

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting - 21 November 2018

Present: P Hogan (Chairman)
D Anthony, P Bastiman, Dr W Matthews and D Pepler

Apologies for
absence: M Bezzant

81. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

82. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Healthy Communities PAG held on 2 October 2018 were approved.

It was noted that information on Heart of Bucks and SBDC grant funding allocations had now been provided to Councillor Dr Matthews.

83. **REPORTS FROM MEMBERS**

The Group received a written report from Councillor D Pepler on the meeting of the Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust held on 26 September 2018.

84. **COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE**

The PAG received a report which updated Members on the work being carried out by the Community Safety team. The report highlighted some of the recent projects and activities which the team had been involved with, focusing on the Council's aims of reducing crime, reducing the fear of crime and tackling anti-social behaviour. The Chairman asked that consideration be given to how the various initiatives could be evaluated, to gauge levels of success.

A question was raised regarding rural crime, relating to recent incidents which had occurred in Iver. It was advised in response that Thames Valley Police had previously organised events focusing on rural crime but more specific information would be requested.

Regarding Modern Slavery, officers advised that there was a "Safe Car Wash" app which could be used to report concerns regarding exploitation.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

85. **COMMUNITY WELLBEING PLANS ANNUAL REVIEW**

A report was presented which set out the projects that had been delivered in the first year of the South Bucks Community and Wellbeing Plan. Members were taken through the objectives and key outcomes of the Plan as listed in the report.

A question was raised regarding the closure of the Citizens' Advice Bureau service in Iver. It was advised that this would be investigated and a response would be communicated to Councillor Matthews.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

86. **PORTFOLIO BUDGETS 2019/20**

Members received a report which provided information on the draft revenue budget and the draft fees and charges for 2019/20. The PAG were advised that, despite the decision to create a unitary council in Buckinghamshire from April 2020, the Council was still required to set a balanced budget for 2019/20.

Paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 of the report showed the net budget figures for the portfolio and the key changes from the current year. It was advised that the transfers to Customer Services were part of the Customer Experience Strategy where it was proposed that two staff members be moved across from Environmental Health and Licensing. The main risk for the portfolio was still the cost around homelessness, although savings would be made with the delivery of temporary accommodation at the Bath Road Depot site and other temporary housing schemes. The recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Task & Finish Group on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the actions taken in response to these were detailed in paragraph 5.7 of the report.

In the discussion which followed, the below key points were raised:

- There would not be a significant change to the fees and charges for 2019/20. Revised charges not included in the appendix to the report had been set but these had not yet been received by finance.
- Officers would be working to improve communications between the Planning and Licensing teams focused on identifying new mobile homes which would require Licences.
- It was hoped that initiatives such as the private sector leasing scheme would address any potential overspend on homelessness.
- The homelessness prevention budget would be used for one-off payments, such as clearing small rent arrears, which would contribute towards the Council's duty to prevent homelessness, and to fund services delivered by partner agencies such as Citizens Advice and Connection Support.
- Officers advised that Universal Credit had been introduced in South Bucks earlier in 2018 and work had been undertaken to ensure the Housing team was prepared for any impacts.
- Two temporary officer posts in the Housing team had been introduced to increase capacity in the team following the introduction of the new Homelessness Reduction Act which had placed more pressure on the Council's Housing services. Members

requested that a report be brought to the PAG after April 2019 to assess the impact of the new Act on the workload of the Housing team.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that the 2019/20 revenue budget and 2019/20 fees and charges be approved.

87. **HEALTHY COMMUNITIES UPDATE**

The PAG received an update report from the Head of Healthy Communities which covered the ongoing work within the service. Further to the report, Members were advised that the consultation on the Bucks Home Choice Allocation Policy had opened and would close on 7 January 2019.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

88. **ACQUISITION OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY**

A report was presented which updated Members on the position regarding the proposed acquisition of residential properties by the Council and the overall programme of projects aimed at reducing the use of nightly booked temporary accommodation.

The PAG were advised that a number of projects had been taken forward to reduce the use of nightly booked temporary accommodation, including:

- Private Sector Leasing Scheme with Paradigm Housing
- Property Acquisitions by Bucks Housing Association
- Bath Road temporary accommodation scheme

These projects, along with work on homelessness case management, had represented a 45% reduction overall in the use of nightly booked accommodation. Therefore, the Council had not yet taken forward any direct acquisitions of residential properties, although this would be kept open as a possibility to deliver temporary accommodation going forward. Members were pleased to note the progress that had been made on reducing the cost of temporary accommodation.

A question was raised regarding the impact of the decision to create a single unitary council for Buckinghamshire on homelessness applicants. Officers advised that the duty to house was with the Local Housing Authority (LHA) however it was not yet clear whether a single LHA would be created for the whole of Buckinghamshire or whether the existing District LHAs would remain.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

89. **EXEMPT INFORMATION**

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the following item(s) of business is not for publication to the press or public on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

90. **UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS**

The PAG received a confidential report which updated Members on the position regarding Unauthorised Encampments. Members discussed the report and recommended to the Portfolio Holder that the Council undertakes a risk assessment of sites and considers adopting Open Space new model bylaws as the next steps to be taken.

Members also requested that the Environment team be asked to explore measures that could be taken to protect Council owned land, with the prevention of car park incursions being a priority.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet the next steps to be taken regarding Unauthorised Encampments.

The meeting terminated at 7.29 pm