Housing and Public Health Policy Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing and Public Health Policy Committee of South Norfolk Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 4 March at 9.30 am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors L Neal (Chairman), V Bell, N Legg, G Walden, N Ward

Apologies: Councillor S Thomson

Ex – Officio Councillor Y Bendle

Officers in Attendance: The Housing and Public Health Manager (Martyn Swann), the Housing Standards Manager (Tony Cooke) the Housing Strategy Manager (Keith Mitchell) and the Compliance and Risk Manager (Leah Mickleborough)

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 17 October 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman wished to officially thank the former Chairman and deputy portfolio holder for Housing and Public Health, Cllr T Blowfield, for the work he had undertaken during the last 9 months. Members noted that Cllr Blowfield had resigned from the above positions, and as a member of the Housing and Public Health Policy Committee, due to other commitments.

The Chairman was proud to have been appointed deputy portfolio holder and would be working closely with Cllr Y Bendle, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Health, and officers. She had recently attended a conference hosted by Saffron Housing Trust, which she had found to be most informative and helpful to her new role.

The Chairman then welcomed Martyn Swann, the newly appointed Housing and Public Health Manager to the meeting.

6 FEEDBACK FROM INFORMAL MEETING HELD 23 JANUARY 2013

The Housing and Public Health Manager referred to the notes from the informal meeting of the Committee, held 23 January 2013. Members noted that contrary to the notes, Kirsty Burns attended the workshop, and Cllr Vivienne Bell had sent her apologies.
The Housing Standards Manager advised the Committee that the informal session had been useful to officers in that it provided a steer on what members wished to see included in any future Fuel Poverty Strategy. Members noted that Fuel Poverty could be addressed as a separate strategy or as part of a wider strategy/or strategies.

In response to queries, the Housing Standards Manager explained that the adoption of strategies was often a process of formalising good practice already in place, setting out new objectives and actions. Cllr Y Bendle assured members that work was already taking place in support of a Fuel Poverty Strategy, making reference to the Green Deal and the recently launched Switch and Save scheme.

7 TENANCY STRATEGY REVIEW

The Housing Strategy Manager informed members that the Tenancy Strategy it had considered at the last meeting of the Committee had gained approval at full Council on 28 January 2013 and had been published on the Council’s website. The Strategy would require monitoring and he suggested the Committee considered it again at its formal meeting in November.

The Chairman referred to the Government’s size criteria proposals for benefits (becoming more known by the public as the “bedroom tax”) and the Housing Strategy Manager explained that the proposals were having an impact in the District on the affordable housing negotiations as part of Section 106 discussion; this was mainly being seen in increased specifications for two-bed and smaller units to enable more people to down-size. Housing Associations supported the need for more two-bed properties.

8 EMPTY HOMES PROGRAMME

The Housing Standards Manager provided members with an update on the Empty Homes Programme previously considered by the Committee on 17 October 2012. A new Empty Homes Strategy had been agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 26 November 2012.

Members noted that 868 letters had gone out to owners of properties that had been empty for at least 3 months, as at 1 December 2012, and to date 390 responses had been received. The correspondence had advised owners of the changes to the council tax discounts relating to empty properties, explained how the grant leasing schemes worked and had asked for information regarding the future of the property.

Members stressed that resources needed to be in place to acknowledge all responses and to act on the information received. Cllr Y Bendle suggested that Orwell Housing Association might be able to assist on a temporary basis through the funding they had received from the Homes and Communities Agency to operate the grant and Lease Scheme throughout East Anglia.

Referring to an ongoing case, the Housing Standards Manager confirmed that a final notice had been served with regard to an empty property and at the end of the 4 week period, a decision would be made whether to force market sale or pursue a compulsory purchase order.
The Housing and Public Health Manager referred to the health care reforms which would, from 1 April 2013, see local government at the forefront of the public health agenda. He explained that part of his role was to take forward a public health strategy for South Norfolk Council, which would set out how the Council would contribute towards the new health and well-being agenda in local government over the coming years.

He went on to deliver a presentation to members (please see a copy of this presentation at Appendix 1 to these minutes), which defined “public health” and provided a number of statistics which related to the South Norfolk area and how these compared with national figures, such as life expectancy, income deprivation, quality of life, childhood obesity, alcohol abuse and smoking. He explained that from the beginning of April, funds would transfer from Primary Care Trusts to Clinical Commissioning Groups and that the whole of the South Norfolk District would fall under the umbrella of one Group. This Group had already set up a Shadow Well-being Board (of which Cllr J Fuller was a member) which would go live in April 2013 and a number of priorities had already emerged from discussions at these meetings:

- Promoting healthy lifestyles
- Supporting people to live independently
- Promoting good mental health
- Giving every child the best start

Referring to the District Councils’ Network “District Action on Public Health”, the Housing and Public Health Manager explained that district councils had a vital impact on the wider determinants of health, in addition to health improvement and health protection. South Norfolk Council needed to consider how it could enhance health outcomes for local residents, for example through leisure services, health protection, community safety and supporting the economy. The Housing and Public Health Manager suggested that this was an opportunity for joint working which could possibly involve the local Neighbourhood Boards.

Members thanked the Housing and Public Health Manager for an interesting and informative presentation. Some members questioned the value of statistics such as those relating to obesity, and queried the exclusion of any mention of drug abuse throughout the District Action on Public Health document.

During discussion, members suggested that the role of the district council was peripheral, and it was stressed that it was important that duplication of work did not take place. They believed that there were many different areas of work which could impact on public health and Cllr Y Bendle referred to the work of the Revenues Team and the recent welfare reforms. Members also referred to the role of parents and the need to promote parenting skills and enhance the role of schools. Members agreed that many of the basic life skills were becoming lost and were concerned that many children left school unable to prepare themselves a nutritious meal.

The Housing Standards Manager advised members that he believed that some very good work was already being carried out for example through the Handy Person scheme and the Care and Repair service, but it had recently come to his attention that local NHS staff had not been aware of these services, which suggested that a more joined up approach was required.

In response to queries from members, the Housing and Public Health Manager explained that the format of the future strategy required consideration, for example would it be a self-
standing document or a joint Housing and Public Health Strategy. He agreed that the Strategy should be a standing item on each agenda for future meetings.

10. SOUTH NORFOLK HOUSING STRATEGY – HORIZON SCANNING SESSION

During this session Members split into groups to discuss areas which they felt should be included within the Housing Strategy.

The Chairman suggested that the results of the exercise be emailed out to members of the Committee and attached to the minutes of the meeting (see Appendix 2 to these minutes). The Housing Strategy would become a standing item for consideration at future meetings.

11. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER STRATEGY

Members considered the Gypsy and Traveller Strategy, which was presented to the Committee to make any recommendations, prior to the document being taken forward within usual corporate arrangements.

The Housing Standards Manager explained the original strategy was devised in 2009 and had covered only Norfolk. Since then, Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils had merged resources and the revised strategy would therefore cover both Norfolk and Suffolk. He drew attention to the Action Plan which would be delivered by a team of partners and covered a wide range of targets which would be monitored by the Norfolk and Suffolk Gypsy and Traveller Steering Group. He made particular reference to the need to ensure that all local authorities moved towards an agreed methodology for assessing need which would result in more meaningful data. Members noted that currently some local authorities did not record data and had then argued that there were no records to suggest a need for Gypsy and Traveller sites in their area.

RESOLVED: To approve the draft Gypsy and Traveller Strategy, to be taken forward within the usual corporate arrangements

12. WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the latest version of the Housing and Public Health Policy Committee Work Programme. The Housing and Public Health Manager welcomed suggestions for the work programme from members.

Members noted that the Housing and Advice Services Manager was happy to arrange a meeting with partner housing associations as part of a future informal meeting, if members felt it would be helpful.

13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the dates of future meetings

The meeting closed at 11.40 am

-----------------------------------------------
Chairman
1. Definition of Public Health

“The science and art of preventing disease, prolonging public life and promoting health through the organised efforts and informed choice of society, organisations – public and private, communities and individuals”

2. Public Health

Includes interdisciplinary approaches of:
- Epidemiology
- Biostatistics
- Health Services

Other Important Fields:
- Environmental Health
- Community Health
- Behavioural Health
- Health Economics
- Public Policy
- Insurance Medicine
- Occupational Health
3. Life Expectancy in the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>82.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In South Norfolk:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04/06</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>9th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/07</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>31st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/08</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>46th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/09</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>54th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/10</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>44th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Issue – not just about regional / area differences – also about quality of life in later years. Longer – lead-in-times.

4. What can impact on quality of life in later years?

- Sleeping rough
- Mortality
- Life expectancy
- Long standing illness
- Education Attainment
- JSA
- Crime
- Claiming Benefit
- Elderly deprived
- School Absence
- No heating
- Children deprived
- Green area
- Travel
- Teenage conception
- Election turnout
- Air quality

Variations at small area level.

5. South Norfolk Health Analysis

- Health of people in South Norfolk generally better than England average.
- Local Context.
6. Health and Social Care Act

- Abolishes PCTs and strategic health authorities
- “Commissioning” or health care funds to be transferred from PCTs to clinical commissioning groups.
- Department of Health, Public Health England is planned for 1st April 2013.
  - Establishing independent NHS Commissioning Board
  - Establishing new LA health and well being Boards
  - Developing MONITOR as an economic regulator

7. The New Structure

Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board

Clinical Commissioning Group

Clinical Commissioning JCG

Supporting People Commissioning Board

8. Priorities

- Promoting healthy lifestyles
- Supporting people to live independently
- Promoting good mental health and well being
- Giving every child the best start

WHAT IS THE DISTRICT OFFER?

9. Ideas for the District Offer

- Wider determinants
- Health improvement
- Health protection
APPENDIX 2

Housing and Public Health Policy Committee 4 March 2013

HORIZON SCANNING FOR THE HOUSING STRATEGY

- This report is a summary of the Horizon Scanning session held as part of the Housing and Public Health Policy Committee
- The session utilised the PESTEL framework to achieve the scanning of external factors relevant to producing a new housing strategy – PESTEL covers political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal issues.
- Officers will consider the issues identified by Members and will report on progress to the next meeting of the Housing and Public Health Policy Committee

### Political

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues Identified</th>
<th>Member Views</th>
<th>Officer Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key government agendas and targets need to be followed</td>
<td>This is important for a variety of reasons – but in particular because of the opportunity to access funding for new initiatives, and to respond to our statutory requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Economic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues Identified</th>
<th>Member Views</th>
<th>Officer Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Housing Strategy needs to maximise the links between housing and employment, education and training.</td>
<td>How can we help deliver more jobs in the District either directly or by increasing partnership working e.g. registered providers? The forthcoming Handyperson scheme apprenticeship cited as good practice and an indication of what can be done.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can new housing developments provide opportunities for work, education or training?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What role can housing play in terms of helping people “get on in life” as opposed to “holding them back”?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare Reform, in its broadest sense, is hugely important and impacts housing provision and delivery on a number of fronts.</td>
<td>We need work with partners to ensure customers are getting the right advice and support.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We need to enable the right kind of affordable housing so that applicants are not being housed in homes they can no longer afford.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We need track progress carefully to ensure that the risks to homelessness are fully understood – i.e. statutory duty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Member Views</th>
<th>Officer Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the national economy really have a significant impact on South Norfolk housing?</td>
<td>It was agreed whatever is happening nationally should be considered carefully, but South Norfolk can still “buck the trend” if it continues to show innovation. E.g. the building of homes (including affordable housing) which is continuing in the District can play an enormous part in helping the economy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability. Growth of private rented sector</td>
<td>Should new housing developments include provision for private rented units? What is happening to this sector in light of direct payments to landlords and welfare reform – is the market shrinking?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private landlords (often reluctant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative equity – unable to sell – forced to rent</td>
<td>Do we know the position on negative equity and its impact?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing the right housing support for young people</td>
<td>This should be focused intervention – with people standing on their own two feet afterwards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing housing market – how can people access property market?</td>
<td>We need to understand the barriers to accessing housing markets e.g. need for large deposits etc… and whether the Council can help people. We should be able to assist customers across all sectors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Member Views</th>
<th>Officer Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isolation for elderly. Can we/partners do more?</td>
<td>We need to re-think our role in working with older people. Is the housing we provide the right kind? Do they get the right support? What do we do when someone is elderly? What is good practice? Cllr Neal mentioned good practice identified at Saffron conference.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing for older people – there are more people getting old and very old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older people – housing must contribute – housing with care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Housing & Public Health Policy Committee - CLW 4 March 2013
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Member Views</th>
<th>Officer Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fast Broadband – no cabling at Queens Hills</td>
<td>How can this be improved through housing? Officers to consider.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better use of technology by older people / or ensuring doesn’t create isolation</td>
<td>Two-sided – giving older people opportunity, but also ensuring equality of access to services where they don’t have access to technology or capacity to use it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good quality homes that are sustainable environmentally</td>
<td>Homes should make best use of the latest technology to improve home energy performance and quality of life for residents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Technology**
### Environmental

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Member Views</th>
<th>Officer Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual impact of developments – history + new ideas - environment</td>
<td>Housing should be linked to conservation, but there should be capacity to try out new and innovative products.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All-electric homes – Cost &amp; quality of heating</td>
<td>We should do what we can to try and reduce fuel bills for residents, and support schemes that help in this pursuit e.g. like the Passivhaus scheme in Ditchingham.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards – existing stock</td>
<td>Quality of existing stock should be identified, and then improvement measures identified. This information should be known at Ward level. The right support should be in place, building on existing good practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are Saffron’s targets for quality?</td>
<td>Housing management standards for all registered providers are important – Members have had individual concerns and need reassurance that registered providers are acting swiftly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Legal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Member Views</th>
<th>Officer Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statutory responsibilities</td>
<td>These need to be delivered professionally, effectively and in a customer focused manner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to enforce developers to do it</td>
<td>If developers have obligations, then they need to undertake them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of CIL - possibly less affordable housing</td>
<td>This needs to be summarised in the housing strategy, as affordable housing is vitally important.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>