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 20 January 2014 at 2.00pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors L Neal (Chairman), N Legg, T Palmer, K Smith, S Thomson and G Walden

Apologies: Councillor N Ward

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor K Weeks

Officers in Attendance: The Director of Environment & Housing (A Jarvis), the Housing & Public Health Manager (M Swann), the Housing Standards Manager (T Cooke), the Housing & Public Health Partnerships Officer (S Cayford), and (for parts of the meeting) the Acting Housing & Advice Manager (L French) and the Housing Enabling & Strategy Officer (K Mitchell)

24 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman advised members that Cllr Bendle would not be able to attend the meeting due to illness, and had passed on her apologies to the Committee.


The Chairman announced that, as a formal response to the draft version of the Fuel Poverty Panel's report was required by 14 February 2014, this matter would be discussed as an urgent item. (See Minute No. 27 below).
26 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 2 July 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Subsequent to the meeting, it was brought to the attention of the Committee that the last sentence of the first paragraph of minute 20 required deleting, to be replaced with:

“The 2012/13 Government allocation to South Norfolk Council (SNC) for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) was £303K. The total spend on DFGs in South Norfolk was £788K. This figure included the SNC contribution plus the Aids and Adaptions budget for Saffron properties”.

The Chairman and the members of the Committee were in agreement that this amendment should be made.

27 UPDATES FROM INFORMAL MEETINGS

HCA Prospectus 2015 - 2018:
The Housing Enabling and Strategy Officer gave an update to the Committee, advising that details regarding funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) had not yet been announced. Members were informed that once this information was received, an assessment would be made to confirm the Council’s priorities. Concerns were raised that the original deadline set for bids had been at the end of March and members hoped this would be extended due to the delay in the HCA publishing the details.

Home Options Policy Review
The Acting Housing & Advice Manager provided an update regarding the Home Options Policy Review later in the meeting. (See Minute No. 31)

Empty Homes
The Housing Standards Manager updated members with the latest figures on empty homes in the district. The Committee was pleased to note that the number of empty homes in the district had been declining over the past five years but was particularly pleased to see the largest number and percentage decline over the past year since the involvement of the Policy Committee in this area of work. Members were advised that, although there had been a large drop in the figure since the draft policy statement, it was not expected to continue to fall year on year at the same rate and that the focus would be on keeping levels down and working towards gradually decreasing the number. Members agreed that the campaign had been successful and were pleased that the Council’s proactive approach had produced positive results.

Report of the Fuel Poverty Panel
The Housing Standards Manager presented the report of the Norfolk County Council Fuel Poverty Panel, inviting members to comment on the recommendations contained in the report. Members considered each recommendation in turn and provided feedback as detailed in the Appendix of these minutes.
POSITIVE OUTCOMES

The Acting Housing & Advice Manager and the Housing and Public Health Partnerships Officer advised the Committee of the reduction in waiting times for customers to be housed under the Housing Register. The challenge of keeping on top of the housing register had meant an increased volume in providing preventative assistance. However this approach was working, 39% of the housing register were housed in 12/13 and it was anticipated that this figure would increase in 13/14. The Housing and Public Health Manager added that the high level of success was due to a good supply of housing and the efficient management of the service which provided good advice and focussed on customer need. One member was concerned that there appeared to be an increase in the number of customers refusing housing and the Committee was advised that Saffron Housing was working on an initiative to alleviate problems regarding hard to let properties.

The Housing Standards Manager gave a brief update on the progress of the Care and Repair Service, advising members that, by providing good advice and an individual service, officers were helping vulnerable people to stay in their own homes.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Housing Enabling and Strategy Officer provided members with an update on Affordable Housing in the district, advising that the 3-year target in 2011-14 of building 500 affordable homes in the District had been exceeded and he expected the final figure to be up to 570. Members were advised that a target of 600 new affordable properties, an increase of 20% on the current target, appeared sufficiently challenging for the following three years 2014-17 unless there was a national economic downturn.

The Committee was informed that five bids to SNC’s Affordable Housing Grants scheme had been approved and all of the bids were from Saffron Housing Trust There were currently no further proposals. This demonstrated as an authority South Norfolk Council was resourcing its priorities by placing funding back into the community. The Housing and Public Health Manager advised members that for each home built, 1.5 jobs were created so approximately 800 jobs would be generated from building affordable housing, making a positive contribution to the economy.

DRAFT HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

The Housing and Public Health Manager gave a presentation to members on the progress of South Norfolk Council’s Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy. He advised the Committee of the journey so far, advising them on how the views of its own members and the building of close relationships with partners such as the South Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Group (SNCCG), Active Norfolk, and the Health and Wellbeing Board, had shaped and developed the priorities of the process and the production of the Draft Strategy.

The Committee was informed of the three proposed outcomes of the Strategy;

1. Younger people securing the best chances in life through health and wellbeing;
2. Older people living independently in their own homes with peace of mind; and
3. South Norfolk residents enjoying health and wellbeing and avoiding/delaying demand on higher cost health and social care services.
Members were advised that the intended vision of the Strategy was that “South Norfolk residents should have the best possible health and wellbeing, living their lives in decent homes, in better health and with support from the community”. The Housing and Public Health Manager stated that the key to the strategy was to work together with partners and residents to promote healthy lifestyles and early assistance so that a more preventative approach could be taken to avoid or delay the need for social care, and to enable residents to remain in their own homes.

The Director of Environment and Housing spoke to the Committee regarding concept papers which were awaiting a response from Norfolk County Council (NCC) following the reallocation of funding responsibility for disabled facilities grants. He stressed the importance of helping people to stay in their own homes, drawing members’ attention to some of the common requests such as the installation of showers to assist residents who were unable to bathe. The Committee considered how this process could be made more efficient, balancing this cost with the savings made by making it possible for residents to remain in their own homes.

Members were also invited to comment on concept papers submitted to NCC requesting further funding for the Handyperson Scheme to be used for education, as an early intervention, for those residents who were likely to fall or to become unwell. In addition, papers had been submitted for a longer term project to deal with obesity and fitness which entailed working with employers to promote good health for their employees. Further papers were being written, to tackle excess winter deaths, in which the SNCCG had expressed an interest, and the issue of child poverty in low income families in South Norfolk.

Members commented on all the concept papers. Concerns were raised regarding the funding for Health and Wellbeing projects and the possible duplication of work with other organisations. Officers advised that they were aware of funding constraints but that by working closely with local agencies, partners and businesses, work would be complimentary rather than duplicated, and that other agencies would be contributing to the costs from larger budgets.

Committee members were happy that the strategy reflected their contribution and were happy for it to be taken to Cabinet.

31. BETTER CARE PLAN (FORMERLY INTEGRATED TRANSFORMATION FUND)

The Director of Environment and Housing presented members with a verbal update on the Better Care Plan, reminding the Committee that this had formerly been known as the Integrated Transformation Fund. He confirmed that a first draft of the Plan was required by 14 February 2014 and advised that there would be a two year plan for Norfolk which would be split over three areas. Members were advised that final clarity of the Plan was not yet available but it was expected that the Excess Winter Death Project and DFGs would be featured, and it was hoped that the Handyman Scheme would also be included. The Committee was informed that the first draft of the Plan would be sent to the Health and Wellbeing Board for sign off by the end of March 2014.

In response to some concerns raised by members, the Housing Standards Manager explained the reasons for the tight deadline for the production of the first draft of the Plan, and the Director of Environment and Housing added that although there was a vast amount of work to be done, there were no alternative plans and that the Better Care Plan would be implemented. It was agreed that an update would be given at the next meeting of the Housing and Public Health Policy Committee.
32. **ENHANCED HOUSING OPTIONS**

The Acting Housing & Advice Manager gave a brief presentation of her report on the Enhanced Housing Options Module, advising members of the process where customers would be able to access options and advice tailored to their needs online. The Committee was advised that the system would be initially tested with customers and officers before being made available to residents. Officers confirmed that members would receive training on the module and that although it was expected that the online tool would reduce enquiries from customers, they would still have the option to come into the office for advice. Members supported the system and were pleased to note that it did not detract from customers receiving personal attention, but offered a good alternative.

33. **PROVIDING SOCIAL HOUSING FOR LOCAL PEOPLE**

The Acting Housing & Advice Manager presented members with an update on how authorities were operating the Allocations Policy following the Department for Communities and Local Government’s (DCLG) new guidance regarding social housing allocations and local association, which was released on 31 December 2013 and distributed with the agenda for this meeting.

Having considered the salient points contained in the guidance, including the recommendation that a minimum residency period of two years should be adopted by housing authorities. Members were in agreement with officers that, as South Norfolk Council had already conducted a review in light of the Localism Act and were keen not to undermine mobility in the local employment market it was not necessary to revise the Allocations Policy. Members agreed to keep this decision under review.

34. **CHANGES TO MOBILE HOME LICENSING**

The Housing Standards Manager provided members with a brief outline of the changes in legislation issued by the Government, under the Mobile Home Act 2013, regarding the licensing of mobile home parks. He advised members that prior to the Act, mobile home park owners were permitted to block the sale of mobile homes, but that new legislation would enable local authorities to action arbitration and to charge for inspections. The Committee was informed that, once further details regarding guidance and charges were published, officers would report back to members and, should members be in agreement, residents would be contacted.

35. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Members noted the date of the next formal meeting to be held on 10 March 2014.

The meeting closed at 4.20pm

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Chairman
# Appendix – Fuel Poverty

## Fuel poverty in Norfolk – response template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
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<th>Response (recommendation accepted / not accepted; comments on implementation; or reasons for not implementing)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> That all County Council departments, district councils, housing associations, NHS and third sector organisations and agencies who send staff into people’s homes make use of the Warm and Well e-learning module and ensure that staff are signposting people at risk of fuel poverty toward the available help.</td>
<td>Norfolk County Council Directors 7 District Councils Norfolk Housing Alliance Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust</td>
<td><strong>Recommendation accepted</strong></td>
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| **2.** That the Home Shield service is promoted to staff who take the Warm and Well e-learning module and to community contacts, such as village agents or community oil buying champions, who may be able to refer people in fuel poverty to the service. | Director of Community Services | **Recommendation accepted**  
South Norfolk Council do not receive many referrals from Home Shield as we have an efficient service and a good energy team, but accept that other areas of the county are different. |
| **3.** That the Enabling Communities group considers ways in which local communities can participate in the Warm and Well campaign and in other | Director of Community Services | **Recommendation accepted**  
Accepted, but consider it might be difficult for County to implement as they do not have the same level of |
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<th>activities to tackle fuel poverty in their areas.</th>
<th>understanding regarding Community Partnerships as Districts. We also consider the County should consider how it can involve the CAB in the campaign.</th>
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| 4. | That the County Council’s customer insight work and assistance is made available to all County Council departments and the other organisations and agencies who could use it to target help (e.g. Green Deal) towards people who could use it. | Head of Planning, Performance and Partnerships  
Recommendation accepted |
| 5. | That the Insight Team investigates the development of a network for the sharing of information, data and knowledge in respect of fuel poverty and associated issues so that organisations can see the opportunities for working together | Head of Planning, Performance and Partnerships  
Recommendation accepted |
| 6. | That the district councils and Norfolk Rural Community Council continue to promote collective switch and save and that Norfolk County Council also helps to promote future rounds of the Big Switch and Save. | 7 District Councils  
Norfolk Rural Community Council  
Recommendation accepted |
| 7. | That the County Council takes up the issue of roll-out of mains gas connections with National Grid. | Norfolk County Council  
Recommendation accepted |
|   | Recommendation | Norfolk Housing Alliance  
7 District Councils  
Eastern Landlords Association | County should also support councils who are already delivering this advice to vulnerable owner occupiers through Handyperson, Care and Repair and Energy advice services. |
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<td>8.</td>
<td>The housing associations, district councils with housing stocks and private landlords ensure that new tenants are given clear written instructions for their boiler and central heating system and that one to one instruction is given where necessary.</td>
<td>Recommendation accepted in principal: Accepted but we need to be satisfied that the company’s offering the Green Deal are legitimate, their product reasonable and they have the necessary resources in place.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>That District Councils consider allowing their logo to be used in promotion of the Green Deal in their area.</td>
<td>Recommendation accepted in principal: Accepted but we need to be satisfied that the company’s offering the Green Deal are legitimate, their product reasonable and they have the necessary resources in place.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>That Norfolk County Council expresses support for the Energy Bill Revolution which is calling for the Government to spend its carbon tax revenue, approximately £4 billion per year, on making homes more energy efficient.</td>
<td>Recommendation accepted</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>That Breckland District Council produces a HECA as soon as possible.</td>
<td>Not relevant to SNC</td>
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| 12. | That the district councils consider each others’ HECAs and whether some of their neighbours’ ideas would work in their area (e.g. the loft clearance service in Norwich seems like a very good idea for encouraging people to take up the offer of loft insulation). | 7 District Councils | Recommendation accepted  
This work already takes place in SNC |
| 13. | That members of the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board receive this report and that they consider ways in which fuel poverty can be alleviated as they work together on the health and wellbeing strategic priorities | Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board | Recommendation accepted |
| 14. | That the five CCGs come together to consider how they can commission services to avoid excess winter deaths, building on the Warm and Well, initiative, and work with the seven district councils to consider how the councils can help in delivering aspects which relate to the home environment. | 5 Clinical Commissioning Groups | Recommendation accepted  
SNC is already leading on this with CCG in South Norfolk. |