SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on 2 February 2016 at 9.30am.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Members Present:</th>
<th>Councillors: L Neal (Chairman), D Fulcher, C Gould, K Kiddie, T Lewis, G Minshull and J Wilby</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apologies:</td>
<td>Councillors: B Bernard, B Duffin and K Kiddie</td>
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<td>Substitute:</td>
<td>Councillor: D Goldson (left after Item 7) for K Kiddie</td>
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<td>Cabinet Members in Attendance:</td>
<td>Councillors: Y Bendle, J Fuller and M Wilby</td>
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<td>Others in Attendance:</td>
<td>S Cheshire and M Armitage – Norfolk CAB</td>
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<td></td>
<td>J John – North East Suffolk CAB (NESCAB)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>M Jones – Diss &amp; Thetford CAB</td>
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<td></td>
<td>S Barnes – Commissioning Manager for Children and Young People</td>
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<td>Plus one member of the public</td>
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<td>Officers in Attendance:</td>
<td>The Chief Executive (S Dinneen), the Director of Community Services (P Boyce), the Director of Growth and Localism (T Horspole), the Early Intervention Manager (M Pursehouse), the Housing Access and Standards Manager (T Cooke), the Projects and Process Manager (A Mewes), the Independent Living Team Leader (S Cayford), the Housing and Public Health Partnerships Officer (L Pickering), the Policy Officer (P Chapman), and the Scrutiny and Information Rights Officer (E Goddard)</td>
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The following members declared “other” interests in the matters listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Councillor</th>
<th>Minute</th>
<th>Declaration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L Neal</td>
<td>1160</td>
<td>SNC Representative on Norfolk CAB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Minshull</td>
<td>1159</td>
<td>Benefit claimant</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1160</td>
<td>Provided proxy vote for Diss &amp; Thetford CAB</td>
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The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 18 November 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Early Intervention Manager provided members with a presentation that detailed the ongoing work and future plans of the Help Hub (HH). He advised the Committee of the importance of collaboration and information sharing between the various agencies within the HH, and provided case studies and examples of how the professionalism and teamwork of its partners had made vast improvements to the lives of many South Norfolk residents. Members were reminded of the cost efficiencies of providing early help so that difficulties could be resolved before they escalated and required more extensive and expensive solutions.

The Commissioning Manager for Children and Young People, Sarah Barnes provided the Committee with a presentation on the Integrated 0-19 Years Healthy Child Programme. Members were advised that the Programme had been commissioned in October 2015 and proposed that professionals would actively seek to help vulnerable people and those in need of care and assistance. It was noted that the Healthy Child Programme also included the work of Health Visitors and School Nurses who would carry out routine visits to tackle weight and developmental problems in children, deal with post-natal depression in mothers, and ensure that children would have a named Health Visitor for the first year of their lives.
The Independent Living Team Leader spoke briefly on the work of the HH regarding independent living in the District, advising members that it was perfectly placed for professionals to quickly deal with issues and therefore reduce the cost and burden on public services. The Committee was reminded of the various grants and assistance available to residents, including the Handyperson Scheme which assisted with adaptations to people’s homes, and Forget Me Not Grants for people with dementia, and it was noted that both schemes were created to help enable residents to remain in their own homes.

Cllr Bendle commended the work of the HH and was pleased at the progress made since its inception one year previously. She stated that the number of people using its services had increased substantially and this figure was continuing to grow, adding that South Norfolk Council itself was also benefitting from the facility. Members were encouraged to continue to spread the word throughout their Wards to further increase public awareness.

In response to a member’s question regarding whether the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) had similar aims and agendas to those of the early help services, the Early Intervention Manager advised that the HH was still developing, growing and continuing with its ‘journey’. He stated that the DWP was undergoing a culture change and that relationships were being encouraged to ensure common goals, adding that a senior manager from the DWP was already a member of the Executive Group.

In reply to a member’s question of whether the Help Hub’s operation was dependent upon the budgets of partners, the Early Intervention Manager confirmed that resources had been pooled and that staff employed in the Hub were existing employees of the agencies who worked in the hub. The Director of Community Services stressed that the work being undertaken to promote and enable independent living and provide preventative care was an investment in the health services, decreasing the need for more expensive hospital and residential care, and improving the lives, skills and health of residents.

The Chief Executive advised members that funding had not been sought from all partners when the HH was created, however the set-up costs and the first three years of operation had been part-funded by Children’s Services, and that most of the Early Help Team had been formed by the relocation of existing staff. Members noted that, as the Help Hub had proven its success and was entering its second phase, research would be made into how processes could be improved and how funds could be directed more efficiently.

Members discussed the complexities of quantifying the costs and savings of the HH, due to the unknown future effects upon residents and services resulting from the impact of its work. Officers added that many of the benefits and outcomes of their work would be realised in the long term and were not quick fixes i.e. early intervention with child obesity having a vast future impact on adult diabetes.
The Committee discussed how the Council intended to raise awareness and promote the HH through schools and toddler groups, and were looking at promoting the brand but also required members to spread the word. Members also discussed the poor public perception of care work, agreeing that the job was not well paid or highly recognised as a worthwhile profession. Cllr Bendle stated that she had been working with job centres to promote care working as a worthwhile career, and would speak to Adult Social Services about the promotion of this.

After discussion, it was

RESOLVED

To

1. note the progress of early help services;

2. recommend that officers investigate new methods and outlets in order to advertise the Help Hub;

and

3. recommend that officers liaise with Adult Social Services to address the promotion of care work with a view to improving its recognition as a worthwhile profession.

1159 PROCESSING BENEFIT CLAIMS

Members considered the report of the Policy Officer, which sought to advise the Committee of the Council’s performance in relation to processing benefit claims, and highlighted the significant improvements in processing times over the last quarter.

The Policy Officer provided members with details of improvements that had been achieved in order to reduce processing times back to acceptable levels and the procedures implemented to ensure that any future issues were effectively managed. The Committee was pleased to note the positive progress made in improving benefits processing times and that the Revenues and Benefits Team would continue to build upon the good working methods to ensure greater efficiencies in the future.
Following a brief discussion, it was

RESOLVED

To note the contents of the report and endorse the good practice employed over the past quarter.

1160 REVIEW OF ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICES – CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUX (CABx)

The Chairman welcomed S Cheshire and M Armitage (Norfolk CAB), J John (North East Suffolk CAB (NESCAB)), M Jones (Diss & Thetford CAB) and member of the public, P Allen, to the meeting.

The Committee was reminded that in 2014, the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) were reviewed and agreed with the three CABx in South Norfolk, for a two-year period. Members considered the report of the Housing and Public Health Partnerships Officer that sought to advise the Committee of the outcomes and changes to the SLAs, the level to which the objectives set had been achieved, and to ask them to consider how the current model could be improved.

Members were advised that many organisations provided advice and assistance to residents but that there were concerns that some advice providers might not be referring and escalating more complex issues, where appropriate. Officers stated that, in some instances, there was duplication of work which resulted in higher costs to advice providers and a less favourable service to customers. The Housing and Public Health Partnerships Officer stressed the importance of a collaborative approach and ‘making every contact count’. He advised that the Council’s focus was on avoiding costly and unnecessary duplication of work and negating the need for residents who required help to have to ‘re-tell their stories’ to several organisations in order to receive comprehensive advice. The Housing Access and Standards Manager reassured the Committee that steps were being taken to align these services to ensure a more simplified, measurable and customer focussed working practice.

Mr Cheshire (Norfolk CAB) provided the Committee with a presentation which detailed the work of the three CABx in South Norfolk. Members were advised of the skills, dedication and professionalism of the staff and volunteers who worked for the CABx, and were provided with examples of the types of services they regularly provided to South Norfolk residents.

There were some concerns raised regarding the lack of measurable outcomes reported by the CABx as members felt it was necessary to be able to assess their outcomes, outputs and achievements when renegotiating the SLA.
In response to a member’s question regarding the level of interaction between the CABx and the Early Help Hub, it was confirmed that, although the referral systems at the CABx did not currently allow them to refer residents to the Hub, this would soon be rectified. The Housing Access and Standards Manager confirmed that the Hub was still developing after one year in operation and that work was being undertaken to align this alongside other organisations to improve the service provision in the District. Members agreed that regular communication between the Council and the CABx would help to streamline the work undertaken and resolve the problems of duplication and confusion.

Miss Allen addressed the Committee and spoke of her concerns, agreeing that the Early Help Hub was of major benefit to residents and value for money, but she felt that it would be unable to take on even a small percentage of the CABx’ work due to the high volumes of people seeking help.

Cllr Bendle spoke of her previous involvement with the CABx and of her participation in the inception of the Early Help Hub and its ongoing journey. She agreed that more communication was required between CABx and the Hub and felt that the CABx should be provided with a thorough understanding of the work being undertaken, and trained in how they could utilise it for their customers, which would result in a more collaborative and streamlined way of working.

After discussion, it was

**RESOLVED**

To

1. note the contribution made to date by the South Norfolk CABx in the provision of advice services for residents;

2. support the need to ensure value for money, and clear outcome-based performance measurement which shows improved outcomes for residents;

3. endorse the re-negotiation of SLAs going forward in line with the content of the report;

and

4. recommend that officers regularly liaise with the CABx to share best practices and current issues to encourage a more collaborative and joined-up way of working.
The Projects and Process Manager presented the Committee with his report which provided details of the draft Business Plan for 2016/17. He explained that the main difference this year was that the Plan had been aligned with the Council’s new Corporate Plan priorities rather than around organisational structures. Cllr Fuller advised the Committee that there had been a significant squeeze of Local Government finances and, as South Norfolk had historically maintained a strong financial record, the Council had been greatly affected. He reassured members of his confidence that the Council was on the right track and that activity would continue to grow in the District.

It was noted that there were two typographical errors in the Draft Business Plan and it was agreed that these would be amended.

In response to a member’s question, the Projects and Process Manager confirmed that some changes had been made to the Draft Business Plans following feedback received during the members’ workshop, in particular regarding the Digital Engagement Strategy and the Market Towns Initiative. The Director of Community Services confirmed that both Councillors and staff had contributed to the Plan and that the Strategic Leadership Forum would review the document to ensure that its themes were embedded within the Council.

Following a brief discussion around the repairs and maintenance facility for Big Sky Property Management Ltd., the Committee agreed that the Draft Business Plan was well compiled and easy to understand and it was

**RESOLVED**

To note the Draft Business Plan and commend it to Cabinet, subject to two typographical amendments.

Members noted the Work Programme, Tracker and Cabinet Core Agenda.

Copies of a proposed non-suspensive call-in paper was distributed to the Committee. This paper referred to the proposed Corporate Environment Policy which had been considered by Cabinet on 18 January 2016. Members were advised that, as alternative action had been agreed, the call-in would not be considered at this meeting.

(The meeting concluded at 12:40pm)