

Lancashire County Council

Health Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 7 October, 2014 at 10.30 am in Cabinet Room 'C', County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Steven Holgate (Chair)

County Councillors

M Brindle	A James
Mrs F Craig-Wilson	B Murray
B Dawson	M Otter
G Dowding	N Penney
N Hennessy	D Stansfield
M Iqbal	

Co-opted members

Councillor Brenda Ackers, (Fylde Borough Council Representative)
Councillor Trish Ellis, (Burnley Borough Council)
Councillor Carolyn Evans, (West Lancashire Borough Council)
Councillor Paul Gardner, (Lancaster City Council Representative)
Councillor Helen Jackson, Rossendale Borough Council
Councillor Roy Leeming, (Preston City Council)
Councillor Mrs Kerry Molineux, (Hyndburn Borough Council)
Councillor M J Titherington, (South Ribble Borough Council Representative)

County Councillors David Stansfield and Bernard Dawson attended in place of County Councillors Andrea Kay and Yousuf Motala respectively.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were presented on behalf of Councillors Asjad Mahmood, Pendle Borough Council, Julie Robinson, Wyre Borough Council and Bridget Hilton, Ribble Valley Borough Council.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None disclosed

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2014

The Minutes of the Health Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 2 September 2014 were presented and agreed.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Health Scrutiny Committee held on the 2 September 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. Public Health actions to address the impacts of economic downturn

As part of the ongoing scrutiny of the 'Living Well' element of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the committee was provided with a report which presented an overview of the actions being taken to address the impact of the economic downturn on the health and wellbeing on the population of Lancashire.

The Chair welcomed the following officers from the Directorate for Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing:

- Mike Leaf, Director of Health Improvement
- Clare Platt, Public Health Specialist
- Hilary Abernethy, Public Health Specialist (Public Mental Health Commissioning)
- Gulab Singh, Public Health Specialist (Central Locality)
- Chris Calvert, Health and Wellbeing Officer

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation which set the context and briefly summarised the determinants of health. Officers then went on to explain in further detail what Public Health was doing to address the impacts of the economic downturn. The presentation focused on:

- Mental health
- The workplace
- Food poverty
- Affordable warmth

A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.

Members raised a number of comments and questions and the main points arising (under broad headings) are summarised below:

Food Poverty

- The Chair noted that the planned 'Call to Action' event to be held in February 2015 was to be held in East Lancashire; he acknowledged that deprivation was prevalent in that part of Lancashire, however he felt that it was important to engage communities, including councillors, from all parts of the county. The Committee was assured that the list of delegates would be carefully managed to ensure that appropriate groups were represented.
- It was reported that much work was ongoing across the Districts to address food poverty and Lancaster City Council, in particular, had developed its own action plan around food poverty. It was to present at the 'Call to Action' event to share information with other delegates.
- It was acknowledged also as very important for major supermarkets to engage with the issue of food poverty.
- There was some discussion about the different operating arrangements of food banks and the Committee was assured that work was ongoing to try to achieve a greater level of co-ordination, support and sharing of good practice and expertise. The 'Call for Action' event would provide an opportunity to progress this.
- In response to a suggestion that food banks could provide cookery lessons, it was explained that not all food banks had facilities, but a number of colleges provided adult learning courses for 'cooking on a budget' and food banks could signpost people to these courses.
- It was noted that some supermarkets collected donations for food banks but the food wasn't necessarily distributed locally; it was considered appropriate that collectors make it clear to where donations would be distributed. It was understood that much depended on the relationships established between the food banks and the collectors.
- In terms of the profile of people who were using food banks it was a mixed picture, including people in work and on a low income.

Affordable Warmth

- The point was made that it was often the people least able to afford to pay for fuel and who were receiving benefits who actually paid the most for it.
- The Committee requested further information about how Affordable Warmth Grants were distributed to each District and for case studies. The Committee was assured that funding had been distributed according to the level of fuel poverty and the number of households in each district to ensure that funding was following need.
- Members requested a breakdown of the 587 Excess Winter Deaths which had been referred to in the presentation. It was explained that not all the EWDs related to cold temperatures and a more detailed breakdown would be provided.

Environment

- The planned recruitment of a Public Health specialist to the County Council's planning function was welcomed.
- It was considered important to ameliorate the environmental factors that affected health and wellbeing. It was suggested for example that people needed to understand why the installation of solar panels on all new builds

was not standard, or why allotment space for growing was not provided as part of a new housing development.

- The Committee was informed that social landlords were already being targeted in connection with the provision of green space for recreation and/or growing. Also, the health impact assessment around the north Preston masterplan had ensured that green space, cycle routes and recreation space had been factored in.

Mental Health

- It was explained that social prescribing was very much a part of early intervention and a wide variety of professionals could refer into the services. There was also a self-referral option. Following such a referral, an assessment would be made to find out what was behind the poor mental health, for example, poverty, isolation, relationship issues, and a programme of support would be developed to address needs identified.
- It was confirmed that all county libraries had a full set of the 35 books on prescription which were evidence based and clinically approved, and free to access; some were also available as audio and e-books.

Employment

- It was suggested that, historically, there had always been a rift between the North and South of the country and there was a need for better quality jobs in the North.
- The Committee's attention was drawn to the 'Due North' report produced following an inquiry, commissioned by Public Health England. It detailed evidence on trends in health inequalities and provided a set of recommendations, based on the root causes of health inequalities, for policies that could address social inequalities in health within the North and between the rest of England.
- A significant number of people were in receipt of in-work benefits and it was felt that some employers might be taking advantage of this situation to pay low wages.
- The proportion of temporary and zero-hours jobs was creating uncertainty and insecurity, which in turn caused mental health issues and long-term problems for years to come. It was suggested that many of the companies offering such contracts were in receipt of Government grants and therefore the Government was effectively subsidising employers who were paying low wages; job security and economic viability were fundamental to wellbeing.
- The practice of charging employees for items such as payslips and to process travel claims appeared to be condoned by HMRC and it was suggested that this needed further investigation.
- It was also suggested that the County Council, as a commissioner, could make clear to its providers that zero-hours contracts would not be tolerated.
- Members were keen to know how the national agenda could be influenced, especially issues relating to poor employment practices. They were advised that the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership had a role in advocating for and supporting the provision of good quality jobs.

It was acknowledged that some parts of the country were showing signs of economic recovery, however the impact and effects of the recession were still very important issues for Lancashire. The Chair acknowledged that there was a very mixed picture which made it even more important to be mindful of health inequalities and the determinants of health.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

5. Report of the Health Scrutiny Committee Steering Group

On 15 August the Steering Group had met with officers from North West Ambulance Service to discuss their 5 year plan and Lancashire Care Foundation Trust who provided an update on inpatient facilities. A summary of the meeting was at Appendix A to the report now presented.

Resolved: That the report be received.

6. Work Plan 2014/15

Appendix A to the report now presented set out a draft work plan for both the Health Scrutiny Committee and its Steering Group, including current Task Group reviews.

In light of the discussion at this meeting about the impact of environmental matters on health, it was suggested and agreed that the related topics scheduled for the 13 January be brought forward to the 25 November meeting, and those scheduled for November now be considered in January.

Members requested, that as part of the presentation to the Committee, practical examples of interventions, including approaches that have not been successful, be included. The Committee recognised that it was still early days and some interventions will not yet have been evaluated.

It was reported that a work planning workshop would be arranged in March 2015 at which the Committee could consider and agree topics for the 2015/16 programme of work.

Resolved: That the work plan, as now amended, be noted.

7. Recent and Forthcoming Decisions

The Committee's attention was drawn to forthcoming decisions and decisions recently made by the Cabinet and individual Cabinet Members in areas relevant to the remit of the committee, in order that this could inform possible future areas of work.

Recent and forthcoming decisions taken by Cabinet Members or the Cabinet can be accessed here:

<http://council.lancashire.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?bcr=1>

Resolved: That the report be received.

8. Urgent Business

No urgent business was reported.

9. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday 25 November 2014 at 10.30am at County Hall, Preston.

I Young
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston