

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel

(to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Thursday, 16 January 2014

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Mrs M E Ellerton (Chairman)

T G Knight (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: Miss S M Bell, Mrs K K Trott and D M Whittingham

Also Present: Councillor B Bayford, Executive Member for Health and Housing (item 3)



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D L Steadman and N R Gregory.

2. MINUTES

It was AGREED that the minutes of the Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel held on 14 November 2013, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor B Bayford, Executive Member for Health and Housing addressed the Panel to give an update on the Fareham and Gosport Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) meeting that he had recently attended.

Councillor Bayford referred to item 1 of the previous minutes which reported on a proposed change to cardiovascular services which would result in the majority of cardiovascular services being provided by Southampton University Hospital Trust. A letter of objection to this proposal was likely to be submitted by Gosport Borough Council. The likely outcome will now be that all critical patients will be seen at Southampton General Hospital whilst minor cases will still be seen at Queen Alexandra Hospital.

Council Bayford also gave a brief overview of a Better Care Fund which will be used to fund Care in the Community service to provide support for those who come out of hospital and still require assistance.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS

There were no declarations of interest or disclosures of advice or direction made at this meeting.

5. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

6. WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Finance and Resources which gave an update on the Welfare Reform.

The report gave an overview of the changes to the Welfare system and the impact that this has had on the Council and the residents who are in receipt of benefits.

It was reported to Members that the revenue and benefits team has been working closely with the housing department and housing associations to

ensure that all residents affected by the reduction in spare room subsidy have been given support and advice on what their options are.

Members were also provided with information regarding the changes to the Council Tax support scheme which is now being administered by the Council. It was reported that there are currently 1800 residents affected by the changes to this scheme. Members noted the proposed further reduction in support for year two of the scheme and possible impact this could have on residents.

It was AGREED that the content of the report be noted.

7. REVIEW OF IMPACT OF REMOVAL OF SPARE ROOM SUBSIDY

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Community which reviewed the Impact of the removal of the spare room subsidy on Council tenants.

Members attention was drawn to the proposed Event outlined in section 20 of the report, which will be open to all tenants that are affected by the reduction in the spare room subsidy, tenants registered on the Council's Waiting List looking to move to smaller accommodation, tenants registered on Homeswapper who are currently overcrowded and are looking for larger accommodation with the intention that some tenants will be able to find others to exchange properties with. Tenants will also be given advice on the housing waiting list, Homeswapper, housing options and discretionary housing payments. Members were advised that the event has now been arranged for 4 February 2014, at Ferneham Hall.

The option of lodgers was discussed by members and concern was expressed over the safety of tenants who were to do this. The Director of Community informed the Panel that advice would be given at the event on lodgers, highlighting the potential benefits and advice on staying safe.

It was AGREED that the Panel:-

- (a) endorses the proposal to organise an event for those tenants effected by the RSRS;
- (b) requests a verbal update on the outcome of the Event at the meeting on 13 March 2014; and
- (c) notes the content of the report.

8. HOUSING INITIATIVES (ACCESSING THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR)

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Community on Housing Initiatives, accessing the private rented sector.

The report outlined the 3 new proposed schemes, The Tenant Finding Scheme, The Private Sector Lease Plus Scheme and The Full Management Scheme.

Questions were asked regarding the viability of the full management scheme as many landlords have already withdrawn from similar schemes with high street letting agents. The Panel were informed that it was felt that the scheme will be successful as unlike high street letting agents, the Council will be responsible for the full management of the tenancy and will guarantee the rent for 12 months.

It was AGREED that the Panel supports the development and publication of the private rented sector schemes as described in the report.

9. PRELIMINARY OVERALL REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14 AND DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Community which invited members to review the outcome of the work programme for 2013/14 and draft the work programme for 2014/15.

Member's attention was drawn to section 2 of the report which highlighted the changes to the 2013/14 work programme.

It was AGREED that the Panel note the content of the report.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 6.56 pm).