

## **COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

**Date:** Thursday 8th August 2019

**Time:** 10:00am – 11:20am

**Venue:** Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

**Present:** Councillors S Criswell (Chairman), K Cuffley (Vice-Chairman),  
D Ambrose Smith, A Costello, J French, C Richards, A Taylor and  
S Taylor

**Apologies:** Councillors L Every and L Nieto

### **183. APOLOGIES & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies were received from Councillors Every (substituted by Councillor Ambrose Smith) and Nieto.

No declarations of interest were made.

### **184. MINUTES 4TH JULY 2019 & MINUTES ACTION LOG**

One Member observed that the question recorded in the fifth bullet point of minute 176 in the Minutes of 4th July had referred to the treatment of homeless people from other “*counties*”, as opposed to other “*countries*”, as had been recorded.

With regard to Minute 146 of the Action Log, Members were informed that the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery Board would be reconsidering the list of intended outcomes, as suggested by the Committee, at their forthcoming meeting in September. A report would be presented to the Committee once a final list of intended outcomes had been established.

An update from Councillor Manning in regard to Minute 164 of the Action Log was noted, in which he informed Members that Melbourn had been proposed as a location for a Hate Crime Third Party Reporting Centre as it benefitted from the necessary infrastructure of support staff. There was no suggestion of the location being specifically chosen in favour of any alternative locations. Further clarification would be provided by Councillor Jose Hales of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Members were also informed that a briefing note would be circulated prior to the next Committee meeting, which would provide an update on the issues raised in minute 176 of the Action Log.

Having agreed to change the word “*countries*” to “*counties*” in minute 176, it was resolved to:

Approve the minutes of the meeting of 4th July 2019 as a correct record and note the action log.

## **185. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No petitions or public questions were received.

## **186. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH CORONER SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee received an annual report on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Coroner Service, for which oversight had been transferred to the Communities and Partnership Committee in May 2019. It was noted that coronial statistics were based on the calendar year and that prior to the meeting there had been 2042 deaths registered in 2019, of which 271 had led to an inquest. Members were informed that the Coroner investigated around 50% of all deaths, while the introduction of the Medical Examiner scheme would result in all deaths occurring in hospitals now being investigated.

Attention was drawn to section 2.1 of the report, which detailed the expected benefits of the Medical Examiner scheme, as well as technological developments such as the new case management system and the ability to communicate via email. The service had received responses from 95% of GPs that were contacted in connection with the new referral portal, and the high response rate was noted, along with the positive feedback received. It was also acknowledged that reduced funding in other sectors had increased pressure on all services, including the coroner service. A correction was made to section 2.2.2 of the report, as the time period from 1 June 2017 to 31 May 2019 was 24 months, and not 12 months as suggested in the report.

The Senior Coroner was welcomed by the Committee, and while discussing the report, Members:

- Queried why the national reviews and consultations that had been held between 2009 and 2017 had taken so long. The Senior Coroner acknowledged the excessive length of the process, noting that the process had been instigated as a result of the Shipman Inquiry and that the Government was responsible for the timeline.
- Established that all coroners were qualified lawyers, as required by the Coroner and Justice Act 2009.
- Clarified that complex cases were so-named due to the complexities of the coronial process and legal procedures, as opposed to the nature of the death itself. Deaths in custody were given as an example of such cases, while it was also acknowledged that the cutting edge work carried out in the Leading Teaching Hospitals based in the County sometimes involved patients who could not be saved and the relating complications resulted in complex inquests.
- Suggested that the size of Addenbrooke's hospital mortuary should have been considered and increased to accommodate the increased numbers resulting from the Papworth Hospital move. Members were informed that Addenbrooke's hospital had always struggled because of the size of the mortuary, especially during the winter period, and that it did not have the capacity to provide the facilities. At the same time, local funeral directors had both the ability and the space to do so and therefore the Coroner arranged contracts to meet the service needs in terms of body storage.

- Established that the increases demonstrated in section 2.3 of the report were specific to Cambridgeshire but were also generally indicative of national trends, with coroners across the country noting an increased complexity and length to inquests.
- Acknowledged that the presence of three prisons within the jurisdiction placed an increased burden on the service, with every death requiring extensive investigation.
- Requested statistics that differentiated between male and female deaths. The Committee was informed that 32 cases relating to drugs and alcohol went to an inquest in 2018, of which 18 were male victims and 14 were female. It was also noted that there were 48 male suicides compared to 16 female suicides.
- Expressed concern over the backlog of cases and questioned whether the service was in need of additional resources. The Service Director of Community and Safety informed Members that an agreement had been made at a recent Joint Management Board meeting to provide additional funds over the following year, although it was stressed that any investment needed to be appropriate and conducive to an effective working relationship. Further information would be provided in the Finance Report being presented to the Committee on 5th September 2019. The Senior Coroner explained that backlogs were cyclical and as soon as one backlog case was cleared, another would develop. **Action required**
- Confirmed that the service was funded nationally and argued that the level of funding received by the Council had not kept pace with the increase in demand. It was acknowledged that the national funding formula did not reflect the specific demands faced by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and that it was important for the relevant sectors, such as Public Health, to lobby during the Government's ongoing review. **Action required**
- Sought further detail on how the service worked to prevent future deaths, as stated in section 3.1 of the report. The Senior Coroner informed Members that there were a large number of investigations across the whole system which often picked up on trends or anomalies in an attempt to reduce their likelihood. An example was given of the detection of high numbers of infant mortalities due to babies or toddlers sleeping with parents, which led to advice against the practice and a subsequent drop in the number of cases. Preventative measures could also be taken when established locations for committing suicide were identified, while deaths in medical institutions could lead to procedural changes or further training.
- Established that mental health workers provide statements during inquests, which could then lead to further reports. It was also acknowledged that data sharing attempted to prevent repeat cases and any concerns raised by coroners would be taken forward by the relevant organisations or bodies.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the work of the Coroner Service; and
- b) Support the service moving forward with increasingly complex workloads.

## 187. CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CAPITAL PROJECTS

As requested by Members at the meeting on 4th July 2019, the Committee was presented with a report that detailed the key capital projects within the Cultural and Community Services department. Cambridgeshire Archives and Sawston Community Hub were identified as the largest projects, while it was noted that most of the projects listed in the report would be completed by the end of the financial year (April 2020).

While discussing the report, Members:

- Requested a programme delivery timeline for open access facilities at libraries across the County. The Committee was informed that site surveys were currently establishing the particularities of each individual library building, including lighting, power supplies and access, in order to provide an analysis of what would be needed and how much it would cost. Soft market testing would be carried out in late August to learn from other library services' experiences. The larger, hub libraries were likely to be the first locations to have the facilities installed.
- Were informed that some other library services had opted to not provide open access facilities in libraries that were considered too complicated or expensive. One Member suggested that such libraries could extend their opening hours to provide similar, if not identical, benefits. The Assistant Director of Cultural and Community Services noted that the partnership being developed with Adult Learning and Skills would potentially lead to further use of library facilities and therefore benefit the business case in such situations. She informed Members that they would be provided with a list of all the libraries that would be adopting open access facilities once it had been established. **Action required**
- Sought clarification on when the library in Darwin Green would be opened and which facilities it would be providing. It was explained that the latest estimate was for it to open in 2023, although it was acknowledged that it was required to be completed in time for the 1000th occupation of the Darwin Green development. Advanced plans had already been established for the library, including the layout and artwork, and it was agreed to share this information with Members. **Action required**
- Requested an update on the British Library Business and Intellectual Property Centre. Members were informed that the centre had proved successful, with a large number of events and many people engaging, while it was also noted that the partnership allowed for the hosting of high standard exhibitions.
- Welcomed the continued investment in the library service.
- Sought clarification on an opening date for the Cambridgeshire Archives in Ely. The Assistant Director of Cultural and Community Services said that it was planned to be completed by December 2019, although it could only be considered complete when the documents were guaranteed to be stored in a safe and secure setting, and therefore a specific date could not be given. Members requested a site visit before it was opened, while the Chairman suggested that a Committee meeting could be held there once the building was complete. **Action required**
- Suggested that work being carried out by Civic in Fenland should extend further than Wisbech and should involve other Members from the area. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the information provided.

#### **188. COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS ORAL UPDATES**

The Committee noted brief oral updates provided by the following Councillors:

- Councillor Costello, who noted that Essentials by Sue would hopefully be opening in Sawtry in September. She informed Members that 'dementia-friendly towns' were being introduced across Huntingdonshire, including Ramsey. A meeting would be held in October to provide parish councils with the opportunity to contribute to the discussion surrounding the bus system and the Combined Authority's travel plan.
- Councillor French, who drew attention to the Golden Age fair that she had attended in Wisbech, informed Members that it encouraged elderly people to socialise, while also raising money for them and allowing them to meet representatives from relevant organisations and bodies, such as the fire service and care providers. She reported that the next fair was likely to be held in the March library in October.
- Councillor Richards, who reported that discussions were being held with Cambridge City Council to expand the provision of free sanitary provision to schools and community centres.

Councillor Every submitted a written update in her absence, which is attached to the minutes as **Appendix A**.

#### **189. COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN**

Acknowledging that all reserve dates would be taken up by Committee meetings and workshops due to the busy schedule, the Committee noted its Agenda Plan.

#### **190. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that the following report contained exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Parts 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and that it would not be in the public interest for this information to be disclosed: information relating to any individual, and information relating to the financial business or affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

## 191. CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULT LEARNING AND SKILLS

The Committee received a report that provided information relating to the key changes being made to the Cambridgeshire Adult Learning and Skills Service delivery plan for the new academic year. A service-wide review had been carried out, which although establishing that a good quality service was being provided, it identified that a large proportion of courses were non-credited learning. While not denying the importance of such courses, the national trend had been for their funding to move away from Government and local authorities. As the new provider of Adult Skills funding, the Combined Authority had proved more prescriptive in what could and could not be delivered. The four options considered – doing nothing, cease trading, redesigning the Service and merge with Peterborough – were outlined in section 2.9 of the report, along with the reasoning for the decision to redesign the Service. Members were informed that internal candidates for posts had been appointed and that further vacancies would be advertised following the Committee meeting, mostly targeted at tutors.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Welcomed the newly appointed Head of Service.
- Acknowledged that the final decision for establishing an arms-length service would be made by the Commercial and Investment Committee.
- Sought clarification on where the offer would be available across the County. Although the main hubs would be located in Ely and March, Members were informed that the service would be provided wherever it was needed. Investigations were currently being carried out with community partners to establish potential class sizes and available rooms and once venues were confirmed, Members would be informed of their locations. **Action required**
- Suggested that some courses that were classified as leisure or pleasure courses, such as lip-reading, developed important skills despite not leading to a formal qualification. It was also argued that they brought the community together, reducing homelessness and benefiting society on many levels. Members were informed that colleges had been widely involved in discussions and most had indicated that they would continue to provide such courses, either by increasing class sizes or costs to the student, or by establishing an alternative source for funding. It was noted that these courses were also used to embed core subjects, such as English or maths, in their curriculum whenever possible. Students were also encouraged to use the skills that they developed to create businesses from home, which in turn lead to economic development. The Local Authority would financially support the work carried out by charities, such as Wintercomfort, with up to 20% of funding being available for outsourcing.
- Observed that learners had been discouraged to attend courses due to having to travel to other towns, with residents of St Neots having to travel to Huntingdon in order to access the service. Studies had proven that people were generally unwilling to travel far for adult learning and therefore it was an important consideration. Members were encouraged to draw attention to any areas that suffered from such a lack of nearby service provision.

- Established that the main hub in March would be based in the community centre, although some programs would be run from the library, while two potential locations were under consideration for the hub in Ely. The Head of Service undertook to provide Members with information on the current situation regarding venues across the County. **Action required**
- Noted that a portion of funding had been reserved for funding projects, providing a further means of being able to target areas individually.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the changes in the delivery plan for the new academic year, which build on the outcomes of an internal review and the requirements of the new funding body;
- b) Request that the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Communities and Partnership Committee and the Service Director for Communities and Safety, carries out the final due diligence required prior to changing the organisational arrangements of the service, ensuring any residual risks to the Council are identified and mitigated; and
- c) Note that the final decision will be made by the Commercial and Investment Committee after due diligence has been completed.

Chairman  
10th October 2019