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Meeting	Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	23 April 2018
Present	Councillors Doughty (Chair), Cullwick (Vice-Chair), Mason, Pavlovic, Richardson, Taylor and Warters

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## **70. Declarations of Interest**

Members were asked to declare at this point in the meeting any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests, or any disclosable pecuniary interests that they had in respect of business on the agenda.

Cllr Pavlovic declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 3 (Homeless Strategy 2018-23), as he had carried out private work with homeless charities in York.

## **71. Public Participation**

It was reported that there had been two registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme, both in relation to Agenda Item 3 (Homeless Strategy 2018-2023).

Jon Littler, as an ex Probation Officer in York, expressed concern at the lack of provision for people on release from prison, for whom bed spaces could no longer be reserved in advance at the Peaseholme and Arclight hostels, and the potential adverse implications of this for public safety.

Gwen Vardigans highlighted the lack of affordable housing available generally in York. She asked if the council planned to lobby government to introduce changes that would allow secure and affordable renting to become the norm, as in other countries such as Germany, to help tackle this issue.

## **72. Homeless Strategy 2018-2023**

Members considered a report which invited them to comment on the content and implications of the draft Homeless Strategy for 2018-23 prior to its final publication. The Assistant Director for Housing and Community

Safety and the Service Manager, Housing Options & Support, were in attendance to present the report and answer questions.

The draft strategy, attached as Annex 1 to the report and entitled 'Preventing Homelessness Together', would replace the current 2013-18 strategy. It incorporated the recommendations in the motion agreed by Council on 26 October 2017 and subsequently considered by the Executive on 25 January 2018. The accompanying action plan, setting out detailed actions under five strategic aims, was attached as Annex 2. This report to Scrutiny was the final stage of an extensive consultation on the draft, which would next be signed off by the Homeless Strategy Executive Group before being taken to Executive.

During their debate, Members questioned Officers at length on various aspects of the strategy, and on matters raised under Public Participation. The responses may be summarised as follows:

- Issues around accommodation for those leaving prison were recognised within the strategy (strategic aim 4).
- With expanded provision at Peaseholme and Howe Hill, new provision due at James House hostel and new powers in the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, it was hoped the situation would improve.
- There was always a balance to be achieved between the needs of all homeless people and the resources available.
- The system could only work for those willing to engage with services, and some people were not ready to take on the responsibility of a tenancy.
- Efforts were made to address potential barriers to accepting hostel accommodation, including staff on duty, CCTV, and availability of female only provision, e.g. at Robinson Court.
- Officers could explore the idea of issuing a leaflet for the general public advising on support available for homeless people.
- Private accommodation was sourced via the council's own lettings agency, Yorhome, and a Private Sector Officer had been appointed for 12 months to work with landlords.
- The idea of creating a company to develop a private rented model similar to that used in Germany was being explored.
- York had been invited to bid for government funding allocated to addressing rough sleeping.
- Homelessness in York was not an 'imported' problem, as the council could only assist those with a connection to York.
- Relationship breakdown, a major cause of homelessness, was twice the national average in York and the Homeless Reduction Act provided an opportunity to address this.

- Exploring the use of student rooms as emergency accommodation was an action point in the plan (1.11).
- The homeless strategy was monitored via an annual report to the relevant Executive Member, but no overall evaluation report was produced.

Resolved: (i) That the contents of the report, and the additional information provided in response to questions at the meeting, be noted.

Reason: So that the committee is informed of and involved in the development of the Homeless Strategy and action plan, due for publication in summer 2018.

(ii) That Officers be requested to bring the Annual Report on the 2013-18 Homeless Strategy to the committee's next meeting in May.

Reason: To give Members an overview of the effectiveness of the strategy.

(iii) That the Scrutiny Officer be requested to contact the Assistant Director of Planning and Public Protection, seeking clarification of the council's planning powers in respect of student accommodation, and circulate the response to Members by email.

Reason: To determine whether it is worth exploring the possibility of using vacant student accommodation to help alleviate the problem of homelessness in the city.

### **73. Safer York Partnership Bi-Annual Report**

Members considered a report which outlined the work delivered through the Safer York Partnership (SYP) against the priorities within its Community Safety Strategy, as at the end of 2017-18.

Progress against each of the six priorities of: road and river safety, keeping the city centre safe, protecting people from harm, tackling anti-social behaviour, serious organised crime and tackling substance misuse was set out in paragraphs 3 to 22 of the report.

The Head of Community Safety was in attendance to present the report; she responded as follows to questions from Members:

- Although reports of anti-social behaviour by large groups had reduced by 79% over 5 years, it was recognised that this did not tally with public perception.
- Operation Erase aimed to address this issue, including the problems caused by stag and hen parties; the use of dispersal orders was one of the tools at their disposal.
- Consideration was also being given to the use of a Public Space Protection Order in the city centre.
- Water safety presentations to schools would continue in schools where they had already been initiated, as well as being rolled out to further schools.
- Universities and colleges were well engaged with the Prevent strategy and communicated directly with students' unions on this.
- With regard to anti-social behaviour outside the city centre, the focus was on liaison with neighbourhood policing teams and tackling issues at an early stage. Specific complaints should be raised with the police.
- The problem with criminals targeting the elderly was being tackled through serious organised crime work and liaison with other services, including Trading Standards and Adult Social Care.

Members commented that the report tended to focus on processes and they would like to see more detail on actions and outcomes in future reports.

Resolved: That the contents of the report and the additional information provided in response to questions at the meeting be noted, and that the committee support the council in delivering the strategic priorities contained within the Community Safety Strategy.

Reason: To confirm that the committee is aware of work that has been delivered through Safer York Partnership against the Community Safety Strategy.

#### **74. Work Plan**

Members considered the committee's work plan for the remainder of the 2017-18 municipal year.

Members also discussed a scrutiny topic registration / assessment form submitted by Cllr Pavlovic, seeking a scrutiny review of Commissioned Substance Misuse Services in York. The Director of Public Health was in attendance; she gave a brief update on work already in train in this area which would assist the review.

Resolved: (i) That the committee request a scoping report before deciding whether to undertake a scrutiny review of Commissioned Substance Misuse Services in York.

Reason: To look at the impact and outcomes of the substance misuse contracts and to consider the impact on service delivery of efficiency savings on the contracts.

(ii) That the work plan be approved, with the following additions:

- Meeting on 23 May 2018 – Annual Report on Homeless Strategy 2018-23.
- Meeting on 20 June 2018 – Scoping Report on the topic of Commissioned Substance Misuse Services in York.

Reason: To review and update the work plan.

Cllr P Doughty, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 8.08 pm].