

**STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 12 February 2019

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Jim Brown, John Mead and Simon Speller

**In Attendance:** Cllr M Downing (Chair – Environment & Economy Select Committee), Cllr M Mckay (Chair – Audit Committee) and Cllr J Thomas (Portfolio Holder – Housing, Health and Older People)

J Capon (SBC Sport and Wellbeing Manager), J McManus (HCC Director of Public Health), M Partridge (SBC Strategic Director), J Prescott (SLL Corporate Health and Wellbeing Manager) and S Tomlinson (Chief Executive Officer – Mind in Mid Herts)

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 8.15pm

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs L Harrington, S-J Potter and T Wren.

There were no declarations of interest.

**2 MINUTES - 24 JANUARY 2019**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Community Select Committee meeting held on 24 January 2019 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3 PUBLIC HEALTH DISCUSSION ITEM WITH HCC DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

The Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Director of Public Health presented the Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2018-2022 Progress Dashboard for 2018/19, NHS Long Term Plan Overview Report (released in January 2019) and NHS Long Term Plan (Opportunities and Challenges) Summary to the Committee. The dashboard indicated that the statistical position of Stevenage was significantly worse than that of other districts in the County in the following areas:

- Gap in life expectancy at birth between area and England as a whole (male and female)
- Excess weight in 10-11 year olds

- Obesity in 10-11 year olds
- Average number of portions of vegetables consumed daily (adults)
- Emergency admissions for injuries due to falls in people aged 65-79

The NHS long Term Plan Overview Report itemises the following commitments:

- A new service model for the 21st century
- More NHS action on prevention and health inequalities
- Further progress on care quality and outcomes
- Providing NHS staff the backing they need
- Digitally-enabled care to go mainstream across the NHS

Members were informed that the NHS plan attempts to be a system wide prevention plan and the report acknowledges that the NHS cannot deliver this on its own. The issues of long-term funding for Public Health and Social Care still remain unresolved. It was pointed out that the NHS had a mixed record on prevention. The NHS was struggling to cope with demand for services. The NHS will need the skills, experience and commitment of the County Council, District Councils and Voluntary Sector to deliver public health initiatives. In this regard, the Director of Public Health highlighted that by providing warmer homes across the town, SBC was contributing towards the reduction of cold weather related illnesses.

Members were informed that HCC will be making a case for more funding from the NHS. The Director of Public Health emphasised the need for collaborative working and more consultations among central government, NHS organisations and local authorities. The Director of Public Health suggested that SBC and other local authorities do more to hold the NHS to account. It was also suggested that the Council invites the Secretary of State for Health to Stevenage to get first-hand understanding of the town's health initiatives.

It was noted that mental health and learning disabilities did not appear to get much attention in the NHS Long Term Plan and the Healthy Stevenage Strategy. Mental health stigma was still an issue in some sections of society. The Committee welcomed the move away from the institutionalisation of significant numbers of mental health patients. However, there did not appear to be bespoke support provisions for the various mental health categories. Mental health services had been affected by cuts in health and social care funding. It was acknowledged that the Stevenage Health Strategy did not have initiatives to support all learning disability cases.

Members suggested that there should be a focus on building resilience into the health system rather than a reactive approach. Members sought clarification on the structure and funding for the Sustainability & Transformation Partnerships (STPs).

In response to a question, the Director of Public Health informed the Committee that mental health support was beginning to improve following the introduction of counsellor and mental health nurse working teams in schools. It was recommended that people with learning disabilities be more widely consulted on issues that affected them.

**Healthy Stevenage Update** - The SBC Health and Sport Strategy Manager provided an update on the Healthy Stevenage Strategy and the success of programmes delivered to date. Members were informed that the Strategy was launched in April 2018 by Stevenage Borough Council in collaboration with the Healthy Stevenage Partnership. A range of initiatives had been delivered through multiagency working using different funding streams. These initiatives were linked to cultural initiatives such as cycling. The key priorities for 2018 included the following:

- Reducing physical inactivity levels in adults and children
- Reducing obesity levels of adults and children
- Improving mental health and wellbeing for all
- Reducing the prevalence of smoking
- Promoting and enabling older people's independence
- Improving health promotion
- Partnership working with the NHS and Public Health

In response to questions, the Health and Sport Strategy Manager informed the Committee that:

- Residents enrolled on the Active Herts project through referrals
- The Active Herts project was fully funded in liaison with Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL)
- Learn to ride fees were set by the Cycling Hub and not prescribed by SBC
- There was no evidence to suggest that the cycling fees were outpricing potential participants
- The fees were based on a cost recovery basis and were not linked to class size
- Following a pilot cooking course, the Community Project team was using a targeted approach to enrol participants on future courses

It was suggested that the drop in smoking prevalence could be attributed to the increase in the uptake of vaping, clampdown on illicit tobacco products and a drop in the number of pregnant smokers. There was research evidence supporting the view that vaping was more effective in assisting smokers to quit than other products.

The Committee commended the Council for receiving the Excellence in Public Health Award and its selection by the LGA to feature as a case study in the 2019 Public Health Annual Report. Members were informed that Stevenage had also been featured in the District Councils Network Report. It was noted that it was unusual for a District Council such as Stevenage to be featured in the Public Health Annual Report.

**Diabetes** - In the absence of the diabetes/diet expert, the Chair narrated her health experiences before and after her diabetes diagnosis in August 2018. The Chair told the Committee that she was made aware of her pre-diabetic condition about 20 years ago. Since then, she has noticed a general lack of understanding of diabetes and vast disparity of knowledge particularly among health professionals. Due to the lack of readily available information on diet and lifestyle for diabetic patients, the Chair ended up relying on self-help books. The Chair managed to lose weight after making lifestyle changes and following a recommended diet regime for diabetes

patients. The NHS enrolled the Chair onto the X-PERT Diabetes course that helps diabetes patients to identify their own health risks and to set their own goals. She waited three months to go on the HCC-funded course. The funding for this course has now stopped and in its place they intend to roll out the DESMOND Course. The benefits of the group learning course include the following:

- Understanding the condition of diabetes including complications
- Details of food substitutes
- Illustrations of ingredients and food dishes
- Guidance on portion size
- Understanding food labelling

The Chair contrasted the weekend course with the four hour DESMOND NHS training course for people with type 2 diabetes. Personal accounts appeared to indicate that the DESMOND course was not as beneficial as the X-PERT Diabetes Course. The X-PERT and DESMOND courses were previously funded by the NHS via the County Council.

It was noted that there were probably a lot more people in Stevenage who had pre-diabetic conditions or had diabetes but who were not getting necessary support at early stages. The Chair pointed out that there will be a number of people who have Type 2 Diabetes who are unaware that they have the condition and that these people are at immediate significant risk of heart attack and stroke. The premature heart attacks and stroke figures contained on the Health report may well be due to Type 2 Diabetes. Members also noted that it appeared some health care decisions were primarily based on funding implications rather than clinical considerations.

The Chair made a plea to HCC and other organisations represented at the meeting to campaign for X-PERT Diabetes Course funding for Stevenage. The Chair also recommended the following:

- Public Health campaign in Stevenage featuring diabetes
- Diabetes Awareness Strategy and publicity campaign
- SBC gets more involved in encouraging residents to adopt healthy lifestyles

The Chair emphasized the importance of lifestyle change as a means of reducing the prevalence of Type 2 diabetes.

The Director for Public Health acknowledged that more diabetes patients benefitted from the six week X-PERT than the DESMOND course. The Director made an undertaking to:

- Check funding options for diabetes patients
- Find out the reasons for the discontinuation of the X-PERT course in preference to the DESMOND course
- Assess the feasibility of re-introducing the X-PERT course to diabetes patients in Stevenage
- Collaborate with SBC in designing the diabetes awareness campaign

The SLL Corporate Health and Wellbeing Manager informed the Committee that SLL

will consider allocating part of the recently secured Lottery funding to the proposed Stevenage diabetes campaign. SLL was in consultations with Diabetes UK on a project to introduce a campaign bus in Stevenage.

Members noted the following:

- Due to funding limitations, public health was not always a high priority for health providers
- Health and social care providers were likely to deliver more benefits to communities by targeting a few initiatives
- Those at risk or suffering from diabetes will make healthier food choices if the food industry used the same “traffic light type” food labelling system on the front of food products
- Delays in diagnosis resulted in an escalation in cost of treatment

**Mental Health** – The Committee received an update on mental health issues for Stevenage. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Mind in Mid Herts - a voluntary organisations specialising in mental health - informed Members that Mind in Mid Herts used a collaborative and holistic approach to promoting mental wellbeing. One of the organisation’s objectives was to tackle stigma associated with mental health. The CEO highlighted the organisation’s funding constraints and general funding problems faced by third sector organisation. The CEO expressed gratitude for the subsidised rent arrangement with SBC. Members were informed that the third sector played a vital role of augmenting the main health service providers and offering choices to patients. It was acknowledged that in some cases, third sector organisations produced better clinical results than the public sector at a cheaper cost. It was noted that the NHS spent less than local authorities on services such as drug and alcohol treatment.

The Committee noted the funding challenges faces by voluntary organisations. It was suggested that third sector organisation maximise opportunities to collaborate with the NHS, local authorities and other health and social care providers. Members acknowledged the growing mental health cases among young people.

In response to issues regarding funding for voluntary organisations, the Director of Public Health highlighted current initiatives that were aimed at streamlining health service delivery. Plans were in place to create locality health forums and to have one such forum per district. It was pointed out the need for local authorities to play a bigger role in the allocation of NHS funds. It was stated that Members should be empowered to hold NHS organisations to account. It was suggested that there could be an overall improvement in health of residents if the NHS spent less on acute care and more on locality needs. The Director of Public Health recommended that local authorities adopt a co-ordinated approach in negotiations for health and social care funding.

The Strategic Director informed Members that the Council was working collaboratively with health care partners in the region. The partnership was focussed on delivering key objectives such as reducing child obesity. The partnership was progressing towards the goal of having one health forum per district. The Strategic Director indicated that it was vital for local authorities to be consulted on proposed

savings related to the Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) initiative.

**Stevenage Healthy Hub** – The SLL Corporate Health and Wellbeing Manager provided an update on the Healthy Hub. The Manager highlighted the following:

- 14,200 visitors to the Hub as of the end of January 2019
- 813 exercise referrals
- 534 walk in/advice only visits
- More than 12,600 partner's appointments
- About 300 visitors were signposted rather than referred to partner organisations such as Mind in Herts
- Focus on spreading the prevention message
- Finalist in the WOW! Awards after an intervention by a member of staff prevented a member of the community from taking his own life
- Plans to launch a Diabetes awareness group
- Plans to launch a health awareness publicity bus for Stevenage

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the NHS Long Term Plan Report is noted
2. That the update on Healthy Stevenage Strategy is noted
3. That the Hertfordshire County Council Director of Public Health provides an update on funding for diabetes courses
4. That the Hertfordshire County Council Director of Public Health provides an update on arrangements for the Sustainability & Transformation Partnerships
5. That the Portfolio Holder (Housing, Health and Older People) liaises with HCC regarding funding for diabetes awareness training
6. That the SBC Health and Sport Strategy Manager provides statistics on the uptake of cycling courses and learn to ride fees from the Cycle Hub

#### 4 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

#### 5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

#### 6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

#### **CHAIR**