

SCRUTINY COMMISSION 3
HEALTH AND CARE

Minutes of a meeting of Scrutiny Commission 3 held on Wednesday,
5 November 2008 at 6.00 p.m. at the Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT - Councillors D.R.W. White (Chairman), J.A. Dixon, G.P. Hossell, C.N. Mason, A. McClements, H. Williams and D. Wright

Mrs A Cox and Ms D. Davis (Co-optees).

Also Present – Ms. C. Woodward (Director of Health Improvement – Telford & Wrekin Primary Care Trust), Ms S Adams (Head of Health Inequalities & Health Promotion – Telford & Wrekin Primary Care Trust).

Officers – R. Webb (Corporate Director: Adult & Consumer Care), J. Rowe (Head of Leisure & Culture), S. Tyas (Healthy Schools & Parenting Manager), A. Smith (Scrutiny Manager) and P. Smith (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

SC3-18 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 7 October 2008 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

SC3-19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor V.A. Fletcher and Mrs V. Lindley & Mr D. Saunders (Co-optees)

SC3-20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

None

SC3-21 OBESITY – RISING TO THE CHALLENGE IN TELFORD & WREKIN

Obesity had been identified as a particular health issue in Telford & Wrekin, and Members received a series of presentations that set out the work that the Council and Telford & Wrekin Primary Care Trust were leading in tackling obesity issues in the Borough. A copy of the Telford & Wrekin Obesity Strategy was attached to the agenda.

Catherine Woodward firstly set out the national and strategic context which had led to obesity becoming one of the biggest challenges to health. Some of the issues could only be tackled at a national level, and since 2004 there had been a series of Government strategy and policy documents which reflected the increased priority being given to reversing current trends. For example, the National Childhood Measurement Programme, established in 2005, gave detailed information on the body mass index of all Reception and Year 6 children. Locally, the results showed that for most measures Telford & Wrekin had a greater percentage of overweight and obese children than the average for England. A number of targets were in place to

reduce obesity in children & young people – however, it needed to be acknowledged that the situation could not be turned around overnight. A realistic short-term aim would be to reduce the percentage of overweight and obese children by 1 or 2 points. The Telford & Wrekin Obesity Strategy had been in place since 2006, and there had been significant success with the programmes in place to help the most seriously obese adults lose weight. The Strategy was due to be reviewed and updated in 2009.

Sarita Adams then gave a presentation about some of the work that had been undertaken to tackle obesity. Prior to 2004 the number of overweight and obese people in the Borough was recognised as an issue, but there was not a lot of money available for this work. The focus had therefore been on low cost partnerships close to or within areas of multiple deprivation – for example, working with Leisure Centres to promote healthy activities. Since 2004, obesity had become a national health priority, with an increase in Government strategies and guidance. At a local level, this had meant additional resources could be targeted on this issue, which was reflected in the development of programmes to help people lose weight. For adults, this included the “Why Weight” free sessions and the “Why Weight Plus” programme, which had the capacity to see 1800 patients a year. Outcomes were positive, with around a 5% average reduction in people’s Body Mass Index (BMI) after 12 months. For young people, the YW8 project had evolved since 2004, to the point where it was now being mainstreamed and rolled out to the Borough Clusters. It was targeted at the 8 to 13 years age-group, and consisted of a 12 week family based programme to increase knowledge of nutrition and balanced diet, and to encourage healthy lifestyles and opportunities to exercise. The most recent results for the project were very positive, with 85.4% of participating children having an improved BMI along with evidence of improved quality of diet and increased levels of physical activity. There were also improvements in the BMI of the children’s parents.

Jonathan Rowe outlined the work going on to improve levels of physical activity in the Borough. Promoting healthy and active lifestyles was now very much a local authority issue, with a Local Area Agreement target to increase adult participation in 3 x 30 minutes of exercise a day from 20.6% (which was below the national average) to 24%. For children & young people, there was a major step change locally to increase the provision of sports and exercise in schools. Results had been dramatic, with 92% of pupils getting at least 2 hours of physical activity per week. There were a number of organisations and partners that had a role in encouraging participation in physical activity and providing funding, and they were represented on the Telford & Wrekin Physical Activity and Sport Board. Examples given of the facilities/initiatives in the Borough included the “Lets Get Physical” campaign, free swimming for over 60s, Tennis in Parks, and the “Whole Life” fitness facilities at Leisure Centres. Further work on key priorities was planned in order to help achieve participation targets, including targeting of particular groups who currently did not regularly undertake physical exercise, school and club development, further development of facilities, and promoting a healthy workforce within the Council.

In the final presentation, Sally Tyas reported on improving nutrition in schools, in particular through the National Healthy Schools Programme. This Programme linked closely to many of the issues discussed earlier, and had four connecting themes – Personal Social and Health Education, Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Emotional Health & Well-Being. In terms of Healthy Eating, all schools were working

towards the published Standard, with 56% having achieved it. 28 schools had recently achieved the Gold/Platinum Healthy Eating Award, and there were various initiatives to encourage participation and awareness in healthy food choices and in healthy cooking. Information was provided on the School Meals Service, and the work that had been done to reduce the use of processed foods and food additives, increase the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables, and to use local food suppliers wherever possible. It was important that children and young people were involved in this process, and over the last 18 months Schools Councils had been involved in menu compilation, food tasting sessions and surveys on school meals. All primary school menus had been nutritionally analysed, and complied with the Government Food Standards.

Following the presentations, Members made a number of comments and asked a variety of questions, including:

- were parents told if their children were diagnosed as obese?

Response: Government policy had changed so that parents were now told, and guidance was provided at various stages of the process.

- After an initial weight loss programme, was monitoring continued over a longer period to provide evidence as to whether any reduction in weight was maintained?

Response: There was some tracking of clients in the medium and longer term, although some of the evidence was not always of a high quality. The service was intended to be “for life”, in contrast to some of the short-term programmes operated in the commercial sector.

- What work was being done with pre-school children?

Response: This was an important issue, as many children were already overweight before they started school. Guidance about healthy eating and the importance of exercise etc were provided to all early years settings. Preventative work also needed to be done with prospective mothers in terms of reducing the risk of overweight babies, through encouraging better diet during pregnancy and breast feeding.

- Was the Body Mass Index (BMI) a reliable measure of obesity?

Response – There was some debate and controversy about this, and it was likely that, for adults, waist measurement would become an additional factor in measuring obesity. For children and young people, the National Childhood Measurement Programme was a significant step forward in quantifying the scale of the problem.

- Could work to encourage healthy eating be undermined by the current economic downturn, which might lead people to choose cheaper, less nutritious food?

Response – It was accepted this was a danger for low income families, and needed to be monitored. However, there was a Community Food Project that worked with targeted groups/people to raise awareness of low cost healthy alternatives..

– how was the “Why Weight” programme accessed and publicised?

Response – To access the sessions, it was not necessary to have a referral. However, healthcare professionals were able to refer patients to the programme, and all GPs had been provided with packs containing guidance on dealing with all forms

of obesity, and the services/facilities available. Various methods were used to publicise the availability of the “Why Weight” and other schemes.

Members suggested that the Council’s “Insight” magazine and local parish magazines could be used to publicise these services. It was also suggested that perhaps Members could be invited to take part in these activities, which might help to provide further publicity.

- For participants on the “Why Weight” programme, was any work done in identifying possible underlying causes to a weight problem?

Response – if the person had been referred by a healthcare professional, there would be some case history provided. But, in any event, Programme staff were trained to work with clients to bring out any issues that might be a factor in their weight problem.

- What work was being done to encourage children and parents to walk to school?

Response – it was agreed that walking to school had many benefits, and a programme to develop this was currently being examined. **Catherine Woodward also suggested that this could be an area that Scrutiny might wish to look at in future.**

- To what extent were school sports and leisure facilities available for public use?

Response – in terms of the Council’s leisure centres, the conflicts between schools and community use during the day had largely been resolved. **Catherine Woodward referred to the role that Extended Schools could play in access to physical activity, and this could be another area that Scrutiny might wish to look at in future.**

- How were the free swimming sessions funded?

Response – historically, free swimming for over 60s had been provided by the Council. Money was now coming down from Government over the next two years to provide free swimming for those aged 16 and under and those aged over 60. As the Council already funded free swimming for the over 60s, it was intended to use the balance of the government funding to extend provision to other groups.

In conclusion, Catherine Woodward and Sarita Adams reported that progress on many of the initiatives that had been talked about was tracked in the Action Plan that sat alongside the Obesity Strategy. Some of the information in the Strategy was now out-of-date, and a new Strategy would be developed next year.

Members were encouraged by the wide range of work taking place across agencies/organisations, and the progress that was being made in tackling obesity in both children & young people and in adult groups.

SC3-22 APPOINTMENT OF LINK CO-OPTEE

The Scrutiny Manager reported that the Telford & Wrekin Local Involvement Network (LINK), as the successor to the local Public and Patient Involvement Forum, was entitled to nominate one of its members as a co-optee to the Health & Care

Commission. The LINK Management Group had recently nominated Val Lindley to this role.

RESOLVED - that the appointment for a two year term of Val Lindley as the LINK co-optee for scrutiny of health and adult social care services be endorsed.

SC3-23 CHAIRMAN’S UPDATE

Further to the update at the last meeting on the Development of a Health and Health Care Strategy for Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, the Joint TWC/SCC Health Scrutiny Committee would meet on 10 November 2008 to get further information from the Project Director and Chief Executives of the two Primary Care Trusts on the likely outcomes in relation to the possible re-configuration of services. The Chairman advised that, in order to keep all members of the Commission informed, he had asked for an informal meeting to be arranged so that all members could be briefed on the outcome of the Joint Committee meeting.

SC3-24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Commission was scheduled for 6.00pm on Wednesday, 26th November 2008.

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The meeting closed at 8.00pm

Chairman.....

Date.....