

Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee

A meeting of Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee was held on Tuesday, 17th February, 2009.

Present: Cllr Mick Stoker (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Aidan Cockerill, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher

Officers: P. Smith (CESC), J. Trainer, N. Hart, C. Lunn (LD)

Also in attendance: Mrs C Clark

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Andrew Larkin, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Roy Rix, Cllr Mick Womphrey, Mrs T. Fraser

CAS 47/08 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

CAS 48/08 Minutes of the meetings held on 30th October 2008 and 18th November 2008

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meetings held on 30th October 2008 and 18th November 2008 were signed as a correct record.

CAS 49/08 Minutes of the meeting held on 6th January 2009

Members considered the draft minutes of the meeting held on 6th January 2009.

An amendment request regarding 'Also in attendance' was made - Mrs C. Clark was present at the meeting and wished to be added to the attendance list.

CONCLUDED that, subject to the amendment outlined above, the minutes be approved and forwarded to Council.

CAS 50/08 Scrutiny Review of Older People's Strategy

- **To review summary of evidence and formulate draft recommendations**
- **Summary of MORI feedback on older people's issues**
- **Progress against older people's action plan**

The Committee received the following papers in relation to the Scrutiny Review of Older People's Strategy:-

- Summary of Evidence
- Summary of MORI feedback on older people's issues
- Progress against older people's action plan;

and formulated draft recommendations in respect of evidence received during the course of the review.

Regarding the Summary of Evidence report; the main points arising were as follows:-

- 'No Cold Calling Zones' - Members raised concern as to the reliance solely upon website-based information, as older residents may lack the skills or knowledge required to utilise these resources. The Committee discussed IT courses for older people that were not necessarily qualification based, as well as internet access in local libraries. Members agreed that consideration should be given to identifying what provision was available to meet these needs. It was noted from the results of the MORI survey that residents in both the 50+ and 65+ age groups obtained most of their information about the Council from 'Stockton News'; and therefore the Committee discussed the potential of publishing information within this publication. Members felt that publicity was fundamental to the success of the 'no cold calling zones' scheme, and raised the need for all front-line personnel such as PCSOs, carers and Tristar Officers to inform residents about it.

- 'Beware the Bogeyman/Doorsteppers' campaign - The Committee was informed that volunteers were in the process of being recruited to promote this to residents.

Members discussed the importance of inter-generational activity in enhancing community safety; and the possibility of undertaking community projects in respect of this.

It was noted that discussion surrounding play issues (i.e. parks and equipment), which demonstrated a link between older and younger people, had already commenced between CESC and Children's representatives.

- 'Handyperson service' - Details of the service were available on Stockton Borough Council's website. However, in order to promote the scheme further, the utilisation of external bodies, such as a link on the Help the Aged website, would be advantageous. Members discussed the possibility of publishing short articles detailing the service in local and national publications. Members queried how well the service would cope with a sudden uptake in 'handyperson' requests. P. Smith informed the Committee that this would be monitored by Broadacres Home Improvement Agency, though an indication as to the levels of business would be offered at a future Committee meeting.

- 'Cultural Services' - Members discussed budget restrictions in turning ideas into reality, as well as the impact of cultural service demand on future strategy. Cllr. Mrs Fletcher provided the Committee with handouts displaying various photographs of an older people's exercise area, taken whilst on a recent holiday, which was located next to a Children's play area, and provided various themes/exercises for older people to become involved in. The Committee discussed the potential of this idea, and agreed that it would be a positive area to explore. Cllr Stoker informed Members that developments were being undertaken at John Whitehead Park and Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park, and offered to investigate this idea in relation to these.

With regards to Tees Active and the various trails and walks available for residents to explore, the Committee agreed that officers would be invited to a future meeting to discuss these.

- 'Tees Active' - The Committee was informed that free swimming for the over 60's from 1st April 2009 was fully supported. It was noted that Splash was a very well used and attended leisure centre; in relation to this, Mrs. Clark queried the location of disabled parking bays. Members discussed this issue, as the

exact location of disabled parking bays was a topic that related to various matters.

- 'Housing & Neighbourhood Partnership' - The Committee discussed various points relating to the evidence received from the Housing & Neighbourhood Partnership:-

- In terms of the recommendation that consideration be given to the need for an elected member to be appointed as the Council's Older Persons Champion to provide a focal point for contact regarding Older People issues, Members discussed the benefits of having an Older Persons Champion; it was felt that this would help bring organisations together.

- Members raised concerns over the financial implications of undertaking essential home improvements - e.g. guttering. It was noted that some agencies encourage people to secure loans in order to finance improvement/essential works, which would not suit everybody. Members discussed the potential of utilising equity within the home to fund works; P. Smith informed that he would contact external organisations in order to research statistics surrounding loan and equity uptake.

- Regarding the service for claiming pension credit, housing benefit and/or council tax benefit over the telephone, Members queried the possibility of feedback in terms of uptake; it was noted that this would be provided at a future meeting. Members discussed the issue of benefits in certain wards, and that people are not always aware of their eligibility for benefits.

- 'Northern Housing Consortium' - Members received feedback from the Northern Housing Consortium Consultation Event. Members discussed the issues surrounding the sale of houses in order to secure more appropriate accommodation; the current economic climate was imposing barriers upon this. It was recommended that this issue be added to the Consortium update.

- 'Visit to Bunny Hill' - The Committee was provided with the summary of evidence relating to the 'one stop shop' approach available to Older People at Bunny Hill. Members also considered the development of the Access to Services model being implemented in Thornaby, which included services such as: Council tax, a cash office and referral to additional Council services. Members queried if something similar would be provided to the residents of Billingham; it was noted that the approach would be replicated; however exact details had not been confirmed.

The Committee discussed the facilities which would be available at the Access to Services centres, and also the transportation issues surrounding their development. The Committee considered local community transport, and Members queried the cost of Dial-A-Ride to users. This issue was expected to feature as a possible scrutiny topic for review during 2009/2010.

- 'Employment Issues' - The Committee considered the need of supporting older people into employment and enterprise; the topic of volunteering was given particular attention. Members discussed the importance of utilising employment-gained skills to benefit others; and were informed that potential volunteering agencies were being sought.

- 'Health & Well Being Partnership' - Members raised concern that health & well-being services ought to be needs-orientated; the Committee discussed the

demand for this.

Regarding the difficulty that patients/carers face in having to approach a number of organisations for access to health & well-being services, Members suggested potential development of a 'travel agency with a journey into later life'. This would amalgamate all of the services together, thus heavily facilitating accessibility for users.

- 'Consultation with Help the Aged' - The Committee was informed that opportunities for joint working would increase via the improvement of consultation and information-sharing between organisations.

Members discussed the notion of a 'pop-in' centre in Stockton, which would allow increased opportunity for older people to socialise with others and gain information about topics of interest.

Members were directed to the results of the MORI survey and informed that certain key factors affecting quality of life, such as Improved services for elderly/disabled people and improved maintenance of footpaths, were of equal importance to residents aged both 50+, and 65+.

CONCLUDED that the Committee's final report be drafted for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

CAS 51/08 Progress updates on previously agreed recommendations.

- papers to follow

The Committee provided with progress updates on previously agreed recommendations.

Regarding the Meeting Venues Review, members enquired about the issue of access permits allowing taxis to 'drop off' and collect passengers attending the Town Hall. It was unclear as to take up, and how much it cost to issue them. In relation to the Consultation Review, members expressed concern about some recent consultation exercises and questioned the robustness of post consultation feedback. The Team Leader-Scrutiny informed members that, in order to discuss these issues, she would invite the officers responsible for the initial report to the next Committee meeting.

CONCLUDED that the progress update reports be noted.

CAS 52/08 Work Programme

- To prepare questions for witnesses attending the next meeting**
- To review the project plan in respect of the current review**
- To discuss ideas for future review topics**

Members considered the work programme, and discussed ideas for draft recommendations and future review topics.

CONCLUDED that:-

1. The work programme be noted.

2. The next meeting would be 7th April 2009.