

People Select Committee

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday, 26th April, 2021.

Present: Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Chair), Mrs Jean O'Donnell (Vice Chair), Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Barry Woodhouse, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Louise Baldock.

Officers: James Burrell, Jane Webb (HR, L&C); Gary Knight (FD&BS); Stephanie Landles (A&H); Peter Bell, Rebecca Saunders-Thompson, (MD).

Also in attendance: Peter Akers (North Star Housing); Nick Warden (Accent Housing); Karen Gardner (North East Ambulance Service); Gareth Aungiers (Xentrall).

Apologies: None.

PEO 34/20 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

PEO 35/20 **Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2021**

Consideration was given to the minutes from the meeting held on 1 March 2021.

AGREED that the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PEO 36/20 **Monitoring Previously Agreed Recommendations - Action Plan - Scrutiny Review of Public Consultation**

Members were presented with the Action Plan setting out how the agreed recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Public Consultation would be implemented and target dates for completion.

Members thanked officers for their work on the review.

AGREED that:

- 1) the Action Plan be approved.
- 2) a progress update will be provided to the Committee in approximately 12 months.

PEO 37/20 **Scrutiny Review of Carbon Monoxide Awareness**

This was the second evidence session. Members were presented with a summary of evidence which included information received in the previous session and further evidence to be discussed during this session.

As the review topic proposer, Cllr Louise Baldock was invited to speak about her personal experiences of carbon monoxide poisoning and raising awareness on this issue. Cllr Baldock highlighted the key lines of enquiry which had featured in her original suggestion and had been covered through this review:

- What work do we do to encourage people to have CO detectors in their homes?
- Do we participate in CO awareness month each year?
- What do our partners in RSLs do? For instance, do their operatives carry detectors when they go into tenants' homes for instance?
- Do our ambulance staff routinely check patients who have a rosy complexion when they pick them up?
- Do we encourage our RSL and private landlords to install COs in all their properties?
- Is our fire service giving out detectors?
- Is there more we can do?

Members agreed that carbon monoxide poisoning was a serious issue and thanked Cllr Baldock for speaking to the Committee and for suggesting this topic.

Members questioned whether a universal price for carbon monoxide detectors could be introduced to ensure that more people were protected.

Members suggested that legislation should be passed to ensure that carbon monoxide alarms were fitted in all properties for gas appliances as well as solid fuel burning appliances.

Members suggested that a feature in Stockton News could focus on carbon monoxide poisoning awareness to prevent further casualties. Information on carbon monoxide awareness could also be included at SBC Home Safety events.

Members suggested that carbon monoxide alarms should be installed in all forms of holiday home, including caravans.

The increase in wood burning appliances in households and holiday homes was also raised as a concern.

'Mini-detectors' which could be placed on a person's clothing, such as a belt, were available to purchase. Members suggested that these detectors could be provided to staff and contractors when entering residential properties as part of their work.

Members suggested that members of the public could be encouraged to take their own carbon monoxide alarms away with them on holiday as a safety measure.

Members suggested that registered carers could take carbon monoxide alarms into the homes of older residents.

Members suggested that correspondence should be sent to local MPs about this issue and to encourage MPs to raise this issue in the Commons.

Karen Gardner, from North East Ambulance Service (NEAS), spoke to the Committee and answered Members' questions.

The main issues were as follows:

- NEAS did not routinely carry probes in ambulances to measure for carbon monoxide poisoning as staff were normally called to incidents once a person had become seriously unwell. However, routine tests carried out on patients would uncover if an individual was suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Staff were trained to recognise the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning and to be aware that an individual may be suffering from the non-specific symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- The increase in the installation of smoke detectors across all types of properties and buildings had resulted in a decrease in casualties. Legislation to also make carbon monoxide a standard requirement could also have the same effect.

Peter Akers, from North Star Housing, spoke to the Committee and answered Members' questions.

The main issues were as follows:

- North Star ensured that contractors always talked to tenants about carbon monoxide alarms and what to do if an alarm sounded.
- North Star were looking into obtaining 'mini-detectors' for their contractors and staff entering tenant properties.
- Increasing awareness of carbon monoxide poisoning would be promoted via social media and the company website.

Nick Warden, from Accent Housing, spoke to the Committee and answered Members' questions.

The main issues were as follows:

- Accent Housing was regulated in a similar way to North Star Housing and followed the same procedures as shown in the summary of evidence document.
- Accent were currently considering the possibility of hardwiring carbon monoxide alarms in properties to prevent alarms from being moved from rooms or placed in unsuitable areas. Staff informed tenants of the importance of keeping alarms where they were supposed to be so they could detect carbon monoxide effectively.

Gary Knight and Stephanie Landles, SBC Officers, spoke to the Committee and answered Members' questions.

The main issues were as follows:

- Officers reiterated that they provided information to landlords and work within the current legislation, as mentioned in the previous session.
- Looking after staff as well as residents was also a priority and consideration would be given to the purchasing of 'mini-detectors' to prevent exposure in potentially dangerous properties.

Apologies from Thirteen Housing Group were noted. Written evidence had, however, been submitted.

Members thanked SBC officers and external speakers for attending the meeting

and for their contributions.

AGREED that:

- 1) the evidence is noted.
- 2) a final report be drafted for consideration by the Select Committee incorporating recommendations from Member discussions.

**PEO
38/20** **Work Programme 2021-22**

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

The next meeting of the People Select Committee would take place on 24 May 2021.

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.

**PEO
39/20** **Chair's Update**

The Chair had nothing to update.