

PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday 2 September 2024.

Present: Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Chair), Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Hugo Stratton and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Sam Dixon, Krisan Saltikov (AHW), Chris Donnison (CESC) and Michelle Gunn (CS).

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr John Gardner and Cllr Eileen Johnson.

PEO/23/24 Evacuation Procedure

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedure.

PEO/24/24 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

PEO/25/24 Minutes

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PEO/26/24 Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant

The Committee received a presentation from the Occupational Therapy (OT) Team Manager. The presentation covered:

- SBC OT Service overview and missions statement
- Legal Duties
- OT provisions and process
- The impact on health and wellbeing and measuring success
- Effects of long waiting lists and non-provision, including the financial impact
- Demand on service

Key issues discussed included:

- The OT assessments mainly took place in a person's home, although they could take place in residential care setting, day care settings and local prison too.
- Comparisons from before and after the person came to the OT service were made to measure the impact of OT interventions on their personalised outcomes.
- Reduction in the cost of the care package was being achieved by in-depth review of such care packages by the OT assessor. However, the main objective of undertaking a review of the care package was to make this personalised and less intrusive e.g. tailored to the individual.

- The OT service worked with Tees Valley Home Finder and Registered Housing Providers to ensure those on the housing register were applying for housing that met their needs. A long term implication of non or delay in provision of DFG's included the need for re-housing and the shortage of housing and difficulty in finding suitable properties for a persons need was noted.
- Members questioned whether, following an extension built via DFG, a person could apply again for another DFG if their family expanded, or they moved properties. Officers explained that the design of extensions and/or adaptations had to meet the need of the person and they could apply again if their needs changed.
- It was questioned whether arrangements were in place to return small items people may require on short term basis such as crutches, and while this was not the responsibility of officers at the meeting they were aware that there was a system in place for returning these.
- Discussion took place regarding the design of new housing and ensuring that these were built to meet the needs of older people, which would ensure they did not require as many adaptations in future. It was noted that this would be a planning issue and changes would have to be made with the planning process. However, there were regulations regarding the placing of plug sockets and door widths.
- It was noted that the OT would put short term measures in place immediately to assist the person while there were awaiting a DFG.
- Members questioned the reason for the increase in demand for OT services and informed that the team had improved how they promoted their services and became more accessible. Additionally, they had built good working relationships with Tees Valley Homefinder, Thirteen, and care services therefore received more referrals.
- The financial impact for waiting for adaptation was noted, and Officers explained that the cost for a day in hospital was approximate. It was questioned why someone would spend one day in hospital and explained that this would be an extra day stay in hospital which may be caused by a delay in discharge due to the adaptations needed not being in place.

The Committee also received a presentation from the Building Service Manager. The presentation covered:

- Team overview
- Number of DFGs completed and cost from 2020-2021 – to date
- Process overview
- Average timeline
- Customer journey and communication with the customer
- Impact of fast track applications
- Feedback and aftercare
- Appointing contractors and supply/purchasing of adaptations/stock
- Challenges

Key issues discussed included:

- The team installed three wet rooms a week, which took five days each. Between April - September 2024 they had carried out 63 wet rooms. The client was given plenty of notice so that they could arrange alternative washing facilities or accommodation while the work was being carried out. No works were carried out for a three week period over Christmas, as they found that clients did not want them in their homes over the Christmas period and this

gave staff the opportunity for a break. The team were operating with less staff than previously, and this had an affect on how many wet rooms they could install due to staff holidays and sickness. It was explained that it was a very skilled team and therefore the manager could not task operatives from other areas to assist. This then impacted on the waiting list. It was questioned what the multi-skilled operatives base trade was, and officers informed that the base trade was plumbing, however they were trained in several other trades but not electrics.

- Members questioned how often bulk buy suppliers were reviewed and where informed that this was carried out every three months. This allowed for officers to create good professional relationships with suppliers which also helped to drive down costs. Storage for bulk purchasing was also discussed, and the impact of fast track applications on this, with members questioning if more storage could be found if needed. There was storage for 4 weeks' worth of stock and the service only bulk purchased items that did not deteriorate quickly. Certain items also changed dependent on the need of the client therefore these were purchased in smaller numbers.
- Registered Housing Providers were raised, and it was explained that their tenants had the same rights to access the funding as non-RP tenants. It was noted that Thirteen used to have their own inhouse service but no longer operated this and referred their to tenants SBC's DFG service. Officers suggested the reasons for this included the good quality SBC provided along with claiming they did not have the funding. Approximately 50% of the properties the team carried out works on were private properties and 50% Registered Housing Provider properties. Officers also noted that Thirteen made contributions toward some adaptations needed in their properties, but not all.
- Asbestos surveys, which delayed when the works could be carried out, were raised with members questioning if they checked every home for this. The officer informed that if they were carrying out intrusive work on a home built prior to 1999 they would check it for asbestos. They would carry out scrapes as part of the pre-work, which included checking where wiring and pipes were needed, ready for the asbestos report. Thirteen carried out their own asbestos reports but there were no issues with the waiting time for those surveys.

In addition, the link officer noted that the current wait for a DFG was 135 days, and it was taking 143 days to complete on a DFG, which was under the government target of 150 days.

AGREED that the information be noted.

PEO/27/24 Chair's Update and Select Committee work Programme 2024-2025

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

The next meeting would be held on Monday 7 October 2024.

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.