

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting of People Scrutiny Committee

Date: Tuesday, 13th October, 2020

Place: Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor L Salter (Chair)
Councillors N Folkard (Vice-Chair), H Boyd, A Chalk, D Cowan, M Dent,
F Evans, M Flewitt, D Garne, B Hooper, M Kelly, H McDonald*, K Mitchell,
C Nevin, I Shead, M Stafford, A Thompson
O Richards (Healthwatch Southend), T Watts (Southend Carers Forum) (co-opted members)
M Faulkner-Hatt (Southend Youth Council (observer))

*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.

In Attendance: Councillors T Harp, A Jones and M Terry (Cabinet Members), Councillor K Evans, S Baker, E Cook, T Forster, R Harris, B Leigh, M Marks, K Ramkhelawon, D Simon, A Smyth and S Tautz
Also in attendance: S Waterhouse (Essex Partnership University NHS Trust)

Start/End Time: 6.30 pm - 7.25 pm

435 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Borton (substitute Councillor H McDonald), J Collis and K Jackson (co-opted members).

436 Declarations of Interest

The following councillors declared interests as indicated:

- (a) Councillors T Harp, A Jones and M Terry (Cabinet Members) - Interest in the called-in items; attended pursuant to the dispensation agreed at Council on 19 July 2012, under S.33 of the Localism Act 2011;
- (b) Councillor L Salter - Minute 439 (Changes to Acute Mental Health Beds in South Essex) and Minute 441 (Annual Public Health Report) - Husband is a consultant surgeon at Southend Hospital; daughter is a consultant at Basildon Hospital; son-in-law is a general practitioner in the Borough - Non-pecuniary interest;
- (c) Councillor M Kelly - Minute 439 (Changes to Acute Mental Health Beds in South Essex) - Employed by Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust - Non-pecuniary personal interest. Councillor Kelly left the meeting for this item;
- (d) Councillor K Mitchell - Minute 439 (Changes to Acute Mental Health Beds in South Essex) – Works with adults with complex needs, including mental health issues - Non-pecuniary interest;
- (e) Councillor K Mitchell - Minute 440 (Updated Local Financial Assessment and Illustration of the Potential Impact of Covid-19 on the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2020/21-2024/25) – Family friend is employed as a Finance Officer by the Council - Non-pecuniary interest;

- (f) Councillor M Flewitt - Minute 439 (Changes to Acute Mental Health Beds in South Essex) and Minute 441 (Annual Public Health Report) - Family member employed at an NHS Trust outside the Borough - Non-pecuniary interest:
- (g) Councillor C Nevin - Minute 439 (Changes to Acute Mental Health Beds in South Essex) - Family members employed at Mid and South-Essex NHS Trust hospitals, previous association with the Trust and currently employed at an NHS Trust outside the Borough - Non-pecuniary interest:
- (h) Councillor C Nevin - Minute 440 (Updated Local Financial Assessment and Illustration of the Potential Impact of Covid-19 on the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2020/21-2024/25) - Previous association with local care homes as an NHS employee;
- (i) Councillor C Nevin - Minute 441 (Annual Public Health Report) – Friend responsible for delivery of flu immunisation programme outside the Borough - Non-pecuniary interest:
- (j) Councillor H Boyd - Minute 439 (Changes to Acute Mental Health Beds in South Essex) – Family member works in care home setting - Non-pecuniary interest; and
- (k) Councillor N Folkard - Minute 441 (Annual Public Health Report) - Ambassador for Fund Raising Team at Southend Hospital; relative works at Broomfield Hospital; on the Reading Panel at Southend Hospital - Non-pecuniary interest.

437 Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions from members of the public relating to the responsibilities of the Committee.

438 Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 September 2020

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 September 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

439 Changes to Acute Mental Health Beds in South Essex

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Mental Health for Mid and South Essex, outlining changes to acute mental health bed provision in South Essex by Essex Partnership University NHS Trust (EPUT), in response to previous recommendations of the Care Quality Commission.

Councillors were advised that EPUT had recently moved an adult inpatient ward back to Rochford Hospital, which had accommodated two adult acute inpatient wards until Willow Ward at Rochford had been temporarily moved to Basildon. The Director of Mental Health reported that the Trust was now in a position to move patients back to Rochford and to re-open Willow Ward on a single-sex basis, to prevent patients from South East Essex having to leave the locality for treatment. The Committee was advised that all inpatient accommodation at Rochford Hospital was provided in single bedrooms and that the changes had provided the Trust with an opportunity to improve the accommodation at Basildon from outdated dormitory provision in which social distancing requirements could not be maintained, to single bedrooms with ensuite facilities.

The Director of Mental Health reported that options for the project had been limited within the existing fabric of the building at Basildon Mental Health Unit, although it had been possible to maximise the available space to create sixteen ensuite bedrooms at each of the two refurbished wards on the site. The Committee noted that this had meant that there was an overall reduction of six inpatient beds for South Essex and that, whilst the Trust would have preferred to maintain the existing number of inpatient beds, this had not proved possible.

The Director of Mental Health reported that during the COVID-19 pandemic, EPUT had been operating with reduced capacity on all inpatient wards and that the staffing ratio for patients would improve as a result of the changes being implemented to bed provision. The Committee was advised that out-of-area placement arrangements would be utilised by EPU only as a last resort.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

440 Updated Local Financial Assessment and Illustration of the Potential Impact of Covid-19 on the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2020/21-2024/25

The Committee considered Minute 375 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 15 September 2020, which had been called in to each of the three scrutiny committees, together with a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) providing an updated assessment of the local financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a range of high-level scenarios to illustrate the potential scale of the financial challenge over the short and medium-term.

The Committee requested that the Leader of the Council consider the referral of future reports made to the Cabinet on the financial position of the authority arising from the response to the pandemic, directly to the relevant scrutiny committee.

At the request of the Committee, the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care agreed to circulate to all members of the Council a presentation that was currently being developed with regard to the impact of the pandemic on the adult social care provider market.

Resolved:

That the following decisions of the Cabinet be noted:

- "1. That the Council's updated assessment of the local financial impact of the unprecedented challenges that has been caused by the pandemic, be noted.
2. That the scale of the potential financial challenge summarised in the submitted report, be noted.
3. That the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy is reviewed and a range of options are developed to ensure continuing financial sustainability.
4. That the Cabinet receive regular reports to future Cabinet meetings, which will provide updated assessments on our financial position and outline any changes to our strategy and range of assumptions."

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor I Gilbert

441 Annual Public Health Report

The Committee considered Minute 378 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 15 September 2020, which had been called in to the People Scrutiny Committee, together with a report of the Executive Director (Children and Public Health) presenting the annual report of the Director of Public Health for 2019.

In response to a question concerning the level of referrals for mental health services during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Director of Public Health agreed to circulate details to all members of the Committee following the meeting.

Resolved:

That the following decision of the Cabinet be noted:

“That the content and recommendations of the 2019 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health and progress made to-date in regards to the recommendations from the previous report in 2018, be noted.”

Note: This is an Executive Function
Cabinet Member: Councillor T Harp

442 In-Depth Scrutiny Project 2019/20-2020/21

The Democratic Services Officer reported that the final report for the current in-depth scrutiny project for the Committee would be available for consideration at the meeting to be held in November 2020.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Note: This is a Scrutiny Function

443 Simon Leftley MBE

The Committee was informed that Simon Leftley, the Council's former Deputy Chief Executive (People), had received the award of Member of the Order of the British Empire in the Queen's Birthday Honours Lists for 2020 in recognition of his outstanding services to people with learning disabilities in Southend and Essex. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair paid tribute to Mr Leftley and requested that its congratulations be extended to him for his well-deserved award.

Chair: _____