

HEALTH AND PLANNING

Health Liaison Board - 9 November 2016

Report of Chief Planning Officer

Status: For Information

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report provides Members with information on how Planning Policy can influence the health and wellbeing of residents

This report supports the Key Aim of reducing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Piper

Contact Officer(s) Claire Pamberi Ext. 7221

Recommendation to Health Liaison Board: That the report be noted.

Introduction and Background

- 1 This report will look at the relationship between Planning and Health and along with a presentation at the meeting, will look at how Planning Policy works alongside Housing and Health to assist and improve the well being of residents of the District.
- 2 The presentation to the committee will look at three elements to the relationship between Health, Housing and Health:
 - The Past
 - The Present
 - The Future
- 3 It will also provide a small case study to show how liaison between the three is working in practice.

The Past

- 4 The planning system we have in England today has always been about housing and health. The first Planning Act in 1909 forbade back to back housing that was symbolic of the poverty of the industrial cities and introduced systems of town planning which meant that homes had to be built to certain standards. The Garden City movement under the vision of

Ebenezer Howard, was already in place, at this time, which looked to provide self contained towns and attractive environments.

- 5 There has been a plan led system in England since 1947. Here at Sevenoaks through our Core Strategy and Allocations and Development Management Plan, we have local policies in place that aim to support the health and well being of the residents of the District. These policies help us resist inappropriate development, and reflect the specific needs of our communities while representing the social, economic and environmental circumstances further afield.
- 6 Planning can affect health and well-being positively as it can help to create good quality places to live. There are also challenges to this, as whilst you can create an environment to improve health and well being through planning legislation, there are some aspects to the built environment that cannot be controlled by planning for example internal layouts of buildings and provision of facilities which also have a direct impact on the health and well-being of residents.

The present

- 7 In 2015 The King's Fund produced a report, in partnership with the District Council Network (DCN), titled 'The District Council contribution to public health: a time of challenge and opportunity'. This report outlines the greater role district councils can have on improving the health and wellbeing of local residents.
- 8 One of the roles identified in the above report, that can influence health and wellbeing is through Planning Policy and practices. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides a role for the planning system to contribute to achieving sustainable development, playing a core role in creating 'a high quality built environment, with accessible local service that reflect community's needs and support its health, social and cultural wellbeing.' The NPPF in particular promotes healthy communities and states that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities.
- 9 At a local level, Sevenoaks District Council has a Core Strategy in place, adopted back in 2011, and our Allocations and Development Management Plan 2015, which set out the vision for the District. The two documents form the Local Plan and seek to enable future development pressures to be met in an area of constraint (the Green Belt covers 93% of the District) by making the best use of previously developed land. It also sought to meet future housing needs of different groups and to conserve and enhance the quality of our natural and built environment. In particular it looks at promoting sustainable development which is accessible to local services and reflects a community's needs and supports its health social and cultural well being. There are challenges however in providing for this additional development in the District, as all the new residents need access to Health care facilities and hospitals, when there is already a difficulty in people getting access to hospitals and GP practices. There has also been a reduction in the number of

schools to serve the District, meaning that children have to travel considerable distances to attend school which again can affect health and well being.

- 10 The plan has also enabled us to secure affordable housing - either units on site or payments in lieu. It has also allowed us to successfully negotiate the inclusion within new residential development a mix of housing types, specifically smaller units of one and two bedrooms, and it has enabled us to facilitate housing schemes for people with special needs, including older people for example in Swanley, Ash Close in Edenbridge, Salts Farm, Wilderness and Seal. There are still however challenges in providing for residents who want to downsize for example.
- 11 It is also appropriate here to highlight the fact that despite there being a Local Plan in place the provision of affordable housing and other special needs housing is becoming quite a challenge in the Sevenoaks District with changes to Government legislation, viability issues and strong local objections.
- 12 From a health perspective, through our Local Plan, we have been able to safeguard open space, sport and recreational facilities. We have provided homes in sustainable locations. We have also been able to provide funding towards air quality monitoring and encourage mixed development types and mixed communities. Whilst it is the Council's aim to positively affect the health and well being of residents, there is still however more that we can do in regard to this.
- 13 In addition to the Local Plan and policies that have been put in place. This Council works with key partners including Kent Public Health Team, GP Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), local health and social care providers and the voluntary sector to meet the Healthy Environment priorities within the Community Plan to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of residents. The recent results of the SHMA (the Strategic Housing Market Assessment) have shown that our population is increasing and in particular the number of residents above the age of 75 has also increased since 2010, which indicates that for some of our population people are living longer.
- 14 Some of the key functions delivered by this Council that can play a significant role in preventing ill health include Housing, Planning, Licensing, Environmental Health, Community Safety and Economic Development. Planning Policy work with and ensure that there is good communication between these teams.
- 15 In particular Planning Policy and Housing Policy have now been brought together under a strategic planning team. This will enable better communication between the different roles and will also enable the planning policy team to make significant progress to be made in how we respond to the needs of our communities and in particular how we facilitate and secure housing solutions to improve resident's environments and also plan for our health needs.

The future

- 16 Despite having a current Local Plan in place, with a change of Government came the abolition of Regional Planning and the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework, has meant that we have no option but to review the policies and evidence which supported our current Local Plan. This now provides us with an opportunity to look at what our priorities are and also look further into some of the areas where we need more work and evidence to assist us in addressing issues.
- 17 The Planning Policy Team has therefore commenced a process of developing the new Sevenoaks District Local Plan. This enables us to re-establish our spatial vision. It will look again at the key issues in the District, and it will appraise where our existing policy has stood up well to challenge and where we can still do more. We can re-shape our policies, refresh our ambition and plan again for the needs of our communities for the next 20 years and more.
- 18 Our new Local Plan will be supplemented by a detailed evidence base. That evidence will enable our Members to make robust decisions on policy direction as they will have a comprehensive understanding of the needs of our communities, and it will provide confidence to our communities that policy is built on strong foundations.
- 19 The plan will be produced with a wide consultation, and the involvement of groups, stakeholders, partner organisations and interested parties. Our duty to cooperate discussions with other local authorities and also service providers will also ensure that policy consideration does not stop at an administrative boundary, and will require others to plan positively for our residents and we will for theirs.
- 20 In particular, under 'duty to co-operate', the planning policy team are also required to meet regularly with other public bodies such as the Clinical Commissioning Groups, Homes and Communities Agency and Public Health Bodies who can assist officers in developing our local plan and policies to ensure that development meets the needs of the District and also that the right housing is brought forward to meet the needs of our residents.
- 21 This review of the Local Plan will enable this Council to consider how proactive planning policies can contribute to delivering healthy places through physical activity, healthy food environments and affordable and accessible homes. This can also assist with implementing and planning growth and regeneration areas, which can also have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of local residents as well as reducing health inequalities across the District. It can also ensure that Sevenoaks plans for the correct housing in place and continues to facilitate housing schemes for people with special needs. We are currently undertaking a Housing Needs Survey to get an up to date understanding of the needs of the District. This will then form part of our evidence base when looking to allocate land and develop policies.

- 22 We also intend to have policies that plan for the housing journey. We recognise the importance of helping people starting out but also helping people to live in appropriate accommodation (and in appropriate locations) throughout their lives. We will examine different tenure models and mixes, and recognise that policy needs to be flexible and adaptable to respond positively to changing mind-sets towards home occupancy and ownership.
- 23 And we will also aim to plan more thoroughly for an aging population, recognising the range of accommodation that is necessary to cater for our residents as their needs change, whilst the desire to remain close to family and friends may not.
- 24 Health was implied within many policies of the Core Strategy but in the Local Plan we intend to make it more explicit. We will look again at policies regarding open space, sport and leisure to establish the quality and diversity of the existing provision, including White Oak Leisure Centre and to look at raising standards across the board and identifying areas for doing more. We will look at the contribution green infrastructure makes to communities to see where additional benefit can be achieved, and reassess accessibility and connectivity issues. As well as looking at the needs of the District and trying to write stronger more robust policies to make sure that they are addressed.
- 25 When we consider allocating sites for development all of the options proposed will be tested against numerous sustainability criteria, including the impact on health and wellbeing, so we can quantify the potential impact and explore ways to measure the positive effect in future years. This includes also allocating and encouraging employment in sustainable locations so that residents have less of a commute to work, improving their quality of life and well being.
- 26 And finally we will refresh our infrastructure delivery plan so that we are able to fully understand what provision is required to support our communities, and through the allocation of CIL monies we will be able to actively assist in that infrastructure coming forward.
- 27 The Community Infrastructure Levy is now also in place since August 2014, where the Council receives an income from development that occurs in the district. This money can only be spent on Infrastructure to support the development which is taking place. This includes funding infrastructure projects for Health and Medical facilities. Whilst no decision has been made yet, as to how this money will be spent, the provision and support of Health and Medical facilities in the District is seen as a priority and there is a potential here for CIL to contribute towards bringing forward much needed infrastructure projects in the District to improve and support health and medical facilities. The relevant health and community bodies are aware of CIL and will be making bids to the CIL Spending Board at the relevant time. It should however be clear that this funding is provided as ‘top up’ funding and will not be providing all the funding for some of the infrastructure projects, but can assist where there is a gap in funding by being able to help bring the funding forward.

28 Members will be reminded of the key points of this report at the meeting.

Conclusion

29 It is clear that the places we live in, and which planning creates and shapes, affect our health and wellbeing. Planning policy need to work collectively to turn that understanding into policies and practices that create environments where it is easy to have a happy, healthy and fulfilling lifestyle.

30 It is clear that there is much to do, particularly with the provision of medical facilities and infrastructure and also providing an adequate amount of affordable housing and housing to meet the specific needs of the residents. But national planning policy encourages the Districts to plan positively. The Planning policy team will be working hard to ensure that the needs of our residents are understood and will put policies in place that will help to bring forward the right policies which will encourage the right development in the right areas.

Key Implications

Financial

31 There are no financial implications for the Council associated to this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

32 There are no legal implications for the Council associated to this report.

Equality Assessment

33 No decision is required as part of this paper and therefore no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusions

34 For Members to note the work of this Council's Planning Policy function to contribute to the health and wellbeing of local residents.

Appendices None

Background Papers: District Council's Network - The Kings Fund Report - The district council contribution to public health: a time of challenge and opportunity:

http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field_publication_file/district-council-contribution-to-public-health-nov15.pdf

Richard Morris
Chief Planning Officer