

Housing & Community Safety Advisory Committee

8 October 2014

Portfolio Holders Report

Housing Strategy/Policy and Housing needs

Attended the Gypsy/Traveller consultation drop in session on Tuesday 3 June in Swanley.

HERO: Met with Brian Horton of KCC with Pat Smith on 12 June to discuss promoting HERO across Kent. Peter Fleming has written to Kris Hopkins to see if HERO can complement the government's homelessness and health agenda. We have received a supportive reply. Pat has met with TMBC and has other meetings arranged. We are also pursuing opportunities with KCC FIPS and KCC West Kent ACT to expand HERO further and secure its future funding. Moat and T&MBC are looking at copying HERO and using their own versions however we are still hopeful that KCC FIPs will be interested and we have other ideas for example working with the private sector as well.

We are therefore reviewing HERO to deliver in a slightly different way to adapt to changes and keeping a step ahead.

Pat Smith and I have a meeting on 9 October with Civil Servant, Andrew Dack, about rural designation order extensions in some of our villages that want them.

Community Safety

Gave a 5 minute presentation with Kelly Webb to the Kent Safety Partnership Conference on 4 June that focussed on E-safety. We talked about the SDC experience with parents/carers – the missing piece of the internet safety jigsaw.

Met the new West Kent (Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge & Malling and Sevenoaks) PCSO, Sue Kemsley, responsible for educating mainly schools about staying safe online.

Booked to attend the LGA Councils' role in tackling female genital mutilation (FGM) conference in London on Tuesday 14 October.

Met with the Police on Tuesday 16 September for an update on slavery in the district and what SDC can do to support the Police to eradicate this inhumane crime.

Looking into seeing if Dogs Trust can provide a sponsorship scheme in Sevenoaks for victims of domestic abuse that are afraid to flee their home in order to protect their pets.

Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) Funding

Cabinet asked me to look into DFG funding to see if is more cost effective to bring the Occupational Therapists (OTs), currently paid for by KCC, in house. We have thoroughly looked into this possibility and it seems as though it would be best to advise Cabinet to leave the situation as it is for the following reasons:

1. We still have the option of paying for private OTs at £200 to £300 as and when we need to
2. All new OTs spend a half day with us so we can induct them into the SDC ways

3. An SDC member of staff accompanies the OT on all visits and discusses the needs and cheaper ways of achieving the same goal
4. We have a maximum spend of £30,000 per case and KCC picks up the rest. If we had our own OT KCC may not believe their recommendations and may not pick up the rest of the bill, or send their own OT to look into it and that could cause problems.
6. Bringing the Occupational Therapists in house would also bring in house all their salary and on costs which would work out more expensive. As it is we do not pay for the OT only their recommendations.
7. We are now extending review period of in house DFGs to June 2015 because there have been 2 staff vacancies slowing down the process.

Challenges facing Housing & Community Safety

- Reducing expenditure and maximising income to help make the council self-sufficient within a decade
- How we can further support the middle income group of people (£33,000 to £60,000) to step onto the housing ladder
- How we can better work with planning to provide the District's housing needs
- Securing HERO funding and future
- Changes to DFG funding: challenges and opportunities
- Further consolidation and shared working in environmental health
- Continue with internet safety improvements
- Troubled families – exploring the links between housing and community safety as well as better joint working with KCC
- Slavery and Human Trafficking
- Focusing on how housing policy impacts on the health agenda