
Housing and Health Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Tuesday, 14 January 2025 from 7.00 pm - 9.04 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Hayden Brawn, Ann Cavanagh, Alastair Gould, Angela Harrison (Chair), Peter Marchington, Ben J Martin, Tom Nundy, Karen Watson (Vice-Chair) and Dolley Wooster (Substitute for Councillor Kieran Golding).

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Hannah Perkin.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Billy Attaway and Charlotte Hudson.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Kieran Golding, Pete Neal and Chris Palmer.

534 **Vice-Chair in-the-Chair**

Councillor Karen Watson (Vice-Chair) took the chair for this meeting and would be referred to as the 'Chair' for the remainder of these minutes.

535 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

536 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 October 2024 (Minute Nos. 356 – 364) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

537 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Alastair Gould declared a non-pecuniary interest with respect to Item 5, Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership, as he was a General Practitioner for the National Health Service.

Councillor Ben J Martin declared a non-pecuniary interest with respect to Item 5, Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership, as he worked as a Green Doctor to help residents of Swale improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

Councillor Tom Nundy declared a non-pecuniary interest with respect to Item 6, Housing Assistance Policy Review, as his partner had adaptations made to her property.

538 **Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership**

The Chair welcomed Nikki Teesdale (Director of Health and Care Integration and Improvement, Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership) to the meeting.

The Director of Health and Care Integration and Improvement gave an overview of the 2024-2025 Delivery Plan for the Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership (HaCP), with a five-year perspective on the development and operation of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs). The Delivery Plan outlined the key areas of focus which included: Development of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams; Workstream Progress and System Integration; and Monitoring and Evaluation. She added that the aims of the

HaCP Delivery Plan were to deliver an effective and cohesive local care ecosystem that met the diverse health and wellbeing needs of Medway and Swale residents, reduced health inequalities and optimised resource utilisation across the system.

The Director of Health and Care Integration and Improvement gave a case study as an example of the good work that the partnership had recently done at a primary school in Swale.

The Chair invited questions from Members, and points raised included:

- Did the wider determinants understand the importance and the positive impact that the HaCP had on local communities?;
- did the partnership offer specific support for those that were suffering from loneliness?;
- what were the holistic care plan for people that suffered from Diabetes?;
- what was an asthmatic friendly school?;
- what was the role of Green Doctors in the Community?;
- could the partnership use the un-used space, at the Isle of Sheppey Hospital, as a community hub?;
- had the care partnership approached local schools that could host community health training events?;
- had the partnership considered preparing a cost-effectiveness of carrying out work similar to the case study, as a way of providing evidence for the funding that was needed;
- the Council were responsible for ensuring social housing homes were not rated below an 'E' energy efficiency rating when offering it to possible tenants;
- could data sharing agreements be made between organisations to speed-up the referral process?;
- important for all four Health Care Partnerships in Kent shared ideas, experiences and collaborate effectively with each other to improve the service;
- the Council were currently looking at ways to fix mold and damp issues in properties in the borough; and
- giving residents of the borough the knowledge of how they could prevent Health Issues was the first step of giving care.

The Director of Health and Care Integration and Improvement responded to points made and explained that the Integrated Care Board (ICB) would be in control of the partnership's budget from April 2025. The partnership had already been looking at alternative funding opportunities to ensure that they could carry on with the work they had been doing.

Over the past few years the partnership had delivered 46 different programs including isolation and the impact that it could have on individuals. Once the partnership had a good understanding of what the communities needed, the community would be given an opportunity to bid for funding for the specifically related health needs of the area. This enabled the partnership to deliver the right health care programs in the right areas.

The Director of Health and Care Integration and Improvement responded to the approach to the diabetic needs in communities and said that it was hoped that INTs to be given the correct knowledge and help so that everyone in the neighbourhood would have the support they needed. She added that a recent audit had been carried out on INTs and a report had outlined recommendations on how this could be achieved.

The Director of Health and Care Integration and Improvement explained that Green Doctors were a voluntary group that worked with individual homeowners to give them knowledge and help to make their homes as efficient as possible. She added that an asthmatic friendly school was a school that had the required training needed on; the triggers of asthma; signs to look for in someone suffering from asthma; how to help someone use their asthma pump; and how the lungs worked. The training was given to teachers, young children and parents so that anyone with asthma had the support they needed at the school.

The Director of Health and Care Integration and Improvement said the partnership already had a good relationship with Sheppey Matters and they were working with organisations and using more community space to host health hubs across the borough. She said that if Members had any questions on the Delivery Plan they could contact her and her team.

The Chair thanked the Director of Health and Care Integration and Improvement for attending the meeting.

539 **Housing Assistance Policy Review**

The Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report which set out the Housing Assistance Policy and sought approval for the draft policy to go out for public consultation.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- Wording on paragraph 2, page 11, of the policy needed to be changed to read 'Often housing associations might be able to assist their tenants' rather than 'are able to assist their tenants';
- how did officers ensure that owners of properties that had received grant works to their homes, did not sell the property for profit following the works?;
- could officers look at the use of AI technology to help deal with large numbers of applications?;
- the document referred to Cabinet Members which needed updating;
- often Councillors knew of local trades people that struggled to fill-in the necessary documents to be registered to the contractor portal, so could officers do more to help smaller trades people in the borough?; and
- what was the timescale for the policy to come back to committee for final implementation?

The Head of Housing and Communities responded to points raised and said that once grant works had been undertaken on a property a charge was placed on the deeds of that property to ensure any fees that were owed to the Council were paid back in full. She added that AI technology was something that officers were looking at and hoped that recent changes in the Housing team would result in the use of newer technologies to help with the large number of applications.

The Head of Housing and Communities informed Members that the Housing team had annual meetings with contractors in the borough to understand any concerns or issues that they had with carrying out any assistance works to properties. She added that the

portal could be added to and if Members had local trades people that were DBS checked, they could refer those trades people to the Housing Team.

The Head of Housing and Communities said that the consultation would run for a total of eight weeks and hoped to bring the full revised policy following the consultation to the first Housing and Health Committee of the 2025/2026 civic year.

Councillor Ben J Martin proposed that the threshold for means-tested assessments should be adjusted to £11,483. This was seconded by Councillor Tom Nundy and on being put to the vote, agreed by Members.

Resolved:

(1) That the draft Housing Assistance Policy 2025, with the revised changes as minuted, go out for public consultation.

540 Temporary Accommodation (TA) Spend - Scrutiny Report

The Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report which provided an update on the current performance of Temporary Accommodation (TA) and the current budget position.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- Welcomed the good work and report, but it was a shame to see so many people in need of temporary accommodation;
- could officers conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the Council having their own Temporary Accommodation against using external providers?;
- creating our own housing stock was a sign of moving in the right direction;
- was the Council still on target to achieve 50 temporary accommodation homes on the housing stock?;
- frustrating to hear that the Government had taken away grant funding because the Council's service was 'too good';
- had officers considered converting shipping containers to help with temporary accommodation?;
- there were a lot more empty homes at new build developments as developers found it hard to find housing associations that were willing to take up the ownership of the homes;
- often social and temporary accommodation homes were not built in the right locations; and
- did officers have any recommendations to improve the number of housing associations that were willing to take-up social housing on new build developments?

The Head of Housing and Communities responded to points raised and confirmed that officers had planned a review of the cost-benefit analysis for the Council owning their own stock vs using external providers later in 2025. She added that her team wanted to purchase the right kind of homes within the budget that had been agreed by the Housing and Health Committee and hoped to meet the 50 homes target.

With regards to the use of shipping containers the Head of Housing and Communities said that officers had worked with organisations to explore the possible use of shipping containers, however, the site locations proposed were deemed unsuitable for shipping

containers due to un-even ground levels or not having the required amenities.

The Head of Housing and Communities explained that it was Planning Policy which outlined the levels of social housing development in each area and recognised that sometimes these were often different from where the largest demand was. The Housing Team and the Planning Policy team were reviewing the policy as part of the Local Plan process and her team always kept good communications between developers and housing associations to ensure the take-up of social and affordable homes where possible.

Resolved:

(1) That the performance report and controls in place to manage the Temporary Accommodation budget be noted.

541 Forward Decisions Plan

Councillor Lloyd Bowen asked if a report on the impact devolution could have on health and housing provisions could be added to the forward decisions plan.

The Head of Housing and Communities advised that she would add the Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme – cost benefit analysis report to the forward plan.

Resolved:

(1) That the forward decisions plan be noted.

542 Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting was adjourned from 7.45 pm until 7.50 pm.

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel