

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 30th July, 2020

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), and Councillors Salman Akbar, Michael Chalk, Debbie Chance, Peter Fleming, Pattie Hill, Andrew Fry, Ann Isherwood and Mark Shurmer

Also Present:

Councillor Nyear Nazir – Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Sarah Sellers and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and J Gresham

12. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Jennifer Wheeler. Officers confirmed that Councillor Debbie Chance was attending as her named substitute.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations or interest nor of any party whip.

14. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no registered public speakers on this occasion.

15. SUICIDE PREVENTION TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

Councillor Debbie Chance, in her role as Chair of the Suicide Prevention Task Group, presented the report to the Committee.

The Committee was informed that in total the group had held 11 meetings and spoken to eight witnesses between June 2019 and

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Chair

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June 2020. There had been a slight delay in bringing the report before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Suicide Prevention was a very sensitive subject to investigate and the members of the group had learned a lot about the impact of death by suicide on bereaved families and friends. Members were advised that on average one person died each week as a result of suicide in Worcestershire. In Redditch, for the three year period from 2015 to 2017, there were 26 deaths by suicide of which 84% were among men.

The group had been really surprised by the data around the economic cost of death by suicide and the evidence of the long-term effects on bereaved relatives. Research showed that those who had lost a loved one to death by suicide were at a higher risk of suicide themselves. Another surprising finding was that many of the deaths were amongst persons not previously known to mental health services, or who had not confided in anyone that they were struggling.

The Committee was asked to note that the investigation had focused on issues outside the day-to-day service remit of Redditch Borough Council and had relied on a number of external witnesses. There was a Suicide Prevention Plan for Worcestershire and locally this was co-ordinated and led by Worcestershire County Council.

The two main areas the group focused on in detail were:

- 1) Suicide prevention generally and in particular the Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Policy. In these discussions the group was greatly assisted by Officers from Worcestershire Public Health.
- 2) Mental health services available in Redditch, including the options that were available for people in crisis, and the role of the voluntary sector.

The feedback received from witnesses during the review had highlighted the need for awareness raising and training and this was reflected in the group's recommendations. The group had also been guided by the Council's Policy Team to identify how the Council's Equalities Strategy could be updated to include actions that supported suicide prevention. The final recommendation from the group covered the benefits of promoting awareness around suicide prevention.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed a number of points in detail:

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- The important work that had been undertaken by the group and the impact that suicide could have on friends and families.
- The evidence that had been submitted by Mr Mike Lewington to the group. The Committee was informed that sadly Mr Lewington had since passed away and therefore the report was dedicated to him.
- The financial implications of the proposals detailed in the report. Officers advised that this information had been received after publication of the report and it was anticipated that the action proposed could be covered within existing budgets. Members were asked to note that, if it was discovered during implementation by Officers that more significant financial resources were needed, then a further report would be presented inviting Members to approve additional funding.
- The incidence of suicide within all communities and the higher incidence of suicide amongst young men compared to other sections of the population.
- The work that Members could undertake to address suicide following the completion of the review. The Committee was asked to note that Members could ensure that mental health considerations were taken into account during the policy setting process. Elected Members could also help to raise awareness within the local community and signpost local constituents to support services where they were reporting mental health problems.
- The difficulty in terms of helping people who did not display any mental health difficulties prior to suicide.
- The role of the Redditch Partnership in the community and the fact that mental health had been identified as a priority area to address. The group were suggesting that Members' findings should be taken into account by the partnership.
- The actions of Members of the Task Group and the Democratic Services Officer who supported the group. They were thanked for their hard work.

During consideration of this item Councillor Nyear Nazir was invited to speak to the Committee in her capacity as Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services as well as a former member of the group. She highlighted the value of the review in terms of raising awareness of the impact of suicide in the community and the importance of suicide prevention work. Members were asked to note that the subject of suicide prevention was very complex and the group had interviewed a wide range of witnesses. Councillor Nazir concluded by thanking all the

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Members, Officers and external witnesses who had contributed to the review.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the Redditch Borough Council Equalities Strategy should reflect the Council's commitment to suicide prevention and supporting good mental health, and that in producing the updated version of the Equalities Strategy for 2020 to 2024 objectives and actions should be included to cover the following:-**
 - a) **that officers continue to publicise messages around positive mental health to staff and promote opportunities to participate in training and events;**
 - b) **that officers develop the signposting information available on the intranet to support staff in being able to signpost either service users or colleagues to the relevant support services;**
 - c) **that officers mark suicide prevention awareness day in September 2020 including using this as an opportunity to promote the work of local groups that support suicide prevention;**
 - d) **recognising that not all staff may undertake the Mental Health First Aid training, that officers arrange for some alternative web based training resources to be provided for staff, to be aimed at those working in front line posts;**
- 2) **support to local voluntary sector organisations around improving promotion of their organisations:**
 - a) **that officers from the Communications Team work with the Partnership Manager to identify local voluntary sector organisation which offer support around mental health and wellbeing and/ or promote suicide prevention;**
 - b) **that the organisations identified be invited to participate in workshop training sessions to be provided by the Communications Team to help them to better publicise the support and services their organisations provide through use of social media and other publicity; and**
- 3) **publicise the findings of the Task Group:**

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given that suicide prevention work is carried out by multiple agencies and stakeholders, that officers be tasked with publicising the outcome of the Task Group in the Wellbeing in Partnership Newsletter and by giving details of the findings to the Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Plan Partnership Group (sub-group of the Health and Well-being Board).

16. SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME - SELECTING ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

Members considered the content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1st August to 30th November 2020 and agreed that the Recovery and Restoration Plan be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1st August to 30th November 2020 be noted; and
- 2) the Recovery and Restoration Plan be added to the Committee's Work Programme for pre-scrutiny.

17. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Officers explained that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme would be updated in accordance with the request made under Minute Item No. 16.

18. TASK GROUPS, SHORT SHARP REVIEWS AND WORKING GROUPS - UPDATE REPORTS

- a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Jenny Wheeler

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Redditch) reported to Members that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had met on 13th July 2020 and had pre-scrutinised the Financial Implications of Covid-19 report and the Quarter 1 Financial Outturn Report 2019/2020. It was reported that the Head of Environmental Services and Housing Property Services had been in attendance to discuss the Capital Expenditure Programme for a number of items within his remit.

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b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Andrew Fry

Councillor Fry advised Members that a date had been identified for the next meeting and that the Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy would be in attendance to discuss the impact of Covid-19 on Council Services.

c) Dementia Task Group – Chair, Councillor Michael Chalk

Councillor Chalk reported that the members of the Task Group had been confirmed and were as follows: -

- Councillor Michael Chalk – Chair
- Councillor Joanne Beecham
- Councillor John Fisher
- Councillor Jennifer Wheeler

It was confirmed that the first meeting would take place in September 2020.

19. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

a) West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Redditch Member, Councillor Michael Chalk

The Committee was informed that Councillor Chalk had missed the last two meetings of the Committee but he offered to circulate the minutes.

b) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Redditch Member, Councillor Michael Chalk

Councillor Chalk explained that the previous two meetings of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) took place on Thursday 18th June 2020 and Monday 20th July 2020. Councillor Chalk referred Members to the updates provided in the supplementary agenda and explained that, unsurprisingly, the main thrust of the discussion was the impact of Covid-19 on services across Worcestershire.

The Meeting commenced at 6.47 pm and closed at 7.23 pm