

SEFTON BOROUGH PARTNERSHIP OPERATIONS BOARD

MEETING HELD AT THE ONE VISION HOUSING OFFICES, ATLANTIC
HOUSE, DUNNINGS BRIDGE ROAD, BOOTLE
ON TUESDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER, 2013

PRESENT: Margaret Carney, Chief Executive, Sefton MBC
(Chair)
Janet Marlow, Peter Morgan and Roy Williams, One
Vision Housing

ALSO PRESENT Christina Jones, Corporate Commissioning and
Neighbourhoods
Steph Prewett, Head of Commissioning and
Neighbourhood Co-ordination
Sam Tunney, Head of Business Intelligence and
Performance
Mike Morris, Senior Democratic Services Officer

10. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Stephanie Appleton (Job Centre Plus), Graham Bayliss (Director of Corporate Services), Nigel Bellamy (Sefton CVS), Fiona Clark (NHS Sefton Clinical Commissioning Groups), Phil Halewood (Merseytravel), Chief Superintendent Nicola Holland (Merseyside Police), Rob Pritchard (Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service) and Angela White (Sefton CVS).

11. MINUTES

It was agreed that the Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Board held on 11 June 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

12. MATTERS ARISING

In relation to Minute No. 7 (Community Resilience) of 11 June 2013 and, in particular, Rob Pritchard's reference to the possibility of gleaning useful information from a study being undertaken in Liverpool, Christina Jones indicated that work being done by the Police in Litherland and Linacre Wards took account of the Liverpool model. In addition, Sam Tunney indicated that a team leader recently appointed to the Business Intelligence Section was familiar with the Liverpool study.

13. OUTCOMES FROM THE JOINT WORKSHOP WITH MEMBERS OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD HELD ON 16 AUGUST 2013

The Board considered a report by Sam Tunney, Head of Business Intelligence and Performance on outcomes from a joint workshop which had been organised following a recent Local Government Association Peer Challenge into health and wellbeing and public health functions in Sefton. The feedback from the Peer Challenge had highlighted the need

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for closer alignment between the Health and Wellbeing Board and partners such as the Sefton Borough Partnership Operations Board. The workshop explored the perceived gaps within the Peer Challenge findings and compared them with our own self-assessment. The workshop also resulted in a draft action plan for the Operations Board which had been circulated to members and having been discussed by the Board, it was proposed that this would form part of a wider action plan. Members of the Operations Board had also been invited to attend a wider stakeholder event on 25 September 2013 at Bootle Town Hall at 9.00 a.m. Public “Big Chat” events were also planned for October/November in order to engage the wider public in the process.

Sam Tunney also tabled, by way of reminder, the pledges that members of the Operations Board had made at the workshop, and asked that the Operations Board consider how the commitments contributed to the overall achievement of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Margaret Carney suggested that given that so many of the people who were present at the joint workshop were not in attendance at the meeting that those present should liaise with them to check that the draft Operations Board action plan was acceptable, and if any changes were needed, that these be forwarded to Sam Tunney, prior to the Health and Wellbeing Board formally agreeing the overall action plan.

Margaret further suggested that given the new substructure to the Board had been introduced, it would support the development of this substructure if the Operations Board considered its role and its relationship/responsibilities for other strategies, which related to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. To support this thinking, it was suggested that a facilitated discussion take place at the next meeting of the Operations Board on 10 December 2013.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) any partner organisation which is unable to send a representative to the event on 25 September be urged to forward any comments, ideas or proposals on the action plan to Sam Tunney;
- (3) comments on the draft Action Plan tabled at the meeting be forwarded to Sam Tunney to enable these to be incorporated in the overall action plan to be agreed by the Board, and that representatives at the meeting share with Board Members their pledges to support thinking as to how these contribute to the overall achievement of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy; and
- (4) at the Operations Board meeting on 10 December, a facilitated discussion take place on the role of the Operations Board, and how it fits in and relates to other partnerships/stakeholders in the wider system.

14. WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

Steph Prewett, Head of Commissioning and Neighbourhood Co-ordination, advised that Sefton Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) had produced a film on the detrimental impacts on residents of recent welfare reforms such as the "Bedroom Tax" and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The film highlighted how levels of debt were increasing across communities and that more people were becoming reliant on foodbanks. The film also depicted two real life case studies that showed the impact of the welfare reform changes. Steph also recommended members to read the report on this subject which was considered by the Council's Cabinet at its meeting on 18 July 2013.

The Board then viewed the film.

Peter Morgan referred to the mitigation work of the Welfare Reform Partners Group which met monthly. The priorities of the Partners Group was being informed by a series of workshops involving partners and community representatives from across the Borough which had an average attendance of between 80 and 100. In addition, a Cabinet Member Reference Group had been established, which also met monthly to provide direction and leadership on welfare reform. Neil Davies, the Council's Housing Strategy and Investment Manager, had been co-operating with partners in the housing field, for example, to examine the effects of welfare reform changes on income to landlords. Partner colleagues were encouraged to establish similar networks, to understand the interdependencies of Welfare Reform changes. It was reported that demand for foodbank assistance from the South Sefton foodbank scheme had now risen to about a ton of food a week. A bigger proportion of recipients now consisted of larger families.

Steph Prewett referred to the excellent partnership which had been established between the Sefton Helping Hand charity and One Vision Housing regarding the re-use of donated items of furniture. On average, 10 "crisis packages" of such items were being distributed each week and other registered social landlords were being asked to participate in the scheme. Steph also indicated that the need to address digital inclusion in the context of welfare reform implications would be included in discussions at the Welfare Reform workshop on 27 September. She also stated that the Trussell Trust was working with Sefton's three foodbanks to work towards a shift in available food resources towards the South Sefton area. Steph also praised the fantastic efforts of about 100 volunteers in South Sefton. Christina Jones added that St. Leonard's Church was planning an event to recognise the work of the volunteers. Janet Marlow referred to the particular problems encountered by residents on low incomes because of the high cost of travel. In addition, the possibility of providing a staff salary sacrifice scheme and gift aid contributions was being investigated through the recently established Sefton4Good scheme.

Roy Williams referred to the fact that the Universal Credit proposals were yet to be introduced and this could contribute to making the achievement of some of the Health and Wellbeing targets even more difficult. Already,

One Vision Housing was having great difficulty in letting 3 bedroom houses and 2 bedroom flats. A comprehensive demand study was being undertaken and demolition would need to be considered in some instances. In addition, the company was obliged to take appropriate action on rent arrears. Social housing providers were lobbying the Government about these and similar issues, but things were not likely to change in the short term. Peter Morgan commented that the National Housing Federation was currently undertaking a survey on the impact of the Welfare Reform initiatives. Roy Williams referred to the refurbishment of certain high rise blocks and the conversion of flats to smaller units. However, benefits could still be reduced even if the rent payable was based on smaller accommodation. Janet Marlow emphasised the problems encountered by ex-offenders in relation to accommodation and suggested that the Probation Service, working with Housing Associations, could overcome some of these plus mitigate some of the impacts of welfare changes

Margaret Carney stated that the work undertaken by the Welfare Reform Partners Group had been excellent. The impact of Welfare Reform was here to stay and there were rumours that protection for pensions was likely to be ended, perhaps as soon as next year. In addition, Shadow Ministers have said that they have no plans to “undo” the reforms. They clearly still had a measure of popular support. She felt that it was important that we took a strategic approach to mitigating the effects of the reforms, building resilience and considering what long-term radical changes could be put in place. It might be the case that we should be thinking of the effects over a period of 10-15 years and that whatever might be put in place might just be “scratching the surface”.

Discussion was held on the role of G.P. surgeries and the possibility of them acting as referral agencies for those suffering physically and mentally from the effects of the reforms. Steph Prewett stated that this was somewhat sporadic in south Sefton. Margaret Carney believed that discussions with G.P. surgeries should continue, for example, in ensuring that symptoms of dementia were noticed as early as possible. She hoped that other ideas which partner organisations had could be referred to the Welfare Reform Groups or this Board. She added that it was important to recognise that organisations’ own staff were also affected by the reforms. For example, Sefton Council had brought forward the salary pay day this month in the hope of reducing the likelihood of staff applying for “payday loans”.

Roy Williams referred to the campaign groups which his organisation sometimes engaged with and wondered whether a corporate view on this interaction should be considered. Peter Morgan commented that we would always listen to suggestions for improved ways to seek to mitigate welfare reform impacts, but some campaign organisations did not respond to the invitation to share their suggestions. Steph Prewett indicated that the Council’s website had a single message on welfare reform and that the Council had been working via neighbourhood contacts to encourage them

to “signpost” residents to the CAB, for which the Council had provided extra resources towards recruiting and training volunteers.

Margaret Carney indicated that the Council had been waiving bailiff charges at the first stage of court proceedings for debt recovery, albeit further action would have to be taken in appropriate cases. Roy Williams stated that benefit advisers assisted in rent arrears cases brought by One Vision Housing. Steph Prewett understood that One Vision Housing had begun discussions with Margaret Rawding about the possibility of collaborative arrangements with the Council in relation to debt recovery and she felt that any such discussions should also involve credit unions. Roy Williams also referred to the possibility of broadening the discussions to other social housing providers.

Peter Morgan indicated that another film on the effects of Welfare Reform had been produced locally by young people. Steph Prewett also referred to another short film which had been commissioned and which focused on volunteers which would be shown at the Welfare Reform workshop on 27 September. She undertook to send a Youtube link to Operations Board members. Phil Hart stated that a film which included signposting links to all appropriate agencies would be most useful. Steph Prewett agreed that this was something which could be considered. Margaret Carney stated that this could tie in with the Directory of Services, but she cautioned against creating a demand which it was not possible to meet.

15. SEFTON'S STRATEGY FOR OLDER CITIZENS

The Board considered a draft of the above Strategy and Roger Pontefract, the Chair of the Sefton Partnership for Older Citizens, explained that an Action Plan had been produced three years ago and progress had been reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Health and Social Care) every 6 months since that time. The first draft of a new Strategy was much briefer than the previous one and was currently the subject of a 2 month consultation period. Roger stated that it would be appreciated if any comments could be forwarded to him by 25 October. In particular, he would welcome views on whether the 7 key priorities/objectives were valid. Roger answered questions about the success of the previous strategy and the determination of the key objectives. Margaret Carney commented on the importance of the Strategy in view of its focus on older people as a group, regardless of need. Margaret invited Roger to present the draft Strategy to a forthcoming meeting of the Council's Strategic Leadership Team.

RESOLVED:

That Roger be thanked for presenting the draft Strategy.

16. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

RESOLVED:

That consideration of future agenda items be deferred until after the next meeting of the Board, which is scheduled to be held on 10 December 2013.

17. DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Details of the following programme of meetings for the remainder of 2013/14 (all starting at 2.30 p.m.) were submitted:-

Tuesday, 10 December 2013 at the Sefton Council for Voluntary Service Offices, 3rd Floor, Suite B, North Wing, Burlington Home, Crosby Road North, Waterloo, L22 OLG

Tuesday, 18 March 2014 at the Town Hall, Oriel Road, Bootle, L20 7AE.