

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY WELLBEING, HEALTH & CARE**

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, Health & Care held on Tuesday, 7 November 2023 at 4.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

### **Present**

Councillor Matthew Winnington (in the Chair)

Councillors Graham Heaney  
Brian Madgwick

#### **9. Apologies for absence**

There were apologies for absence from Councillor Lewis Gosling and Helen Atkinson, Director of Public Health.

#### **10. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **11. Public Health Strategy 2023-2026**

Claire Currie, Assistant Director of Public Health, introduced the report on behalf of Helen Atkinson, Director of Public Health. The Strategy illustrated how Portsmouth worked with organisations such as the NHS, the University, the Integrated Care Board, Integrated Care Partnership and many others. She thanked them all for their help in contributing to the aims and ambitions of Portsmouth's public health approach.

Councillor Winnington suggested turning the report into an action report and referring it to the Cabinet so it could go to Full Council. In view of how it linked to other plans and strategies it was useful for all members of the council to have a good overview of what was happening. Councillor Heaney formally requested that this should happen.

With regard to reporting back, Ms Currie said the Strategy's various strands had their own governance reporting, for example, via the Health & Wellbeing Board, but Public Health was happy to bring regular updates if that was helpful to show how shorter-term aims were updated as the Strategy moved forward.

Councillor Winnington requested thanks be put on record for the Strategy. It was very important across the council and for local partners; it brought together what could be disparate strands. He was happy to make it an action report and resolved to refer it to the Cabinet and then request it went to Full Council.

The Cabinet Member noted the report which is for information only and is not for call-in.

## **12. Public Health Annual Report 2023**

Matthew Gummerson, Assistant Director, Strategic Intelligence & Research, introduced the report and thanked the numerous people who had contributed to it. It would be reproduced in a more accessible format that would be useful for a range of audiences, including the public. He highlighted some key points showing how poverty impacts residents, for example, a quarter to a third of children in Portsmouth were growing up in poverty and the five-GCSE A\* to C attainment gap between children receiving free school meals and those who did not was greater than nationally. The cost of living crisis meant more people experienced poverty with those already living in poverty more severely affected. The recommendations had gone to the Health & Wellbeing Board and Mr Gummerson was happy to present them to the Cabinet and Full Council.

In response to questions from Councillor Heaney, Mr Gummerson explained that

- To keep costs down there were no plans for printed versions but they could be provided for anyone who needed one, for example, the city archives who had copies of historic health reports.
- The definitions of relative and absolute poverty were calculated before taking housing costs into account. A note could be added for clarification.
- The table with the percentage of pupils achieving a standard GCSE pass in English and maths looked very different after 2019 because of teacher assessments. The positions were relative not absolute.
- The Tackling Poverty Steering Group has discussed whether there were inconsistencies in how Universal Credit sanctions were applied as Portsmouth has a relatively high rate compared with other local authorities. Mr Gummerson would raise the matter at the group's November meeting and report back.

Councillor Heaney suggested that the poorest Portsmouth residents having to pay 20% of their council tax was a point to be pondered and considered. It was worthwhile for other councillors to see the report as it contained a lot of interesting information.

Alan Burnett said the report was very impressive with analysis and action. Anyone reading it might think Portsmouth was ridden with problems; however, most people made the best of it and worked hard. The situations outlined in the report might apply to a minority. The Pompey Pensioners were looking at the issue of pensioners claiming benefits they were entitled to. He agreed that progression in school and not just exam results was important. He liked the section showing good practice in other local authorities. A recent visit to Commercial Road showed one vegetable stall but several vape shops so Portsmouth had a difficult job on its hands.

Mr Gummerson said benefits take-up was being flagged up as a member priority as well as a corporate one as it was known that a large proportion of support was unclaimed. The report focused on deficits rather than assets in order to show the scale of challenges but work was taking place to improve matters, for example, regeneration in Commercial Road or progression in schools. However, more could always be done.

Councillor Winnington noted that the Health & Wellbeing Board had already recommended the report go to the portfolio. It could go to the Cabinet and Full Council as it deserved to be seen far and wide; public health permeated across the council. The Health & Wellbeing Strategy was innovative as it focused on "the causes of the causes." Poverty by its nature was deficit based as it led to worse outcomes. The council has been tackling poverty since the 1980s but now the approach was more holistic which was why the Director of Public Health made it a priority this year.

Councillor Winnington responded to points raised in discussion. He noted the "Portsmouth paradox" in that schools had good inspection judgements but results were not as good as expected. However, if children's circumstances were taken into account then results could be seen as satisfactory. From his experience of working at the DWP the figure for benefit sanctions might be due to local decisions to look at neighbouring areas; even though it was a national organisation it made local decisions. He thanked Mark Sage and the Tackling Poverty Steering Group whose work was embedded across the Strategy and the voluntary and community sector. He agreed with the suggestion of having a couple of paper copies of the Strategy for archiving with summaries for the Cabinet and Full Council. At the first assembly of the Integrated Care System last year it was noted that the Strategy was radically different to others, feeding into all sectors including the private. He was a councillor when it was decided to re-introduce council tax for the poorest residents and would love for people not to pay it but the council was in a difficult situation at the time. Commitment from central government was needed so that the poorest did not pay tax except some taxes like VAT. Councils were going to have to make some unpalatable decisions.

Councillor Madgwick asked who checked levels of poverty as he had seen someone using a foodbank, driving off in a 4 x 4 and then buying cigarettes and scratch cards. He was not against people who genuinely needed help but questioned if the figures were correct.

Officers explained the government set definitions of poverty. Criteria for benefits were monitored and perhaps a small number of claimants had income from elsewhere. Benefits were measurably lower than they used to be. The government was trying to stop people claiming benefits they were not entitled to. It was important to recognise the complexity of people's lives as they might be struggling with the cost of living as well as other factors such as addiction so it was very difficult to understand individual circumstances. The council aimed to take a mental health and trauma informed approach when applying systems and processes.

Councillor Winnington pointed out that referrals were needed to access foodbanks. Referrers relied on trust and were not there to scrutinise bank accounts. From his experience of working with foodbanks it was a very small proportion of people who abused them but unfortunately some people lied and played the system. Foodbanks could bar people. The fact that foodbanks existed was a great shame for the country. He thanked officers for their contributions.

The Cabinet Member noted the report which is for information only and is not for call-in.

### **13. Liberty Protection Safeguards and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards**

Andy Biddle, Director of Adult Care, introduced the report, noting that the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) did not apply in community settings so applications had to be made individually at a cost of around £300, as well as using staff time.

Members said the delay in implementing the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) impacted vulnerable people. The original implementation date of 2020 was delayed by the Covid pandemic and the announcement in April 2023 that it would be delayed beyond the current parliament was "a hammer blow" for all local authorities. Councillor Winnington thanked the staff who had been employed specifically to work on the LPS, especially Jackie Bickers. Portsmouth was fortunate in retaining them rather than having to recruit all over again. Not just those subject to proceedings were affected but also others such as statutory advocacy services, which were nearly all run by the voluntary and community sector. Recruiting and training staff was a cost for charities. It was unclear why the LPS had not been implemented or why there was no timetable so writing to the Secretary of State and the local MPs might help expedite matters.

#### **DECISIONS**

The Cabinet Member agreed to:

1. Write to the Secretary of State raising concerns that the LPS have not been implemented and there is no timetable to do so.
2. Write to the Members of Parliament for Portsmouth and invite them to contact the Secretary of State and express their concerns.

### **14. Adult Social Care Complaints - Annual Report**

Andy Biddle, Director of Adult Care, introduced the report. He thought the increase in enquiries from councillors was due to better recording.

Members were pleased that 69 out of 74 complaints were resolved internally and that so few went to the Ombudsman. Councillor Winnington said it was good to see compliments recorded as the public sector was not always very good at recording them. He had discussed with Mr Biddle how to encourage compliments, for example, asking people to put them in writing. He thanked Mr Biddle and the Complaints Managers.

The Cabinet Member noted the report which is for information only and is not for call-in.

The meeting concluded at 5.04 pm.

---

Councillor Matthew Winnington  
Chair