

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES
HELD IN THE
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON 17 JUNE 2013**

Present: Councillors D Over (Chairman), D Lamb, D Sanders, D McKean, D Harrington and E Murphy

Officers in Attendance:	Leonie McCarthy	Social Inclusion Manager
	Sharon Keogh	Peterborough Food bank / Care Zone
	Kiril Moskovchuk	Citizens Advice Bureau
	Sally Chicken	Director of Credit Union
	Richard Godfrey	ICT & Transactional Services partnership Manager
	Tim Bishop	Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning, Adult Social Care
	Paulina Ford	Senior Governance Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2013

The minutes of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities meeting held on 26 March 2013 were approved subject to the following. Members wished to record that at the meeting held on 26 March 2013 they had requested that an item on Solar and Wind Farms be added to the work programme for 2013-2014. This request had not been recorded in the minutes.

4. The Impact of Welfare Reform

The Social Inclusion Manager introduced the report which provided the Commission with information on the impacts of Welfare Reform and the work being undertaken through the Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme (PCAS) to tackle poverty and destitution. Members were informed that one of the key issues for rural residents was that all services were based in the City Centre. Anyone needing to be assessed to see if they were eligible for PCAS assistance would be required to come into the City Centre to attend the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Only those people eligible for welfare and benefits are able to access the PCAS Scheme. This enabled the scheme to ensure that those most in need and eligible for support were assisted to maximise income and reduce debt. Once eligible for the scheme they would be referred to the Citizens Advice Bureau for screening and advice. Members were advised that all Councillors which included those who were rural based had been contacted and informed of what the PCAS could offer.

Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme (PCAS) was set up to provide:

- Peterborough's first Credit Union (managed by Rainbow Saver Credit Union)

- A basic needs facility for furniture, white goods and general crisis provision (managed by Carezone, Kingsgate)
- A specialist voluntary information and advice network (incorporating Age UK, Citizens Advice Bureau, Disability Information and Advice Line, Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service and Peterborough and Fenland MIND)
- Peterborough's first citywide Foodbank with six outlets to date (led by Kingsgate Church)

Representatives from Peterborough Food Bank / Care Zone, Citizens Advice Bureau and the Credit Union were in attendance and each spoke about the work of their organisations in relation to the Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme.

The following comments, observations and questions were raised:

- Members commented that a lot of services relied on access to the internet e.g. signing on, and access to welfare benefits. Access to the internet in rural areas was often limited. It was also difficult for some rural residents to get transport into the city centre to access food banks, places like Carezone and debt counselling. Extra steps needed to be taken to deal with the equality issues of rural residents. *Officers acknowledged that more work needed to be done with rural residents. Internet access had been a problem and equality assessments were being carried out and a piece of work called 'Channel Shift' which was about the need to shift to apply for benefits on line was being carried out. This was part of Phase one of the programme. Phase two of the programme was about the Citizens Advice Bureau going out to all of the community representatives including Parish Councils and training them in triage to help people who were destitute or in poverty.*
- Members were concerned about people in the rural areas who might find themselves in destitute situations. An example might be that their fridge had broken but had no insurance or money to replace it and no food. The added complication would be having no transport to visit the Carezone in the City to get a replacement. *Members were informed that the DwP had stated that people requiring a crisis loan or community care grant would have to go into the city to collect it. Food Bank and Carezone referrals came from professional agencies and if they had a client with an access issue would transport them into the city if possible. A lot of work had been done with local faith groups across the Parishes to inform them about the changes and how it may impact on their congregations. The Credit Union model was to have a main shop in the town centre and then reach out into communities looking for volunteers and key workers in certain areas to be trained to administer the Credit Union. An example might be in a children's centre where all their staff would be trained to administer the Credit Union. It was still early days in Peterborough but links were being built in the villages. Rural residents need help for different reasons. An example would be if a rural resident's car failed its MOT they might need an emergency loan to get the vehicle back on the road again. People applied for emergency loans by post, on line, phone or in person. It was noted that apart from face to face assessments and advice, people could also use the telephone, email or website. There was a dedicated PCAS telephone line used to assist customers. The PCAS system was not a like for like replacement of crisis loans and community care grants. There was less welfare available and it was important to ensure that welfare went to the people most in need. The most effective way to achieve this was through face to face interviews. In exceptional circumstances PCAS team members were prepared to talk to support workers, family members or key workers.*
- Members referred to the graph on page 10 – PCAS Clients by Ward and asked why only two rural wards were listed. *Members were advised that the graph showed people who had presented so far as PCAS clients (eligible for help in this scheme). There was more work that could be done to get in touch with Parish Councils about what was available to people in their communities. Rural communities would be a priority on the list of organisations that CAB would train up in the future.*
- Members requested that PCAS consider sheltered accommodation to use to spread information to rural communities. *Members were informed that pensioners were not a*

group PCAS had specifically targeted because the most vulnerable people were below pensionable age. A lot of the housing schemes had already been made aware of PCAS but the team would endeavour to reach out to the sheltered schemes in rural areas.

- Members suggested attending Parish Council Liaison meetings.
- Members highlighted that care agencies should also be approached for assistance. Members expressed concern regarding transport in rural areas which put people living in those areas at a disadvantage and therefore stressed the importance of working with Parish Councils so that they became aware of these issues.
- Members suggested having workshops in the areas that were of concern. *Members were advised that PCAS had conducted Equality Impact Assessments for age, faith and gender and that they could ask for one to be done for rural areas.*
- Members commented that there were villages that were very small with no parish council and no community centre and asked how those villages would be assisted. *Members were advised that in parts of rural Suffolk, Trading Standards paid for a leaflet drop to deliver information to small communities and this was an idea that could be used in Peterborough. It was also suggested that CAB could train up members of local village church congregations.*
- Members felt that a leaflet drop would be an excellent way of informing people in rural areas. It was also suggested that information on PCAS could be placed in newsletters or magazines and included with letters that went out to people in debt.
- Members asked if there could be a system in place to assist those people who approached the CAB in Stamford, but actually lived in Peterborough's area of authority to ensure that people were not pushed from pillar to post. *Members were advised that everyone was welcome to approach their nearest CAB for advice or information, but would have to attend their local authority CAB for welfare assistance.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission recommends that the Head of Neighbourhood Services take the following action:

1. Prepare an Equality Impact Assessment on the impact of welfare reform on Rural Communities and present back to the Commission in September.
2. Request the Citizens Advice Bureau to provide basic training on the Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme (PCAS) to Ward and Parish Councillors in Rural areas.
3. To arrange a leaflet drop throughout the Hamlets in the Rural areas of Peterborough to provide information on the Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme.
4. To arrange for posters to be placed in post offices, village Halls, schools and mobile libraries throughout the Rural Villages of Peterborough.
5. To prepare and arrange for a media article to be placed in all village and Parish Council magazines and newsletters.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Commission request that the Head of Neighbourhood Services:

1. Report back to the Commission in September with a report on the positive steps that have been taken to stop people going into poverty in the Rural communities.
2. Provide the Commission with a link to the PCAS scheme information.

5. Update on Superfast Broadband in Rural Areas

The report provided the Commission with an update on superfast broadband in rural areas. It was confirmed that the contract for broadband had been awarded to BT in March. The Broadband Delivery Group was currently in the process of planning where the fibre broadband would be laid. A number of areas had been identified where the roll-out could

take place quickly which were shown in Appendix A of the report. It was confirmed that the Broadband Delivery Group was still on target to provide fibre base broadband to 98% of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by 2015.

The following comments, observations and questions were raised:

- Members expressed concern that no rural villages have been selected and wanted to know why the areas chosen had been selected and not the villages. What phase would the villages get the upgrade. *Members were advised that the areas selected had been put forward by BT as 'quick wins' and were unable to advise when the villages would receive the upgrade as this was dependent on the roll-out of the BT model.*
- Members commented that BT should not be allowed to dictate to the council. While it was agreed to use the first phase for 'quick wins' it was highlighted that the Broadband Delivery Group should be influencing BT regarding where to roll-out in the following phases. *Members were advised that the group did discuss this with BT but the difficulty was prioritising and keeping the process as cost-efficient as possible.*
- Members noted that Lincolnshire was involved in high-speed broadband and asked if the villages to the north of Peterborough could link up to the villages south of Lincolnshire that were currently being given high speed broadband. *Members were advised that there was an overlap of approximately 10K into each of the counties that border Peterborough and therefore Peterborough villages may well benefit from Lincolnshire upgrades.*
- Members highlighted the fact that villages were currently getting broadband as slow as 1MB and this was causing great deprivation for those people living in those villages regarding access to facilities. Members were concerned that need, distance and context should be taken into considered when prioritising roll out. *Members were informed that 98% of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough would have fibre based broadband by 2015.*
- Members emphasised the request of allowing villages bordering Lincolnshire to benefit from their upgrade and asked officers to take every opportunity to make this happen.
- Members requested that the officer report back to the Committee in a short period of time to inform them when each village would be upgraded.
- Members noted that a lot of villages were in conservation areas and asked if this was being taken into account and how it was being dealt with? *Members were advised that the Broadband Delivery Group was working very closely with the planning department and conservation officers to ensure these concerns were covered.*

ACTIONS AGREED

The Commission noted the report and requested that the ICT & Transactional Services Partnership Manager:

1. Ensure that every opportunity is taken to explore all possibilities of cooperation with Lincolnshire with regards to upgrading the Barnack Exchange and
2. Report back to the Committee in a short period of time to inform them of a timeline of when each village would be upgraded.

6. Use of Homecare Monitoring System – Update

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on the use of electronic homecare monitoring since last presenting to the Commission in September 2012. Since then the Electronic Call Monitoring System (ECMS) had been implemented. Fifteen of the eighteen providers successfully implemented the ECMS by October 2012. The remaining three providers had implemented the system by January 2013. Ongoing work was being undertaken to ensure invoices and call information was accurate and reconciled. Compliance with the ECMS was also being proactively monitored by the Adult Social Care contracts team. Reviews for renewing Domiciliary Care Contracts were currently being undertaken.

The following comments, observations and questions were raised:

- Members commented that the ECMS could be a good tool to ensure maximum efficiency for the Council but wanted to know if it was working for the consumer. Was there any confirmation that times allocated to consumers were being met? *Members were advised that the whole point of the use of ECMS was to ensure that hours that had been allocated were being delivered by the care agencies. The care agencies submitted invoices and the Finance and Contracts Team reconciled the invoices against the ECMS information. It was confirmed that the invoices were currently reconciling well. A new client record system had been implemented and work was being done to ensure the ECMS data fitted with the data of the new system. The process should be completed in about 3-6 months. Reports would then be produced to show hours paid for, hours commissioned and ECMS hours.*
- Members asked if customer surveys had been conducted. *Members were advised that a range of surveys were undertaken including two annual surveys that all Adult Social Care departments in the country take part in. These were used to compare response rates with other local authorities. The most recent survey was the 'Carer's Survey' which had provided promising results. Customer reviews were also conducted annually to assess needs and the domiciliary care packages being provided.*
- Members asked how many additional local people have been employed as personal assistants to provide support as a result of the use of direct payments. *Members were advised that 435 people currently received a direct payment. The majority of these were people with physical disabilities and people over 56 years of age. No details were kept of who those people had employed. As long as the support they were purchasing was legal and met their assessed needs there was not requirement to enquire who they had employed. People often used family and neighbours.*
- Members requested that figures were provided for people in rural areas using direct payments in September 2012 compared to current figures.
- Members requested data showing the number of times non-attendance occurred for the period rural customers expected care. *Members were advised that there should be no inference that people in rural communities were being 'short-changed'. It was confirmed that the Raise system has been replaced with Framework I, which did provide better data than Raise. This made reconciliation far easier than previously. It was noted that the previous concern was about the difficulty of providing care in rural areas and this had been addressed by paying enhanced rates to providers who were requested to provide service to customers in more 'difficult areas'.*
- Members referred to paragraph 7.1 in the report and asked about the data quality issues and why it was taking twelve months to provide a report. *Members were advised that some of the tools used to extract information from Framework I had taken time to embed to ensure the data was correct. Unfortunately this piece of work had not been a priority. There was not one over-arching system specified that could be used to gather information from care providers, the data was therefore coming in different formats which had also caused a delay.*
- Members advised they would like to see some data, even if it was in draft format.
- Members asked the team to explain the Domiciliary Care challenges and what progress was being made to resolve these. *Members were informed that there had been national concerns about the provision of Domiciliary Care. Like other Local Authorities in the same situation Peterborough continued to work with care providers to ensure they provided a service in the time they commit to and that they were not sending a whole range of different people at different times of the day. The ECMS assisted in monitoring this. It was noted that one of the challenges faced nationally was staff turnover and ensuring individuals did not get many different carers. PCC continued to work with care providers to ensure they properly managed their rota in order to try and have the same carer tending to an individual or at least a smaller number of carers per individual. In terms of the new contract Members were advised that the contracts being let were regional star contracts that had been developed by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Care. This provided quality assurance as other local authorities were using the same contract and it allowed for some consistency of contracts between care providers.*

- Members asked what the piece of work was costing and wanted to know if it was worth continuing. *Members were advised that they needed to obtain a base line to ensure there was not an ongoing problem. It was noted that one of the reasons this work had been slow was because additional people had not been employed to do the work. It was acknowledged that it was costing staff time, but it was reiterated that they needed a baseline before they could confirm that there was no problem and the work would no longer be needed.*
- Members commented that they had requested this report in order to understand whether they were getting the right service in rural communities and they now needed to see the data output to confirm this.
- Members asked if the new contracts would include baseline data. *Members were advised that the new contracts would be based on outcomes.*

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee requested that the Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning, Adult Social Care report back to the Commission in three months time with:

1. A data report from the Electronic Monitoring System covering each village by post code.
2. A data report on the increase of take up of direct payments in the rural areas since September 2012.

7. Review of 2012-2013 and Work Programme 2013-14

The Committee reviewed the Work Programme and agreed to the below amendments.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Commission requested that the following items be added to the work programme:

- Solar and Wind Farms – Review of current business model compared to original business case , financials and implications of delay in planning application – September meeting.
- Parish Plans – Progress Report – September meeting.
- Education Attainment report in November to include Ofsted reports for Rural Schools for the past three years.
- Crime and Disorder in Rural Areas including crime statistics. Invitation to go out to Safer Peterborough Partnership and the Police and Crime Commissioner – January 2014 meeting.
- British Transport Police – report on crimes at level crossings – January 2014 meeting.

6. Notice of Intention to Take Key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council’s Notice of Intention to Take Key Decisions, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee’s work programme.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the latest version of the Council’s Notice of Intention to take key Decisions.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.45pm

CHAIRMAN