

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

NOTES OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP – WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER, 2019 AT 3.00 P.M.

Present: Councillor Ms. M. Freeman (Chairman of Wellbeing Scrutiny
Committee)
Councillor C.D. Smith
Councillor Ms. V. Jones
Councillor Mrs. H. Sutton
Councillor Mrs. D. Todd
Councillor J. Newbury
Councillor Ms. A. Layton

Officers: M. Edmonds, Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles
M. Walker, Environmental Health Consultant
T. Weston, Senior Environmental Health Officer
J. Hunt, Senior Committee Officer

Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

All Members present.

Notes – 29 October, 2019

Received for information.

Members Research and discussion on areas of the current Policy where improvements have been identified for inclusion in the revised Policy

The Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles explained the scope and review of the last session and advised that the revised Policy would be taken through the Cabinet process for approval.

A Member referred to a document entitled 'Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and Other Adaptations – External Review' produced by UWE Bristol which she thought provided some interesting information around DFGs and disabled adaptations. She felt that there was some good practice around the use of flow charts and the easier language used. She commented that the Council's Policy could be improved by following this as an example.

A Member agreed that the wording of the Council's current Policy could flow better and be improved. He also referred to the title of the Policy and commented that the word 'accessibility' should be incorporated. He referred to the 'Naidex' exhibition being held next year which showcased innovations in mobility, care and other areas which he considered would be useful for Members to attend.

Members reported that they had experienced some difficulties trying to ascertain information on DFGs from other Local Authorities. However, a Member commented that she had managed to locate Lichfield Council's Policy; however others such as Stafford Borough Council and South Staffs needed to be updated.

It was explained that the Council had difficulty with the drop out rate for DFG applications. The process from receipt of application to installation of equipment was explained to Members. Members were advised that the application would initially be forwarded to the Benefits department who would check to see if the applicant was entitled to the grant, if not, it would then go through a means test process. This was usually where the drop out occurred which could be due to reasons such as difficulty with form filling, not having the means to pay a contribution or not wishing to disclose personal finances.

Officers then provided information to Members on means testing and affordability, design of the scheme and cost of work and re-assessment of an applicant should their financial status change.

The Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles indicated that some minor adaptations and installation of alarms etc. up to a certain amount could all be considered, with the aim of assisting speedier discharges from hospital..

The Senior Environmental Health Officer also commented that there could be instances where a carer was required to live in and provide care in the home of a resident. There could be an issue where the property was either not adequately sized or could not be adapted to meet those needs. Therefore, the Policy could consider an extension of a bedroom or perhaps re-location to meet the need. However, there would be certain constraints to this. She also touched on the lack of provision for older people who may require respite care whilst adaptations were being carried out to their property.

A Member referred to and asked that the 'Accessible Property Register' be explored. The register could be accessed through the internet and provided a list of properties in various locations for sale or rent that were wheelchair accessible. The Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles was not aware of this register but would explore it.

The Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles summarised the next steps for officers:

- To look at the document produced by UWE Bristol
- To re-draft the Housing Assistance Policy and incorporate where possible, options discussed by Members including means testing levels and criteria
- Review Passported Benefits
- The types of assistance to be provided e.g. dementia aids, falls and trip alarms, moving assistance,
- Help to accelerate hospital discharges and prevent hospital admissions and re-admissions,
- Help to provide living accommodation for carers and respite care for people in lieu of pending adaptations, and

- Opportunities for the better promotion of the grants available

The Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles also asked Members to send any other comments or suggested improvements through to Democratic Services

He also advised that a further meeting of the Task and Finish Group would be required prior to the Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 3 March, 2019.

Close 5.59 p.m.