

**TO: ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
PANEL  
22 JANUARY 2013**

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**CONTRIBUTION OF ECC DEPT TO PUBLIC HEALTH AGENDA  
Director of Environment, Culture and Communities**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The Panel has asked to be briefed about the contribution that the Environment, Culture and Communities Department can make to the new public health agenda given that the responsibility to deliver these services will fall to the Council from April 2013. This report sets out to highlight the main contributions that will be made and also to ensure the Panel understands the opportunities that exist to help ensure that the “new” public health agenda is not simply a replica of that delivered by the Primary Care Trust.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that:-**

- 2.1 **The Panel notes the contribution that is currently being made will continue to be made by the Department in improving public health within the borough; and**
- 2.2 **Panel members note the opportunity to influence the future provision of public health services by ensuring the council embraces the full range of public health services that could be provided.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Public Health function is fundamentally about creating and maintaining the conditions that promote good health and ensuring that the population as a whole has the capability to protect their own health or is supported in doing so. This function is delivered by all departments within the Council and the services provided by the Environment, Culture and Communities already contribute to this agenda and have the potential to make an even bigger impact on the health of the population once responsibility for public health is vested in the Council from April 2013.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Not applicable.

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 5.1 Local Government’s involvement in public health actually dates back to Victorian times and it was only relatively recently, in 1974, that the NHS took over most public health functions. The Government has now introduced the Health and Social Care Act which, amongst other things, transfers the public health function from PCT’s to upper tier authorities from April 2013.

5.2 The Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing and the Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing are the Council's lead Executive Member and Officer respectively charged with ensuring a smooth transition of public health functions from the PCT to BFC. Earlier this month, they presented a progress report to the Adult Social Care and Housing OSP, and this is attached as Annexe 1. This report will therefore not repeat the detail contained in that report but will focus primarily on the contribution that the ECC department can make.

5.3 Prior to considering specifics, it is important for the Panel to note the four domains within which local authorities are expected to work:

Domain 1: Improving the wider determinants of health

Domain 2: Health improvement

Domain 3: Health Protection

Domain 4: Healthcare, public health and preventing premature mortality

It should hopefully be evident that the services provided by ECC already do and can be expected to continue to make a significant contribution to improving the health of our residents. There are new opportunities to work together better.

More detail on each domain is provided in the following paragraphs.

5.4 Domain 1: Improving the wider determinants of health.

This domain provides recognition that there are a great many factors that will determine whether someone is healthy or not. These have been described as policymaking, social, health services, individual behaviour, and genetic. It is the interaction of all these factors that will impact on the health of individuals and is why "public health" is clearly a council wide function.

National and Local policies will impact on the health of individuals. The department through its licensing and regulatory services leads on policies for alcohol, tobacco, regulated sales which help influence how individuals access these particular elements. Planning policies relating to open space ensure our residents have access to healthy environments. Transport policies relating to travel planning or safe routes to school tend to encourage alternative modes of transport that are healthier and better for the environment than using a car. Pricing policies in leisure that give cheaper access to facilities for those in financial need encourage more activity than otherwise would happen. There are many such examples but it is important for members to note that these types of policy which may not very obviously be about good health actually underpin and help secure and protect the general health of our residents.

The social aspects of health are very varied indeed and can range from quality of schools, accessibility of services, poverty and social interaction, and the environment. The department plays a hugely significant part in shaping the environment that our residents interact with every day. We have a large infrastructure of accessible green spaces that most people would recognise actually define the borough. They provide toxic free places to recreate as a family. The quality of the built environment is correlated with good health and the planning function ensures as far as practical that the borough has quality infrastructure. We monitor the quality of air and take action where appropriate to reduce toxic chemicals in the atmosphere. Our borough is clean. The numerous sports and arts groups that thrive in the borough provide places for social interaction. We try and make our roads safe through design and

maintenance and have educational campaigns to minimise the number of people who are killed or seriously injured on our roads. Regulatory services officers ensure that workplaces and homes are safe and that restaurants serve food that is safe for consumption.

The department does not provide health services as such, but interacts with GP's through our GP referral scheme and we have a strong partnership with Adult Social Services in our leisure facilities. Well qualified fitness Instructors give advice on healthy lifestyles and can also encourage individuals to see their GP if they notice issues when doing fitness assessments for example. We also provide for the needs of the disabled through the provision of grants.

Individual behaviour obviously has a significant impact on health. Through actual interaction and educational campaigns the department will try and influence people's behaviour in areas such as alcohol, diet, drink driving, exercise, speed of driving, volunteering. Leisure services, either built or natural, give individuals access to the right environment for good health.

Clearly, there is nothing directly that can be done in terms of a person's biology or genetic tendency to be prone to any particular illness or disease, but it is important for staff that interact with the community on a health basis to understand what these might be in certain groups or individuals and be able to either offer advice or signpost the individual to qualified help.

## 5.5 Domain 2: Health Improvement

The department interacts with many thousands of residents on an annual basis some of which may already be taking steps to improve their health and others may not. With so many individual contacts and facilities that are available to the public, there is a key role to be undertaken in providing advice and information to the public, although much of our ability to do so has diminished as a consequence of previous budget economies. This could be in written format or perhaps web based or personal advice from trained individuals. The department has previously had partnerships with the PCT on a number of initiatives and these are likely to be enhanced (with internal partners on the whole) once the functions transfer to the authority.

Smoking cessation, reducing obesity levels, encouraging healthy activity, offering services (e.g. the arts) which have been shown to improve mental health and well-being are obvious areas to contribute. The Leisure Division offers a GP Referral scheme, works with dementia groups and has an effective partnership with Adult Social Care at Bracknell Leisure Centre offering services to individuals with mental health issues. The e+ card allows targeted members of our community to have "stigma-free" access to services at reduced prices, and is also used to help control personal budgets for individuals with learning disabilities. As a proof of age card it also protects traders from selling restricted goods to underage persons as well as allowing those of the right age access to goods and services they are entitled to.

Preventing accidents is another key factor: be that in the home, workplace or on our roads is another area of influence for the department. The young and elderly are particularly prone to accidents. Lest Members think there is little to be done about accidents, Leisure Services can demonstrate the opposite. Although the council's leisure facilities already had a relatively envious position in terms of health and safety of customers and staff, after deploying the ISO 18002 Health and Safety system, accidents have reduced significantly and continue to be low. Similar evidence can be cited for Landscape Services and our contractors.

As public health becomes more embedded into the council services, there will be a need to ensure we develop our workforce through appropriate training to ensure they can contribute to this agenda in a more coherent and comprehensive manner than before.

#### 5.6 Domain 3: Health Protection

Although much of the council's focus will be on ensuring the public is protected from disease and illness through programmes of inoculation and the like, there is much the department does to protect health.

Most obviously perhaps, keeping streets clean and collecting and disposing of rubbish effectively ensures the environment is not conducive to encourage infestations and infections. Regulatory services will deal with pest infestations most commonly in the home and investigate the causes, hopefully preventing further issues.

We all expect the food we eat to be in excellent condition but the work of our food safety teams in retail outlets and restaurants ensure that this is the case and trading standards also ensures that what we are eating is "what it says on the tin" and is fit for human consumption.

Maintaining good air quality through monitoring and action is important in preventing problems such as asthma. Good road design and minimising congestion not only allows people to travel through the borough with minimal issues, but improves air quality as well. Air quality in the streets, is also something that regulatory services monitors and advises on. They also enforce the Smoking in Public Places legislation which has had a significant impact on our health in recent years.

The department also leads on the Council's emergency planning function which, amongst other things, is designed to protect the health of the community in an emergency.

#### 5.7 Domain 4: Healthcare, public health and preventing premature mortality

The objective of this domain is to reduce the numbers of people living with preventable ill health and people dying prematurely, while reducing the gap between communities. The areas of most relevance to the department are mainly, but not exclusively, linked to lifestyle choice where education, support and opportunity can help. The risk of cardio-vascular disease and some cancers are believed to be linked to a poor diet, smoking, alcohol abuse and lack of exercise. Smoking is obviously linked with respiratory diseases and liver cancer to alcohol abuse. Health of the elderly can be improved through exercise, the prevention of accidents and an active social life.

Our regulatory services officers have legal responsibilities in respect of infectious and zoonosis disease control. The Council appoints a Proper Officer for the control of Communicable Disease who is authorised to act under the Council's authority in respect of a range of powers to ensure the protection of public health. Not all civil emergencies have public health implications but where they do, our Civil Emergency Plan clearly establishes the role of regulatory services in respect of the protection of public health.

5.8 Summary: ECC and public health

Although this report has touched on some of the contributions that ECC already makes and could do more with regard to public health, hopefully the key message to members is that public health is an over-arching priority for the entire council and that the real challenge is about maintaining good health as opposed to dealing with illness.

The Environment, Culture and Communities Department has a key role to play in ensuring the council provides a holistic public health service and it is important the Council seizes the opportunity to do so through its newly established responsibilities.

**6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

Borough Solicitor

6.1 Not sought

Borough Treasurer

6.2 There are no financial implications as a consequence of this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.3 An effective public health service should have as one of its key ambitions the need to address health inequalities in the community.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.4 The Council's new role in taking the lead in Public Health will require new governance structures in order to be effective. The report by the Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing which is attached as an annexe to this report, describes the steps being taken to ensure a smooth transition.

**7 CONSULTATION**

Principal Groups Consulted

7.1 None

Background Papers

Health and Social Care Act

Contact for further information

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O&S Report ECC Public Health