

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report To: Cabinet
15 April 2014

From: Scrutiny Committee 2

Subject: **POLICY REVIEW – AGEING POPULATION – DRAFT FINAL REPORT**

All Wards

1.0 SUMMARY:

1.1 Between July 2013 and February 2014 the Committee undertook a review regarding an Ageing Population. This report sets out the Committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations.

2.0 INTRODUCTION:

2.1 An Ageing Population was regarded as an appropriate topic for review because people are living longer and Hambleton is expected to have the oldest population in North Yorkshire by 2035. The residents of Hambleton require access to a variety of services, not just those provided for directly by the District Council but also those services that are supported by the District Council, such as adult social care, housing, transport and voluntary organisations.

2.2 The Committee as a whole undertook the review and the terms of reference were:-

- to establish services specifically provided by Hambleton District Council (HDC) for an Ageing population;
- to gather expert evidence on the future requirements of an Ageing population;
- to examine appropriate HDC policies;
- to compare other similar Authorities' policies; and
- to examine co-ordination and working arrangements with other agencies.

2.3 The following evidence, arranged through the Enabling Officer, was provided at meetings of the Committee:

4 July 2013

- Agreed Project Plan

21 November 2013

- Evidence gathering

5 September 2013

- Evidence gathering

16 January 2014

- Evidence gathering

17 October 2013

- Evidence gathering

13 February 2014

- Concluded review

3.0 OTHER EVIDENCE

3.1 The following witnesses attended meetings of the committee to give evidence:

- David Goodwin, Director of Leisure and Health, (HDC);
- Lisa Wilson, Community Leisure Manager, HDC;
- Dr Lincoln Sargeant, Director of Public Health, North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC);
- Sue Walters-Thompson, Housing Manager, HDC;
- Jane Bennison, Broadacres;
- Paul Fisher, Hambleton Over 50s Forum; and
- Alex Bird, Age UK.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Based on the written and oral evidence presented, the Committee's findings were as follows:

- 4.1.1 The Committee accepted that generally people were living longer and that by 2035 it was expected that Hambleton would have the oldest population in North Yorkshire with 33.8% of people aged over 60. As a result of this increase, there would be pressures on services such as adult social care, health care, housing, plus many other factors.
- 4.1.2 The Committee recognised that partnership working was essential in delivering the priorities and services for the needs and aspirations of older people. However, it was apparent that there was a lack of joining up with no central focus. The District Council worked closely with the Over 50s Forum, Age UK, North Yorkshire County Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group, and a wide range of agencies within the voluntary sector to help achieve this. It was considered important that the value of older people was not forgotten, particularly their potential in volunteering which could both provide benefits to the community and social and wellbeing benefits to the individual volunteer.
- 4.1.3 The Committee acknowledged that the District Council did have an Older Persons' Strategy which had been developed in 2008 with Age UK and that it may be beneficial to update this document but accepted that there may be a cost required for this. The key priority themes within the Strategy at the time were: Be Healthy; Stay Safe; Make a Positive Contribution; Achieve Economic Well-Being. In 2012 the Older People's Sub Group reviewed the original strategy and assessed what the priorities were in 2012. There were eight areas highlighted which were: Transport; Housing; Health; Benefits; Leisure; Community Involvement; Isolation and other issues (which included communication and use of technology). Joint working on the action plan for delivery of this strategy was still on-going.
- 4.1.4 The Hambleton and Richmondshire Older People Group's main role was to identify issues which were important to older people and develop action plans to try and improve services and challenge organisations on decisions made about delivery of services.
- 4.1.5 The Committee raised concern regarding vulnerability and isolation as a lot of older people lived in rural areas, as well as the general population. However, it was accepted that these problems could also be just as prevalent in towns. Schemes such as Winter Weather Prevention highlighted issues such as dealing with adverse weather conditions and the need to prepare for the winter and assistance for those who may require help. The Committee felt that more investment into Community Planning could be beneficial.

- 4.1.6 The Committee also raised concern over transport links, especially in the rural areas. The reduction in bus services could compound the isolation issue and result in more older people feeling isolated and unable to access services they consider to be vital to their wellbeing and social inclusion. Another area of concern highlighted was patient transport.
- 4.1.7 The Committee recognised that health issues were a concern for older people and would be an issue for public services in the future given the ageing population forecasts. A report "What is Public Health" had been produced by Dr Lincoln Sergeant, Director of Public Health for North Yorkshire. This report highlighted the changes to the responsibility for Public Health being transferred back to North Yorkshire County Council from the National Health Service as a result of the reforms brought about by the Health and Social Care Act (2012). This report recognised that people were living longer and that the majority were healthy and wanted to keep contributing to society. There was a minority who were vulnerable and these presented challenges and opportunities. Vibrant communities that offered a range of activities to older people helped break down barriers and could be very effective in reducing social isolation and loneliness in older people.
- 4.1.8 Public Health was working with partners to identify prevention initiatives. It recognised that low level social care could increase the need and dependency of higher levels of social care. It was an aspiration that older people only accessed social care when absolutely necessary. This meant providing support to help people maintain their independence, such as provision of equipment or reablement services.
- 4.1.9 The Committee recognised that within the District Council there was a lot of good work being done. For example, within the leisure services there were leisure programmes and discounted rates for older people, as well as the under 16s and disabled. There was a need to cater for the ageing population and the Disability Sport Officer, which was a newly established post within the District Council, could allocate 2 days a week to work on encouraging older people to keep physically active. Public Health had been working with colleagues in the District Council to identify areas of priority such as physical activity promotion through the Leisure Centres and support for winter warm initiatives.
- 4.1.10 The Committee acknowledged that housing was a priority identified within the Older Persons' Strategy and that research had showed that there was more demand for private accommodation for older people as they wished to stay living independently for as long as possible. The majority of older people within Hambleton were owner occupiers and habited larger dwellings with 7+ rooms (including the living room, kitchen and bathroom). Some homeowners may prefer to downsize and rent smaller accommodation in later life rather than purchase again.
- 4.1.11 The Committee was advised that there were hotspots of older people across the District which were generally around service centres and towards the north east corner of the District. This was possibly due to older people choosing to live near service towns for accessibility to services, bus routes, shops, transport links, etc. Migration of people wishing to retire in the District was also a factor.
- 4.1.12 The Committee expressed concern about the provision of housing for older people and that there appeared to be a shortfall in the number of houses built to meet the demand. The Committee was advised that the demand/need for social housing sheltered properties was not as great as it may be expected and that the Choice Based Lettings information indicated that there was not a great demand for these properties. It also had to be recognised that it was not just older people who had a need for these properties as there could be less able younger people more at risk and in greater need.

- 4.1.13 New homes were built in line with local housing need as identified by the District Council, but these were not just specifically for older people they could be family homes for general need. There was reluctance from Developers to build bungalows as they were not as commercially viable as larger dwellings. Negotiations took place through the provision of Section 106 monies regarding the provision of dwellings and developers were providing larger properties that accorded with the District Council's standards or HCA Qi standards.
- 4.1.14 The Committee acknowledged that the Choice Based Lettings Scheme had been reviewed and a cap regarding assets of £60,000 had been introduced in September 2013. This would be monitored and a review would take place after the policy had been in place for a year and any impacts that the policy may have had would be considered.
- 4.1.15 The Committee recognised that the work and support from the Voluntary Sector on behalf of older people was also a very valuable resource. Charitable organisations such as Age UK did not receive any Government funding so had to be self financing together with grant monies received from other organisations. The services provided from Age UK included Hambleton Strollers; social activities and combating isolation and loneliness; provision of information and advice; home from hospital service which was part of a county wide contract with REACT and the Hambleton Over 50s Forum which provided links to the District Council's Older People's Strategy. The evidence given from these organisations was that the Council's continued cash support was vital and the Officer support was crucial.
- 4.1.16 The Committee considered benchmarking information collated by the Director of Leisure and Health which illustrated the different services offered by various Unitary, County and District Council's around the country. Information was received from Lewes District Council; Scarborough Borough Council; Northumberland County Council; Manchester City Council and Devon County Council. The main services and priorities included: staying active and healthy; volunteering; fear of crime; safe and secure; housing; transport; care and support; winter maintenance; reducing loneliness and isolation and digital technology.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS:

- 5.1 The Committee concluded that the Older Persons' Strategy was out of date and required updating and suggested that consideration should be given to providing funding to enable this to take place if necessary.
- 5.2 The Committee questioned the effectiveness of partnership working as there appeared to be no central focus. The Committee accepted that achieving a central focus would be difficult as each agency had their own priorities and services to deliver. Evidence suggested that partnership working was very effective and essential in delivering all of the different services available for older people.
- 5.3 The Committee expressed concern about isolation and loneliness, not just within rural areas but within the towns. The potential reduction in bus services would affect the ability for older people to access services and support vital to their wellbeing and social interaction. Combating isolation and loneliness was not just about transport links but involved a number of services and access to voluntary groups.
- 5.4 Members recognised the issues regarding Health and accepted that changes to the responsibility for Public Health being transferred back to North Yorkshire County Council presented challenges and opportunities. People are generally living longer and are staying healthy. Promotion of positive health is relevant at all ages and prevention of ill health remains relevant in old age.

- 5.5 The Committee acknowledged that the leisure services provided by the District Council were very good. The Leisure Centres offered a wide range of activities enabling older people to maintain a healthy lifestyle and social interaction. Although at present there were only a limited number of activities specially focussed for older people, there was access to other activities generally that everybody could participate in irrespective of age or ability.
- 5.6 The Committee concluded that generally there was a gap in the market of suitable homes for owner occupiers who would not wish to consider social rented housing and that generally older people preferred to live in bungalows rather than flats. Independent living rather than communal living was also preferential for those able to remain independent and living in their own home. Downsizing to a smaller property was also considered an issue as the housing options were not available to older people. There was a greater need for partnership working with other organisations to enable older people to remain in their own homes for as long as they were able to do so. It was suggested that developers could be encouraged to explore the provision of bungalows or flexible housing through planning policy.
- 5.7 The Committee accepted that the Choice Based Lettings scheme was an indicator of local housing needs and suggested that the statistics and policies continue to be reviewed and responded to accordingly.
- 5.8 The Committee commended the work undertaken by agencies within the Voluntary Sector. Age UK and the Over 50s Forum were recognised as vital links in the chain providing services and support for older people which promote and improve the wellbeing of older people. The Committee recommended that the Council continue to support the Hambleton Strollers and the Hambleton Over 50's Forum.
- 5.9 Following analysis of the benchmarking information, the Committee concluded that Hambleton District Council provided a very comprehensive programme of activities for older people, responded well to the needs of older people and provided the environment for older people to continue to be socially inclusive and live a long, healthy and prosperous life.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

6.1 To recommend to Cabinet that:-

- (1) it be acknowledged that Leisure Services and other activities for the ageing population provided by the District Council and other partners are very good but that when opportunities for improvement are presented they be explored;
- (2) the provision of more specialist leisure activities for older people be explored by the Disability Sports Officer;
- (3) provision of housing options for the ageing population, including provision of single storey dwellings, be considered by the District Council through the relevant policies as appropriate;
- (4) Voluntary Organisations be commended for the work they do in providing services and support for older people and that continued support be given to Hambleton Strollers and the Hambleton Over 50's Forum;
- (5) it be acknowledged that current partnership working is very effective but that emphasis on the need for greater collaborative working between different agencies be encouraged and that concern be expressed about the reduction in public transport, particularly in isolated areas;

- (6) it be acknowledged that the provision of services for older people by the District Council, together with Partners and voluntary organisations, is considered by others to be best practice but will continue to be reviewed and improved if required; and
- (7) the District Council's Older Persons' Strategy be reviewed and updated; sufficient funding be provided for this if necessary and that the issue of combating vulnerability, isolation and loneliness remain a priority within the Strategy with particular emphasis on the need to support activities across the district.

COUNCILLOR D M BLADES
CHAIRMAN

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Ageing Population