

People and Communities Committee

Monday, 16th April, 2018

SPECIAL MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Alderman Sandford (Chairperson);
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillors Baker, Carson, Heading,
Lyons, Magennis and Murphy.

In attendance: Mr. S. Leonard, Environmental Health Manager;
Mr. I. Harper, Building Control Manager; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were recorded on behalf of the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Copeland), Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors Newton and Pankhurst.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Presentation from Marie Curie NI

The Chairperson advised the Members that representatives from Marie Curie NI were in attendance to present to the Committee in relation to a whole society approach to end of life care. Mrs. Joan McEwan, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, and Mr. Craig Harrison, Policy and Public Affairs Officer for Northern Ireland, were admitted to the meeting.

Mrs McEwan commenced by thanking the Committee for the opportunity to present. She provided the Members with a brief overview of the work undertaken by Marie Curie and proceeded to outline some of the work it undertook in relation to providing care and support to people with advanced and terminal illnesses. She advised that each year Marie Curie provided care and support to around 4,000 people living with a terminal illness, their carers and loved ones.

The representative explained to the Committee that she wished to use her attendance at this meeting to try and raise awareness of the need for a whole society approach to end of life care and she highlighted the need to try and change the public's attitudes and perceptions towards death and dying.

She proceeded to outline the following benefits of a whole society approach to end of life care:

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- expands the reach of end of life care services by engaging the wider community;
- addresses a greater range of needs (including social, psychological and spiritual) that may not always be met by clinical services;
- mobilises untapped sources of social and spiritual care/support, as well as practical resources and expertise;
- increases social networks and reduces social isolation;
- helps alleviate the significant burden on caregivers;
- improves overall quality of life;
- reduces the burden on frontline/clinical services, including unscheduled care; and
- provides care in the community setting, usually the place of choice for both patients and carers.

Mrs McEwan then proceeded to outline a number of examples of community-based initiatives and ways that Belfast City Council might be able to support people affected by terminal illness. She stated that, whilst this was not a prescriptive list, it did provide real examples of initiatives that other local authorities, charities and voluntary groups across the United Kingdom had implemented in an attempt to try and support people either faced with or caring with someone with a terminal illness. The representative described examples of ideas, as follows:

- a Carer Passport scheme which would help to identify staff who were caring for someone with a terminal illness;
- introduce work-place resources to support staff affected by terminal illness and bereavement;
- undertake a review of Council policies on sickness leave, compassionate leave and carers leave to ensure that staff received the necessary support when affected by terminal illness;
- hosting a series of Death Cafes for staff and the public to raise awareness of the issues around death and dying and the support available for people affected by terminal illness (organised in conjunction with relevant organisations like Marie Curie or Cruse Bereavement Care);
- hosting information pop-ups on issues relevant to death, dying and loss; and
- supporting local art galleries and museums to run exhibitions exploring ideas of death, loss, grief and remembrance.

The representative requested if the Council would consider supporting Marie Curie NI in delivering its ambition of organising a one-day event that would provide an opportunity to promote awareness of the issues around death and dying and help provide a platform from which to share information about the many excellent support services that were available. The Committee noted that Marie Curie were also considering inviting the following potential exhibitors to participate:

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- Cruse Bereavement Care;
- Law Society NI;
- Carers NI;
- Macmillan Cancer Support;
- National Association of Funeral Directors; and
- Men in Sheds.

Following a query, the representation confirmed that Marie Curie NI would be willing to coordinate this event and organise it in conjunction with the Council.

Several Members endorsed the request in principle but noted that the use of the City Hall did not fall under the remit of the People and Communities Committee.

The representatives then answered a number of queries, following which the Chairperson thanked and praised the Charity for the invaluable work it undertook within the community and they left the meeting.

The Committee agreed that officers would investigate opportunities for the Council to support the proposal from Marie Curie NI for a partnership event in the City Hall which would endeavour to raise awareness of the issues around terminal illness and a whole society approach to end of life care and agreed that a further report would be submitted to the relevant Committee.

Presentation - Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Update Presentation on the New Build Programme 2018/19

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mrs. J. Hawthorne (Belfast Regional Manager), Mr. J. Gillespie (Regional Programme Delivery Manager for Belfast) and Mr. R. Hawe (Head of Place Shaping for Belfast) representing the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE).

The Members were presented with an update report on the New Build Programme for the period 2018/19 which included the following details:

- social housing completions 2017/18 (468 units);
- social housing units under construction at 31st March 2018 (990 units);
and
- programmed to start in 2018/19 – 2020/21 (1,631 units).

Mr. Hawe outlined the current demographic trends and the resultant social waiting list needs and he apprised the Committee with regard to the performance by the Housing Executive in relation to new build start and completion and future delivery timescales.

In response to a query in respect of land options for social housing in Belfast going forward, Mr. Hawe explained essentially there were two options, either building on land towards the outskirts of the City, or the encouragement of City centre living through the redevelopment of existing space in the City. Mr. Hawe explained city centre living and

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regeneration within the context of the Local Development Plan and stated this type of development would also be the Housing Executive's preference but stated that it needed to be mixed tenure housing.

Mr. Howe clarified that, whilst the Housing Executive continued to deliver social housing schemes, there still existed a shortfall between the demand and supply for social development housing. The NIHE was hoping to deliver more than 2000 units of social housing in Belfast during 2018/19 and its overall aim was to increase the stock of social housing.

Mr. Howe updated the Committee in respect of the Place Shaping Role within the Housing Executive which included consideration of housing need, land availability and development/regeneration within the context of the Community Plan, the Development Plan and the Belfast Agenda. He explained that one of the priorities of the organisation was to identify new development sites for social housing and that work was ongoing with the various agencies, including the Council, regarding the zoning of appropriate land. He reiterated that the Housing Executive would be liaising closely with the Council in progressing this area of work.

In response to a Members question regarding the Affordable Warmth Scheme and whether the NIHE might be able assist the Council in meeting the demand for the scheme within the Belfast City Council area, Mrs Hawthorne confirmed that the Housing Executive was currently in a position where it was able to deal with the current target number of referrals. She added, however, that if it were to receive an increase in referrals above the target she could not guarantee that the Housing Executive would have sufficient resources.

The Committee noted that there was still no confirmation in funding for the Affordable Warmth Scheme from the Department for Communities for 2018-2019.

Noted.

Planned Maintenance Programme for Belfast 2018/19

The Committee noted the contents of the Planned Maintenance Programme for Belfast which provided information on the Housing Executive's maintenance and upgrading schemes proposed for 2018/19.

Date of Next Meeting

The Chairperson thanked the officials from NIHE for attending and noted that the next quarterly meeting was scheduled to be held at 4.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 1st August 2018.

Chairperson