

**Unconfirmed**



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Thursday, 17 March 2022 at 6.30pm**

**Members of the Committee present:**

Councillor Edward Back, Councillor Stuart Bird, Councillor Judy Cloke, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Andree Gee, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Tracey Green, Councillor Colin Hedgley, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor Caroline Topping

**Other Members present:**

Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Janet Craig, Councillor Mary Rudd, Councillor Kay Yule

**Officers present:** Sarah Carter (Democratic Services Officer), Sarah Davis (Democratic Services Officer), Alex Heys (Communities Manager), Richard Jacobs (Port Health Manager), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Fiona Quinn (Head of Environmental Services and Port Health) and Nicole Rickard (Head of Communities).

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**1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies were received from Councillors Beavan and Robinson. Councillors Yule and Cooper attended as their substitutes respectively.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3 Minutes**

**RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 December 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4 Crime & Disorder Committee - Review of Community Safety Partnership**

In their capacity as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee under the provisions of the Police and Criminal Justice Act, the Scrutiny Committee received report ES/1097 from the Cabinet Member for Community Health.

### **Councillor Craig joined the meeting at 6.35pm.**

The Cabinet Member explained that her Assistant Cabinet Member, Councillor Jepson, who had been due to present the report as the Council's lead on Community Safety and Chair of the East Suffolk CSP was unable to attend due to health reasons. She stated that the report provided a reminder of the role, responsibilities and structure of the East Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (CSP), the relationship between the Safer Stronger Communities Board at Suffolk level and the East Suffolk CSP, together with key areas of activity, including plans to review and refine the CSP Action Plan and ambitions for the next twelve months. She added that the revised CSP Action Plan would be brought back to this Committee in the Autumn.

The Chairman invited questions for the Cabinet Member and Officers.

Councillor Gooch queried why Norfolk County Council (NCC) was not a Responsible Authority (RA). The Head of Communities responded that Suffolk County Council Public Health were involved and East Suffolk worked closely with NCC through the health structures and the emerging Integrated Care Systems (ICS) but they did not provide any services direct in the District, although she acknowledged that, because some of their funding was aligned to the CCG funding which was used to provide projects in the area, it was a bit of a grey area. She elaborated that NCC did not provide any social care services in East Suffolk so that was why they were not a RA but they could be invited to a meeting if the CSP was discussing something it was felt would be useful to have their input on. She added that, as the new ICS structures emerged it was likely there would be much more blurring of working across the Norfolk and Suffolk boundaries.

In response to a query regarding funding post March 2023, the Head of Communities stated that the Public Sector Leaders Group had provided the funding as they recognised several years ago that CSPs were struggling without any resources and funding was required to implement any projects. East Suffolk had also put funding into community safety and ASB from the Communities Team budget. In relation to the Public Sector Leaders Group, she did not think a decision had been taken yet about future funding but they would be collecting information about what each of the CSPs had done with their funding to decide if new funding would be made available.

Councillor Deacon requested views on whether there should have been a high level Police Officer present at the meeting to enable Members to drill down into what was happening in their communities. The Cabinet Member responded that the Police had attended Community Safety meetings previously but she was not sure if they had ever gone to Scrutiny Committee meetings. Councillor Deacon confirmed that Police representatives and the PCC had attended the Committee in the past. The Chairman explained that it had recently come to light that legislatively things had moved on in that this Committee sat as the designated Crime and Disorder Committee under the Police and Justice Act 2006 but subsequent to that the Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) role had been established and they scrutinised the Police, and the PCC was scrutinised by the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) which meant that this Committee was no longer able to directly scrutinise the Police. He added that Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 set out that there should be a Crime Strategy which is what the

Committee could scrutinise under the Police and Justice Act 2006. The Cabinet Member reminded the Committee that Councillor Jepson was the Chair of the PCP.

Councillor Yule expressed concern that this process did not allow Members to drill down to issues at grass roots levels, for example Woodbridge Town Council had little or no contact with the Police so she queried who Councillors and members of the public could contact if they could not go up the chain with any queries. The Chairman pointed out that Councillor Jepson could be contacted as the Chairman of the CSP and PCP and he reiterated that, in the past, this Council as well as many other Councils thought they had the general power to scrutinise the Police and PCC when in fact they did not.

Councillor Topping referred to paragraph 2.5 on page 18 which stated that £16,500 funding had not been spent because of a relatively low level of criminal exploitation of young people (County Lines) across the District. She pointed out, however, that train conductors stated that young people were running County lines on the trains but the Police were saying there were not any. She also asked for further details about a hub potentially being set up in Lowestoft. The Cabinet Member pointed out that the British Transport Police were responsible for problems on trains rather than the Police. In response to the lack of spend so far, the Head of Communities responded that there had not been much identified activity in East Suffolk but a lot of what had been identified had been classified as drugs activity but not necessarily County lines activity. In relation to the hub, the Communities Manager stated that the siting of the hub was still being debated. He referred to the Felixstowe hub which was a virtual hub where a range of services and expertise was brought to bear on an area, providing focus for activity on reducing criminal exploitation and he explained that they were set up when the intelligence suggested it was necessary and the intelligence was showing it was becoming necessary in Lowestoft.

Councillor Lynch referred to the fact that Kesgrave Town Council received a monthly update from the Police and he suggested Woodbridge Clerk ask them for one. Similarly, Councillor Hedgley stated that the Police would provide information on request and information was also available on their website on activities in each town. In relation to County lines activities, he pointed out that there were undercover police on all the trains and they would not say what they saw or were dealing with.

The Chairman followed up on Councillor Topping's previous question about underspend and stated that the CSP also had £6,400 in reserves and he queried if this was sensible or if it should be spent, and secondly, he referred to two Hate Crime Conferences costing £400 each and asked if holding a conference was the best use of this money instead of spending it in the community alleviating the problem. The Cabinet Member stated that she had been to some of the conferences and they had been worthwhile and usually included training. The Communities Manager responded that an opportunity to discuss best practice and emerging trends was always useful. In relation to the money not being spent, he stated that this was due to issues with the current Plan and the focus it had which was why the workshop in April would hopefully make the Plan more localised and relevant with strategic elements. He explained that County already did a lot of activities and it was hoped that creating a more localised Action Plan would give more opportunity to assign that budget where it was needed rather than potentially duplicating. The Head of Communities acknowledged that the CSP had almost taken a deliberate decision to save the money so when the Plan was

agreed with some localised actions there would be money available to support the implementation of those actions. She agreed that there was a lot of money being spent at County Council level and suggested that it was important to use our money to add value to that. In relation to conferences and events, she pointed out that they were a useful way to raise awareness with a lot of people about some of the key issues eg hate crime and County lines. She added that a lot of work had been undertaken with local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and a lot of the County Lines work had been targeted at schools so a lot of what had been done at the local CSP level was by making the big County wide issues relate-able to the people working on the ground in communities. She also pointed out that other funding had been used to support Community Safety type projects so the CSP funding had almost been protected because it had been unsure if it was finite or not.

Councillor Topping referred to paragraph 3.5 on page 21 which stated that without any further funding the CSP might continue to struggle to deliver on its objectives but she suggested that if there was money left in the pot, it might be detrimental to attracting other funders. The Head of Communities acknowledged that this might be the case but pointed out that sometimes it was also useful to have match funding available eg discussions were currently being held with the Police to put some proposals together for a Safer Streets bid, therefore, having funding available was useful but it was a balance to ensure it was used where it had the most impact and was out there being spent. In terms of covid, the Committee was informed that there had been a significant drop in ASB initially and a significant increase in neighbour complaints because of the restrictions and then people gathering in community locations eg parks and similarly there had been an increase in domestic violence so the last two years had been atypical and things were only now starting to get back to normal. She added that the latest data from partners would be fed into the April workshop eg the levels of hate crime were increasing and there was a significant spike of incidents being reported and we know that those reported were only the tip of the iceberg.

Councillor Rudd apologised for omitting to mention previously that Councillor Green was also a representative on the Police and Crime Panel.

Councillor Deacon referred to Appendix B re Hate Crime and he queried what had been done following the Hate Crime Conference. The Communities Manager explained that there was an update in the Action Plan itself but there had been broad awareness raising eg the National Hate Crime Awareness Week ran last year and a lot of awareness work had been done with partners. He reiterated that the statistics showed that it was rising in East Suffolk but from a relatively low level and he suggested that a lot of communities at risk of hate crime were potentially hidden because they were quite small so more work needed to be done to understand the true picture and engage with those communities. He added that East Suffolk were currently working with both Disability Forums to understand their experiences of hate crime and what they would like to see being done around awareness raising but he acknowledged that more work needed to be done on understanding communities experiencing hate crime and helping them to deal with it. In relation to racist hate crime, the Head of Communities stated that quite a lot of work had been done around this eg following specific incidences reported in the press, the Leader and Councillor Smith had met with a couple of young people in Lowestoft to talk about their experiences of racism and similarly the Head of Communities had met with a lady in Felixstowe whose brother

had experienced hate crime on the basis of his race. She stated that the Council was also planning a focus group on the back of a Residents Survey question last year about community cohesion because there had been a group of people who said they did not think people got on well within their area and they would be interested in being contacted to explore this further. Also, the Covid Intervention Team were doing a lot of outreach work with different communities eg including Travellers and were setting up a specific meeting with trans gender men about their experiences. She concluded that the Council was trying to take a broad view on hate crime and pointed out that it overlapped with some of the Equalities work the Council led on as well, so listening to people and determining where value could be added eg the Lowestoft teenagers we talked to wanted us to feed into schools so we did that through the Lowestoft Schools Network and Lowestoft Rising.

Councillor Gooch asked what the plan was for dealing with any hate crimes against Russians or Ukrainians moving into the area. The Head of Communities stated that various meetings were being held about supporting Ukrainian refugees and they included welcoming them into the community but she was not sure what was happening in terms of Russians, although she had heard that Russian Nationals elsewhere had been targeted. She acknowledged that this was an important issue and agreed to talk to County colleagues about it.

Councillor Cooper asked for an update regarding PREVENT risk assessments in schools and Councillor Green stated that she understood the PREVENT scheme was currently being reviewed nationally to ensure it was still current. The Head of Communities confirmed it was being reviewed and pointed out that a lot was being done locally with staff and other organisations. She agreed to ask the Council Council for an update on PREVENT in schools and email details to the Committee.

Councillor Green confirmed that she had attended the first few Community Safety Partnership meetings and was pleased it appeared a lot more work had been going on over the last year. In relation to funding, she agreed with holding outstanding balances to see if it could be used to bring any other funding into the area. In relation to communication, she acknowledged that SNT newsletters were available on the Police website but suggested Councillors needed much better communication from the Police eg a monthly or quarterly newsletter with any community safety campaigns being highlighted. The Head of Communities and Cabinet Member agreed to liaise with the Police about communication with Councillors. Councillor Green also gave an example of an incident in her Ward and the Cabinet Member stated that this was a Police issue and should be raised directly with them or contact Councillor Jepson.

Councillor Gooch gave details of a specific incident and stated that she was concerned about the lack of timely communication from the Police in relation to the victims of domestic violence. The Cabinet Member asked if the person had contacted the Domestic Violence Unit at the Kirkley Centre and reminded the meeting that this was a direct Police issue rather than Community Safety. The Communities Manager reported that the County Council took the lead on Violence Against Women and Girls and they had been focussing on awareness raising eg training around correct referral routes, engagement sessions had been held as well as domestic abuse workshops for various voluntary sector organisations. The Head of Communities added that there had also been a lot of work around safe accommodation and developing a network of Domestic

Abuse champions to support people experiencing domestic abuse. She recommended talking to the Waveney Domestic Abuse Forum as they would be able to support the individual with the right referral route.

Councillor Topping queried when the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy would be considered by Full Council. The Head of Communities responded that final amendments were awaited from Housing and it would hopefully go to Cabinet in May and then Full Council. She added that Rachel Tucker had been seconded to revise the policy in conjunction with the Environmental Protection and Housing Teams. She was also trying to encourage a greater awareness of ASB and had many activities planned especially for ASB Week to try to make people aware of what it was and how to report it, including potentially introducing a reporting app and she was working on community triggers which was the process to get a review if people were not happy with the way their complaint had been dealt with. The point was made that some of the activity sitting underneath the Policy was just as important eg to refine and improve our processes in dealing with victims and upskill the Communities Officers to support Councillors and communities where there were issues. The Committee was informed that there had been a huge increase in all types of ASB and an increasing impact on those who were vulnerable or in poor mental health, both perpetrators and victims.

Councillor Cooper asked if the Crucial Crew Project would work as well if it went virtual. The Head of Communities responded that there was a pilot looking at how effective virtual was using scenario based videos with the teachers working through the questions. She stressed that there was no intention to move fully virtual but it would be done on a preference basis so it was another way of delivering it and hopefully reaching more people. She explained that this was partly because partners had struggled to resource lots of different sessions at different schools. She reminded the Committee that Crucial Crew was aimed at younger primary age children and Crucial Crew Plus was for older age children. She added that Officers were also looking at an innovative project dealing with community safety issues for older people eg scams and staying safe online.

The Chairman asked how much involvement the other partners referred to in the legislation as Responsible Authorities (RAs) had and if it wasn't sufficient then what was being done to encourage them to get involved. The Communities Manager acknowledged that it wasn't currently sufficient but this was partly due to the nature of the Action Plan and the things included on it. The Action Plan needed revising to be effective and encourage the RAs to really engage, it needed to be more localised and take into consideration the priorities those RAs had as well as the priorities the refreshed County data would point to in terms of areas of focus so the April workshop was part of the re-engagement of RAs who over time had become disengaged because they could not see how they fitted in to the Action Plan. He added that, post workshop, a much more localised Action Plan would be designed with smarter objectives that could be worked on together to deliver. The Cabinet Member stated that the RAs had been involved in the Action Plan and the Head of Communities agreed stating that the County Council had always been a strong partner as well as the Police but she acknowledged that some of the other partners had been less so, although the CCG were now keen to be involved. The Chairman stressed the need to invite all the RAs to the next meeting of this Crime and Disorder Committee. The Chairman also queried what input and added value other partners should be bringing in and the Head

of Communities responded that it was about them feeding their priorities in and sitting around the table when discussing the shared priorities but she pointed out that some of those partners had been dealing with the pandemic for the last two years. She confirmed that there had been a lot of willingness over the last few months from partners to re-engage and the importance of them being involved and having an opportunity to shape things had been stressed to them. She added that it was also important to understand what their priorities were around safety eg the Police's key priorities were the challenges they had for dealing with mental ill health so it would be really useful to have the CCG around the table to discuss things like that.

## **RESOLVED**

1. That, having reviewed and commented on the current position of the CSP, including the Action Plan, a further report be made to this Committee later in 2022 following the refresh of the CSP priorities and Action Plan.
2. That the Head of Communities liaise with County Council colleagues to provide an update on PREVENT in schools and liaise with the Police regarding better communication with Councillors.

## **5 Cabinet Member Scrutiny Session**

The Chairman explained that, as part of the recent review process, a change had been made to the Cabinet Member Scrutiny Sessions to narrow the focus to two areas of their portfolio to make them more effective. He welcomed and thanked Councillor Rudd, Cabinet Member for Community Health who was the first to go through the new process and would be focussing on Port Health and Healthy Promotion/Healthy Eating.

The Cabinet Member stated that Suffolk Coastal Port Health Authority (SCPHA) delivered the port health function for the Port of Felixstowe and was contracted to provide some port health functions for Tendring District Council and Ipswich Borough Council, as well as some feed functions for Suffolk County Council and Essex County Council. Its current primary operational location was the Port of Felixstowe. The Port of Felixstowe was the UK's largest container port handling over 4million TEU (twenty foot equivalent) containers per year and 40% of the UK's 3<sup>rd</sup> Country food imports. SCPHA had responsibility for all food safety and food standards matters relating to imported foods and materials in contact with food. The current service included the following:

- Operation of Felixstowe Border Control Post.
- Delivery of the Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary (SPS) controls
- Delivery of the High Risk Foods Not of Animal Origin (HRFNAO) controls
- Imported food control (non-animal origin products) at Felixstowe, Harwich International Port, Harwich Navyard and Mistley Quay.
- Delivery of the Illegal Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU) controls, including the checking catch certificates for specified products to ensure the legitimacy of the products
- Delivery of The Plastic Kitchenware (Conditions on Imports from China) (England) Regulations 2011 at Felixstowe, Harwich International Port and Ipswich.
- Verification of organic produce at point of importation

- Inspection and issuing of Maritime Declaration of Health on vessels
- Investigation and control of infectious disease at the Ports of Felixstowe and Ipswich
- Monitoring and sampling of feedstuffs at the Port of Felixstowe
- Undertaking risk based monitoring and surveillance programmes based on intelligence
- To support the Port Health service an internally developed software solution is utilised. This solution, Port Health Interactive Live Information System (PHILIS), was also licensed to other ports, for which support was provided
- Liaise closely with Her Majesty's Government (HMG) departments on the current and future regulatory framework

In relation to the known and anticipated impacts of Brexit on Port Health, the following three main areas were noted:

**Workload:**

The uplift to the service had been designed around the DEFRA figures provided in 2019/20, which remained valid until Apr 21. However, DEFRA had recently (2022) provided revised estimates of EU consignments being in the range 91,000 to 150,000 (as opposed to 37947). The original estimate saw a 300% increase in consignment numbers, if the latest projections were confirmed the increase could be in the range 480% to 790%.

The anticipated changes would require modified / hybrid or new operational processes for EU goods – these were currently being worked on by the Port Health team but details from the Government remained vague. The challenge was that there would effectively be dual import processes:

- one for 3rd Country goods
- and one for EU goods.

The operating model would see SCPHA delivering the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) regime (controls to protect animal, plant or public health) across multiple sites – Felixstowe and Harwich BCPs, with 4 different inspection areas. The required legislation and policies had yet to be published and the team continued to monitor data provided by Defra and the trade to gain an insight into likely demand in July.

SCPHA had PHILIS, and was working on the replacement system, but HMG systems such as IPAFFS had not yet been fully enabled for EU goods, and we continue to seek access to the HMRC system – GVMS.

As yet there was no centrally produced training package. As SCPHA was seen as a centre of excellence for imported food controls, it experienced multiple requests for assistance and, where possible, these were accommodated, however, they generated a resource requirement, for which we had been able to recover costs for.

**Income:**

As there was currently no intervention required for EU origin consignments, charges could not be made for these consignments. It was anticipated that some



level of charging might be brought in in July 2022, but details and confirmation were awaited on this. The Third Country service continued to be charged as usual.

SCPHA had been successful in bids to DEFRA for funding to cover the costs, both salary and non-salary (eg transport, utilities, HR,Tech) incurred in preparing for EU Exit checks. A funding request submission has been made to DEFRA for 1 April to 30 June 2022 to maintain current resources of £726,592.29.

The long term financial outlook was positive, as the projected volume of EU trade was expected to generate sufficient income to ensure that the Port Health service remained a self-funding service. This would remain under review until trade volumes were confirmed.

**Staffing:**

Nearly 60 new colleagues had been recruited across the whole of Port Health, some supporting the new 24/7 service to meet the challenges expected by proposed changes. This had created challenges around recruitment, training and retention of staff in part due to competition from other Port Health authorities and the need to train staff (it took on average about 9 months from scratch to be able to undertake checks).

There was an ongoing conversation with DEFRA, about the new consignment projections and funding requirements for additional staff to accommodate this further uplift in consignment numbers. It was estimated that a minimum of a further 33 operational staff would be required.

With regard to Freeport East, it was noted that, under the current proposals, there should be a limited effect on SCPHA outside the Port curtilage. Freeport East would create a zone with advantageous economic trading environment, however, this should not, under the current framework, change the bio-security import requirements at the border. Therefore, it was not currently expected that SCPHA would have to extend its reach to deliver imported food controls outside of its current operating locations. However, if the situation changed SCPHA were well placed to consider the opportunities that might be presented.

The current impacts were likely to be an increase in trade through Felixstowe and Harwich to service / utilise the opportunities presented by Freeport East. Alongside this, there might be creations of multimodal facilities or distribution hubs – whether this would include commodities that fall under regulatory requirements delivered by SCPHA was currently unknown. SCPHA maintained contact with the Freeport Development Officer and monitored the ongoing developments.

In relation to longer term initiatives, the Cabinet Member explained that SCPHA was also engaged and consulted on a number of long term initiatives:

- **Freeport East**
- **Border Strategy 2025**

A border which embraced innovation, simplified processes for traders and travellers and improved the security and biosecurity of the UK 2025 UK Border Strategy - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)). Two particular commitments of this strategy which might impact on Port Health were:

1. Single Trade Window - a facility that allowed parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardised information and documents with a single entry point to fulfil all import, export, and transit related regulatory requirements.

2. Trust Eco-Systems - a combination of data, technology and trusted relationships to deliver robust upstream compliance, allowing processes to be moved away from the frontier and facilitate an improved flow of goods.

- **PHILIS/Neoma**

PHILIS was highly regarded and a good news story. The customer base continued to increase and since 2019 had been deployed to 8 new sites with 4 others in the pipeline bringing the total PHILIS user community to 17 Port Health Authorities. Work continued on NEOMA – the PHILIS replacement project. There were challenges around recruitment of necessary ICT staff in a difficult recruitment market with a small pool of technically competent staff commanding high salaries. There was a resourcing gap within both BAU and the Neoma project. Potential options were currently being explored with HR.

- **Accommodation**

The accommodation needs were currently under review, given the additional staffing, responsibilities and training requirements.

The Chairman invited questions and Councillor Topping queried how the SCPHA ensured it kept staff particularly those who were recently employed and trained up. The Cabinet Member responded that the Port was seen as an exemplar and people wanted to work for the best Port in the Country.

Councillor Lynch asked what happened when a container was rejected and the Port Health Manager responded that it depended on the product but it could be re-exported outside GB, destroyed, used for a purpose other than what it was intended, or further processing but it depends on what the failure was for and the nature of the goods.

Councillor Cooper commented on the success of PHILIS and in response to his query, the Cabinet Member confirmed that it was a good income generator and was currently being updated.

Councillor Deacon queried the establishment figure and the Cabinet Member responded that she was not sure of the total number of people working in Port Health but it was approximately 150 staff covering the 24/7 service. She added that it had originally been intended to invite Councillors to the Port but due to Covid this had not happened but it would be looked at later in the year if restrictions allowed. Councillor Deacon also asked who would be developing PHILIS and the Cabinet Member confirmed it would be done in house at Port Health.

Councillor Green commented that a tour of Port Health was worthwhile and really interesting so a visit would be great. She requested that the information provided be circulated and the Cabinet Member agreed to email it to the Democratic Services Officer for circulation.

Councillor Deacon queried if Port Health would be involved if wine was bottled in the Freeport and going straight out again. The Port Health Manager stated that yes, depending on the product, as he understood it, the bio security controls would still apply but they would not get taxed on it.

In response to the Chairman's query, the Cabinet Member confirmed that it was too early to assess the effect of Freeport on Port Health staff yet.

Councillor Gee asked if Brexit had had a positive or negative effect on the running of the Port and the Cabinet Member pointed out that SCPHA had to take on extra staff and from 1 July 2022 all EU goods would have to be checked but the Government had not confirmed the date yet.

In response to a query from Councillor Coulam, the Cabinet Member confirmed that a number of apprentices had been taken on. The Port Health Manager also confirmed that some current employees had been given the opportunity to go to University to get qualifications, so SCPHA was investing heavily in its employees.

The Chairman requested clarification that the 60 new staff engaged had not cost East Suffolk Council or taxpayers any money and the Cabinet Member confirmed that SCPHA money was ringfenced .

Councillor Topping asked if students were locked in for a certain amount of time and the Port Health Manager confirmed that, as part of the post entry training provided, they were tied into a period of time working for Port Health.

Councillor Cloke referred to the publicity regarding delays re inspections and queried if there were still any delays. The Port Health Manager confirmed that there had been some delays primarily due to the Ever Given blocking the Suez Canal, Covid issues, supply chain issues and driver shortages. The turn round time for examinations was 2 1/2 to 3 days for Third Country trade but was quicker for EU countries.

The Chairman asked if there was a statutory time that the Port Health work had to be done from when a ship arrived. The Port Health Manager stated that there were no statutory timescales but goods needed to comply with the regulatory requirements. He added that, because of the commercial sensitivities for the Port of Felixstowe, the inspections were done as quickly as possible and the handovers between Port Health and the Port were as smooth as possible. He added that bearing in mind the volume and mega vessels there were peaks and troughs and the 24/7 service had been brought in to accommodate all these issues.

The Chairman requested that the Cabinet Member move on to the second identified part of her portfolio in relation to Health Promotion/Healthy Eating.

The Cabinet Member thanked her Officers for assisting with the Port Health part of her portfolio and she explained that the Council worked closely with Suffolk Public Health and the two CCGs, as well as local voluntary sector partners, to support a range of projects to tackle specific health and wellbeing priorities.

### **Childhood Obesity**

The Council promoted healthy eating ([Healthy eating award schemes » East Suffolk Council](#)) including through Eat Out Eat Well and Take Out Eat Well and was currently looking at refreshing them and incorporating the new requirements for calories on menus. A specific piece of work was underway to pilot working with take away businesses in Saxmundham and Leiston to promote healthier options.

The Council was working with Suffolk County Council on the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme which provided at least four hours a day of activities to keep young people active and engaged as well as a meal, over six weeks over the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays for children and young people on free school meals.

Two Community Partnerships were working with the Saxmundham and the North East Integrated Neighbourhood Team on shared health priorities, including childhood obesity, dental care for young people and mental health provision. A specific example of a project to tackle childhood obesity was the Healthy Movers project which focusses on developing physical literacy in children aged 2-5 and improving their school readiness.

Work in Lowestoft had focussed on the most deprived two wards (Kirkley and Harbour) and taking a whole place approach to tackling obesity based on the successful Amsterdam model and the Council was currently working with the County Council to secure funding to implement the proposals identified.

Following the most recent lockdown, the Council launched its new Boost grants programme which focussed on four key priorities identified during the pandemic, including projects to help people to get Fit and Active.

### **Oral Hygiene**

A number of projects around oral hygiene were emerging in different Community Partnership areas. Thanks to funding from a number of Lowestoft Councillors through the Enabling Communities Budgets and sponsorship from Morrisons, oral hygiene kits would be given to all pupils in Year 1 and 2 in Lowestoft schools. The Beccles, Bungay, Halesworth and Villages CP agreed at their meeting in February to sponsor kits for older children (Year 6) in their primary schools. A similar project is being developed in the Leiston and Saxmundham area including a bespoke package for older students (years 7/8) due to the increase in hospital admissions for dental procedures following poor oral hygiene.

### **Mental Health**

The Council had funded a number of projects around mental health and emotional wellbeing through its Covid Community Recovery Plan, including free 'Working with

Those in Distress' and 'Mental Health First Aid Introduction' training for local voluntary organisations and community groups.

At its meeting on 7 March 2022, the Community Partnership Board agreed a package of activity worth over £120,000 around emotional wellbeing, including commissioning Suffolk Mind to deliver courses for schools, people working in youth settings and adults, plus free places for East Suffolk schools for a Theatre in Education performance on mental health and wellbeing. It was also hoped to fund training for barbers and tattoo parlours on mental wellbeing as they were a key contact point, particularly for men.

The three Integrated Neighbourhood Teams in the south of the District all focussed on Mental Health and Wellbeing at their February 'Connect' meetings and their ideas were being developed into an action plan that focussed on themes such as Communication / Signposting, Loneliness and isolation, Waiting Well, Financial Challenges and Parents and families.

Mental health networking events had been held in March at Lowestoft Community Church, Martlesham Heath Community Hall and the Stratford St Andrew Riverside Centre where the new Mental Health round of the Boost grants (£50,000 available) were launched.

### **Community Partnerships**

Five of the East Suffolk Community Partnerships had Health and Wellbeing as a priority:

- **Aldeburgh, Leiston, Saxmundham and villages Community Partnership** - Encourage and enable everyone to be more physically active and healthy
- **Beccles, Bungay, Halesworth and villages Community Partnership** - Improve wellbeing, enable people to live healthy lives and encourage physical activity including walking and cycling
- **Felixstowe Peninsula Community Partnership** - Improve physical and mental health and wellbeing
- **Kesgrave, Rushmere St Andrew, Martlesham, Carlford and Fynn Valley Community Partnership** - Support people to age well
- **Lowestoft and northern parishes Community Partnership** - Improve mental health and wellbeing and tackle childhood obesity

Projects supported through Community Partnerships to improve mental and physical health and wellbeing included:

- Virtual Mile walks / Walk in the Park / Golden Mile
- Talking Benches
- Community growing projects/raised planters
- Mental Health Friendly Towns – Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth
- SPOT Wellbeing physical and mental health courses
- Launch of more Meet Up Mondays to complement current provision
- Wild Wellbeing courses
- Sport for Over 65's
- Trim Trails

- Chinwag Groups
- Young People's Obesity project

### **Amsterdam Healthy Weight Programme**

In 2013, one in four to five children in Amsterdam were found to be overweight or obese. To tackle this 'wicked problem', Council and Health Department of Amsterdam set out to develop a long term approach that reached into every domain of a child's life. Council members awarded the programme with unanimous approval and a sizeable, structural budget, reaching as far as 2033, when children of the first 'healthy generation' will celebrate their 18th birthday. Amsterdam viewed a healthy life for children not just as a responsibility of the parents, but as a responsibility shared by everyone who played a part in the life of children, be it close by like neighbours and teachers, or from afar like policy makers and the food industry. The programme had steadily been working on building a coalition of partners, all working in their own domain on this issue, sending out the same message: healthy behaviour was normal behaviour. Three simple lifestyle rules formed the basis of this message:

Healthy food and drink, exercise, and sleep.

As a city of almost a million people, where still almost one in five children was overweight or obese, Amsterdam had joined all forces to offer the healthy environment and healthy life that every child deserved.

The Chairman asked if there were any questions.

Councillor Cooper reported that Leiston had paid Dentaaid, a charity, to come to the town and provide dental treatments and they had seen 42 patients in just one day. He commented that they would hopefully be returning in May because although expensive, there was clearly a need in the area.

Councillor Back referred to the number of fast food outlets especially on Retail Parks and asked if Planning could be urged to think twice before granting permission. The Chairman reminded the meeting that applications could only be refused on Planning grounds.

The Chairman queried how much the total budget was for Health Promotion/Healthy Eating and the Cabinet Member stated that the Eat Out Eat Well Schemes came under Environmental Health and encouraged the provision of healthy options and a lot of money came from the CCGs. The Head of Communities stated that she had never worked out the total budget but it would include over £1.5M funding from the Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG as the Council managed the procurement of the Social Prescribing Service in the south of the District, although that was the CCG passporting money through the Council. The CCG had also made a £0.5M transformation fund available three years ago which the Council was still allocating funding from, although it had almost gone and had been used for various projects that met CCG and Council priorities. There was a small amount in the Communities Team budget and in kind support from Norfolk and Waveney CCG, similarly the Council had a close working relationship with Public Health. There was also funding from the Community Partnerships. She stated that, although there was not an overall dedicated budget,

there were lots of different pieces of funding eg there were a number of projects in the Covid Recovery Plan around tackling health and wellbeing including the Boost Grants and she echoed the Cabinet Member's comments that the elements within other services such as Environmental Protection should be added. She confirmed that, although some was external funding, some was from East Suffolk Council particularly the Community Partnerships and Councillor Enabling Budgets. She reminded the Committee that the CP Board had just allocated £120K towards mental health and wellbeing projects. She concluded that it would be an interesting exercise to add it up.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Head of Communities confirmed that the statutory responsibility for promoting health sat with the County Council's Public Health Team, however, there were some aspects the District had responsibility for. She explained that East Suffolk was taking the widest view of health and wellbeing, and was contributing so much to the wider determinants of health such as housing, leisure services, planning environments which made it easier for people to walk and cycle, licensing and environmental protection teams around the Eat Out schemes etc so it was something the Council had chosen to do because we felt we had a responsibility to do it. She stated that East Suffolk perhaps went further than some Districts because there was a commitment in the Strategic Plan to support people's health and wellbeing. She added that the Council was keen to look at it on a place basis similar to Amsterdam but on a much smaller scale eg in the Leiston area we are looking at all sorts of different aspects of health including Healthy Movers Project and working with takeaways to encourage them to offer and promote healthier options.

The Chairman expressed concern that, if the Council was not sure how much was spent on this, and not assessing the impact the money being spent was having, how could the Council conclude it was an effective use of money and more or less funding should be spent. The Cabinet Member stated that she sat on the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board which enabled her to see what other Districts were doing with health and she pointed out that starting young with the schools and get the children to eat better etc this would lead to healthier adults so it would cost everyone less in the long run.

Councillor Topping queried if East Suffolk was working with One Life Suffolk and commented that they were doing health checks with families across the area but were struggling to get uptake. The Head of Communities confirmed that the Council worked very closely with them as well as other partners eg Everyone Active to see what could be done to help people recover from Covid and the potential decrease in activity.

Councillor Gooch referred to a conversation she had with Amanda Turner, Oral Health Improvement Manager for Norfolk and Waveney CCG and queried how the Council could have a more integrated joined up approach to ensure all children across the district were supported rather than depending on Enabling Communities Budget and individual CPs to fund projects. The Head of Communities stated that the Council was talking to Amanda Turner and her equivalent at Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG to explore how we can work with them. She explained that their focus was very young children from 2 onwards and they were working with us to develop materials going into the packs being distributed in the three CP areas that had the live projects. She acknowledged it was a big financial commitment and added that the Council was working with Morrisons in Lowestoft to get a discount on items such as toothbrushes and toothpaste and working with Amanda to reduce the cost of materials in the

packs. She had also raised the issue at County level given it was not just East Suffolk children and young people this affected as it was a growing problem and was linked to the cost of living crisis because people were struggling to buy essential supplies.

In response to Councillor Hedgley's query it was confirmed that the Health and Wellbeing Drop in Centres would be reinstated.

The Councillor queried if the cost of living crisis would result in some families who were buying on a budget to buy cheap calories that were not always healthy calories. The Cabinet Member referred to cooking classes held by Councillors Smith and Mallinder because people did not know how to cook. The Head of Communities agreed that often bad food is cheap food and referred to the Community Pantry model which had well balanced items and the Pink Orange Service meal kits and they were also nutritionally balanced to ensure families were getting healthier options. She stated that there were a whole range of things that needed to be done to encourage people to make healthier choices. Councillor Gee endorsed the need for children to learn how to cook basic healthy meals at school. The Cabinet Member suggested that those who were on the County Council should put that forward.

The Chairman referred to statistics which showed hospital admissions where obesity was a primary or secondary diagnosis had increased significantly and he queried if (a) we were losing the battle, (b) doing the wrong things, or (c) if we were not doing these things, would they be even worse. The Cabinet Member stated she felt it was (c) they would be even worse and commented that a lot of people during Covid stopped exercising and needed to get back into it. The Head of Communities agreed and acknowledged there were a lot of health implications from being overweight and obese which had serious long term consequences for people. She suggested there was more that could be done, working in conjunction with the County Council and partners on food and exercise projects in specific CP areas but she acknowledged it was a challenge because of the ready availability of unhealthy food. She added that it was also about encouraging people to drink more water rather than high sugar energy drinks etc. She concluded that it was hoped to get some funding to do the Amsterdam style of working in two of the most deprived areas of Lowestoft.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers for their informative presentations and in particular the Head of Communities who had been shortlisted for an award.

## **6 Scrutiny Committee's Forward Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Committee received and reviewed its current Work Programme and Members were reminded that the April meeting had been cancelled so the next meeting was on 19 May 2022 topic to be confirmed but provisionally it would be a review of the resources in the Council's Legal Team.

The meeting concluded at 8.55pm.

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Chairman