

**REPORT FROM THE DEPUTY LEADER  
AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE  
AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING TO THE MEETING OF  
FULL COUNCIL ON WEDNESDAY, 8 JULY 2015**

Safeguarding Adults Conference

Members will be pleased to learn that more than 180 people attended the Isle of Wight's first ever Safeguarding Adults Conference on Friday, 15 May 2015.

Jointly organised by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and the Isle of Wight Safeguarding Adults Board, the event provided both professionals and members of the public with updates on key issues from a range of national and local speakers.

As well as providing important updates on matters such as the Care Act 2014, which means adult safeguarding becomes a statutory role within local authorities for the first time, the conference also looked at a number of issues people may not normally associate with the Island

Jasvinder Sanghere from the charity Karma Nirvana, spoke about forced marriage and honour based violence. Jasvinder revealed at the conference that her charity has dealt with cases on the Isle of Wight, revealing it is often a hidden crime which needs sensitive handling by professionals to provide much needed support for victims.

A presentation from Detective Sergeant Matthew Gillooly from Hampshire Constabulary talked about the issue of human trafficking and modern day slavery and a specialist anti-trafficking partnership that has been set up across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to tackle the issue.

Keynote speakers at the conference included Suzy Braye, emeritus professor, Sussex University (self-neglect); Rod Landman, ARC UK (mate crime/hate crime); Jasvinder Sanghere, Karma Nirvana (honour based violence and forced marriage); and Clare Foreman, Local Government Association (Care Act and making safeguarding personal).

Consultation launched on Wightcare charges

A two-month consultation on plans to increase the amount the council charges service users for the Wightcare community alarm and telecare service was launched in May. The council has not increased its charges for five years, which has resulted in a growing gap between the cost of delivering the service and recovering income.

All service users and others with an interest in the Wightcare service are being encouraged to register their views as part of this consultation. The online version of the

consultation can be found at [www.iwight.com/consultations](http://www.iwight.com/consultations). All service users have also been written to offering options on how they can complete the questionnaire, as well as support to help them. Wightcare provides 24 hours a day, 365-days a year emergency support service to approximately 2,300 vulnerable residents on the Island. It enables residents to maintain their independence through the community alarm/telecare service – with a call monitoring and mobile response service for emergencies also available.

Wightcare also operates the call answering service for the council's out-of-hours provision for adult social care, housing and some other services – as well as call answering for various partner agencies.

Factors which have led to the increased cost of running the service include fuel costs, equipment, insurance, maintenance costs and inflation. Some service users have also required a significant level of mobile response support due to their complex care needs, which has meant that this level of response costs more.

### Future plans for health, social care and wellbeing on the Island

Residents, town and parish councils, businesses, care professionals and charitable organisations were invited to attend a special event about the vision and ambitions for the future of health, social care and wellbeing on the Island.

The event, which took place at the Riverside Centre on Wednesday, 3 June, was an opportunity to find out more about My Life a Full Life and about an exciting scheme the Island has been chosen to take part in. The Island has been selected by the government's New Care Models Team to be one of 29 Vanguard sites around the country. Each site will receive support to develop new ways of providing health and social care that meet the needs of individuals. The team visited the Isle of Wight last month to find out more about the Island's plans.

### Carers IW

Carers IW were the successful grantees for the small grant funding prospectus programme advertised in January 2016 which was jointly commissioned by The Isle of Wight Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group for Carers Support.

The new service will be seeking to increase awareness, signposting and support that will improve the lives of adult carers on the Isle of Wight in line with the outcomes identified within the Working Together with Carers Strategy 2013 to 2016.

The launch of this new service coincided with celebrating National Carers Week and provided the opportunity to attend the first Respite Weekend for carers. This provided the opportunity for carers to have a break away from their caring responsibilities and to spend time with others who are in similar situations and understanding of the difficulties carers face.

Carers had the option for staying for the whole weekend or attending on a daily basis and enjoyed some relaxing, quality time out with good food, interesting activities and complimentary therapies.

## **Report from Exchequer Services:**

### Help Centres

The help centres dealt with 8,560 enquiries during May with a resolution rate, at the first point of contact of 99.57 per cent against a target of 99per cent.

The help centres' top five service enquiries for May were benefits, local council tax support, council tax and business rates, parking permits and penalty charge notices, and blue badges enquiries.

During May two benefit officers transferred from the customer services team to the contact centre, as part of a pilot to centralise all benefit call handling. Two advisors have also been working within the benefits team since November learning benefits processes and legislation so now all calls are being managed within the contact centre, freeing up back office staff to process housing benefit and council support scheme new applications and changes in circumstances.

The Credit Union has not been successful in engaging residents to open new accounts on the Island and have suggested they may have to withdraw their presence. The Credit Union's chief executive officer has been invited to attend the Anti-Poverty meeting to promote this service in order to try and retain the local service.

The customer interface consultation has gone live and we are encouraging comments from residents which will enable us to redesign our service and the way in which we interact with our customers. As part of developing the future service a pilot is being run in Ryde Help Centre which will hopefully provide useful data.

### Housing Benefits

The average time to process a new claim during May was 15.09 days (target 19 days for May 2015). The team have made a very good start to the new financial year at a time where there has been significant subsidy work and benefit reviews.

The average time to process a benefit change in circumstances was 4.72 days (target 9.5 days for May 2015). The Atlas work undertaken keeps the average percentage down as these files have to be cleared on the day received. The team have dealt with large volumes of work and also setting up a new incentive scheme which looks at detecting fraud and error in the system (FERIS).

A review of the future Local Assistance Scheme is underway and the team are liaising with our Hampshire colleagues to explore different approaches to providing this Local Welfare Provision.

The funding available for discretionary housing payments (DHP) was reduced to £185,553 (from £217,690) in the current financial year and, to date, awards total £18,351 with a committed figure of £13,330 leaving £153,871 for the rest of the year. A review of the existing DHP policy is presently underway to reflect the changes to funding and future policy intentions for appropriate support. The proposed new scheme will be presented to members in due course for consideration.

During May the blue badge team received 110 new claims and 177 renewals with 75 cases being referred to the clinic. However all applications were processed within the agreed timeframes.

General applications and renewals have increased by 17.6 per cent and due to changes in legislation affecting disability benefits. This now means that individuals do not automatically meet the qualifying criteria. This change has resulted in a 24.67 per cent increase in the number of clinic referrals that are being made resulting in an increasing workload for the team.

Development work is being planned to the online Northgate portal which will give landlords their tenant's benefit entitlement information. Two social landlords have been identified to assist with the trial which will enable them to receive information electronically in real time thereby aiding their debt collection.

The Local Council Tax Support scheme is in the early stages of review to enable consultation and to consider options for future years.

Work trays are relatively heavy given the additional work required to review benefit cases to work towards the Department for Work and Pensions FERIS (Fraud Error Reduction Incentive Scheme) targets, and both teams are now focused to process in a timely fashion to avoid any reduction in subsidy.

### Benefits Legislation Update

Indications of the benefit related items being considered for inclusion in the government's July budget are as follows:-

The new government has set out the start of its welfare savings programme aimed at saving £12 billion from the welfare budget. The main elements of the Full Employment and Welfare Benefits Bill include:-

- Freezing the annual uprating of most working-age benefits, tax credits and child benefit for two years from 2016/2017. Pensioners however, will remain protected - with the 'triple lock' applying for the duration of the parliament and the

continuation of winter fuel payments, free bus passes, TV licences and free prescriptions. Other benefits not subject to the freeze include disability benefits relating to the additional costs of disability, statutory maternity, paternity and adoption pay;

- Reducing the benefit cap from £26,000 to £23,000
- Removal of automatic entitlement to housing benefit for 18 to 21 year olds
- Replacing Job Seekers Allowance with a new youth allowance for 18 to 21 year olds involving additional conditionality rules and lasting for just six months, following which claimants will be required to go on an apprenticeship.

### **Corporate Governance - Report from Elections and Local Land Charges**

- Individual Electoral Registration came into effect in the summer of 2014, with new electors being able to register online if they so wish, along with secure online confirmation of their identity via central government databases. So far the system has worked well, with many new electors on the Island choosing to register online rather than by using a paper form.
- Ahead of the general election which was held on Thursday, 7 May 2015 there were a very large number of on-line applications to register, mainly driven by televised coverage of the national leader's debates and the adverts run by the Electoral Commission. On the last day to register there were nearly 600 applications, although around 55 per cent of these were subsequently identified as duplicates from electors who were already registered, and this part of the online system will be reviewed nationally to address this issue.
- The general election itself passed off without incident, and a smoothly run count saw the result declared just after 3am, a time which put the Isle of Wight Constituency in the first quartile of areas to declare. The efforts of Simon Wiggins, as the deputy acting returning officer with special responsibility for the count should not pass unnoticed.
- The ability for electors to register online is indeed welcome, and it removes the barrier of having to first obtain a registration form before a potential elector can register. The online service was well received, although it has become evident on a national basis that there are a number of areas that need further attention. These include:
  - The number of existing electors who thought that they had to re-register, leading to over 50 per cent of applications being marked as duplicates;

- Some electors assumed that as they registered online that they would be voting online, and failed to read their poll card when it arrived;
- Electors who registered online (and especially overseas electors) were surprised when they had to obtain and complete a paper form in order to apply for an absent vote.
- Our attention now turns to the 2015 annual canvass, and the initial forms will be sent to all 71,570 households on the Island in late July. For the first time, householders will be able to respond to these forms online, which will not only be more convenient for residents, but will save postage and processing costs. Prior to sending a paper form to newly identified potential electors, an e-mail prompt will be sent to them (where we hold an e-mail address), which will hopefully encourage online registration, and again contribute to reducing costs wherever possible.
- Following the revocation of the £22 statutory fee for personal searches of the Local Land Charges Register, the wider issue of the continued ability of the authority to charge for property search services remains unresolved. We still await further guidance from the government on this matter, and until then our fees and charges remain in place, and unaltered. We have now completed scrutinising detailed claims from various personal search companies stretching back to 2005, which relate to the conflict between the Local Land Charges Rules and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, and a settlement is expected during the summer of 2015.
- The Infrastructure Bill which was announced in The Queen's Speech 2014 contains a section on the future of Land Registry and their proposal to assume the duties for Local Land Charges. This process has received parliamentary approval, and the process commenced in April 2015 with an initial data gathering exercise, although some slippage is now anticipated. At present only local land charges will be affected in the short term, but there are longer-term plans to look at the whole remit of Local Authority CON29 searches. The possibility of VAT being imposed on Local Authority Searches has also been raised again, and we await further guidance on this matter.
- Local land charges income for May 2015 was a little above our averaged adjusted monthly target, whilst our total actual income is also a little higher than the cumulative monthly target.

## **Report from Coroners and Registrars**

- The coroner service successfully moved to and from County Hall for most of June with minimal service disruption.
- A Magna Carta citizenship ceremony was held at Carisbrooke Castle for five new citizens, attended by the Chairman of the Isle of Wight Council, the High Sheriff and the Lord Lieutenant.
- Twenty-seven ceremonies took place at approved premises across the Island, with a further 15 ceremonies held at the Register Office (RO). This is compared to 19 approved premises and 19 RO ceremonies for the same period in 2014.
- The number of provisional bookings for ceremonies was 38 in June, compared to 45 taken in June last year. Nine priority applications for copy certificates were received – ten down on up last year's number.
- June continued to be a busy month with a high number of copy certificate requests and four approved premises applications processed.
- Procurement of the RAFTS/STOPFORD diary system – now agreed. The service hopes to have the new system in place by the end of September quarter.
- Service redesign yet to be finalised and service running one FTE post down.
- No new financial issues identified although there will be less approved premises renewals (once every three years) this financial year – a budget deficit of £13,000.

### **Councillor Steve Stubbings**

**Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Community Wellbeing**