

**Select Committee on Health & Adult Social Care – 21<sup>st</sup> September 2006**

**Report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services**

**Older Peoples Strategy for Dudley**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To advise the Select Committee on Health & Adult Social Care of the Older People's Strategy. To identify an area of the Strategy for consideration by the committee for scrutiny.

**Background**

2. The population of Dudley is getting older. Currently the number of people aged 65 and over amounts to 50,843, some 16% of the Borough's total population. This will rise to 18% (55,000) by the year 2011 with the largest projected increase being in the 65 – 69 and over 85 age bands
3. It should be recognised that most people over the age of 65 lead healthy and active lives. Whilst some have a disability it is a matter of degree of disability presented; older people want to remain as active citizens engaged in their communities with ready access to universal services
4. At Corporate Board (15<sup>th</sup> February 2005) a crosscutting approach to the development of an Older Peoples Strategy was agreed that would include all Council Directorates, local health services and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The completed strategy was approved by Cabinet (8<sup>th</sup> February 2006) when it was resolved that the strategy be endorsed and published, and that actions for the Council be incorporated into respective Directorate Strategic Plans
5. The Strategy (a copy of which may be accessed in the Members' Library) presents "Dimensions of Independence and Well-being" that were identified by older people across Dudley and address a range of life experiences encountered by older people: -
  - Housing, the Home and Regeneration
  - Neighbourhoods and Intergenerational Issues
  - Social Activity, Social Networks, Keeping Busy and Lifelong Learning
  - Getting Out and About, Transport and Community Safety
  - Income

- Information Giving
  - Health and Healthy Living
6. In addition to the Strategy's "Dimensions of Independence and Well-being" there are considered to be a number of objectives guiding the implementation of the Strategy: -
- Promoting the principles of active engagement in later life
  - Making sure that older people are aware of the range of opportunities and activities that facilitate health and well-being
  - Ensuring that older people have equitable access to all services
  - Making certain that older people have access to a range of services that can help to maximise their income, help them claim appropriate benefits and deal with any advice needs they may have around financial issues
  - Ensuring that older people feel safe and secure in their homes and in the community
  - Encouraging a positive approach to the experience of ageing through older people working together and with others to challenge assumptions about ageing
  - Challenging assumptions about ageing by promoting links and activities across generations
  - Preparing future generations for the opportunities and challenges of later years

These areas serve to complement the Dudley Community Strategy and the Dudley MBC Council Plan support the preventative approach promoted within the Green Paper "Independence Well-being and Choice" (Dept. of Health March 2005) and the White Paper "Our Health, Our Care, Our Say (Dept. of Health January 2006)

7. Along with these and other initiatives in Dudley, the Older Peoples Strategy aims to shift the culture to one that fosters an increasingly collaborative, person centred approach to working with older people. This is needed because it has become clear that the most effective way to meet diverse needs of older people is for all concerned to work more closely together. The layout of the Older Peoples Strategy serves to identify the roles of the Council's Directorates, and others, in contributing to a collaborative approach. This is essential in working to reduce inequalities in Dudley.
- The very essence of the Older Peoples Strategy approach is for older people to be engaged as valued citizens in all areas of public life – contributing to service design, delivery and evaluation and to their wider communities

8. Older people have actively been involved in Strategy development and this has included three conferences: -

- 2004 – All Our Tomorrows: Leading The Way
- 2005 – All Our Tomorrows: The Way Forward
- 2006 – All Our Tomorrows: Strengthening Communities

During the 2006 Conference the Dimensions of Independence and Wellbeing were discussed in detail during workshop sessions, again involving older people. From these sessions comments on each Dimension were captured and examples are presented below: -

- Housing, the Home and Regeneration

One of the key issues was the need for better communication and better access to information. There was a perceived lack of information available to older people on the range of options open to them, from ordinary housing through to residential care including aids and adaptations, sheltered housing, and the Council's Housing With Care schemes

- Neighbourhoods and Intergenerational Issues

It was recognised that there are many similarities between the issues affecting different age groups and the need for respect between young and old. It was recognised that young and old people are affected by changes in family structure, the loss of neighbourhood culture and lack of community facilities

- Social Activity, Social Networks, Keeping Busy and Lifelong Learning

The workshops acknowledged that there are many activities and opportunities available locally, and that they all bring benefits in terms of social contact, companionship, stimulation and increase in confidence. Often people don't know about them, cannot get to them because of transport and parking problems, or do not want to go on their own

- Getting Out and About, Transport and Community Safety

The main issue under "transport" was to do with bus travel. Many older people relied on buses to get around, but had many complaints about their experiences of using buses. Getting on and off buses is difficult for older and disabled people, the kneeling step is not low enough and many bus drivers do not park at the kerb. The visibility of community police and the increased police presence through community support officers was very much appreciated. Issues identified included the need for better street lighting,

pavements and dropped kerbs to make it safer for older people to get around and more seating in towns for the less mobile

- Income

The workshops discussed issues around work, pensions and benefits for older people. It was identified that older people want freedom of choice about whether to continue to work or retire and pursue fulfilling activities. Some thought that the pendulum could swing too far from early retirement to people working forever. The benefits system was felt to be far too complicated and many people did not get the benefits they were entitled to because they did not understand the system

- Information Giving

The topic of information came up continually in all other workshops. Some of the issues raised were the need for easy to understand leaflets, in plain English, and for shorter, clearer forms. Major life events, such as the loss of a partner, were times when information was most needed. All agencies could do more to work together, share resources, and produce and promote joint information

- Health and Healthy Living

In these workshops it was realised that there was more to health than doctors, and healthy living involved a range of aspects such as eating well, keeping active, and being free from isolation, worry and stress, all of which impact on health. Older people wanted to be informed about healthy living

9. Progress against the commitments made in the strategy is monitored by the Older People's Board, a multi-agency board which is part of the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board arrangements. Each of the 7 Dimensions of Independence has an older person as Champion who links directly with the Themed Action Groups who are responsible for actioning the strategy Commitments. There is an overarching Champions Group, including Councillor Hazel Turner, the Local Authority Older People's Champion. A detailed implementation plan is in the Process of being finalised.
10. The Select Committee on Health and Adult Social Care has expressed an interest in focusing on implementation of part of the strategy and it is suggested at least initially one of the dimensions of independence is selected, with the Select Committee contributing to the implementation of this key dimension of change and service improvement.

## **Finance**

11. Any financial implications arising from implementation of the Older Peoples Strategy will be met from within existing resources

## **Law**

12. Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972 enables the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions

## **Equality Impact**

13. The Older People's Strategy is aimed at ensuring older people have full access to universal services and it will therefore make an important contribution to addressing ageism, racism and discrimination on the grounds of disability. Key to this is that the implementation of the strategy will support older people to live at home and to increase their independence and well being and will contribute to work with other agencies to promote the health and wellbeing of older people.

## **Recommendations**

14. That the Select Committee on Health & Adult Social Care receives and comments on this report on the Older Peoples Strategy.
15. That the Select Committee on Health & Adult Social Care be invited to select one of the 7 Dimensions of Independence and Wellbeing for the purpose of scrutiny



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## **List of Background Papers**

Report to Corporate Board on the proposed development of a Borough wide strategy for older people (15/02/05)

Dudley Community Strategy (December 2005)

Dudley MBC Council Plan (2005 - 2008)

“Independence, Well-being and Choice”, Green Paper, Dept. of Health (March 2005)

Cabinet Report - Older Peoples Strategy for Dudley (08/02/06)

“Our Health, Our Care, Our Say”, White Paper, Dept. of Health (January 2006)

Dudley Borough Older Peoples Strategy (April 2006) – Conference Launch