

Select Committee on Health and Adult Social Care 28 January 2010

Report of the Director of Public Health/Director of the Urban Environment

Update on Dudley's Healthy Town Programme

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Select Committee on Health and Adult Social Care of progress made with the implementation of the Borough's 'Healthy' Town programme.

Background

2. The Healthy Towns Programme was funded from the Community Challenge Fund, which is jointly funded by the Department of Health (DoH) and the Department for Children and Family Services (DCFS). The total fund was £30 million.
3. The funding for the Dudley programme is £4.5 million over 3 years which will come into the PCT and be transferred to the LA via a series of section 256 agreements.
4. Dudley's programme focuses on three main areas.
 - The development of family healthy hubs, based in parks and open spaces.
 - The development of active green corridors.
 - Service reform.
5. The programme items to be funded from these external sources are but one part of Dudley's strategic approach to tackling the high levels of obesity in the borough. The bid was commended for its 'strategic fit'.
6. There will be at least one hub in each of the five Area Committee areas. They will include physical facilities such as toilets, buildings, outdoor gym equipment, as well as activity programmes, staff and community events.
7. The active corridors will provide improved access and increased walking and cycling opportunities. This will be delivered via the development and implementation of cycle paths, foot paths, signage and cycle storage.

8. In the context of service reform the aspiration is that the influence of the healthy towns programme will impact and register with all public sector agencies not just those with a health remit. Examples could be anything from support from managers for workplace health initiatives, performance indicators and targets within policies and strategies promoting physical activity and healthy eating, through to impact on policing methods and how schools deliver physical education.
9. There will be an extensive promotion of health messages to assist people in taking action to improve their own health (in line with the forthcoming national Change 4 Life programme). Dudley's programme is designed to have an impact on child and family health, reduce inequalities, reduce air pollution, impact on anti-social behaviour, and increase social and community cohesion.
10. The programme will contribute to targets within the New Generation Local Area Agreement (NGLAA) particularly NI8 'adult participation in physical activity' and, NI56 'halt the year on year rise of childhood obesity'. It will also help with the 5 hour physical activity in schools offer, the Community Plan and the Children's plan.

Programme Developments

11. Since the last report to the Committee a significant amount of activity has occurred and is summarised below:
 - The five hub sites for the Borough were identified for each Area Committee area following a selection process that linked to previous programmes including Liveability, Transforming your Space, Steps to health and Play Pathfinder.
 - Plans for the building hubs have been produced and subjected to stakeholder consultation.
 - Planning approval has been obtained for all hub site buildings and associated lighting where provided.
 - A review of stakeholder engagement in the programme has been conducted with a specific focus on elected members and a Healthy towns booklet is in the process of being finalised and produced.
 - Extensive work has been undertaken with regard to the development of the 'Active Travel Corridors' a sample of which will be brought to the meeting for members to view.
 - The selection of the outdoor gym equipment has been completed, an order placed and it is anticipated that these will be installed in the next two months

- Job descriptions have been finalised for the Park Rangers Service that will be engaged to support the programme and the recruitment process has commenced.
 - Progress has been made with the police who have committed to support the programme. This support is anticipated to mitigate fears and concerns regarding vandalism and anti social behaviour in and around the hubs. Through an increased Police presence in and around these areas
12. Evaluation baseline collection will end mid February with a projected total of around 5000 completed surveys. The process being led by Worcester University, will provide the programme with a key insight into the catchment populations activity levels, diets, perceptions of safety in their communities and their use of the parks. A follow up evaluation will occur after key milestones of implementation of gyms – programmes, and completion of buildings
 13. It is also acknowledged that concerns have been expressed by a number of Members from various Wards with regard to the level of involvement that they had had in the project, both in terms of proposals for parks in their own wards and the programme more generally.
 14. Specific meetings were held with the Ward Members from each of the Wards where Healthy Hub sites are to be established in order to address particular concerns Members had with the proposals for those sites, any additional developments that such Members would like to see incorporated within the project and ongoing communication.
 15. These meetings were held during November and December and Members raised a number of site specific and generic issues regarding the project. These issues have been taken on board and where possible included in the delivery plan for each site whilst others have been identified as something to be developed over a longer period outside of the Healthy Towns project.
 16. Whilst these discussions have been both positive and fruitful and have gone some way to putting the Healthy Towns project back on course, the fact that it proved necessary to have such meetings is a signal that certain aspects of consultation, communication and Ward Member involvement in the project were not as they should have been despite the fact that reports/presentations on the project had been made at Area and Select Committee meetings, consultative events held for each site and the provision of information on the project via both the Council's intranet and internet sites.
 17. An Action Plan for ongoing stakeholder involvement and consultation has been produced for the Healthy Towns Project. Actions within the plan include-

- A section of the Members portal should sign post to latest documents, FAQ's, minutes and reports. The special Healthy Town website which will be set up in the new year, can also have a Members area that will link to this part of the portal.
- Monthly updates for Members to be sent via e mail. This update will be shared with other key stakeholders where appropriate.
- Other additional updates to be sent out when needed. This can be tailored to individual requests and sent to one or several recipients as needed.
- Produce Member updates ahead of Area Committees on Healthy Towns. Separate meetings can also be facilitated where necessary.
- Production of Information Booklet on the Healthy Towns project that receives monthly updates with project developments.

Ongoing Implementation

18. The ongoing physical implementation of the programme has three phases of work within it:-

- Park Improvement Works – including the provision of outdoor gyms; multi use games areas (where provided): replacement and upgrading of play facilities; paths/cycleway works and cycle stands, entrance improvements. The timescale for those works at all hub sites is planned for implementation between February - March of this year.
- Provision of Hub Buildings – new buildings or extension to existing buildings, is planned on four of the five sites (The Dell Stadium already has a building of the required specification). The construction period for these is site specific with the current timetable having an estimated completion date of August 2010 for the final hub building. Following the discussions with Ward Members at 14 above, it has also been agreed to commit to making these buildings as green and energy efficient as possible and this will be incorporated within the design and construction wherever possible.
- Active Corridors – These will comprise various elements from the Type of signage used, surface treatments and crossing point enhancements. The current timescale is for all works to be completed by the end of December this year.

19. As important as the physical improvements are to this programme of equal significance to the success of the project are the service reform elements that are being implemented.

20. The key challenge relates to the transformation of what has been a traditional park keeping role to one that places more emphasis on engaging with park users, promotes and leads activities and champions the physical activity agenda.

21. Consequently the recruitment process for the new park ranger service which is scheduled to be undertaken between February and April is a key priority for the project team at present.
22. Priorities and Challenges
- For the next 12 months we are communicating healthy messages to the population so that the facilities are used.
 - Safeguarding the sites during construction periods and beyond, hence the importance of the Police buy-in.
 - Ensuring that changes to practice are sustainable and supported by all partners.

Finance

23. The funding for the programme is £4.5 million over 3 years which will come into the PCT and be transferred to the LA via a series of section 256 agreements.

Law

24. Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 empowers the Council to take action to implement measures it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the Borough.

Equality Impact

25. The programme is borough wide, inclusive and accessible to all in line with the principles of Dudley's inequalities strategy.

Recommendation

26. The Select Committee on Health and Adult Social Care notes the progress of Healthy Towns programme, and the content of this report and comments accordingly.



Director of Public Health



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For the Director of the Urban Environment

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