

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 6 November 2008

Subject: **Health Inequalities**

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Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (i) That Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the key issues identified in the presentation by the Director of Public Health.
- (ii) That the Committee confirm the Council's commitment to work in Partnership with others to address Health Inequalities for our community and deliver the aspirations of the Joint Action Plan for Health Inequalities across Essex.

Report:

1. Health Inequalities are differences in health experience and health outcomes between different participation groups. These groups can be determined by socio economic status, geographical area, age, disability, gender or ethnic group. Improving health and wellbeing and narrowing the health gap between disadvantaged groups and the rest of the population is one of Central Government's top priorities.
2. In February 2008, the Audit Commission reported on a study they had undertaken to assess current arrangements across Essex. Their aim was to identify ways of reducing health inequalities and to examine future plans to improve life chances.
3. One of the key assertions of the Study (attached) was that addressing such a complex issue should not be the preserve of any one organisational sector but could best be addressed through co-operation and a shared vision.
4. Therefore it was positive to note, that it was established that, across the County, there is a strong commitment to tackling health inequalities amongst partners. In addition it was discovered that currently there is a clear understanding that health inequalities are everyone's business and that Councils have a community leadership role to play in this agenda. This commitment is demonstrated through the Local Area Agreement and Local Strategic Partnership Plans.
5. The District Council has a good track record of engagement with its local Primary Care Trust, jointly delivering a number of initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents. These range from the successful GP Referral Schemes and Cardio-Rehab classes running within the Council's Leisure Centres, to outreach programmes dealing with teenage sexual health and parenting skills, as well as the current "fit as a fiddle" initiative targeted towards increasing activity in the over 50 years age group.
6. This commitment to joint working can also be evidenced through the work of the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which is now chaired by the Leader of the Council. At a recent planning event held by the LSP, combating health

inequalities was identified as one of the highest priorities to be addressed in the development of the new Sustainable Community Strategy, for the District.

7. The Joint Action Plan resulting from the Audit Commission's Health Inequalities Study, which has the support of District Councils and Health Providers across Essex, is contained at Appendix 3 of their report.
8. Members' attention is drawn to Recommendation R9, Political Involvement i.e. "to improve awareness and knowledge of Health Inequalities and their implications amongst elected Members and all service areas within Essex public services".
9. To this end, Alison Cowie, Director of Public Health, West Essex Primary Care Trust, will give a presentation to the Committee, on the Health Profile of the Epping Forest District.