Dementia Support Services – Overview and Scrutiny Review

To: Cabinet
Date: 2 February 2012

Main Portfolio Area: Health, Wellbeing and Rural Communities
Author of report: Mike McGeary, Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Classification: Non-exempt
Ward: All

SUMMARY

This report is being submitted to Cabinet, with a set of recommendations, following a review of how well people with dementia – and their carers – are able to access vital support services.

This report was considered by the Environment, Housing and Health Select Committee at its meeting held on 8 November, where the recommendations were approved. This report is now being presented to Cabinet for approval and subsequent implementation.

LINK TO STRATEGIC COMPASS

Primarily, ‘Passionate about our community’ (‘A prosperous’ and ‘a healthy Tunbridge Wells’) and ‘Passionate about our customers’ (‘Customers are treated fairly and with respect’, ‘Customers are offered a choice’, and ‘Customers are understood and their needs are met’).

Report status

This report is for a decision by Cabinet.

Route to Implementation/Timetable:

If approved by Cabinet, work can start on implementing the recommendations immediately. In one recommendation, there is a commitment to undertake a follow-up visit, which will result in a further report to the Select Committee shortly.
BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

1. In January 2011, the Environment, Housing and Health Select Committee appointed a working party to investigate dementia support services in Tunbridge Wells Borough. The group consisted of Councillors Mrs Cobbold, Mrs Crowhurst, Elliott and Dr Hall. (At the start of 2011/12, Councillor Mrs March was appointed as a replacement for Councillor Dr Hall.) The work was undertaken partly through the interviews and visits made by the working group members and partly through whole-Committee discussions.

2. The focus of the review was how easily people with dementia, and those who look after them (their carers), can access vital support services, to enable the m to remain in their homes. The approach taken was to enquire what their experiences had been and what might be changed, to improve their pathway.

WHAT IS THE ISSUE THAT REQUIRES A DECISION AND WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE PEOPLE OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS?

3. This topic formed the basis of a major review for the Committee. Nationally, there are estimated to be 750,000 people with dementia in the UK, a number which is believed will double over the next 30 years. Within the Tunbridge Wells Borough, there are an estimated 1,360 people living with dementia (2008 figure); this is expected to rise to nearly 2,000 people by 2023.

4. This sets the context for what this means for the people of Tunbridge Wells Borough. The impact on local people and local services is significant and is expected to increase.

5. The services available for people with dementia and for their carers are a mix of (i) NHS West Kent and Kent Adult Social Services jointly commissioned provision; and (ii) charity and voluntary organisations, principally the Alzheimer’s Society and Crossroads Care (West Kent). The expected increase in the need for support services will place a significant demand on both the NHS/KCC and charity/voluntary provisions.

WHO HAVE WE CONSULTED AND HOW? (OR WHO WILL WE CONSULT FOLLOWING THE DECISION?)

6. A range of interested groups and individuals were consulted as part of this review. These include: the Alzheimer’s Society; Crossroads Care (West Kent); West Kent’s Joint Commissioning Manager for Dementia; the Tunbridge Wells Mental Health Services for Older People unit (at Highlands House); and a local GP who heads up the West Kent and Weald Commissioning Group. A full list appears under the ‘calendar of evidence-gathering’ section of the report, set out on page 4.

HOW WILL THE DECISION BE COMMUNICATED?

7. If the report and its recommendations are approved, all parties who helped in this review will be sent a copy of the findings and those who are the subject of follow-up action will be contacted.
WHAT ALTERNATIVE ACTION COULD WE TAKE? (where appropriate)

8. It is believed that the recommendations set out provide a sensible and logical response, based on the evidence which the Select Committee heard. The support services for people with dementia and for their carers are not directly provided by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council but the authority’s community leadership role means that we are in a unique position to help signpost people towards better-informed decision-making.

CONCLUSIONS

9. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of this review have been thoroughly examined and have had the full backing of the Environment, Housing and Health Select Committee. They have also received the broad backing of the Portfolio-holder for Health, Wellbeing and Rural Communities. The recommendations are submitted to Cabinet for approval and implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation 1:
That, based on the evidence provided, the Borough Council write to all GPs in the Borough, seeking their feedback on the following issues: (a) their knowledge and use of the information service provided by the DementiaWeb – Kent and Medway website and 24-hour help line for people requiring good, practical information; (b) their knowledge and use of the ‘core service’ provided by Crossroads Care (West Kent), which aims to prevent carer breakdown (and lessen the need for emergency and crisis action for people with dementia). (This could also act as a basis from which to judge improvement in, say, 12 months’ time.)

Recommendation 2:
That, within the next three months, the working group members undertake another visit to speak to Dr Edwards at the Tunbridge Wells Mental Health Services for Older People unit at Highlands House in order to assess the current situation regarding the implementation of care packages for people diagnosed with dementia.

Recommendation 3:
That, without any commitment to providing financial support, the Borough Council uses its economic development role to assist the Alzheimer’s Society identify larger premises, which will enable it to meet the current – and the strong likelihood of increased – demand for its vital support services.

Recommendation 4:
That the Borough Council uses its community leadership role to help sign-post people with concerns and questions about dementia to the DementiaWeb and 24-hour help line, as part of essential and continual awareness-raising work.
Recommendation 5:
That a ‘dementia awareness’ training course be offered to staff who have a frontline role with the public and especially those who undertake home visits as part of their work, such training also to be offered to members, who might find this helpful in their ward/constituency work.

Recommendation 6:
That the Borough Council maintain close contact with the Joint Commissioning Manager for Dementia, to monitor progress in achieving the targets set out in the Kent and Medway Delivery Plan, and signal the authority’s interest and commitment for initiatives which result in improved outcomes for people with dementia and their carers.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:
The evidence base leading to the conclusions and recommendations is set out in the report.

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Background Papers
The Scrutiny Select Committee report, entitled ‘Dementia – are patients and their carers able to access suitable support services?’, November 2011

APPENDICES TO REPORT
Appendix A – Cross Cutting Issues
Appendix B – Environment, Housing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee report, entitled ‘Dementia – are patients and their carers able to access suitable support services?’, November 2011