

# Executive summary and key recommendations

## Summary

Wychavon District Council is widely acclaimed for its successes in achieving LGC Council of the Year and second place in The Times Best Council to Work For – successes that come as no surprise to those who live locally and work with this highly innovative council. Staff and elected members exude a passion for local public service and their 'can do' approach is evident for all to see.

There is a clear vision for local health improvement which is articulated in the community strategy and recently identified as one of five key priorities in the council strategy. This vision is clearly understood by managers, members, staff and the council's partners and responsibility for the health improvement agenda is broadly shared.

The council has developed a creative style of communication to both its' staff and to its' partners and the public, and this has been used to good effect in sharing the key messages for health improvement. From eye catching posters to staff briefings by the Managing Director and regular local publicity, the importance of health improvement is apparent.

In 2003 the council leadership determined that they wanted the council to be the best, and this focus and entrepreneurial approach is driving the health agenda e.g. when a local cottage hospital was faced with closure, the council stepped in and built a new hospital at Pershore to lease back to the PCT. There is a history of strong relationships with partners, and partners in general trust the council and respect their proactive approach.

The council has worked hard to prioritise local health needs, working closely with the large gypsy and traveller community and polish immigrants. Both the County Council and other partners recognise the invaluable local leadership and support shown during last year's devastating floods. Overview and Scrutiny has played a key role in health improvement demonstrating an innovative approach to the need for a hospital, and making staff health at work a priority, as well as showing a willingness to overturn previous decisions, for example by re-building the salt water lido at Droitwich.

The council has been able to maximise its use of resources and apply its' determination to deliver its strap line 'good services, good value' to deliver an extensive variety of health improvement initiatives. Many of these are written up as case studies and this 'story telling' approach by the council has enabled strong, positive messages to be shared and understood by staff, members and partners. The council has the potential to become a true learning organisation, and when its performance management is rigorously applied, can continue to go from strength to strength.

There is an exemplar healthy workplace programme in place with staff and members taking advantage of a wide range of schemes including reduced gym fees,

comprehensive medical checks, healthy food in council and leisure centres and cycle loan.

This healthy communities peer review was commissioned to enable the council to take stock of its progress on health improvement, identify any gaps and learn from others. The need for some form of over-arching strategy or co-ordinated action plan was recognised as the key gap by the review team, and its importance was reflected in many of the discussions with managers, members and partners throughout the three day visit. This reluctance to draw everything together – and create yet another strategy document - has made it difficult for the council and its partners to clarify short, medium and long term outcomes and identify appropriate outcomes and proxy measures.

Whilst communication is generally excellent, there are still some staff and members who are unclear about their contribution to the health improvement agenda. This is still new ground, and some increased awareness raising and staff/member development will be needed before everyone recognises how their role contributes to local health and well-being. Some scrutiny members lack confidence in tackling health providers and this awareness raising coupled with development in robust challenging techniques would support them in health scrutiny. Not all staff and members are aware of whom they should contact in the PCT when working on joint projects, and this could be easily rectified.

Whilst there is a vast range of health improvement initiatives underway, there remains more to be done to identify and support local people who are not taking these up. There is a need to profile local health improvement issues and develop a social marketing approach. The council could do more to shape and inform public opinion on health through its community leadership role and working more closely with the LSP's. Whilst scrutiny is very proactive, it could do more to encourage local participation in scrutiny committee meetings.

The council has regularly reviewed its partnership arrangements overall, but has yet to focus a partnership review on health improvement. There are opportunities for more effective partnership working and greater involvement of the voluntary sector to achieve even better results.

The PCT does not offer a healthy workplace programme to its staff and there is potential for the council to role model the benefits of such a scheme to both the PCT and other local employers.

During the course of the review the team identified a number of key issues:

## **KEY ISSUES**

### **Strengths**

- lots and lots of positives from Team Wychavon
- self aware
- innovation, passion and enthusiasm shine through
- getting to grips with the agenda

- healthy employer exemplar

### **Areas for consideration**

- Everything in one place – it will add value and focus!
- “Health is everyone’s business” – using your key resource to best effect
- From Art to Science – evaluation a key tool
- Scope for more effective working with partners and better bangs for your collective bucks
- Opportunities for more effective community involvement
- Understand the total resource picture and manage it

### **Key Recommendations**

1. Develop a co-ordinated action plan for health improvement with your partners – capture all your strategic thinking, planning and action in one place. This will give you internal and external benefits including a clear basis for performance management and reduced duplication
2. Determine short, medium and long term outcomes and work with DPH to identify proxy measures where appropriate
3. Develop a communication dialogue to underpin the co-ordinated plan and ensure all stakeholders are actively engaged
4. Work closely with DPH to better understand the health inequalities issues and – regularly invite DPH to Senior Management Team meetings
5. Ensure information is generated at a local level?
6. Instil a belief that health improvement is everyone’s business – provide member and staff development to ensure that staff are confident to raise health issues with members of the public, and members are confident to provide robust challenge in health scrutiny
7. Introduce a social marketing approach, building on the good work already in place, to target those who most need health improvement support
8. Review the ‘fitness for purpose’ of partnerships against the new strategic health promises and priorities and work together to target available partnership resources
9. Share the benefits of the healthy workplace scheme to encourage other employers to consider the health of their staff
10. Use the opportunity presented by JSNA to work with partners on meeting local service needs
11. Take a strategic approach with partners to determine the allocation of resources