

Summary of the November Public Health Committee meeting

The Public Health Committee met on Wednesday 6th November.

It was with great pleasure that the committee welcomed Colin and Marlene Yon from the St Helena Cancer Support & Awareness Group. In October the group organised a number of events to increase awareness of cancer and to raise money. These had been very successful.

The committee wished to acknowledge the important work that the Group does and to explore ways in which the Health and Social Welfare Directorate can work in partnership with the Cancer Support Group. Colin and Marlene stressed the confidential nature of their work but expressed interest in strengthening links with H&SW.

There is currently work ongoing on collating and analysing statistics of cancer rates on island by the Senior Medical Officer. Once this work is completed information will be shared with the Cancer Support Group and there can be a joint public information campaign.

Other topics covered including screening, equipment and psychological support for people diagnosed with cancer. It was a very productive meeting and the committee look forward to working closely with the Group in the future.

Nicolet Hutter, the DFID, Health Adviser is on island as part of her yearly visit. As Health will be one of the main topics for DAPM (Development Aid Planning Mission) this year her arrival is most welcome. The committee will meet with her formally during her visit.

David Jenkins took the committee through a risk matrix that he has developed for the health service. This is to identify any areas of potential risk within health care delivery and explore ways that these risks can be managed. David stressed that while he has written the matrix in consultation with staff it is for staff to develop ways in which to manage risk and to identify what resources may be required. This is part of the 'systems' approach to health care management that he is introducing.

Disaster management is part of the remit of the Public Health Committee though operationally much of the responsibility lies with the Police Service. The Chairperson reported on a meeting that he had attended with Kevin Hornett, the Disaster Management Coordinator and Peter Coll the then Chief of Police. It was agreed that a Disaster Management update would be given to the Committee every three months and that any policies relating to Disaster Management would come through the Committee. There was also some discussion about the role of the Committee during a disaster. While the Committee would not be directly involved in disaster management they discussed the possibility of after a disaster the Committee playing a leading role in post disaster recovery through political leadership. Following a disaster it is now recognised that it is important for a community to resume normality as soon as possible as this could be a role for the Committee. There is further work to do on this but it may include some training.

Back yard slaughtering remains an issue that needs to be resolved. The Chairman presented a compromise proposal that would involve Environmental Health officers not inspecting home slaughtered meat. This meat could then be sold directly to the consumer but would not be available for resale. The committee agreed that this should be discussed further with health professionals to explore the implications of such a proposal.

Ian Rummery

Chairperson – Public Health Committee