

## **ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**5<sup>th</sup> November, 2013**

**PRESENT** – Councillor Thistlethwaite (in the Chair); Councillors Harman, Hutchinson, B Jones, Kelley, Knowles, Lister and S. Richmond (8)

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Mrs D. Jones, J. Lyonette and York (3)

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Pauline Mitchell, Assistant Director, Housing and Building Services, Ann Workman, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care and Bryan Huntley, Planning Officer

**AH16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

**AH17. MINUTES** – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of a meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2013.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

**AH18. WORK PROGRAMME** – The Director of Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the current Municipal Year.

The submitted report outlined those areas where this Scrutiny Committee had previously identified it would like to focus its work and also emphasised that the work programme was a rolling programme and any Member of this Scrutiny could request an item to be included provided that a Quad of Aims had been submitted to the Scrutiny Committee to ensure that it contributed to the strategic aims of the Council.

It was reported that, as part of the on-going work being undertaken by this Scrutiny Committee in relation to safeguarding adults, it was intended to undertake two further separate pieces of work in relation to adult mental health services and medication in care homes and that a meeting would be arranged to commence both of these pieces of work shortly.

Reference was also made to visits which were being undertaken to FRADE, Kings' Church and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub by Members of this Scrutiny Committee and it was also reported that further work arising from those visits would be added to the work programme if Members felt necessary.

**RESOLVED** – That the current status of the Work Programme be noted.

**AH19. HOUSING STRATEGY ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT** – The Director of Place submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be

given to the annual Monitoring Report (also previously circulated) of the Council's Housing Strategy which had been approved in July 2012.

It was reported that the good progress had been made in the first year of implementation and that the Strategy was on course to meet the six objectives, with 51 per cent of the milestones being achieved in the first year of a two-year rolling programme and a further 34 per cent on schedule, with the only area falling short being the provision of housing to meet local needs.

Particular reference was made to the impact and challenges presented by the implementation of the welfare reforms and the bedroom tax and Members were pleased to note that, despite this, Objective 5, which related to the provision of good quality and timely advice to tenants to prevent crisis, increase choice and enable access, was being achieved, together with objective six, which related to effective support and opportunities for vulnerable groups.

Discussion ensued on the condition of some of the Council's Housing Stock and Members were advised that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan contained an investment programme which ensured that properties were maintained to the Darlington Standard and reflected Council tenants key priorities and that the Plan would be submitted to the next ordinary meeting of this Committee scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2014, for consideration.

Particular references were also made to the delivery of the Housing Management services and the possibility of a presentation on the roles and services provided being given to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee; the growing concerns in relation to fuel poverty and the work currently being undertaken in relation to that to give advice and guidance to residents.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That a report on the delivery of Housing Management Services be submitted to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

(c) That the Green Economy Officer be requested to present a report to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2014, on the work being undertaken to give advice and assistance to tenants and vulnerable groups in relation to fuel poverty.

**AH20. ADULT SOCIAL CARE PEER REVIEW** – The Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) advising Members of a Peer Challenge Review of Adult Social Care which was taking place over three days from 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2013.

It was reported that the Local Government Association would be leading a team consisting of a Director of Adult Social Care, a Lead Member and an experienced Assistant Director from Adult Social Care and that the theme for the Review would be the strategic positioning of Assessment and Care Management, including the present position in relation to the use of resources and the effectiveness of adult

safeguarding, with the feedback from the review helping to shape the future direction of Adult Social Care in Darlington.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That the findings of the Review be presented to the next ordinary meeting of this Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

**AH21. CARE BILL BRIEFING** – The Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the introduction of the Care Bill into Parliament.

It was reported that the Care Bill was a major step in taking forward the reforms contained in the Government's White Paper – Caring for our Future: Reforming Care and Support and would modernise social care legislation and put in place a system would promote people's well-being.

Particular reference was made to some of the key points within the Bill which related to Carers; the establishment of a national eligibility criteria for adult care and support; and the Dilnot recommendations and it was reported that the Draft Bill would have its first reading through the Commons on the 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2013, with further consultation taking place until April 2014, and the Statute being implemented from April 2015.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That regular updates on the introduction of the Care Bill and its implications be submitted to future meetings of this Committee as appropriate.