
OVERVIEW OF ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Work Programme

2. As part of our on-going work in relation to Safeguarding Adults, we are about to commence a piece of work in relation to medication in care homes and domiciliary care and, initially, some Members of the Scrutiny Committee will be visiting care homes within Darlington to view existing practices. An initial briefing has been held with partners to identify their experiences and concerns in relation to this and we will be using this information to form the basis of our work.
3. We will also be undertaking a separate piece of work in relation to the delivery of mental health services within the Borough and a meeting will be held to discuss how to proceed with this work. We will keep Members updated on the progress of both areas of work.
4. As previously reported, we have also now undertaken visits to the Kings Church, FRADE and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Unit (MASH). All of these visits were extremely interesting and worthwhile and we have requested an update to a future meeting on the progress and achievements of the MASH since its implementation.

Housing Business Plan 2014/15 – Strategic Options

5. We have had the opportunity to comment on the strategic options being considered as part of the Housing Business Plan 2014/15.
6. The Housing Business Plan 2014/15 covers the 30-year period from 2014/15 and is reviewed annually to ensure that the Council has a financial plan which is sustainable and focusses investment towards strategic priorities to ensure that housing properties are maintained to the Darlington standard and reflect Council tenants' key priorities.
7. At our meeting on 7th January, 2014, we had a discussion on the three key strategic priorities which were identified during the development of the Business Plan which included, the regeneration of Red Hall; the development of new housing to meet local need; and the provision of cost effective accommodation and support options for children and social care clients.
8. As part of our discussions, we also considered statistical data in relation to fuel poverty, particularly in relation to those areas which were off gas and relied on electric heating and to the work being undertaken to increase energy efficiency and

to assist tenants in reducing heating costs and to the possible use of solar panels on this Council's housing stock to generate income for the Council and to reduce tenants' energy bills.

Fuel Poverty – Advice to Tenants and Vulnerable Groups

9. As reported above, fuel poverty is increasing and we received an extremely interesting and informative presentation from the Council's Green Economy Officer on the work being undertaken to provide advice and support to Council tenants and vulnerable groups within the Borough who are affected.
10. There is a considerable amount of work being done to assist with fuel poverty within the Borough and we were particularly interested to learn about the work being done by the Council to assist the elderly and vulnerable and the key challenges facing it in addressing energy efficiency measures and to planned works to a number of tenants' properties as part of a two-year energy efficiency programme.
11. We have requested further information from Officers on the current position in relation to the Council's housing stock in terms of improvements to heating and insulation.

Adult Social Care NE Regional Peer Challenge

12. As Members will be aware and will see from Councillor Copeland's Portfolio overview report, a Peer Challenge took place within Adult Social care from 19th to 21st November 2013. The key areas the Peer Challenge Team were requested to consider related to :-
 - (a) how the assessment and care management function were operating at the present time, and how might this develop/be developed in the future?
 - (b) how do staff and organisational culture support Adult Safeguarding as an integral element of the assessment and care management function, and with wider partners and partnerships, including the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub?
 - (c) how are staff and other resources deployed to deliver safe and effective services, and to improve quality of assessment/packages of care? and
 - (d) how does existing provision impact on the assessment and care management function, including RIACT (The Responsive Integrated Assessment and Care Team) Reablement service, Learning Disability Life stage Service, and in-house provision?

13. We were advised that the initial feedback from the Team had been extremely positive and many strengths had been identified within the Council's Adult Social Care Team and we look forward to receiving the final report once it is available.

Councillor Bryan Thistlethwaite
Chair of Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee