
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.

Tenancy Management and Sustainment

2. At our last Scrutiny Committee meeting held in August 2014, we were consulted on proposed changes to the Council's local lettings policy which were required in the light of significant changes in demand for Council housing. During that consultation, a need for Members to be more aware of the processes and actions in place to minimise the risk of tenancy failure was identified and, at our most recent meeting, we received a report outlining the processes in place from applying for a Council tenancy to the long-term sustainment of a successful tenancy.
3. The Council has focussed its approach to tenancy management over the last few years on prevention, with the aim of avoiding problems or dealing with them effectively and as quickly as possible with the further aim to continue to improve understanding of tenants in order to provide services that can significantly improve their chances of maintaining and sustaining their homes. We were also advised of the launch of Housing Plus, a new service intended for those who, through the initial assessment process, were identified as being at higher risk of breaching their Tenancy Agreements and we will be advised further on the success of that Service once it is fully operational.
4. It is pleasing to note that the number of serious breaches of tenancy agreements is small and although this could be attributed to the fact that most Council tenants do not cause problems it is also a result of the proactive work which is undertaken.

Lifeline Project – Update

5. We have received a further update on the work being undertaken to achieve the proposed savings which have been identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in relation to the Lifeline Service by removing the level of subsidy. The Lifeline project is anticipated to save the Council £336,919 per annum, phased over a three-year period, from 2013/14, by removing the General Fund contribution to the service.
6. We were advised that consultations with service users and the Equality Impact Assessments were now complete and that the results thereof would be reported to Cabinet in December 2014, together with the final findings of the review.
7. The review has identified the removal of the subsidy as a business risk for the service in relation to the loss of income if clients withdrew from the service and if

landlords terminate their agreements, however, we were advised that the impact on the service was, at this stage, thought to be manageable.

The Care Act – An Update

8. Scrutiny has received an update on the work undertaken to date on the implementation of the Care Act within Darlington and how and where this aligns to wider Health and Social Care integration and, in particular, the Better Care Fund.
9. As well as receiving information on the approach being taken in Darlington, we were also advised of the work streams which have been devised to deliver the main legislative changes; the progress on those work streams to date and the individual resource implications; and the interdependencies between the project and other change projects which have intrinsic links to the Adult Social Care Programme, specifically the savings targets within the Medium-Term Financial Plan.
10. Work is being undertaken regionally to share best practice and implementation approaches and each authority is taking the lead on a specific piece of work, with Darlington taking the lead on developing the workforce. We have considered how we can assist with the work being undertaken and have agreed, as a Scrutiny Committee, that we will look at the work stream Darlington is leading on together with the funding element.
11. This Act will present the Council with a complex and demanding project plan and we will add specific elements, including those referred to in paragraph 10 above, to our work programme.

Performance Management Update

12. We received a briefing from the Head of Organisational Planning on the revised Performance Management Framework which has been developed and which will measure achievement and performance against the outcomes contained within the approved Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).
13. The revised Performance Management Framework has been developed around the key eight outcomes contained within the SCS and each individual outcome has a number of high level strategic indicators aligned to it which will be used to measure performance and achievement against the Vision and those outcomes. It is proposed that we will consider information at this strategic level on an annual basis to enable us to ensure that progress towards the key outcomes is being achieved.
14. In addition, there are also a number of low level delivery indicators which are linked to the strategic indicators and performance against these indicators will be available to us on a more frequent basis. These indicators will assess delivery performance on the ground and will enable us to test whether services, which are provided by the Council or its partners, are delivering towards the Vision and outcomes and how much those services cost.

Medication in Care Homes Task and Finish Review

15. We have considered the final report of the Medication in Care Homes Task and Finish Review Group which was established to look at medication and polypharmacy in those care homes currently contracting with this Council.
16. The Task and Finish Review Group met on a number of occasions and, as part of its investigations, undertook announced visits to a number of care homes and a number of associated topics were considered and discussed.
17. In reaching its findings the Task and Finish Review Group had concluded that it was confident that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the ordering and administration of medication in those care homes visited was being correctly managed; that there were examples of good practice within the homes visited; and that any issues which might occur in the future would be dealt with promptly and efficiently by Officers within the Contracts Team in liaison with other external partners and agencies.
18. There were a number of other recommendations made arising from this work which we will now take forward and monitor implementation in the future.
19. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank those Members and Officers who participated in this work. Work in relation to safeguarding adults remains a priority for us and we will keep Council informed of any further work we undertake.

Councillor Bryan Thistlethwaite
Chair of Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee