
OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Breast Clinic Service - Update

2. We received an update from County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust (CDDFT) and welcomed the news that Darlington Memorial Hospital (DMH) has been chosen as one of the two sites to host breast cancer services. New equipment is being purchased and should be installed at DMH by April when the service there should be operational. The decision, is, however, subject to formal agreement by the Trust Board.

Securing Quality in Health Services (SeQHiS) - Update

3. Scrutiny Committee considered a Briefing Note prepared by the five Regional Commissioning Groups, working with the local hospital foundation trusts, in the County Durham, Darlington and Tees region.
4. The Project is to be delivered in three Phases, Phase 1 aimed to establish a consensus in relation to key clinical quality standards that should be commissioned in acute hospitals. Phase 2 worked with individual organisations to update the assessment of where they were in terms of meeting the clinical quality standards now and where they should be by April 2015. Phase 3 will focus on how organisations and services might work together to deliver the standards and identify a model of care across the Durham, Darlington and Tees area that will maximise abilities to meet the standards within available resources.

Strategic Grants

5. Scrutiny received a report regarding performance delivered by the Strategic Grant programme and progress with the infrastructure review implementation.
6. Each organisation in receipt of strategic grant was requested to submit a performance report which has been analysed. Organisations have delivered a wide range of outcomes throughout the year and are continuing to perform or over perform, particularly where welfare changes have triggered increased demand.
7. Members noted the proposals to achieve savings in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the extension of funding to allow for a review of services which is to be linked across the health and social care remit.

8. In relation to the voluntary sector infrastructure support, we had received a draft Action Plan in September 2014 and have now considered the final draft which has yet to be present to the Board of Evolution. It is anticipated the Action Plan will be delivered by April 2015.
9. Scrutiny noted the next steps which included a report to Cabinet in January outlining interim arrangements until March 2015 and the future of infrastructure support following delivery of the Action Plan.

The Care Act

10. We were pleased to receive a presentation outlining the Care Act 2014 which is the biggest change to adult health and social care law in over 60 years replacing many other care laws which were old fashioned or confusing.
11. Members were advised why the Act was needed, demographic changes to the population, the main elements of the Act and the changes in relation to how care and support should be paid for in future years.
12. An accompanying report outlined details of work done within the Council and how and where it aligned to wider Health and Social Care integration, particularly the Better Care Fund.
13. Members were informed of the approach taken within Darlington to implement the Care Act, the work streams devised, resource implications within the work streams and interdependencies between this project and other projects within the change programme that had intrinsic links to the Adult Social Care programme especially the savings target identified within the MTFP.

Alcohol Task and Finish Review Group

14. We have concluded our Review of alcohol which was established to scrutinise the indicators relating to alcohol within the Health Profile for Darlington. We met on several occasions, attended Licensing Committee for the presentation on the Alcohol Harm Reduction Unit and GOLD Health Group for the presentation on the unsafe consumption of alcohol and harmful effects on the elderly as well as visiting the Community Abstinence in Recovery Centre.
15. Scrutiny has now approved a number of findings and recommendations which will be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.
16. Although not forming part of the Alcohol Task and Finish Review, Members did recommend that when the Alcohol Strategy is refreshed, consideration is given to a 'Reduce the Strength' campaign which involves a voluntary agreement with local retailers to limit the sale of low cost high strength alcohol. This has been shown to be effective in some local authorities. In reducing street drinking, anti-social behaviour and alcohol related admissions to hospital.

Performance Management Framework

17. As all other Scrutiny Committees, we have received a presentation on the revised approach to performance management within the organisation which has been adopted to enable an assessment of the achievement of the One Darlington: Perfectly Placed outcomes and the performance of services delivered by the Council which contributed to the achievement of those outcomes to be monitored.

Detailed graphical information was also presented showing the summary of performance for Quarter 2 which specifically related to this Scrutiny Committee and we discussed a number of those indicators which included breast feeding rates for Darlington and the provision of a stop smoking service by midwives for new mothers.

Medium-Term Financial Plan 2015/16 – 2019/20

18. Again, as with all other Scrutiny Committees, we have been requested to provide a response to Cabinet on its proposals in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2014/15 to 2019/20.
19. We received a presentation giving an overview of the current financial position of the Authority; the anticipated further savings which were required by 2020, over and above the current planned savings; the savings achieved to date; progress on the three key areas which it had been agreed would offer the best prospects of the Council being in a position to continue to serve the public well into the long-term i.e. Building Strong Communities, Spending Wisely and Growing the Economy; what the Council spends its money on; and the significant on-going financial challenges and risks ahead.
20. At our meeting held on 16 January 2015, we specifically looked at those areas within our remit i.e. Strategic Grants to the voluntary sector, Public Health Re-commissioning of services and the Local Welfare Provision Grant Loss and we were given an update on the progress being made in each of those areas by the relevant Officers.
21. Following, this update, we were satisfied with the work being undertaken and particularly supported Cabinet's proposals in relation to the allocation of additional resources for the continuation of the services currently covered by the Local Welfare Provision Grant.

Work Programme 2014/15

22. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2014/15 and possible review topics and in doing so, we have taken into account the reduced resources available and ensured that, in recommending our work programme to Monitoring and Co-ordination Group, any work we undertake will have demonstrable outcomes and contribute to the work of the Council and its strategic aims and objectives.

Councillor Wendy Newall
Chair of the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee