
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.

Adult Social Care Transformation Programme

2. Scrutiny has received information on the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme which is being implemented to meet service demands and pressures within that Service area.
3. We are all aware of the need to transform the way adult social care services are delivered in order to manage service demand and pressures and ensure that the best care is available when needed. Scrutiny was advised of the projects and task and finish activities that were being implemented and delivered which would result in a robust preventative approach. This would be delivered through signposting, self-screening and assistive technology; a delayed and reduced need for care and support through targeted and effective re-ablement support, specialist service provision being delivered through personal budgets and direct payments. The Programme will also support the delivery of the MTFP budget reductions for Adult Social Care.
4. In terms of monitoring the delivery of the Programme, there are a number of governance arrangements around each of the six workstreams to ensure delivery and accountability and, we, as a Scrutiny Committee, will continue to scrutinise specific aspects of the work, which will include the opportunity to seek the views of service users.

Quality Assurance Arrangements

5. Scrutiny was advised of the work being undertaken within the Contracts and Commissioning Team to quality assure and monitor services which are in place across the Adult Social Care Service.
6. The two biggest areas of spend in commissioned services within adult services are residential and nursing care and domiciliary care, and in relation to the former, it is pleasing to note that, during 2016/17, there has been an overall improvement in the quality of provision.
7. A quality standard toolkit is used to assess standards in residential and nursing care, however, it is more difficult to quality assurance services within domiciliary care by the nature of how those services are provided. Members could assist Officers with this through mystery shopping and we plan to undertake some further

work to look at domiciliary care as part of our work programme.

8. Both contracts are due for renewal in the next financial year and Officers will be ensuring that the revised contracts will enable providers to meet increasing demand and ensure that services are delivered effectively and provide value for money.

Local Housing Allowance for Tenants in Social Housing

9. We have received an update on the Government's proposals for how Local Housing Allowance (LHA) would apply to tenants in social housing and the potential impact on residents and the Council.
10. Further analysis is required to evaluate the potential impact of the LHA cap on every Council tenant, taking into account their likely rent and applicable LHA rates in 2019 and that, once this is known, the Council will be in a position to evaluate the level of support that can be made available to affected households.
11. The introduction of the cap will also affect the future lettings of Council properties and Officers will need to make potential new tenants aware that, in future, they may not be able to afford their rent charges.

Medium Term Financial Plan

12. As all Scrutiny Committees, we have also considered the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2017/18 to 2020/21. There are no major proposals contained within the proposed plan for 2017/18, however, we were reassured that the savings which had been identified within the 2016/17 MTFP in relation to areas within our remit, although challenging, were on track to be delivered.
13. There are a couple of pressures within the Adult Social Care service which relate to older persons residential fees – increase in framework fees and low attrition rates and these will continue to be monitored through the quarterly monitoring reports to Cabinet.
14. We also discussed the Government's announcement to allow Council's the flexibility to increase its Adult Social Care precept by an additional one per cent in 2017/18 and 2018/19 (from two per cent to three per cent) on the condition that the total increase to 2019/20 did not exceed six per cent and the benefits to the Council in adopting this approach as it generated more income to help offset the increase care costs in the short term.

Housing Revenue Account

15. Cabinet has agreed to consult on proposals in relation for the revenue budget; rent levels and service charges for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2017/18 in the context of the HRA Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 and the 30 year Business Plan and we have agreed to support those proposals.

16. We were advised that Cabinet's proposal was in line with Government's requirement for all social landlords to implement an average weekly rent reduction each year for four years (2016/17 - 2019/20) of one per cent, which would give an average weekly rent for 2017/18 of £71.49.
17. Cabinet is also proposing to implement a small inflationary increase in garage rents and service charges, which will provide for achieving full recovery of costs from those tenants who directly benefit from the services provided.

Dementia Review Group

18. The Dementia Review Group has now concluded its findings and the report and recommendations have been presented to Cabinet. It is pleasing to note that Councillor Copeland is now the Council's Dementia Champion.
19. The Review Group did recommend that all Members of the Council attend a Dementia Friends Information Session and identify one action that they could take forward from that session and I hope that all Members will support this.
20. In Darlington, there are approximately 1453 people living with dementia, a figure which is set to rise to 2269 by 2030 and it is acknowledged that this condition will inevitably touch most of our lives at some time, whether in our personal lives or as elected Members and we have a duty to ensure that we can go forward as a community which is able to understand the needs required to be a Dementia Friendly Town, whether this is through individual actions or support in the community.

Councillor Sue Richmond
Chair of Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee