

ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21 December 2021

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS WAS NOT A FORMALLY CONSTITUTED MEETING, AND THAT THIS IS A 'NOTE' OF THE INFORMAL MEETING THAT TOOK PLACE.

PRESENT – Councillors Donoghue (in the Chair), Mrs. Culley, Curry, Holroyd, Layton, M. Nicholson, Renton and A. J. Scott.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Johnson and B Jones.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Elizabeth Davison (Group Director of Operations), Joss Harbron (Assistant Director - Adult Social Care), Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources) and Sharon Raine (Head of Performance and Transformation) and Paul Dalton (Elections Officer).

AD22 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22

IT WAS AGREED: That Councillor Curry be appointed Vice Chair of this Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2021/22.

AD23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

AD24 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 OCTOBER 2021

IT WAS AGREED: That the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Adults Scrutiny Committee held on 22 October 2021, be accepted as a correct record.

AD25 COVID RESPONSE - VERBAL UPDATE

The Assistant Director – Adult Social Care provided a verbal update on the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically in relation to care providers.

Members were advised of one outbreak at Middleton Hall Care Home though it was noted that this was being managed well, and that the last positive Covid test had been recorded on 9 December 2021. It was reported that there were no staffing issues in relation to this outbreak.

Members were informed that there were no reported cases of Covid in terms of domiciliary care in relation to the Council's two main providers, though recruitment of staff was slow. It was reported that both main providers had placed an embargo on annual leave for the remainder of the year to ensure that staffing levels were maintained. It was also reported that there were no outbreaks across day care settings.

The Assistant Director – Adult Social Care advised that the visiting guidance for care homes had changed to permit only three named visitors per resident, and that care homes in Darlington were working with families directly to implement this.

Members received the latest figures in terms of vaccinations, both for residents and staff working within care settings.

Members entered into discussion on the number of staff who had left roles after choosing not to have the Covid vaccine, and whether the booster would become mandatory for care staff.

AD26 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Assistant Director Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) inviting Members to give consideration to the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2022/23 to 2025/26.

In introducing the report, the Group Director of Operations referred Members to the previously delivered MTFP Briefing, and advised that this meeting presented an opportunity to ask any general questions on the MTFP, however, more specifically to ask questions relating to the remit of this Scrutiny Committee, and for the Committee to subsequently forward any views or comments specifically relating to the services and finances within the remit of this Committee to the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for consideration on 20 January 2022, when that Committee would be formulating an overall response from Scrutiny to Cabinet.

The Group Director of Operations provided an update on the finance settlement received subsequent to the previously delivered MTFP Briefing, and the impact this had on the assumptions made within the draft MTFP.

It was reported that the Council would be receiving £1.579M from the Services Grant announced in the Autumn Statement, and £1.162M from the Social Care Grant, which was slightly higher than initially included within the draft MTFP, however Members were advised that the Services Grant was a one-off payment whilst a further review of Local Government funding was conducted. The Group Director of Operations advised that Officers would need to give further consideration as to how this was reflected within the draft MTFP, and whether any further assumptions could be drawn going forward.

Members were also advised that the New Homes Bonus had been extended for a further year, and that this would net a further £1.4M above anticipated levels. It was reported that there were also a number of deductions from initial draft figures, however overall there would be an additional £1.073M funding for 2022/23, over that which had been previously presented.

Members entered into discussion on the statutory nature of the majority of Adult Social Care services and funding allocation, and the potential for further work to examine this; sought clarification around the price inflation figure contained within the MTFP for 2025/26; enquired about the rationale behind the increase in the external purchase of care, and the reasoning for the perceived reduction in funding for long-term physical disability and long-term mental disability; encouraged the harnessing of under-utilized Council assets and building a Council managed Care Home and Sheltered Accommodation; scrutinised the margin of error in relation to National Insurance contribution and the Employee pay award;

encouraged a greater focus on honing services via the Transformation Agenda to reduce spending and produce greater efficiencies, and encourage care providers to do likewise; and enquired as to whether tackling inequalities could be undertaken at a Council wide level to reduce specific service costs.

IT WAS AGREED: (a) That this Committee accept the draft MTFP 2022/23 to 2025/26, as proposed, particularly in relation to those services and finances within the remit of the Committee, and undertake work throughout the forthcoming year to inform the MTFP 2023/24 to 2026/27.

(b) That the Chair, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Notes of this Meeting of the Committee, to enable the Notes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, scheduled to be held on 20 January 2022.

AD27 ADULT SOCIAL CARE OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

The Assistant Director – Adult Social Care submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform members on the progress in determining a revised Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF), and to provide an overview of Darlington’s performance against ASCOF over the past three years.

The submitted report informed Members that ASCOF was first published in March 2011, and is reviewed annually to update the measures to reflect outcomes for adults and carers. The submitted report advised that ASCOF measures how well care and support services achieve the outcomes that matter most to people, and that the ASCOF is used both locally and nationally to set priorities for care and support, measure progress and strengthen transparency and accountability.

It was reported that performance against the ASCOF is published annually by NHS Digital, and that the Department of Health and Social Care also provides an annual report on the national picture. It was highlighted that Darlington continues to perform well against the ASCOF measures, and in most cases performs better than the North East average.

Members entered into discussion on the reduction of support required within the reablement packages; enquired about the high percentage of adults with learning disabilities in employment in Hartlepool Borough Council, and asked if the Council could learn from Hartlepool Borough Council; enquired about the low number of people requiring a reablement package when being discharged from hospital; the number of carers in receipt of direct payments and the different interpretation and approaches undertaken by other authorities to record this; and the validity and integrity of the user and carer surveys.

IT WAS AGREED: (a) That the content of the report be noted.

(b) That a further report be received by this Committee when the revised framework is published.

AD28 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during 2021/22, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

IT WAS AGREED: That a verbal update on the Covid Response remain on the Work Programme for all meetings for the remainder of this Municipal Year.