

## HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 20 October 2021

**PRESENT** – Councillors Bell (Chair), Heslop, Layton, Lee, McEwan and Newall

**APOLOGIES** –

**ABSENT** – Councillors Bartch, Dr. Chou and Wright

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Jill Foggin (Communications Officer, County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust) and Michelle Thompson (Healthwatch Darlington)

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Penny Spring (Director of Public Health), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues), Ken Ross (Public Health Principal), Paul Neil (Programme Manager) and Hannah Fay (Democratic Officer)

### HH23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### HH24 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON 25 AUGUST 2021

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 25 August 2021.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 25 August 2021 be approved as a correct record.

### HH25 BETTER CARE FUND 2021/22 UPDATE

The Group Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the progress of the 2021/22 Better Care Fund Programme.

It was reported that the Better Care Fund (BCF) was a programme spanning the NHS and Local Government which sought to join up health and care services; and that clinical commissioning groups and local government were required to agree a joint plan which was owned by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

It was stated that the 2021/22 BCF policy framework had been published on 18 August 2021 with minimal changes; publication of the planning guidance for the 2021/22 programme had been delayed and was published in early October; and details were provided of the priority areas of the Darlington Plan for 2021/22.

Details were also provided of the four national conditions for funding and the key metrics that the Plan should focus on; confirmation of funding for 2021/22 was still awaited; and the funding package was not new monies.

Members were informed that the planning guidance had been published and submission

requirements confirmed in October; the draft Plan for Darlington was being developed and would be shared with Members for sign off by the deadline of 16 November.

Discussion ensued in respect of discharge planning and scenario planning; Members were assured that scenario planning was being undertaken for all schemes; this included funding implications and impact on services; and an update would be provided to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the contents of the policy framework for 2021/22 be noted.

(b) That the delays in publication of the planning guidance be noted.

(c) That the draft Plan for Darlington be circulated to Members for comments.

## **HH26 PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Assistant Director Housing and Revenues submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the progress against the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy; and updating Members on the homeless service provision during the Covid-19 lockdown period.

It was reported that Darlington's Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2019-2024 was approved by Cabinet on 9 July 2019; the strategy consisted of four main sections to satisfy the requirements of Section 1(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002; and reference was made to the five key supporting objectives to the Strategy.

The progress of the strategy's action plan was monitored through the multi-agency Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Forum; and Members noted that of the 28 actions in the strategy, 19 had been completed; seven were progressing and on track to meet timescales for delivery; and that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, two were progressing but were not on track to meet timescales for delivery.

It was reported that in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the council had continued to deal with a significant increase in demand for homeless and housing options services; that as part of the Council's 'Everybody's In' agreement, anyone who presented to the Council as homeless had been placed in emergency accommodation; in 2020-21 230 households were placed in emergency accommodation, compared to 174 for the previous year, an increase of 32 percent; and that demand had remained high, with 110 households placed in emergency accommodation for the first quarter in 2021-22.

It was also reported that the length of stay in emergency accommodation for 2020-21 had seen a 176 per cent increase when compared to the previous year; that an increasing number of families were presenting as homeless, with 19 families placed in emergency accommodation since April 2021; and an emerging challenge had been finding accommodation and support for individuals with complex needs. Details were also provided of the progress that had been achieved despite the challenges of Covid-19.

Following a question, Members were advised that the position in respect of demand for emergency accommodation was similar across the Tees Valley; there was very limited

availability of properties to move people on from emergency accommodation; and the 700 Club provided an outreach service for those that were homeless and not wanting accommodation. Members were assured that there was good partnership working in Darlington; and housing services had close links with Adult Social Care and health colleagues; and worked closely with the discharge team at West Park.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

(b) That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to the Housing Services Team and 700 Club for their work.

## **HH27 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMPLIANCE IN COUNCIL HOUSING**

The Assistant Director Housing and Revenues submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the role of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), particularly relating to requirements for social housing providers to meet health and safety standards for their tenants; explaining how the Council met those standards, how compliance was currently monitored; and proposing how Members would scrutinise performance against those standards.

It was reported that the RSH set a number of consumer standards, which social housing providers must comply with; details were provide of the three economic and four consumer regulatory standards; and particular reference was made to the Home Standard which sets expectations for social housing providers to provide tenants with good quality accommodation and a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service.

Reference was also made to the requirements set out in the Government's recent Social Housing White Paper (The Charter for Social Housing Residents); the role of the RSH in monitoring the performance of social housing providers; and that the RSH had not yet determined an inspection regime, but that it was likely to want to see evidence of how the Council adopted the standards, how it complied with health and safety requirements and how Council Members scrutinised performance.

Details were provided of the Council's well established and robust processes that were in place to monitor health and safety compliance in relation to its Council housing stock; and details were provided of the areas covered by the monthly compliance meetings which were chaired by the Performance and Compliance Manager.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the contents of the report be considered.

(b) That reports on health and safety compliance in Council housing be included in the Scrutiny Committee work programme on an annual basis.

## **HH28 CHILDHOOD OBESITY PLANNING OPTIONS IN RELATION TO HOT FOOD TAKEAWAYS**

The Group Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the available planning powers that could be used to support the Councils objectives of achieving the targets set in the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan for Darlington.

It was reported that planning could influence the built environment to improve health and reduce obesity and excess weight in local communities; that local planning authorities could consider bringing forward, where supported by an evidence base, local planning policies and supplementary planning documents, which limited the proliferation of certain use classes in identified areas, where planning permission was required.

Reference was made to the presentation (also previously circulated) which was received by Health and Wellbeing Board on 16 September 2021; and the example of another authorities experiences of using planning powers as part of their approach to tackling childhood obesity (also previously circulated).

Following concerns raised regarding the obesity problem across the whole population, the Public Health Principal advised Members that the direct link to hot food takeaways and obesity, which was required to change planning policy, had not been demonstrated; and work was being undertaken to lobby the government regarding input from Directors of Public Health in planning applications. Members were assured that the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan had a number of actions to ensure Darlington residents were able to make healthy choices; and that a system wide approach was required to tackle this issue.

**RESOLVED** – That the report, outlining data and information provided by Darlington Health and Wellbeing Board on the merits or otherwise of adopting the available planning powers through the development of an evidence base and the analysis of good practice elsewhere in the country which would assist in addressing childhood obesity, be noted.

## **HH29 CHILDHOOD HEALTHY WEIGHT PLAN**

The Group Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the progress made against the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan (also previously circulated).

It was reported that the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan was developed in 2019 prior to the Covid-19 pandemic; and that the pandemic had impacted on the delivery of the actions contained within the plan.

Members were informed of the scope and the vision of the Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan; that the percentage of children at year 6 (2019/20) who were categorised as living with obesity in Darlington was 22.5 per cent, with a figure of 12 per cent at reception age; that childhood obesity and excess weight carried significant health risks for children; and the prevalence of excess weight in least deprived children and young people was decreasing whilst for more deprived children and young people this was increasing. Members also noted that Covid-19 had had a detrimental impact on emotional eating, increased snacking and eating disorders.

Details were provided of the objectives of the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan and of five separate Action Task Groups (ATGs) which were established in January 2021; and the post covid recovery actions and progress made within each of the five ATG's was outlined.

**RESOLVED** – That the update be noted.

### **HH30 HEALTHWATCH DARLINGTON ANNUAL REPORT 2020 2021**

The Chief Executive Officer, Healthwatch gave a PowerPoint Presentation to update Members on Healthwatch Darlington Annual Report 2020/21.

The presentation outlined the purpose and goals of Healthwatch Darlington; detailed the key highlights from 2020/2021 and the work undertaken by Healthwatch Darlington responding to Covid-19; and Members noted that vaccines, GP services, hospital care and CCoVID-19 were top four areas that people had contacted Healthwatch Darlington about.

Members were informed of the work undertaken by volunteers along with the volunteer impact, awards and recognition. Detailed information was also given on the funding and expenditure for 2020/21; and the top three priorities for 2021/22 were outlined.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the update be noted.

(b) That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to Healthwatch Darlington for their work.

### **HH31 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest be included in the previously approved work programme.

Members agreed that the item 'Primary Care (to include GP access to appointments) be brought forward to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

**RESOLVED** – That the work programme be updated to reflect discussions.

### **HH32 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

Members were informed that the Board last met on 16 September 2021. The main discussion items included an update from the Tees Valley NHS Clinical Commissioning Group on the Darlington vaccination programme and an update from on Integrated Care System; a presentation detailing the planning options in relation to hot food takeaways; and a presentation on the Needs Led Neurodevelopmental Pathway.

Members also noted that the next meeting of the Board was scheduled for 16 December 2021.

**RESOLVED** – That Members look forward to receiving an update on the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.