

HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 1 November 2023

PRESENT – Councillors Layton (Chair), Baker, Dillon, Holroyd, Johnson, Mahmud, Mammolotti and Pease

APOLOGIES – Councillors Crudass and Mrs Scott,

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues), Claire Gardner-Queen (Head of Housing), Ken Ross (Public Health Principal) and Michael Conway (Mayoral and Democratic Officer)

HH16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

HH17 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON 30 AUGUST 2023

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 30 August 2023

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 30 August 2023 be approved as a correct record.

HH18 UPDATE ON NHS DENTISTRY PROVISION AND PRIMARY CARE DENTAL ACCESS RECOVERY PLAN

The Senior Primary Care Manager – Northeast and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and colleagues delivered a presentation updating members on NHS regulations and responsibilities of dental provision.

Members were provided with an overview and received an update on current issues and challenges faced by the service which included current workforce and retention issues, the impact of COVID resulting in a greater demand for care currently and the need to support and stabilise current offers and capacity.

Members were updated on current actions being taken to tackle challenges including a £3.8m spend to identify patients with greatest clinical need and to commission additional capacity with pilot schemes being undertaken at practices to refine the process of identifying patients with greatest need. Flexible commissioning is also available for practices, with offsets available for recruiting overseas dentists and general recruitment work being undertaken in order to attract overseas dentists.

Oral health promotion initiatives were highlighted including supervised toothbrushing schemes in Darlington schools with around 1000 children currently taking part, aiming for prevention from early years. A focus also being present for older adults in nursing and residential care with training provided for staff, residents and families as recognised by CQC and rated “best-practice”. Oral health training is also present for Public Health and Social

Care staff.

Members raised discussions around the need to be registered at a practice before they are willing to see a patient and if given an urgent appointment slot whether this will be charged as private care or NHS; dental colleagues clarified that this would need to be established when contacting the practice in question.

Questions were asked regarding the opening of Eastbourne practice; clarified that timelines are set at time of tender with service commencement date yet to be established until the current phases are complete.

A further question was asked, as to what factors have resulted in the current staff shortage and were informed that a lot of newly qualified dentists prefer to focus on cosmetic dentistry rather than general practice and with certain practice locations also not being desirable (e.g. rural practices).

Wider context was also highlighted, pointing out that high sugar diets are a main cause for decay and that the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan aims to promote de-normalising sugar in children's diets.

It was also stated that Councillors could share information in ward newsletters if NHS colleagues provide information to the portfolio holder in the first instance.

Members voiced their appreciation for the volume and quality of information provided in the presentation.

RESOLVED – That the presentation and updates provided be noted.

HH19 HOUSING SERVICES REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE POLICY

The Assistant Director – Housing and Revenues submits the draft Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy before approval by Cabinet on 7 November 2023. The report sets out responsibilities to council tenants and leaseholders, how the Council inspect and survey our properties to ensure they are maintained to a good standard and highlighting the arrangements in place for undertaking repairs when issues arise.

Members were provided with an overview of the repairs and maintenance policy outlining how requests for work are handled including the categorising of jobs and the assessment process for work. The Tenants Panel were consulted on the draft policy which met with overwhelming support.

Questions were raised as to how many calls are as a result of mould, officers confirm that this would be treated as urgent however reports of mould comprise a very small percentage of overall calls. Further questions were raised as to whether surveys are conducted on the cause of certain issues, officers confirmed that this is the case where required.

It was also clarified that advice is available for tenants on more complex issues (e.g. CCTV placement)

Members praised staff due to positive feedback from residents around repairs and response times.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted with no issues raised prior to submission at 7 November 2023 Council

HH20 HEALTHWATCH DARLINGTON ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Darlington delivered a presentation on Healthwatch Darlington's Annual report providing an overview of the manpower, functions, and current projects of Healthwatch Darlington.

Points of note in the presentation included Healthwatch's continued statutory requirement to signpost individuals to required services and that the current staffing levels of Healthwatch Darlington stand at five staff including one full-time staff member and Youthwatch currently being refreshed.

Members were provided with a clarification of Healthwatch's involvement in patient experiences in which anonymous feedback is taken to form responses to NHS colleagues in order to provide a voice for all involved with volunteers visiting communities and collating experiences of individuals where necessary.

Members were updated on current projects being undertaken by Healthwatch including carrying out extra work regarding Winter Pressures and the issuing of small grants to promote the risks of diabetes and reporting to the ICB at the end of November 2023 on the experiences of those ageing with learning disabilities.

Members raised questions with regards to members sharing Healthwatch information on social media which will be provided when available.

Discussion was held with regards to social prescribing; with Healthwatch colleagues highlighting their role being that of signposting rather than providing support. A possible future item or session with a focus on social prescribing was proposed with NHS colleagues willing to be point of contact on this.

RESOLVED – That the annual report and presentation be noted.

HH21 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director Law and Governance 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.

RESOLVED - Members agreed the following amendments:

- (a) MTFP discussion will be held at the next meeting 3 January 2024 with feedback provided prior to a Special Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 18 January 2024
- (b) The scheduled presentation of a quad of aims regarding chronic inflammation is

deferred until all parties are available to present.

HH22 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Members were informed that the Board last met on 7 September 2023 and that the next meeting of the Board was scheduled for 14 December 2023 which would include an update on the Health and Wellbeing Plan and a review of the Terms of Reference for the Board.

RESOLVED – That Members will continue to receive an update on the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

HH23 TEES VALLEY JOINT HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED – That the minutes of quorate meetings of the Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Committee would be included in this Committee's agenda for members' information only.