

ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 9 January 2024

PRESENT – Councillors Crumbie (Chair), Anderson, Layton, Mammolotti, M Nicholson, Renton, Storr and Toms.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Donoghue and Tostevin.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Curry.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Joss Harbron (Assistant Director - Adult Social Care), Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources), Mark Harrison (Public Health Consultant), Paul Dalton (Democratic and Elections Officer) and Olivia Hugill (Democratic Officer)

AD22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

AD23 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2023

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 24 October 2023.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of this Committee held on 24 October 2023, be approved as a correct record.

AD24 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2024/25 - 2027/28

The Assistant Director, Resources, submitted a report (previously circulated), which invited Members to give consideration to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2024/25 to 2027/28, and forward any views, in particular those in relation to the services and finances which were specifically within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee.

The submitted report stated that the MTFP had been agreed by Cabinet on 5 December 2023 as the basis for consultation, and Members were asked to discuss and consider the overall contents of the MTFP, however, with particular emphasis on those services and finances within the MTFP which specifically related to those areas within their remit, and forward any views to a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, to be held on 18 January 2023, for consideration. It was reported that the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee would then agree a formal response to Cabinet on behalf of all the Scrutiny Committees, as part of the consultation.

A briefing was delivered to Councillors on 13 December 2023 which provided an overview and highlighted key points in the plan. It was noted that since the MTFP had been published for consultation, the Council had received notification of the draft financial settlement for 2024/25.

Discussion ensued on the costs associated with children transitioning to Adults Services and

the arrangements in place to plan for transitions; the work being undertaken to promote Discretionary Housing Payments, and how best to maximise receipt of this funding to ensure that there is no underspend; the percentage of the Adult Social Care budget spent on statutory services and how this funding is utilised; whether a cost benefit analysis has been undertaken in terms of commissioned services and the scope for the development of an in-house solution (Care Cooperative); the assumptions made around the continuation of the Social Care Grant; the purpose of the £71,000 of non-allocated, non-construction funding attributed to Adult Social Care within the submitted report; the need for greater funding for Mental Health services; and the proposed reduced increase in Council Tax for future years.

RESOLVED – (a) That the work being undertaken on behalf of the Adults Portfolio Holder on proposals for a Care Cooperative be presented to a future meeting of this Committee in the next financial year.

(b) That the report be noted, and that the Chair of this meeting, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Minutes of this Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, in order to enable the Minutes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, scheduled to be held on 18 January 2024.

AD25 SOCIAL CARE REFORMS - UPDATE

The Assistant Director, Adult Social Care, submitted a report (previously circulated) which provided an update on the reforms to Adult Social Care. Members were informed that since the previous report the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection ratings for the five Local Authority pilot areas had been published.

Members were advised that assessing how local authorities had met their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act (2014) was a new responsibility for CQC, and that during the pilots the CQC looked at nine of the quality statements to assess how well each local authority was meeting its responsibilities, and that this had enabled the CQC to give an indicative rating. The submitted report stated that the CQC had found some similar themes across all five local authorities, however that there were different practices across the five local authorities in how they worked with young people who are transitioning from Children's Services to Adult Services.

The Assistant Director, Adult Social Care, reported that the CQC had now updated their guidance on how they will assess local authorities, as required by the Health and Care Act 2022. Members were informed that the CQC would be starting assessments from January 2024 onwards, with assessments being undertaken in cohorts of 20 authorities every three months, which would enable the CQC to assess all authorities within two years. The submitted report outlined the position of this local authority in terms of inspection preparedness.

The submitted report also highlighted that the proposed reforms to the Mental Health Act 2022 had been delayed and would not be enacted prior to the next UK Parliamentary (General) Election.

Members entered into discussion on the amount of notice the CQC would provide ahead of

an inspection, and welcomed the proactive approach adopted by this authority in terms of readiness for inspection; and requested further information on the work around discharging people from all hospitals, including Mental Health hospitals.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

AD26 SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICE UPDATE: SUPPORT TREATMENT AND RECOVERY IN DARLINGTON THROUGH EMPOWERING (STRIDE)

The Interim Director of Public Health submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update to Members of the Adult Scrutiny Committee on the current performance, provision and composition of STRIDE specialist substance misuse treatment and recovery services delivered within Darlington.

The submitted report stated that following the publication of the National Drugs Strategy, 'From Harm to Hope', in December 2021, the Government published guidance for local delivery partners in May 2022, which outlined the recommended steps that local areas should take to help deliver the three main priorities of the Strategy: breaking drug supply chains; delivering a world-class treatment and recovery system and achieving a generational shift in the demand for drugs. It was reported that to support the improvements described in the National Drug Strategy, three years of additional ring-fenced funding for treatment and recovery had been allocated to local areas as the Supplemental Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant (SSMTRG) from 2022 until 2025.

Members were notified that this increased funding had enabled a step change in increasing both clinical and non-clinical treatment capacity, and had also supported the provision of a comprehensive recovery offer and greater capacity for both drugs and alcohol detoxification, planned for 2024.

It was reported that whilst progress on numbers in treatment had been slower than expected, primarily due to recruitment, training and the retention of an expanded workforce, performance in Darlington has improved from the baseline and was consistent with progress both regionally and nationally.

Discussion ensued on the period of time that services were commissioned for; the historic lack of rehabilitation provision within the community and acknowledgement of the programmes currently delivered; the potential for dual referrals and diagnosis within mental health services; the training required in care homes to support staff in assisting residents with addictions; the balance between engaging people in services with the right to decide not to access services; and the services available to those with a gambling addiction.

RESOLVED – That the contents of this report and the progress made in the planning and delivery of substance misuse treatment and recovery services in Darlington be noted.

AD27 WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

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 should be included in the

previously approved Work Programme.

Members entered into discussion on the potential continuation of the Loneliness and Connected Communities Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be noted.