

HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 19 June 2024

PRESENT – Councillors Baker, Beckett, Crudass, Holroyd, Johnson, Layton, Mahmud, Mammolotti, Pease and Mrs Scott

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Roche, Snedker and Warren Edge (County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust)

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

HH1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

HH2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024/25

RESOLVED – That Councillor Mary Layton was elected Chair of this committee for the municipal year 2024/25.

HH3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024/25

RESOLVED – That Councillor Bryony Holroyd was elected Vice-Chair of this committee for the municipal year 2024/25.

HH4 TO CONSIDER THE TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024/25 ON THE DATES AGREED IN THE CALENDAR OF MEETINGS BY CABINET AT MINUTE C106/FEB/24

RESOLVED – That the proposed dates and times for meetings of this Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2024/25 were approved as proposed.

HH5 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON 24 APRIL 2024

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 24 April 2024.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 24 April 2024 be approved as a correct record.

HH6 CDDFT QUALITY ACCOUNTS 2023-24

The Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Quality Accounts 2023/2024 for County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust.

The Committee noted the positive performance set out against the 2023/2024 priorities,

expressing satisfaction that most services had been rated as “good” and the “outstanding” rating of the End-of-Life Care service.

Members noted that the Trust has a zero tolerance for pressure ulcers and on-site infections alongside and reinforcing the core concepts of hand-hygiene and cleanliness and the emphasis on early-recognition from staff in order to isolate patients appropriately.

Questions were raised regarding cases of sepsis and its early-warning signs, the desired standards of maternity care, sustainability of the Trust’s desired quality priorities, staffing levels, staff satisfaction, assessment criteria for new patients, the availability of staff trained to handle mental health issues. The Trust’s representative provided satisfactory responses to all queries and took note of member’s suggestions, such as including Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPE) infection levels in the final draft.

Members noted the quality priorities for 2024/2025 which reflected the Quality Strategy priorities and further priorities where further work was required to meet the 2023/2024 objectives.

Members welcomed the opportunity to comment on the Trust’s Quality Accounts and would like to receive six monthly reports on the progress being made, to enable them to provide a more detailed and valuable contribution to the Quality Accounts in the future.

RESOLVED – Members agreed that the Chair of this meeting be given authority to agree the written response to County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust on this draft 2023/2024 Quality Accounts in order to meet the 23 June 2024 deadline for response.

HH7 HOUSING SERVICES GAS AND ELECTRICAL SAFETY POLICIES 2024-2029

The Assistant Director – Housing and Revenues presented the draft Housing Services Domestic Gas and Heating Safety Policy 2024-2029 and members were informed that the policies set out the Local Authority’s legal obligations in relation to gas and electrical safety, together with the responsibilities for our staff, contractors and our tenants, to ensure they are not put at risk from the effects of gas and electricity.

We were informed that all works are carried out by fully qualified staff with full safety checks on homes requiring work and that as a housing provider, the Council takes all reasonable steps to ensure compliance and mitigate risks arising from health and safety assessments.

RESOLVED - Members noted the content of the report and supported its onward submission to 16 July 2024 Cabinet.

HH8 HOUSING SERVICES DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY 2024-2029

The Assistant Director – Housing and Revenues presented the draft Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy 2024-2029, acknowledging that domestic abuse is often a hidden problem, and that the Council strive for all our tenants and household members to be safe from the impact of domestic abuse.

The policy highlighted the commitment to tackle domestic abuse in Council properties and how Housing Services will aim to manage and support any cases to ensure that victims of

domestic abuse and their children can access the right support in safe accommodation, when they need it.

Members were informed that Consultation was undertaken in May 2024 with the Tenants Panel, Public Health, Harbour and Family Help, with full support given to the proposed Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy.

Questions were raised, including the implications of increased housing waiting lists with the response that domestic abuse victims are given the highest priority and it was highlighted that members believe the service is doing positive work, acknowledging the challenges faced when rehousing victims of domestic abuse.

RESOLVED - Members noted the content of the report and support its onward submission to 16 July 2024 Cabinet.

HH9 AIR QUALITY STRATEGY 2024-2029

The Environmental Health Manager presented the proposed Air Quality Strategy 2024-2029 for Darlington which is required by law to be produced. The goals of the strategy being to improve air quality, raise the profile and importance of air quality and provide information about local air quality.

Members were informed of the six aims of the strategy which also outline work that has been carried out in each area and future actions for each:

- a) Reduce emissions and protect public health.
- b) Raise awareness and influence change.
- c) Lead by example
- d) Decrease exposure to air pollutants.
- e) Consider the impact of development on air quality.
- f) Ensure compliance with legislation.

Members raised questions regarding car idling and wood burning in the town with assurance provided that these are being looked at going forward. A member also raised discussion regarding car-use and suggested that bus subsidies could be a useful incentive if possible, in the future.

RESOLVED - Members noted the proposed strategy and support its onward submission to Cabinet.

HH10 WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the report, previously circulated and 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 on this Committee's Work Programme for 2024/25.

The following items were suggested to be included in the 2024/25 Work Programme for the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Sexual Health Provision including methods of access.
- b) Drug Abuse including understanding of numbers and offered provision /

preventative measures.

c) Chronic Illness and preventative measures.

d) Wider Determinants of Health

e) Insulation Standards in Council Properties

f) CDDFT Quality Accounts – 6 Monthly Update

g) Costs and impacts of buying-back of Council homes.

RESOLVED – That Officers examine the above topics and that the Work Programme be updated as appropriate to reflect the decisions of this Scrutiny Committee.