

COUNCIL
24 SEPTEMBER 2020

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Covid Update

2. At a special meeting of Scrutiny, Members received an update on the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on health protection and outbreak management by implementing government policy, and an update on decisions taken with regard to services relevant to this Committee.
3. We were advised of the local response to the pandemic, with strategic management by the County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum (LRF). We were pleased to note the early local agreement with CDDFT which made available COVID-19 testing for all council employees, with the offer being extended to care home staff, NHS workers and other key workers from the LRF responding organisations.
4. Members also noted that the Department of Health and Social Care Whole Care Home Testing Programme was being implemented, and that testing is also in place for patients being discharged from hospital to care home settings and for those patients being placed in a care home from their own homes.
5. We were concerned to learn of the significant increase in the number of presentations for homelessness, rough sleeping or at risk of being homeless but noted that additional temporary accommodation has been sourced through procuring hotel accommodation and ensuring the Tenancy Management Team increase the number of temporary Council accommodation units. Housing Options has worked with over 300 clients and placed 57 households in temporary accommodation for the period of April and May 2020.
6. Scrutiny also welcomed an update on the Local Outbreak Control Plan, setting out the response of Darlington Borough Council and partners to prevent and control COVID-19.

Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust Recovery/'Build Back Better' Plan

7. Members received an update at a special meeting of Scrutiny on the 'Build Back Better' Plan for Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust following the COVID-19 pandemic.
8. We noted the work being undertaken to develop plans for Phase 3 and 4 of the pandemic in line with national requirements. This includes the development of a model to forecast for the expected increase in COVID-19 related demand for services. A Health Impact Assessment, led by the Local Resilience Forum (LRF)

recovery cell was being finalised and would provide a system-wide picture of the possible impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on the local Darlington community.

9. We discussed the need for increased budgets for mental health services and welcomed the plans for increased resources in schools.

Darlington Outbreak Control Plan

10. We received a further verbal update from the Director of Public Health on the Darlington Outbreak Control Plan. We were concerned to note that there had been an increase in the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Darlington, with the majority in the 18 to 30 year age group. We were however pleased to note that there has not been an increase in cases in Darlington care homes and no significant outbreaks in Darlington work places.
11. Darlington's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is being closely monitored via a number of forums at a regional and local level. This includes three regional Local Resilience Forums which meet regularly; Darlington Health Protection Board currently meets fortnightly and closely monitors Darlington's outbreak control plan; and the North East Directors of Public Health Network meets weekly to share cross border information about outbreaks and joint planning.
12. Members did raise concern regarding the potential increase in the number of confirmed cases following the commencement of the new school year but were assured that the Local Authority Public Health team are working closely with all education settings in Darlington and the Public Health Principal receives and scrutinises the NHS Test and Trace data daily.
13. We did highlight concern in respect of the leisure and hospital sector and the need for consistent messages. The importance of Members' roles in sharing messages, providing local intelligence and views was reiterated and Members agreed that it would be beneficial for them to receive regular messages to be cascaded to residents within their wards.

Better Care Fund

14. We received an update on the position of the Better Care Fund for Darlington, including performance against the four metrics and Members noted that the current 2020/21 Better Care Fund is a one year continuation programme with no changes to the national conditions or metrics.
15. We were advised that with regard to the future structure of the programme, planning guidance to inform the development of a Darlington Plan had been delayed due to Covid-19 and to date had not been received. We look forward to receiving further updates in due course.

Performance Report – Quarter 4 2019/2020

16. We received an update on performance against key performance indicators for 2019/20 at Quarter 4.

17. We noted that of the nine Housing and Leisure indicators reported to this Scrutiny Committee, four were showing performance better than the same period last year, whilst five were showing performance worse than the same period last year.
18. Of the 24 Public Health indicators reported to this Scrutiny Committee, five had new data available. We gave particular consideration to PBH 041, Waiting time – number of adult alcohol only clients waiting over three weeks to start first intervention, which showed an increase in waiting times. We noted that that this was as a result of an increase in service users accessing treatment due to work undertaken by partner agencies.
19. We did discuss PBH038, Waiting times – number of adult opiate clients waiting over three weeks to start first intervention, and agreed that an update on the new drug and alcohol service be provided at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

Annual Report of Healthwatch Darlington 2019/20

20. Members welcomed a presentation from the Chief Executive Officer, Healthwatch Darlington on the Healthwatch Darlington Annual Report 2019/20 and recognised their valuable work.

Work Programme 2020/21

21. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2020/21 and possible review topics. The work programme is a rolling programme and items can be added as necessary.

Quality Accounts 2019/20

22. Scrutiny considered the draft Quality Accounts 2019/20 of Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust at a special meeting on 9 September 2020 and have provided commentary for inclusion in the final Quality Accounts.

Councillor Ian Bell
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee