

## HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 16 December 2020

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

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Dr. Chou,

**ABSENT** – Councillors

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors Dulston (Stronger Communities Portfolio), Gillian Curry (County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust), Jo Murray (Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust), Mark Pickering (NHS Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group), Robert Goddard (South Tees NHS Foundation Trust), David Welch (NHS Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group) and Michelle Johnson

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Penny Spring (Director of Public Health), Pauline Mitchell (Assistant Director Housing and Building Services), Elizabeth Davison (Assistant Director Resources), Ken Ross (Public Health Principal) and Hannah Fay (Democratic Officer)

### HH35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bell declared an interest as an employee of County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust; Councillor McEwan declared an interest as a Lay Member for Darlington Primary Care Network; and Councillor Tostevin declared an interest as a Member of the Board of Governors for County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust.

### HH36 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON :-

#### (1) 7 OCTOBER 2020

Submitted – The minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 7 October 2020.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 7 October 2020 be approved as a correct record.

### HH37 21 OCTOBER 2020

Submitted – The minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 21 October 2020.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 21 October 2020 be approved as a correct record.

### HH38 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Submitted – A report (previously circulated) of the Chief Officers Executive which had

been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 8 December 2020, in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021/22 to 2024/25, including setting a budget and council tax increase for 2021/22.

It was reported that the Council had faced significant challenges over the last decade following the economic downturn and reduction in public sector spending; that to date, the Council had been successful in responding to these challenges but this was becoming increasingly difficult, particularly in respect of a growing elderly population, pressure in the children's social care sector and the major economic impact of Covid-19 which had a direct impact on the Council's finances this year.

The submitted report outlined details of the core offer budget, which had been agreed following a significant consultation exercise in 2016 and allowed reduced expenditure and services to a risk based minimum level with a small investment fund of £2.5m per year. It was noted that in subsequent MTFP's unallocated balances of £6.5m were invested in five areas, namely Community Safety, maintaining an attractive street scene, maintaining a vibrant town centre, developing an attractive visitor economy and neighbourhood renewal.

The submitted report highlighted areas of saving within the plan and areas of pressure, in particular the significant effect of Coronavirus pandemic on the Council's expenditure and income budgets. Reference was made to the pressures felt across leisure and culture facilities and it reported that estimates had been made on the direct service impact of the pandemic in 2021/22 with the assumption services would return to normal in 2022/23; and Members noted the projected expenditure for 2021/22 of £95m.

Details were provided on the projected income, including core grant funding to Local Government; in particular the continuation of the Sales, Fees and Charges recompense scheme from April to June 2021 which was estimated to be £0.616m; and the increase in Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (NDR), which would provide an increase in income over the period of the MTFP. Members noted the projected income of £94m for 2021/2022.

The submitted report outlined details of the Futures Fund allocation, with £3.401m committed to the futures fund themes to date with a balance of £0.699m remaining; and Members noted the recommendation to utilise £0.914m of the unallocated balances to continue the Futures Fund ongoing priorities and commitments into 2024/25.

It was reported that by 2024/2025 the projected general fund balance was £3.504m however this relied on building around 433 Band D equivalent houses per year, no significant overspending, assumptions of a cash equivalent position materialising in the settlement and a Council Tax increase of 1.99 per cent and a further 3 per cent Social care precept totalling 4.99 per cent.

**RESOLVED** –That this Scrutiny Committee has no comment to make on the proposed schedule of fees and charges for those services within its remit; supports the Council Tax increase of 1.99 per cent plus the 3.00 per cent adult social care precept for the next financial year; and supports the Futures Fund continuation into 2024/25.

### **HH39 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

Submitted – A report (previously circulated) of the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services which had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 8 December 2020, to propose the revenue budget, rent levels and service charges for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2021/22 in the context of the HRA Medium Term Financial Plan to 2024/25 and the 30-year Business Plan.

It was reported that Local Authorities had the discretion to inflate rents by CPI plus 1%, which would mean an average £1.46 increase in weekly rents with an average social rent of £73.11 and affordable rent of £83.62; that 73% of tenants would have their rent and most services charges covered by benefit payments; and that the Local Authorities rent and service charges tended to be much lower than other Social Landlords operating in Darlington.

The submitted report stated that since the Government had lifted the borrowing cap on the HRA, the Council had been using the additional capacity to invest in building new homes; and planned to borrow an extra £8million in 2021/22 to fund the new build programme; and that this could be supplemented with Homes England grant with the overall plan being to provide 100 affordable homes per annum for the next ten years. It was also reported that over 237 households had already benefitted from the Council's current new build programme which had taken place at various locations around town and demand for these houses continued to be exceptionally high.

Reference was made to the priorities identified through the Housing Investment Plan and particular reference was made to the total investment of over £20m, with £13.385 to be spent on completing the new build programme; and that £1.000m had been set aside to support Energy Efficiency improvements and to contribute towards any match funding required as part of future potential Energy Grant bids. Members were advised of the closing balance of £9.784m for 2021/22.

Discussion ensued on the bad debt provision and the heating replacement programme; Members were assured that whilst it was a challenging time, Darlington was achieving the target of 3.4 per cent for rent arrears and compared favourably with other housing organisations; and that Darlington were part of the Northern Housing Consortium which was working to address the issues of retrofitting and that Darlington were actively seeking grant allocations.

**RESOLVED** – That this Scrutiny Committee supports the average weekly rent increase of 1.7 per cent for 2021/22, increases to the garage rents and services charges, the budget and Housing Business Plan, as appended to the submitted report.

### **HH40 LOCAL OUTBREAK CONTROL PLAN**

The Public Health Principal and Director of Public Health gave a presentation updating Members on the Covid-19 situation in Darlington and in doing so reminded Members of the importance of the campaign regarding Hands, Face, Space as a

measure to control the spread of the virus.

Details were provided of the five measures used to assess the Tier levels; namely case detection rates in all age groups; case detection rates in over 60's; rate of cases falling or rising; positivity rate; and pressure on the NHS.

Members noted that there had been 3770 positive cases in Darlington since March; that cases peaked on 15 November with 361 cases per 100k and that the current rate was 193 cases per 100k. It was also reported that the 70-79 and 80-89 age groups had seen an increase in the number of cases in the last fourteen days, and that this increase could be attributed to an outbreak in a care home.

It was also reported that the bed occupancy and ICU occupancy had peaked in November and was starting to decline; and that the case rates across Darlington and the Tees Valley had decreased between 1 and 8 December 2020. Members also noted that Care Homes had reported 36 outbreaks since March 2020; and household transmission was the greatest source of positive cases.

Details were provided on the new government guidance; the lateral flow testing, which was underway in Darlington; and the Covid-19 vaccination programme was outlined.

Discussion ensued on community testing; the Director of Public Health advised Members that the initial supply of lateral flow tests was 20k; the tests were for anyone and everyone that was asymptomatic; the test site was launched on 14 December at the Dolphin Centre; the testing centre would remain open until 23 December, with tests recommencing on 11 January 2021; and a small increase in the number of positive cases was to be expected and this would help to reduce the number in relation to contact tracing.

**RESOLVED** – That the Public Health Principal and Director of Public Health be thanked for their update on the Covid-19

#### **HH41 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - QUARTER 2 2020/2021**

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services and Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with performance data against key performance indicators for Quarter 2 2020/21.

It was reported that 36 indicators that reported to this Scrutiny Committee, six Housing indicators, six Culture indicators and twenty four Public Health indicators.

At Quarter 2, data was available for nine of the twelve Housing and Culture indicators. It was noted that one indicators which had a target to be compared against, HBS 013 – Rent arrears of current tenants in the financial year as a % of rent debit (GNPI 34) was showing performance better than target; and that, of the nine indicators with data available, one indicator was showing an improved performance compared to the same point in the previous year whilst eight indicators showed a performance not as good as that recorded at the same time in the previous year.

In relation to Public Health indicators it was reported that eight of the twenty-four indicators had new data available at quarter 2.

Following a question Members were advised that there were no rough sleepers in Darlington; that anyone who presented to the Council as homeless was placed in emergency accommodation as reflected by the indicator HBS025 – The number of days spent in bed, which increased from 883 in Quarter 2 2019-20 to 2633 for the same period this year.

Discussion ensued on PBH046 – Cumulative percentage of the eligible population aged 40-74 offered an NHS Health Check who receive an NHS Health Check, and Members were advised that the NHS Health checks were commissioned by the local authority and were managed by Primary Healthcare Darlington to ensure a consistency in the quality across all GP practices in Darlington; and that the incentive was in place as the health checks were not included in the existing GP contracts.

Regarding PBH009 – Low birth weight of term babies Members were assured that expectant mothers received booking in appointments with the midwifery service where extensive assessments were undertaken, including smoking status and alcohol consumption with support offered where necessary; and that the 24 week appointment focussed on post-delivery, reinforcing the messages in respect of smoking and drinking, and to offer support if required.

**RESOLVED** – That the performance data reported for Quarter 2 2020/21 be noted.

#### **HH42 NON-ELECTIVE SPECIALIST UROLOGY PROVISION**

The Clinical Director General Surgery and General Manager General Surgery, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust; and Clinical Director Urology and Senior Service Manager, South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust submitted a joint report (previously circulated) informing Members of a change to the non-elective specialist urology provision.

The submitted report stated that to support patient access to specialist urology services, patients from Darlington, Bishop Auckland and surrounding areas who require non-elective urology care would be admitted to The James Cook University Hospital from 1 December; and that this would affect three patients a week.

It was reported that prior to the change to the provision patients would present to their GP or to Darlington Memorial Hospital, receive an assessment and (if required) be admitted under the care of the General Surgery team with care overseen by this team, with input from Urology Associate Specialist staff.

**RESOLVED** – That the non-elective specialist urology provision update be noted.

#### **HH43 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Managing Director 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.

Discussion ensued on the consultation process currently underway in respect of the document 'Integrated Care: next steps to build strong and effective integrated care systems across England', which sets out how NHS organisations, local councils, frontline professionals and others would join forces in an integrated care system (ICS) in every part of England from April 2021.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the current status of the work programme be noted.

(b) That a task and finish group be arranged to enable this Scrutiny Committee to submit a response to the consultation on the document 'Integrated Care: next steps to build strong and effective integrated care systems across England'.