

COUNCIL
25 NOVEMBER 2021

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.

Better Care Fund

2. Scrutiny welcomed an update report on the progress of the 2021/22 Better Care Fund (BCF) Programme.
3. The BCF is a programme spanning the NHS and Local Government which seeks to join up health and care services, so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing and live independently in their communities for as long as possible. It requires clinical commissioning groups and local government to agree a joint plan which is owned by the Health and Wellbeing Board.
4. We were informed that the 2021/22 BCF Policy Framework was published on 18 August 2021 and that given the ongoing pressures across all systems, there would be minimal changes to the framework.
5. We were advised that planning guidance for the 2021/22 Programme had been delayed, with publication of the guidance and submission requirements confirmed in early October. We were provided with details of the key priority areas of the Darlington Plan 2021/22. Reference was also made to the four national conditions that the Plan must comply with along with the and key metrics that the Plan should focus on.
6. Scrutiny noted the contents of the policy framework for 2021/22 and have agreed to virtually review and provide comment on the draft plan for Darlington.
7. We questioned discharge planning and scenario planning and were assured that scenario planning was being undertaken for all schemes, this included funding implications and impact on services. Members look forward to receiving an update at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Update

8. We received an update from the Assistant Director Housing and Revenues on progress against the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, noting that of the 28 actions in the strategy 19 had been completed, seven were progressing and on track to meet timescales but that due to Covid-19 two were progressing but not on to meet the timescale for delivery.

9. Members were also updated on the homeless and housing options service provision during the Covid-19 pandemic, noting the significant increase in demand as a result of the pandemic.
10. Members were pleased to note that despite the significant challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, everyone in need of emergency accommodation had been provided with somewhere to stay.

Health and Safety Compliance in Council Housing

11. A further update was received from the Assistant Director Housing and Revenues updating Members on the role of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), particularly relating to requirements for social housing providers to meet health and safety standards for their tenants. The update also explained how the Council meets those standards, how compliance is currently monitored and proposed how Members would scrutinise performance against those standards.
12. We were provided with details of the three economic and four consumer regulatory standards which social housing providers must comply with, with particular reference made to the Home Standard which sets expectations for social housing providers to provide tenants with good quality accommodation and cost effective repairs and maintenance service.
13. The report provided Members with details of the role of the RSH in monitoring the performance of social housing providers. We noted that whilst the RSH has not yet determined an inspection regime, the Council already has well established and robust processes in place to monitor health and safety compliance in relation to its Council housing stock.
14. Members have agreed to receive annual update reports on health and safety compliance in Council Housing at this Scrutiny Committee.

Childhood Obesity Planning Options in relation to Hot Food Takeaways

15. We received a report updating Members on the available planning powers that could be used to support the Councils objectives of achieving the targets set in the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan for Darlington.
16. The report informed Members that planning could influence the built environment to improve health and reduce obesity and excess weight in local communities and local planning authorities could consider bringing forward, where supported by an evidence base, local planning policies and supplementary planning documents, which limit the proliferation of certain use classes in identified areas, where planning permission is required.
17. We raised concern regarding the obesity problem across the whole population but were informed that the direct link to hot food takeaways and obesity, which was required to change planning policy, had not been demonstrated. We were assured that the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan had a number of actions to ensure Darlington residents were able to

make healthy choices and noted that a system wide approach was required to tackle this issue

Childhood Healthy Weight Plan

18. We also received a report updating Members on the progress made against the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan, which was developed in 2019. We noted that the pandemic had impacted on the delivery of the actions within the plan.
19. The report provided Members with details of the scope and vision of the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan and the key objectives were outlined.
20. Members were informed that five separate Action Task Groups (ATGs) had been established in January 2021 to identify and leverage changes to local environments in which children and young people live play and socialise. We were provided with details of the progress made within each of the five ATGs.

Healthwatch Darlington Annual Report 2020 2021

21. Members welcomed a presentation from the Chief Executive Officer, Healthwatch Darlington on the Healthwatch Darlington Annual Report 2020 2021 and recognised their valuable work.

Work Programme 2021/22

22. 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.
23. We have agreed that the item 'Primary Care (to include GP access to appointments) be brought forward to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Ian Bell
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee