

**COUNCIL**  
**26 JANUARY 2023**

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**OVERVIEW OF ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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

**Reforms to Adult Social Care – Update**

2. The Assistant Director, Adult Services, reported that the Charging Reforms had been paused until 2025, and that the Inspection Framework would be implemented April 2023. Members requested that a written update, rather than a verbal update, be provided to future meetings, and we are looking forward to an update on the Fair Cost of Care at our next meeting.

**Workforce Recruitment and Development**

3. In light of the national issues surrounding recruitment in the Adults Services Sector, we received a presentation on workforce recruitment and retention in Adult Services from the Assistant Director, Adult Services, the Darlington Academy Coordinator and the Workforce Development Manager.
4. We heard about the wider issues in terms of recruitment and retention, our use of the workforce recruitment and retention fund, and received information in relation to recruitment and retention in Darlington, with greater detail provided around the Council's retention schemes and programmes. We also received information regarding targeted recruitment campaigns and the different approaches adopted, and then how that fed into the bigger picture.
5. Members entered into discussion on the success of the differing strands of the recruitment campaign, recruitment of both young people and older people into the sector, the use of relief contracts as opposed to zero hour contracts, the benefits and disadvantages of zero hour contracts within the sector, the need for workers to access services to enable them to continue to work within the sector, and the reduction in staff turnover in Darlington.

**Care Homes in Special Measures (Executive Safeguarding Arrangements) Task and Finish Review – Final Report**

6. A report was submitted to provide an update on the work of the Care Homes in Special Measures (Executive Safeguarding Arrangements) Task and Finish Group.
7. At a meeting of this Committee on 21 June 2022, Members requested that a piece of work be undertaken to allow Members to receive information on those Care Homes in 'Special Measures', and to understand the reasons as to why those Care Homes had entered Executive Safeguarding Arrangements. An invitation was also extended to the Members of

the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee to be involved in the work. The Task and Finish Group met on 8 November 2022.

8. A note of the meeting, together with the recommendations of the Group, were appended to my report, and the recommendations were endorsed and agreed by the Committee.

### **Work Programme**

9. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2022/23 and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

### **Medium Term Financial Plan**

10. At a Special Meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday, 10 January 2023, we gave consideration to the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2023/24 to 2026/27, which had been agreed by Cabinet at its meeting held on 13 December 2022, as a basis for consultation.
11. The report reflected on the briefing held on 14 December 2022, which had been offered to all Members, on the background and the overall proposals contained within the MTFP 2023/24 to 2026/27, and we examined those services and finances specifically within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee to enable a response to be formulated to Cabinet as part of the consultation exercise.
12. We also received an update on the Local Government financial settlement, which had been received on 19 and 20 December 2022, subsequent to the approval of the draft MTFP by Cabinet, and were advised on the impact this settlement had on the assumptions made within that approved draft MTFP.
13. Members of the Committee welcomed the additional funding for Social Care announced in the Local Government settlement, however noted that, as most of the expenditure covered statutory requirements, there was little scope for robust scrutiny. Discussion ensued on the Fair Funding Review and the concerns that existed around future funding, in particular the potential deficits in the latter two years of the draft MTFP and the assumptions in terms of the interest rate.
14. Members discussed more general themes, including the establishment of charitable foundations to assist local authorities in terms of delivering non-statutory services, the collection of donations to assist with costs, and whether these approaches had been considered by this Council.
15. Clarification was also sought in terms of the current budget position, and how this fed into the draft MTFP, and Members were reassured that the Quarter 3 position for this financial year would be reported to the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in February 2023. It was noted that at Quarter 2 there was an overall overspend due to the recent pay settlement, however it was highlighted that the Adult Social Care budget had an underspend.

16. We gave consideration to the increased ageing population and the work being undertaken to ensure that elderly residents were able to remain in their homes for longer, reducing the burden on the Care Sector, and the efficiencies that could be achieved from 'spend to save' schemes and the use of sustainable energies.
17. Members felt that it was important that Adult Social Care should not be seen as a drain on local authority resources, but as an investment, which generated wealth and jobs, and should be discussed in business terms. Clarification was sought in terms of the PFI Funding identified within the MTFP, and the period covered by the New Homes Bonus.

**Councillor Bob Donoghue**  
**Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee**