

HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 8 February 2023

PRESENT – Councillors Newall (Chair), Heslop, McEwan, Mrs H Scott and Sowerby

APOLOGIES – Councillor Layton

ABSENT – Councillors Dr. Chou, Mills, Preston and Wright

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Jill Foggin (Communications Manager, County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust), Michelle Thompson (Healthwatch Darlington) and Emma Joyeux (NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Penny Spring (Director of Public Health), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues) and Hannah Miller (Democratic Officer)

HH43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

HH44 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON :-

(1) 14 DECEMBER 2022

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 14 December 2022.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 14 December, 2022 be approved as a correct record.

(2) 11 JANUARY 2023

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 11 January, 2023.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 11 January, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

(3) 24 JANUARY 2023

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 24 January, 2023.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 24 January, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

HH45 PRIMARY CARE ACCESS

The Commissioning Lead – Primary Care, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board gave a presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on Primary Care access.

The presentation provided Members with an overview of primary care in the Tees Valley, with details provided of the configuration and the contract requirements for practices; reference was also made to the Primary Care Network (PCN) Contract Directed Enhanced Services (DES). Members noted the PCN enhanced access services which were available to all Darlington patients and that a mixed model was in operation in Darlington, with practices providing some hours and Primary Healthcare Darlington providing the remaining.

Details were provided of the findings of the GP Patient survey 2022, an independent survey run by Ipsos on behalf of NHS England; primary care appointment activity and causes of access challenges were outlined; and improvements to access included increased practice workforce and increased PCN workforce, with 244 staff funded across the Tees Valley from Additional Role Reimbursement Scheme, 33 of those being employed by Darlington PCN.

Members were also provided with details of additional access to GP appointments on Sundays and Bank Holidays through a Winter Resilience scheme commissioned by the ICB; and the further support to improve access was outlined.

Particular discussion ensued regarding the GP Patient Survey results which Members felt did not reflect residents feedback; Members were assured that Darlington practices implemented a number of different mechanisms to capture patient feedback in addition to the GP Patient Survey.

Discussion also ensued regarding patients that do not attend their appointments (DNAs); Members highlighted the need for greater work to identify barriers to access, reasons for DNAs and how these could be addressed and requested that this be fed back to the PCN for consideration. The Commissioning Lead – Primary Care, informed Members of the range of measures in place to address DNA's including appointment reminders and the use of social media; and following a question regarding staff, Members were advised that a range of training courses were offered to all staff in the GP practices via the Primary Care training hub, including customer service skills and managing difficult conversations.

Members highlighted the need to communicate the different roles of staff in GP practices to the wider public.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to the Commissioning Lead – Primary Care, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board for her interesting and informative presentation.

HH46 HOUSING SERVICES ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Assistant Director Housing and Revenue submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the draft Housing Services Allocations Policy (also previously circulated) prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 7 March 2023.

The submitted report stated that the Council had been part of a sub-regional scheme for allocating social housing since 2009; a Tees Valley Common Housing Allocations Policy was adopted by the five Local Authorities, which had been in place since 2012 and was last updated in 2019.

Members were informed that the existing policy no longer met the strategic needs for Darlington and notice had been given on Darlington Borough Council's membership of the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership, due to expire in June 2023; and a new Housing Services Allocations Policy was required.

Details were provided of the key changes to the policy, this included a number of changes to the priority banding; and the Tenants Panel had been consulted in January 2023 and overall were in support of the proposed Housing Allocations Policy.

Following a question, Members were informed that veterans were included in the policy and would be considered under the priority band 1.

RESOLVED – That Members support the onward submission of the draft Housing Services Allocations Policy to Cabinet.

HH47 HOUSING SERVICES DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION POLICY

The Assistant Director Housing and Revenue submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the draft Housing Services Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy (also previously circulated) prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 7 March 2023.

The submitted report stated that the Council has a responsibility to ensure its homes are free from hazards, including damp, mould and condensation; and the Housing Services Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy explains how the Council will ensure that prompt action is taken to remedy issues and support tenants, offering guidance, advice, and assistance throughout the process.

It was reported that the Council's Housing Management Policy includes a specific section on the Council's approach to dealing with damp, mould and condensation in Council homes; and that due to an expectation of the Regulator of Social Housing for all social housing providers to have a separate and specific policy on damp, mould and condensation, the Housing Services Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy has been developed to set out the Council's approach to these issues.

Details were provided of the specific responsibilities for Darlington Borough Council as landlords as set out in the policy; the responsibility for tenants; and that consultation was undertaken with the Tenants Panel in January 2023 who were in support of the draft policy.

RESOLVED – That Members support the onward submission of the draft Housing Services Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy to Cabinet.

HH48 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director Law and Governance 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 be included in the previously approved work programme.

Members were informed that a special meeting of this Scrutiny Committee would be arranged to receive an update on dental services; that the Integrated Care System update had been deferred to June 2023; and Members were informed that a Housing Services Climate Change Strategy was in development and would be brought to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

Reference was made to the recent site visit to Darlington Memorial Hospital for Members to observe the EPR; and reference was made to a recent Autism reset event attended by the Chair and Vice Chair of this Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be updated to reflect discussions.

HH49 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Members were informed that the Board last met on 15 December, 2022 and that the next meeting of the Board was scheduled for 16 March, 2023.

The Director of Public Health informed Members of work being undertaken on vaccine inequality and that an update would be provided a future meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED – That Members look forward to receiving an update on the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.