

COUNCIL
30 NOVEMBER 2023

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.

Update on the NHS Dentistry Provision and Primary Care Dental Access Recovery Plan

2. We welcomed the Senior Primary Care Manager – Northeast and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and colleagues who delivered a presentation updating members on NHS regulations and responsibilities of dental provision.
3. We were provided with an overview of the above and received an update on current issues and challenges faced by the service which included current workforce and retention issues, the impact of COVID resulting in a greater demand for care currently and the need to support and stabilise current offers and capacity.
4. Members were updated on current actions being taken to tackle challenges including a £3.8m spend to identify patients with greatest clinical need and to commission additional capacity with pilot schemes being undertaken at practices to refine identifying patients with greatest need. Flexible commissioning is also available for practices with offsets for recruiting overseas dentists and general work being undertaken in order to attract overseas dentists.
5. Oral health promotion initiatives were presented including supervised toothbrushing schemes in Darlington schools with around 1000 children currently taking part geared towards prevention from early years. A focus also being present for older adults in nursing and residential care with training provided for staff, residents and families as recognised by CQC and rated “best-practice”. Oral health training is also present for Public Health and Social Care staff.
6. Members raised discussions around the need to be registered at a practice before they are willing to see a patient and if given an urgent appointment slot whether this will be charged as private care or NHS, officers clarified that this would need to be established when contacting the practice in question.
7. Questions were asked regarding the opening of Eastbourne practice, clarified that timelines are set at time of tender with service commencement date yet to be established until current phases are complete.
8. It was discussed that Councillors could share information in ward newsletters with a request the NHS colleagues provide information to the portfolio holder in the first instance.

9. Members voiced their appreciation for the volume and quality of information provided in the presentation.

Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy

10. We welcomed the Assistant Director – Housing and Revenues to consider the draft Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy before approval by Cabinet on 7 November 2023. The report sets out responsibilities to our tenants and leaseholders, how we will inspect and survey our properties to ensure they are maintained to a good standard and the arrangements in place for undertaking repairs, when issues arise.
11. We were provided with an overview of the repairs and maintenance policy outlining the how requests for work are handled including the categorising of jobs and the assessment process for work. The Tenants Panel were consulted on the draft policy which met with overwhelming support.
12. Questions were raised as to how many calls are as a result of mould, officers confirm that this would be treat as urgent however reports of mould comprise a very small percentage of overall calls. Further questions were raised as to whether surveys are conducted on the cause of certain issues, officers confirmed that this is the case where required.
13. Members noted the policy and added praise for staff due to positive feedback from residents around repairs and response times.

Healthwatch Darlington Annual Report

14. We welcomed the Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Darlington who delivered a presentation on Healthwatch Darlington's Annual report providing an overview of the manpower, functions, and current projects of Healthwatch Darlington.
15. Points of note in the presentation included Healthwatch's continued statutory requirement to signpost individuals to required services and that the current staffing levels of Healthwatch Darlington stand at five staff including one full-time staff member and Youthwatch currently being refreshed.
16. Members were provided with a clarification of Healthwatch's involvement in patient experiences in which anonymous feedback is taken to form responses to NHS colleagues in order to provide a voice for all involved with volunteers visiting communities and collating experiences of individuals where necessary.
17. We were updated on current projects being undertaken by Healthwatch including carrying out extra work regarding Winter Pressures and the issuing of small grants to promote the risks of diabetes and reporting to the ICB at the end of November 2023 on the experiences of those ageing with learning disabilities.
18. We raised questions with regards to members sharing Healthwatch information on social media which will be provided.
19. Discussion was held with regards to social prescribing with Healthwatch colleagues highlighting their role being signposting rather than providing support. A future item or

session with a focus on social prescribing was proposed with NHS colleague, Martin Short willing to be point of contact on this.

Work Programme

20. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2023/24 and possible review topics. The work programme is a rolling programme and items can be added as necessary.
21. We have agreed the following amendments:
 - (a) MTFP discussion will be held at the next meeting 3 January 2024 with feedback provided prior to a Special Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 18 January 2024
 - (b) The scheduled presentation of a quad of aims regarding chronic inflammation is deferred to the next meeting 3 January 2024

Councillor Mary Layton
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee