

COUNCIL
18 JULY 2024

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.

CDDFT Quality Accounts 2023-24

2. The Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee welcomed the opportunity to consider the draft Quality Accounts 2023/2024 for County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust. The Committee considered that the Quality Account was clearly set out and noted the positive performance set out against the 2023/2024 priorities, expressing satisfaction that most services had been rated as “good” and the “outstanding” rating of the End-of-Life Care service.
3. We noted that the Trust has a zero tolerance for pressure ulcers and on-site infections alongside and reinforcing the core concepts of hand-hygiene and cleanliness and the emphasis on early-recognition from staff in order to isolate patients appropriately.
4. We raised questions regarding cases of sepsis and its early-warning signs, the desired standards of maternity care, sustainability of the Trust’s desired quality priorities, staffing levels, staff satisfaction, assessment criteria for new patients, the availability of staff trained to handle mental health issues. The Trust’s representative provided satisfactory responses to all queries and took note of member’s suggestions, such as including Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPE) infection levels in the final draft.
5. We noted the quality priorities for 2024/2025 which reflected the Quality Strategy priorities and further priorities where further work was required to meet the 2023/2024 objectives.
6. Overall, the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee welcomed the opportunity to comment on the Trust’s Quality Accounts and would like to receive six monthly reports on the progress being made, to enable them to provide a more detailed and valuable contribution to the Quality Accounts in the future.
7. Members agreed that the Chair of this meeting be given authority to agree the written response to County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust on this draft 2023/2024 Quality Accounts in order to meet the 23 June 2024 deadline for response.

Housing Services gas and Electrical Safety Policies 2024-2029.

8. We welcomed the Assistant Director – Housing and Revenues who presented the draft Housing Services Domestic Gas and Heating Safety Policy 2024-2029 and were informed that the policies set out the Local Authority's legal obligations in relation to gas and electrical safety, together with the responsibilities for our staff, contractors and our tenants, to ensure they are not put at risk from the effects of gas and electricity.
9. We were informed that all works are carried out by fully qualified staff with full safety checks on homes requiring work and that as a housing provider, the Council takes all reasonable steps to ensure compliance and mitigate risks arising from health and safety assessments.
10. We noted the content of the report and supported its onward submission to 16 July 2024 Cabinet.

Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy

11. The Assistant Director – Housing and Revenues presented the draft Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy 2024-2029, acknowledging that domestic abuse is often a hidden problem, but we want all our tenants and household members to be safe from the impact of domestic abuse.
The policy highlights the commitment to tackle domestic abuse in Council properties and how Housing Services will aim to manage and support any cases to ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their children can access the right support in safe accommodation, when they need it.
12. We were informed that Consultation was undertaken in May 2024 with the Tenants Panel, Public Health, Harbour and Family Help, with full support given to the proposed Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy.
13. We raised questions including the implications of increased housing waiting lists with the response that domestic abuse victims are given the highest priority and it was highlighted that members believe the service is doing positive work, acknowledging the challenges faced when rehousing victims of domestic abuse.
14. We noted the content of the report and support its onward submission to 16 July 2024 Cabinet.

Air Quality Strategy 2024-2029

15. We welcomed the Environmental Health Manager who presented the proposed Air Quality Strategy 2024-2029 for Darlington which is required by law to be produced. The goals of the strategy being to improve air quality, raise the profile and importance of air quality and provide information about local air quality.
16. We were informed of the six aims of the strategy which also outlines work that has been carried out in each area and future actions for each:

- a) Reduce emissions and protect public health.
- b) Raise awareness and influence change.
- c) Lead by example
- d) Decrease exposure to air pollutants.
- e) Consider the impact of development on air quality.
- f) Ensure compliance with legislation.

17. We raised questions regarding car idling and wood burning in the town with assurance provided that these are being looked at going forward. A member also raised discussion regarding car-use and suggested that bus subsidies could be a useful incentive if possible.

18. We noted the proposed strategy and support its onward submission to Cabinet.

Work Programme 2024/25

19. We noted the report, previously circulated and 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 on this Committee's Work Programme for 2024/25.

20. We suggested that the following items be included in the 2024/25 Work Programme for this Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Sexual Health Provision including methods of access.
- b) Drug Abuse including understanding of numbers and offered provision / preventative measures.
- c) Chronic Illness and preventative measures.
- d) Wider Determinants of Health
- e) Insulation Standards in Council Properties
- f) CDDFT Quality Accounts – 6 Monthly Update

Councillor Mary Layton
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee