

## HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 28 August 2024

**PRESENT** – Councillors Layton (Chair), Beckett, Crudass, Holroyd, Johnson, Mahmud and Mammolotti

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Pease and Mrs Scott,

**ABSENT** – Councillors Baker

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors Roche and Michelle Thompson (Healthwatch Darlington)

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Lorraine Hughes (Director of Public Health), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues), Claire Gardner-Queen (Head of Housing) and Hannah Miller (Democratic Officer)

### HH11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### HH12 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON 19 JUNE 2024

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 19 June 2024.

A number of amendments were requested to the minutes, namely the addition of ‘Lorraine Hughes’ and ‘Michael Conway’ in the attendance list; and Appointment of Chair for the Municipal Year 2024/25, Appointment of Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2024/25 and Times of Meetings for the Municipal Year 2024/25.

**RESOLVED** – That, with the above amendments, the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 19 June 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### HH13 DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Director of Public Health submitted a report (previously circulated) sharing the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2023-2024 – Women’s Health: Taking action in Darlington (also previously circulated).

It was reported that the Annual Report considered keys areas of women’s health, with the aims of highlighting inequalities that girls and women face, and understanding what this means for Darlington; and that the report included chapters on early years and adolescence, women’s health services, employment and wellbeing and the importance of women’s safety on their ability to live a healthy, fulfilling life.

Following a query, Members entered into a discussion regarding mental health, noting that reasons for self-harm and suicide were complex; Members highlighted the need for a focus on healthy exercise rather than ‘sport’ and were informed that work was being undertaken

to develop a physical activity strategy; and Members queried school readiness and how this was measured.

**RESOLVED** – That the Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2023-24 be received.

#### **HH14 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMPLIANCE IN COUNCIL HOUSING**

The Assistant Director – Housing and Revenue submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the health and safety compliance standards for Council housing stock and performance against these in 2023-24.

It was reported that the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) sets a number of consumer standards, which social housing providers must comply with; and the Council has well established and robust processes in place to monitor health and safety compliance in relation to its Council housing stock.

The submitted report provided details of the areas where compliance was monitored on a regular basis, including asbestos, electrical, gas, fire, fire door and water safety, lift safety, smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors and damp and mould.

Following a question, Members were advised of the range of mechanisms in place to ensure that council tenants were informed of their rights and responsibilities in relation to health and safety.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

(b) That this Scrutiny Committee continues to consider reports on health and safety compliance in Council Housing on an annual basis.

#### **HH15 HEALTH PROTECTION ASSURANCE**

The Director of Public Health submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on health protection arrangements in Darlington.

It was reported that the protection of the health of the population was a legally mandated responsibility of the local authority as part of the Health and Social Care Act 2012; the Director of Public Health was responsible for the discharge of the health protection functions delegated to the Council; and an annual health protection assurance report was produced to provide an overview of health protection arrangements and relevant activity.

Members were informed that health protection describes activities and arrangements that seek to protect the population from risks to health arising from biological, environmental or chemical hazards through prevention, surveillance and control.

Reference was made to the role of Directors of Public Health and local authority Public Health teams in supporting health protection work; the range of groups, information flows and reports in place to support health protection functions were outlined; and information was provided on the performance and activity in relation to prevention, surveillance and control.

Members raised their concerns regarding the hazards associated with the Aycliffe Quarry. The Director of Public Health informed Members that the quarry was regulated by the Environment agency, that gas emissions had reduced as a result of work undertaken at the site and the advice of the UKHSA was that there were no long term health risks associated, however short term symptoms can be reported to the GP.

Further discussion ensued regarding the reduction in uptake of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine; Members were informed that Darlington was not an outlier and was performing similar to England and that behavioural insights had been undertaken which would be used to improve information that is communicated regarding the vaccine.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

(b) That the shared responsibility for Health Protection be noted.

(c) That it be noted that the Director of Public Health is assured that the health protection arrangements are appropriate and effective in dealing with the various aspects of health protection in Darlington.

#### **HH16 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY ANNUAL REVIEW 2023-24**

The Assistant Director Housing and Revenues submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an annual update of the Housing Services Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) policy. A presentation accompanied the report (also previously circulated).

It was reported that the policy was approved by Cabinet in 2022 to ensure Housing Services effectively deal with ASB and hate incidents; the aims of the policy were outlined; and reference was made to the new regulatory requirements introduced on 1 April 2024 and their expectations.

Members were provided with details of performance, noting that 500 cases involving tenants were opened in 2023/24; with the main themes being noise, drug misuse and pet nuisance; and it was reported that the majority of complaints being resolved through advice being given.

The presentation outlined the tenancy enforcement action undertaken, work undertaken in the last 12 months along with planned work for the next 12 months.

Members queried the support provided to tenants who had been evicted; and support provided to victims and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.

**RESOLVED** – That the update be noted.

#### **HH17 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - 2023-24 QUARTER 4**

The Assistant Director – Housing and Revenues, Assistant Director – Community Services and Director of Public Health submitted a report (previously circulated) providing Members with performance data against key performance indicators for 2023/24 at Quarter 4.

Details were provided of the 36 indicators reported to this Scrutiny Committee, six indicators were reported by both Housing and Culture and 24 by Public Health.

It was reported that at Quarter 4, 17 of the 36 indicators showed performance better than from when last reported; 18 indicators showed performance not as good as when last reported; and 1 indicator showed performance the same as when last reported.

Members raised concerns regarding the figures for opiate users successfully completing treatment and were informed that service users entering treatment have very high levels of dependency and required a lot of support to get to the point of accessing treatment; and were assured that outcomes were improving as a result of additional investment and increased staffing. Members also requested further information regarding NHS Health Checks.

**RESOLVED** – That the submitted report be noted.

#### **HH18 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.

Discussion ensued on the current work programme and Members noted that a number of items would be deferred to the next municipal year.

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

#### **HH19 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

It was reported that the Board last met on 20 June 2024 and that the next meeting of the Board was scheduled for 12 September 2024.

**RESOLVED** – That Members of this Scrutiny Committee receive the Minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board.