

**COUNCIL**  
**26 SEPTEMBER 2024**

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**OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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

**Director of Public Health Annual Report 2023-24**

2. Members welcomed a report, sharing the Director of Public Health Annual Report for 2023/24, which considered key areas of women's health, with the aims of highlighting inequalities that girls and women face, and understanding what this means for Darlington.
3. We noted that the report includes 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.
4. Members entered into a discussion regarding mental health, noting that reasons for self-harm and suicide were complex. We highlighted the need for a focus on healthy exercise rather than 'sport' and were informed that work is being undertaken to develop a physical activity strategy. Members queried school readiness and how this was measured.

**Health and Safety Compliance in Council Housing**

5. We received a report from the Assistant Director Housing and Revenue, updating Members on Health and Safety Compliance in Council Housing.
6. The report provided details of the areas where compliance is 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.
7. Following a question, we were advised of the range of mechanisms in place to ensure that council tenants are informed of their rights and responsibilities in relation to health and safety.

**Health Protection Assurance**

8. We welcomed a report from the Director of Public Health updating Members on health protection arrangements in Darlington.
9. Members were informed that the protection of the health of the population is a legally mandated responsibility of the local authority as part of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and that the Director of Public Health is responsible for the discharge of the health protection functions delegated to the Council.

10. An annual health protection assurance report is produced to provide an overview of health protection arrangements and relevant activity. We noted 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.
11. We noted the role of Directors of Public Health and local authority Public Health teams in supporting health protection work and welcomed details of the range of groups, information flows and reports in place to support health protection functions. Information was also provided on the performance and activity in relation to prevention, surveillance and control.
12. Particular concerns were raised regarding the hazards associated with the Aycliffe Quarry and we were informed that the quarry is regulated by the Environment agency, that gas emissions have reduced as a result of work undertaken at the site and the advice of the UK Health Security Agency is that there are no long term health risks associated, however if people experience symptoms they should contact their GP or NHS 111.
13. We also discussed the reduction in uptake of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine, and noted that Darlington is not an outlier and that behavioural insights have been undertaken which will be used to improve information that is communicated regarding the vaccine.

#### **Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Annual Review 2023-24**

14. Members received a presentation from the Head of Housing, updating Members on the Housing Services Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy, which was approved by Cabinet in 2022 to ensure Housing Services effectively deal with ASB and hate incidents.
15. We were provided with details of the aims of the policy and the new regulatory requirements introduced on 1 April 2024 and their expectations.
16. We welcomed 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. We were pleased to note that the majority of complaints were resolved through advice being given.
17. We noted the work undertaken in the last 12 months and welcomed an update on the planned work for the next 12 months.
18. Members did query the support provided to tenants who had been evicted and support provided to victims and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.

#### **Performance Indicators - 2023/24 Quarter 4**

19. We received an update on performance against key performance indicators for 2023/24 at Quarter 4.

20. We noted that of the 36 indicators reported to this Scrutiny Committee, 17 showed performance better than from when last reported, 18 showed performance not as good as when last reported and 1 indicator showed performance the same as when last reported.
21. Particular concerns were raised regarding the figures for opiate users successfully completing treatment. Members were informed that service users entering treatment have very high levels of dependency and require a lot of support to get to the point of accessing treatment. We were assured that outcomes are improving as a result of additional investment and increased staffing.
22. Members have requested further information regarding NHS Health Checks.

### **Work Programme**

23. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2024/25 and possible review topics. The work programme is a rolling programme and items can be added as necessary.

**Councillor Mary Layton**  
**Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee**