

HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 2 April 2025

PRESENT – Councillors Layton (Chair), Beckett, Crudass, Holroyd, Johnson, Mahmud and Mrs Scott

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baker and Pease

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Roche, James Graham (Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust), John Stamp (Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust) and Andrea Goldie (Healthwatch)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Lorraine Hughes (Director of Public Health), Catherine Shaw (Public Health Officer), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues), Claire Gardner-Queen (Head of Housing), Cheryl Williams (Housing Asset and Compliance Manager) and Hannah Miller (Democratic Officer)

HH50 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

HH51 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON :-

(1) 5 FEBRUARY 2025

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 5 February 2025.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 5 February be approved as a correct record.

(2) 26 FEBRUARY 2025

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 26 February 2025.

RESOLVED – That, with the removal of ‘with Members noting that limited uptake in Darlington for the incentivised access scheme’ and the insertion of ‘with Members noting that limited uptake by dentists in Darlington for the incentivised access scheme’ to Minute HH46/Feb/25, the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 26 February be approved as a correct record.

HH52 UPDATE: CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2024-2029

The Housing Asset and Compliance Manager gave a presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on the Climate Change Strategy 2024-2029.

The presentation outlined the aims of the strategy and details were provided of the actions taken in 2024/25 in relation to retrofit. Members noted that £1.27m funding was secured from the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund wave 2.1; that this money had been used, alongside the Council's matched contribution to roll out retrofit works to 130 homes; and this work was due to be completed in May 2025. Details were provided of the energy efficiency measures applied.

It was reported that further funding had been applied for in September 2024 under the government's Warm Homes Social Housing Fund wave 3 and the Council would also contribute to this project and the outcome of the bid was due to be released in March 2025. Members noted that the Council had committed over £4m each year over the lifetime of the MTFP for energy efficiency works.

The presentation also provided with details of actions taken in 2024/25 in relation to new build homes. Members were advised that new builds were built to a standard of EPC B; that solar photovoltaics and air source heat pumps were included as standard; and electric vehicle chargers would be installed in line with new building regulations.

Details were provided of the planned and responsive maintenance and in relation to EPC's Members were advised that 51 per cent of council properties now had an EPC C or above; that there had been an increase of 184 homes having reached EPC or above from 2024 to January 2025 and roughly 1400 homes had a high scoring EPC D and required minor works to obtain an EPC rating of C.

Details were also provided of the plans for 2025/26 with Members noting the inclusion of the Tree and Woodland Strategy and progress on the action plan was outlined.

Discussion ensued on those properties with low or no EPC ratings; Members were informed that stock modelling was undertaken for those properties with no EPC ratings and those properties with the lowest EPC ratings were in receipt of targeted work in the first instance.

Concerns were raised regarding the progress being made to retrofit the council's housing stock in order to achieve net zero carbon by 2050; Members were informed that the next wave of funding would enable work to be undertaken on up to 1700 properties, however there were a range of factors to consider and further clarity was required in relation to the governments plans for gas boiler installations.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

HH53 WORKING COLLECTIVELY TO TRANSFORM THE MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

The Associate Director of Partnerships and Strategy, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust gave a presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on the work being undertaken to transform the mental health system.

Details were provided of the core aims and the vision of Community Transformation; an update on Darlington Connect which opened in March 2023; and reference was made to the expectations and impact of the model.

Members were advised of the plans for 2025 which included the commencement of peer support and autism support services in May 2025; and the key challenges of community transformation were outlined.

Members highlighted concerns regarding the visibility of Darlington Connect, despite its central location and it was suggested that Members provide further information regarding the service to residents via their newsletters.

Discussion ensued regarding the low percentage of patients requiring step up to secondary care services, the reduction in patients waiting for assessment, and staff turnover. Reference was made to the importance of offering support and techniques to enable people to manage their own mental health and Members noted that Daisy Chain would be offering this service via Darlington Connect for people aged 16 years and above, for those with and without a formal diagnosis.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

HH54 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

The General Manager – Durham and Tees Valley Community CAMHS, Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust gave a presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on the Children and Young People's Services in Darlington.

The presentation provided details of the i-TTHRIVE framework for delivering children and young people's mental health services; reference was made to average wait times for assessment and treatment, with waits for treatment dependent on the support required; wait time for specialist neuro assessment; and services in place to help address waiting times, including Keeping in Touch process, transformation programme, Mental Health School Teams, with Members noting that Darlington is the first local authority in the Tees Valley to achieve 100 per cent coverage of all mainstream schools. Reference was also made to the regional work with partners to address the backlog and unmet needs of those waiting for neurodevelopmental assessments.

Details were provided of regulatory activity, including a recent independent review undertaken by NICHE in 2024; and the work being undertaken to deliver on the Trust's priorities for children and young people service.

Discussion ensued regarding the new Keeping In Touch (KIT) process; and following a query regarding support for those waiting for a neurodevelopmental assessment, Members were advised that support was available to children and young people without a formal diagnosis, that people were encouraged to access the bubble of support which was widely promoted, and that this was a key area of focus for the Trust.

Members raised concern regarding the lack of progress being made by services for children with autism; the General Manager Durham and Tees Valley Community CAMHS acknowledged Members concerns, informing them of the challenges faced by the services in the years that followed COVID. Members were advised that there had previously been an exponential increase in wait times for assessments however this increase had started to reduce and that there was no additional funding for services.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

HH55 HEALTHY LIFESTYLE SURVEY

The Director of Public Health submitted a report (previously circulated) sharing an overview of the current Healthy Lifestyle Survey, including headlines of the 2024/25 survey and a timeline for the consultation and review taking place.

The submitted report stated that the survey, which had been delivered in Darlington for 14 years, was offered to all primary and secondary schools across the Darlington Borough; there was a pilot survey planned for Darlington College; and there were two surveys, one on wellbeing and relationships and one on health.

Details were provided of the topics covered by the surveys and reference was made to the headlines for both primary and secondary schools (also previously circulated).

Discussion ensued regarding topics not included in the surveys and Members were reminded of the scope and function of the survey. Members also entered into a discussion around gambling and addictive behaviour and consent.

RESOLVED – (a) That this Committee welcome the work programme, data collected and how the data is used.

(b) That this Committee supports the continuation of the Healthy Lifestyle Survey, and where possible share the positive messages captured through the survey.

HH56 SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS - CONFERENCE

The Director of Public Health submitted a report (previously circulated) providing an overview of the Supporting Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing in Schools conference with Members.

The submitted report stated that the Public Health team organised and facilitated a conference on 11 February 2025 which was extremely well received from the majority of schools across the Borough. Members noted that there were 103 delegates in attendance from 33 schools and 14 local and national services which support work in schools.

The submitted report provided details of the event which included seven workshops, eight speakers delivering a range of regional and local updates and the launch of the consultation on the Healthy Lifestyle Survey, including an activity for all participants.

Reference was made to other outcomes from the day and feedback from the day, which was extremely positive. Members were informed of the intention to hold the conference on a biennial basis.

RESOLVED – That Members welcome the feedback from the conference and that future events be supported by this Committee.

HH57 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 following a query regarding sexual health services for young people, Members were reminded that a sexual health briefing had been drafted; that Healthwatch were undertaking some work on this topic; and the briefing would be updated and circulated once this work had been completed.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.

HH58 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

It was reported that the Board last met on 13 March 2025 and that the next meeting of the Board was scheduled for 19 June 2025. The Cabinet Member for Health and Housing informed Members that items discussed at the last meeting included the Better Care Funding, Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report, Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment, NHS planning and the joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

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

HH59 REGIONAL HEALTH SCRUTINY

The Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee last met on 13 March 2025 and the next meeting of the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 8 May 2025. Members noted the approved Minutes from the meeting held on 9 January 2025 (previously circulated).

Members were informed of a request to include 'health impacts of incinerators' on the work programme of the joint scrutiny for the next Municipal Year.

RESOLVED – That Members look forward to receiving an update of the work of the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting of Scrutiny Committee.