

**COUNCIL  
5 DECEMBER 2019**

---

**OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO**

---

**Purpose of the Report**

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the main areas of work under my Health and Housing Portfolio were as follows:-

**Housing Allocations Policy**

2. Cabinet has approved the proposed amendments to the Tees Valley Common Allocations Policy for the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership to ensure that the legislative requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 have been met; that Council meets its commitments in respect of the Tees Valley Letting Partnership; and to ensure a consistent policy across the sub region.
3. A review of the Tees Valley Common Allocations Policy, which had been in place since 2012, was undertaken, with extensive consultation by the five Tees Valley local authorities and registered provider partners with tenants, applicants, staff, stake-holders and partners. The feedback from the consultation has been reflected in the policy.

**Survey Results**

4. An independent specialist organisation was appointed recently to undertake a telephone survey of 1000 Council tenants which represents around 20 per cent of all Council tenancies. Tenants were asked a range of questions and to identify what was most important to them. Their top three were:-
  - (a) Being treated fairly as a customer
  - (b) Safety and security
  - (c) Overall quality of the home
5. The satisfaction results for these were all high varying from 8.2 to 8.4 out of 10. The Council's overall score for Value for Money was also very good at 8.3.
6. In terms of areas identified for improvement, communication was highlighted, particularly in terms of offering a wider range of communication methods, as well as, better informing and involving tenants more in planned programmes of work. A significant amount of work has already taken place to improve waiting times for customers wanting to contact us. Telephone waiting times have reduced from an average of 5.07 minutes in September last year to 3.08 minutes currently, whilst customers calling in person are now waiting on average 5.36 minutes against a target of 10 minutes compared to 11.10 minutes in September last year. We are increasingly developing ways in which customers can self-serve in general and, in terms of Housing Services, tenants can now manage their tenancies on line,

including reporting repairs on line and viewing their rent accounts. Housing Officers are also increasingly engaging with tenants at community events in order to seek their views rather than rely on traditional consultation methods such as formal meetings.

### **Rough Sleepers Counts**

7. The Government have set a vision to half rough sleeping by 2022 and to end it by 2027. Local Authorities in England must provide an annual snapshot of numbers sleeping rough in their Borough.
8. We are working with all the local authorities in the North East as part of a Rough Sleeping Initiative funding which has involved looking at specialised workers being employed to try and better understand this cohort. This includes specialisms around mental health, substance misuse and tenancy sustainment.
9. We are working toward delivering a No First Night Out policy to prevent anyone having to sleep out for one night and are carrying out regular outreach work and street support with partners including ASB, Police, Community Safety etc. We are placing clients in interim accommodation and identifying support regardless of their priority need which is proving very effective.
10. Housing Officers have carried out a number of small rough sleeper counts in the early hours with our third sector partners (700 Club) and have not found anyone on these occasions. Strong partnership working continues as well as an increased understanding of the difference between begging and homelessness

### **Public Health**

11. On 24 September, a multi-agency event was held to officially launch the Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan and to bring partners together to develop clear actions to tackle childhood obesity across the borough. The event was attended by 50 partners from a range of organisations including the local authority, schools, NHS and the voluntary and community sector. Our vision is that more children in Darlington leave primary school a healthy weight. The presentations and interactive workshop sessions held on the day ensured that all partners were committed to a collaborative approach to taking this work forward.
12. Feedback from the event has been circulated to all partners and actions will include work with schools, business engagement, maternal health and early years and physical activity. An engagement group will be established to take this work forward.
13. Public Health have been supporting County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust to make all their sites, including Darlington Memorial Hospital, smoke free zones from 1 October 2019. This reflects the Trusts' commitment to improving health and wellbeing and the environment for patients, visitors and staff.
14. From 1 October the Trust has put into place different measures to deter smoking on the site and help smokers quit. Patients needing support during their hospital stay will be given Nicotine Replacement Therapy and those wishing to stop smoking can access expert help from the local Stop Smoking Service.

15. Darlington participates in a North East Suicide Prevention Network and has received Public Health England funding for grass roots community organisations to deliver programmes that contribute to suicide prevention locally. Four organisations benefited from this funding in in 2018/19 totalling £17,000. It delivered Men's Sheds, community awareness and training and employment support. We have launched the programme for 2019/20.

### **Health and Well Being Board**

16. The Health and Well Being Board held on 28 November focussed on 'Living and Ageing Well', with a presentation on 'Winter Planning'. A number of updates were also provided including Mental Health, Darlington Suicide Prevention Plan and the Public Health England Annual Health Protection Report 2018/19.
17. Other issues considered at the meeting included an update on the Better Care Fund and Carers update.
18. A consultation response was submitted to the Department of Health and Social Care on "Advancing our health: Prevention in the 2020s." We welcome the government's ambition to place prevention at the heart of the health agenda.

### **Tees Valley Health and Well Being Board Chairs Network**

19. On 24 October, there was a meeting of the Tees Valley Health and Well Being Board Chairs Network at which I was appointed to the position of Chair until 2021. The terms of reference for the network were reviewed and the forward plan was considered.
20. An update was provided on Tees Valley oral health and we agreed to receive the Technical Appraisal at the next meeting of the Network.

### **Holiday Enrichment Project**

21. During the summer holiday period, the Move More Team planned and delivered a four-week programme of sport and positive activity. The four schools targeted for this project were Skerne Park, Rydal Academy, Corporation Road and Northwood, with the aim of helping with the transition from Primary to Secondary school and to support raising aspirations and improving self-development.

### **Health in Haughton Matters Project**

22. The project commenced in September 2019 with the aim of helping the residents of Haughton to move more. Activities included family events, such as orienteering and archery in Rockwell Nature Reserve, one-hour walks around the ward, chair-based exercise and a group which focussed on enabling people to move from their couch to running 5km.

**Councillor L Tostevin**  
**Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing**