

**COUNCIL
5 DECEMBER 2019**

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Universal Credit Update

2. We received a report which provided an update on the continued roll-out of Universal Credit in Darlington, and the impact on residents and Council services. The Committee were informed that Universal Credit was replacing a number of existing means tested benefits for working age people, including Housing Benefit which is administered by the local authority, and that the full roll-out of Universal Credit commenced in Darlington in June 2018. It was stated that this meant that most working aged people making a new claim for benefit, or who reported a significant change in their circumstances, would now claim Universal Credit. The subsequent migration of existing claims for Housing Benefit to Universal Credit will take place between 2020 and 2023, although Members heard that the exact timetable was yet to be finalised.
3. The Committee explored the differences between Housing Benefit and Universal Credit, which included the payment frequency, and the impact this had on collection and arrears. It was pleasing to note the role of the Tenancy Sustainment Team, and the support provided by the team in terms of a full welfare benefit check, signposting to other forms of assistance and health referrals.
4. Members expressed an interest in the wider community impact of the implementation of Universal Credit, though it was acknowledged that any report could only reflect the Council's position. Discussion also ensued on rent arrears in the Private Sector, and the recovery of arrears from existing and former local authority tenants. Members were pleased to hear of new software that will monitor arrears on a weekly basis and identify payments patterns.

Safeguarding Adult Partnership Board Annual Report 2018/19

5. The Committee received a report to provide Members with the opportunity to comment upon the Annual Report of the Darlington Safeguarding Adult Partnership Board (DSAPB) for the period 2018/19. Members were interested in the working relationship between the DSAPB and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and heard that representatives of the CQC attended the Safeguarding Board.
6. We heard that hoarding was an emerging theme, and that this was concerning as it had links to self-neglect, however it was a problem that highlighted the complexity of safeguarding work, and for some it might be a conscious decision.
7. Focus centred on the increase in the conversion rate over the previous three years, and Members, and the period of time a conversion takes.

Adult Social Care Transformation Programme

8. We received a report to update Members on the progress of the Adults Social Care Transformation Programme, which had previously been reported in October 2018.
9. Members were informed that the need for transformation arose due to services needing to be modernised and Care Act compliant, in addition to the increased pressure on Adult Social Care resources. The objective of the Programme is to develop a new, modern operating model that will be sustainable going forward, and this vision is being achieved through a systematic and controlled delivery of projects and task and finish activities, separated into four work streams – managing demand, maximising independence, self-directed support and effective and responsive best value provider economy. The four work streams are underpinned by a number of cross-cutting projects required to support the changes in service delivery.
10. Members were satisfied to hear that Adult Social Care staff now had a greater connection and presence at the Darlington Memorial Hospital, and felt that there was a commendable amount of work being conducted in terms of the projects. Concerns were raised in relation to slippage in some project delivery dates, however Members accepted that there was finite capacity and that work was prioritised to provide the best outcomes for people. The Committee were pleased to learn that, despite some initial issues, the on-line self-assessment tool was scheduled to go live in November 2019.

Loneliness and Connected Communities – Quad of Aims

11. We gave consideration to a request received from Councillor Holroyd that an item in relation to Loneliness and Connected Communities be added to our Work Programme, and the Committee felt that it would be beneficial to establish a Task and Finish Group to look at this area, with an invitation extended to the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to participate in this as a joint piece of work.

Work Programme

12. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during 2019/20, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included. The Committee noted a number of updates to the Work Programme, and were informed of the receipt of an invitation to provide representation on a review of CQC Ratings, which was being conducted by the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.

Scrutiny Committee – Proposed Terms of Reference

13. The Committee received a report to give consideration to the Terms of Reference for the Council's Scrutiny Committees and noted the revised proposals accordingly.

Councillor Anne-Marie Curry
Chair of Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee