

ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 22 October 2019

PRESENT – Councillor Curry (in the Chair); Councillors Bell, Clarke, Crumby, Curry, Holroyd, Layton, M Nicholson, Renton and A J Scott.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Mrs Culley and Preston.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – James Stroyan (Assistant Director Adult Social Care), Pauline Mitchell (Assistant Director Housing and Building Services), Anthony Sandys (Head of Housing and Revenues), Ann Baxter (Independent Chair, Darlington Safeguarding Adult Partnership Board) and Paul Dalton (Elections Officer).

AH13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

AH14 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2019

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of this Scrutiny Committee held on 3 September 2019.

RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 3 September 2019 be approved as a correct record.

AH15 UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update on the continued roll-out of Universal Credit in Darlington, and the impact on residents and Council Services.

The submitted report informed Members that Universal Credit was replacing a number of existing means-tested benefits for working age people, which included Housing Benefit which was administered by the local authority, and that the roll-out of Universal Credit commenced in Darlington in June 2018. The submitted report stated that most working aged people making a new claim for benefit, or reporting a significant change in their circumstances, would now claim Universal Credit. Members were advised that the migration of existing claims for Housing Benefit to Universal Credit would take place between 2020 and 2023, however the exact timetable had not yet been published.

Members explored the differences between Housing Benefit and Universal Credit, which included the payment frequency, and the impact this had on collection and rent arrears. Members were pleased 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.

Members expressed an interest in the wider community impact of the implementation of Universal Credit, though it was acknowledged that any report from Officers 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.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

AH16 BETTER CARE FUND 2019/20 UPDATE

The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members of the Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee of progress with the submission of the 2019/20 Better Care Fund.

NOTE: Due to staff absence the consideration of this report was deferred to the next meeting of the Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee.

AH17 SAFEGUARDING ADULT PARTNERSHIP BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to enable the Adult and Housing Scrutiny Committee to receive and comment upon the Annual Report of the Darlington Safeguarding Adult Partnership Board (DSAPB) for the period 2018/19.

The submitted report stated that the Darlington Safeguarding Adult Partnership Board was required to produce an Annual Report which referenced the Board's activities over the previous year and provide a determination of the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within the local area. The submitted report outlined that the DSAPB Annual Report for 2018/19 had six strategic aims, based on the six key principles outlined in the Care Act 2014.

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. Members recognised hoarding as an emerging theme and heard that this was concerning as it had links to self-neglect, however it was a problem that highlighted the complexity of safeguarding work as for some it might be a conscious decision.

Focus centred on the increase in the conversion rate over the previous three years and the period of time a conversion takes.

RESOLVED – That the Darlington Safeguarding Adult Partnership Board Annual Report for 2018/19 be noted.

AH18 ADULT SOCIAL CARE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Scrutiny on the progress of the Adults Social Care Transformation Programme.

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. Members heard that the objective of the

Programme was to develop a new, modern operating model that would be sustainable going forward, and this vision was 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, and that these four work streams are underpinned by a number of cross-cutting projects required to support the changes in service delivery.

Members were reassured to learn 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 recognised 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.

RESOLVED – That the progress on plans to transform Adult Social Care be noted.

AH19 LONELINESS AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES - QUAD OF AIMS

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that Members gave consideration to a request received from Councillor Holroyd that an item on Loneliness and Connected Communities be added to this Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme.

The submitted report stated that a request had been received from a Member of this Committee requesting this Scrutiny Committee identified existing actions being undertaken to reduce loneliness and foster connected communities, examined the scope for improved working through cross-organisational / departmental working, both within the local authority and with external partners, and gave consideration to additional actions and policies that could be undertaken to improve outcomes in this area.

The submitted report invited Members to make a decision on whether this item should be added to its Work Programme, and, if so, how the work should proceed.

RESOLVED – (a) That a Task and Finish Review Group be established to undertake the work outlined in the Quad of Aims, and that an invitation be extended to Members of the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to participate in the work.

(b) That the Work Programme be updated accordingly.

AH20 WORK PROGRAMME

The Managing Director submitted a report requesting that 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.

Members entered into discussion on potential involvement in a Joint Task and Finish

Review with the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, to examine recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) Ratings in Darlington, including the examination of the rating of Newbus Grange Hospital as 'Inadequate' just five months after being rated as 'Outstanding'.

RESOLVED – That participation within the CQC Rating Task and Finish Group be included within the Work Programme.

AH21 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) which invited Members to give consideration to proposed changes to the Terms of Reference for the Council's Scrutiny Committees.

The submitted report stated that the Leader of the Council intended to implement a number of changes to the Cabinet Portfolios with effect from December 2019, and that Officers had been requested to review the Terms of Reference for the Council's Scrutiny Committees, with a view to aligning them more closely with the new Portfolios. The proposed Terms of Reference were appended to the submitted report.

Members noted the proposed Terms of Reference, however considered that there would still be an element of cross-cutting work in relation to the work of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference of this Scrutiny Committee be noted.