

COUNCIL
26 MARCH 2020 (This meeting is cancelled)

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: -

Getting to Know the Team

2. Over the last few weeks I've been meeting with teams across our Health and Housing areas to better understand the work being undertaken. I've visited the Dolphin Centre, Eastbourne Sports Complex, Contact Centre and our Housing Options and Lifeline Services Team. It's clear to me that we have many dedicated and motivated colleagues who are helping to deliver success for Darlington each and every day and this is to be celebrated.
3. I'm also in the process of setting up meetings with our external health partners to better understand and explore what we can all do better for people across Darlington.

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus)

4. Members have been provided with updates relating to COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus), when any situation or advice changes, further updates will follow accordingly. An all members' briefing is scheduled to take place on 26th March prior to full Council.
5. Leaders of groups on the Council have been invited to a weekly conference call involving cabinet, chief officers and partners. This call is focused on sharing factual information about the council's current position.
6. Members are community leaders and part of our role is to share factual and proportionate information relating to COVID-19. This information can support our residents and vulnerable people when making decisions.
7. The Local Resilience Forum (LRF) leads are involved in the response and management of COVID-19, (Novel Coronavirus). As members are aware this is an evolving situation which is being closely monitored by Public Health England.
8. As a council, we are following the national Coronavirus action plan.
9. The Council has robust continuity plans right across our service areas, and these are being reviewed regularly. The Council's Cabinet is being updated daily with any developments which may require a change in our approach.

10. The National Health Service (NHS) has a dedicated online website with lots of generic and specific information which is being updated in real time and we would recommend people regularly visit the NHS website.
11. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) publishes updated data and Public Health England (PHE) publish the latest information and advice for the public. The Council website and social media platforms also offers links to the above sites, which are best placed to inform the public about the evolving situation.

Public Health

12. The breastfeeding rate in Darlington has continued to improve and is now better than the regional average. Darlington has historically had relatively low numbers of children who are breastfed in comparison to England.
13. Supported by midwives and Health Visitors locally, the number of women who are choosing to breastfeed their babies has increased. Breastfeeding provides significant and long-term benefits to both mother and baby which has a long-term impact. We will continue to promote and share the benefits of breastfeeding in Darlington.
14. The Council has robust continuity plans right across our service areas, and these are being reviewed regularly. The Council's Cabinet is also meeting weekly and is being updated with any developments which may require a change in our approach
15. This Council has the duty to commission Sexual Health services including the provision of Emergency Oral Hormonal Contraception free of charge to those who require it. The Sexual Health Service has contracts with 12 of the 19 pharmacies in Darlington to provide Emergency Oral Hormonal Contraception (EOHC).

It is the pharmacy's responsibility as an employer to ensure that their staff are trained to dispense EOHC. Individual pharmacists have a professional duty to maintain their competence as well. There are numerous accredited training packages available with most provided for free by the industry.

Pharmacies that don't provide EOHC have a duty to signpost to a pharmacy who does provide contraception and/or provide people with a phone number of the local specialist contraception clinic.

Lifeline Services

16. Lifeline Services, working with the Alzheimer's Society have successfully introduced 'Games for the Brain' into the Council's sheltered housing schemes by training our scheme managers to deliver a programme of brain training games in several of our community centres. These games which challenge people on reasoning and problem solving have been found to improve cognitive function and help older people to get on better with their daily lives. We are now in a position to deliver the sessions across all sheltered schemes.
17. Lifeline Services play a key role in supporting local residents to remain independent in their own homes and enjoy a good quality of life. In the past year Lifeline Response Officers physically attended to over 10,000 calls. The highest number of

calls (2845) required an urgent response where two-way telephone contact was not possible, followed by 2311 calls where someone had fallen or was unable to move. Other reasons are varied but include support and assistance for a medical/health issue, individual locked themselves out of their homes or for the maintenance of assistive technology.

Customer Engagement

18. Members of our Tenants Board and a Housing Officer attended the initial North East Tenant Voice meeting at Durham recently. The purpose of NETV is to act as a vehicle for social housing tenants from across the region to come together, to have a voice, to learn from each other and to shape policies, working collectively on issues that impact upon them. It will provide one voice for tenants to highlight regional challenges and opportunities and be heard by the regional and national decision makers. Membership is be open to all social housing tenants.
19. Our Tenants Board members are keen to actively participate in this regional organisation and see it as a great opportunity to further develop their role. They will be supported by our Housing Officers, in particular a new Community Engagement Co-ordinator whose role is to assist with the delivery of the Tenant involvement and empowerment standard, supporting the effective management of activities and meetings relating to engagement and consultation with Council tenants and leaseholders.

Dolphin Centre Ten Pin Bowling

20. Following the Cabinet approval to install a 5-lane bowling alley into the Dolphin Centre, companies have now been invited to tender for the work on both the bowling alley and the soft play.
21. It is expected that work will commence in Spring and the bowling alley will open October 2020. Members' will be kept up to date with developments and will key stakeholders in this exciting project. We're keen to involve young people in the development of the bowling alley and further details will be communicated in the coming months.

Children and Young Peoples Activities

22. A range of activities have taken place during the half term holidays that encouraged over 200 young children from Darlington to get active and positively engage at the Dolphin Centre. Activities included diving camps, trampolining, mini fencing, multi games, battle wars and science workshops.
23. In addition, a new 18 metre pool float was launched to attract families and young people in Darlington.
24. In March 'Fit Fridays' launched at the Dolphin Centre. It is designed to target 11 to 16-year olds on Friday evenings to participate in fitness activities such as swimming, going to the gym, bootcamp classes and table tennis.

Councillor Kevin Nicholson
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing