

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 21ST JANUARY, 2019

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on MONDAY, 21ST JANUARY, 2019 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Kevin Rodgers

Councillors John Healy, Neil Gethin, Richard A Jones, Jane Kidd and Andrea Robinson

Invitee: Paul O'Brien (GMB)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

DMBC;

Steve Mawson, Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Director Finance  
Lee Golze, Head of Business Transformation and Strategic Commissioning

Doncaster Children's Services Trust;

Paul Moffatt, Chief Executive, Doncaster Children's Services Trust  
Mark Douglas, Chief Operating Officer  
Robert Moore - Director of Corporate Services & Company Secretary  
James Thomas, Head of Performance and Business Intelligence

		<u>ACTION</u>
1	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.</u>	
	Apologies were provided by Councillor Paul Wray and Councillor David Nevett	
2	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	There were no items on the agenda that contained exempt information	
3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest made.	

4	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	<p>A public statement was made by Les Monaghan in relation to how the Council can work with artists' to use underutilised spaces.</p> <p>Reference was made to certain public art projects that had taken place in Doncaster. These included 'Right Up Our Street' and 'The Desire Project' which had all been received well, however, concern was raised that it could prove difficult to sometimes exhibit in public. Mr Monaghan spoke about 'Relative Poverty', a photographic exhibition created with destitute families in Doncaster over a 2 year period to provide a way for those people to have a voice about why they were in that situation.</p> <p>It was explained that libraries, when used as a venue for such exhibits were not going to reach across all of Doncaster. Mr Monaghan spoke about the potential places where the public might feel more comfortable to go into such as shops or the credit union in Colonades. It was considered that these were places where such projects could be shown and where there would be less of a barrier. Mr Monaghan spoke about how the work represented something that could be related to. It was explained that more needed to be done to remove those barriers and get people to listen. Members heard how the 'Relative Poverty' exhibition could hang from ceilings and be put up and taken down the same day. It was explained that it was a flexible exhibit that fitted with showing the new and different. Members were informed that the exhibit had been shown at the Minister, at Bawtry and Tickhill and there was a wish to move further into those spaces that people were familiar with such as town centre shopping centres. It was added that the project was not seen to tally with what the Frenchgate was about. It was questioned what spaces were available where the public did not fear that were readymade.</p> <p>Members briefly discussed suitable vacancies that would be appropriate for artwork.</p> <p>Members offered their support to help this project reach a wider audience and understood some of the issues that created barriers. It was recognised that it was a world hidden to many people.</p> <p>As part of the discussion, reference was made to the potential of Council buildings, commercial properties, Tourist Information Centre and the entrance to the Doncaster Children's Services Trust office, which all experienced a fair amount of footfall. It was commented that art on its own was not enough and it needed to generate discussions.</p> <p>It was recommended that the Chair forward a short note to Cabinet Members around Members support for the project.</p>	
5	<u>DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST FINANCIAL</u>	

## OVERVIEW REPORT

### **Doncaster Caring DGT theme**

The Committee received a financial update from the Doncaster Children's Services Trust. It was outlined that since being on its improvement journey, the Trust was judged as "Good" and more recently had received "Outstanding" Ofsted ratings for two Children's Homes, and its Fostering and Adoption Services.

Looked after Children and Impact on 2018/19 - The number and level of complexity of looked after children cases continued to rise for the Trust during 2018-19 to an all-time high of 593 in September 2018 when it peaked and had since decreased. It was stated that significant measures had been taken to arrest this increase and Children in Care numbers (that had increased alongside other measures) presently stood at 559 at December 2018. It was reported that Children's Services across the country and South Yorkshire sub-region had been experiencing similar cost pressures

Concern was raised by Members about the ongoing pressure of rising numbers and demands. Members were assured that the Trust had developed reporting with the Council to offer greater transparency of the numbers.

Reference was made to the significant increase in referrals since 2014/15 to 2017/18. It was of the opinion that too many families were being referred in and were presently caught up within the system.

Finances – Members were told how additional funding of £6 million had been approved by Cabinet with £4.1 million (69%) of the £6m relating to 2017-18 cost pressures brought forward into 2018-19. It was explained that a range of measures had been introduced to reduce costs. The Council have indicated that the budget for 2019-20 will be re-based for the Trust to start with a balanced budget going forward.

It was commented that in respect of the future financing of services, there was a move towards more shared service to reduce overhead costs and work alongside the Council.

Contract Management and Overview and Scrutiny – Members were told about the Trust Children in Care Strategic Overview Group that met on a fortnightly basis, a Joint Resource Panel (that consisted of representatives from the Council, the Trust and Doncaster NHS CCG). Members were also reminded about the joint commissioning work taking place with Doncaster NHS CCG as well as innovation and partnership work that had been outlined in the report.

Other mechanisms referred to included the Monthly Operational Finance Meetings, Joint Performance and Finance Meeting and

Quarterly Performance Monitoring Group. Members were provided with assurances that these helped ensuring that there would be a robust processes and closer working relationships between the Trust and the Council.

Support for Care Leavers into Independence – Reference was made to Doncaster Council being the first Local Authority in Yorkshire to support its care leavers by exempting them from paying council tax (in place for young people leaving the care of Doncaster Council until the age of 25).

DCST Governance – It was explained that the Department for Education (DFE) had conducted a review late 2018 of the governance arrangements of the Trust. Following that review, the Trust and Council were working towards converting the Trust from its current form to be an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) with the single member being the Council and a new governance framework and contract being in place from 1 April 2019. Representatives from the Trust felt that the new arrangements were a significant and positive step moving forward.

Members of the Committee were informed that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel would be considering the Revised Company Structure of the Doncaster Children's Services Trust at a meeting of the Panel on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

It was recognised that the Council had always met its statutory responsibility and the new governance arrangements would allow greater control and a closer relationship with the Trust, without the Trust losing its independence and expertise.

Management of Costs In reference to the number of measures taken to reduce costs, one Member asked for further clarification on what those savings actually meant and what would be the impacts of those savings. It was explained that within the Family Support Workers Team, for example, reductions had been made as part of a wider strategy and that vacancies had been taken out of the system. It was also outlined how prior to Ofsted, additional funding had been provided by the Council to increase numbers of staff for a temporary period to drive quality and performance in preparation of the inspection. Members were also told how the Trust had been successful in converting agency posts into permanent staff positions and this was a reflection that Doncaster was becoming an employer of choice.

Concern was raised by the Union invitee about the continuing overspends that the Council has supported which ultimately may place pressure on the Council internally. The Committee was informed that staff Terms of Reference had been maintained and any efficiencies made had been applied across all staff grades. In terms of staff reductions, it was clarified that all options were considered first to

prevent redundancies being made.

It was reported that no costs had been incurred with agencies when agency staff became permanent staff of the Trust via the Matrix agreement after 13 weeks. Members were told that there would always be a need for some agency staff to be employed due to the national shortage of Social Workers.

Concern was raised that staff could be attracted to those neighbouring authorities which offered higher salaries and smaller caseloads. It was responded that it was a competitive market, which was the reason why Doncaster needed to offer something additional, for example, training and development and a career structure. It was noted that developing a regional agreement was challenging as there was always the potential for one of the authorities to step down from it.

It was recognised that the Council had invested in its premises, valuing the staff and the important role that they played. It was about the Council, its partners and the Trust recognising the importance of value and the impact of this on staff culture.

Capital and innovation funds – Reference was made to some of the examples that had been shown to produce good results. It was commented that there was the potential through a capital receipt to support and deliver additional children's homes that would be relocated in different parts of the borough.

It was recognised that there was a need to experiment and pilot new areas. It was noted that the Council, Trust and NHS CCG all acknowledged that there was a need to invest in Doncaster to bring those children back into the Borough.

Out of Authority Placements - In terms of Out of Authority Placements, it was shared that the Council needed to ensure that the education offer was right. Members were assured that the education offer was being considered in order to ensure that those children benefitted from good outcomes. It was further explained that work was being undertaken looking at the Quality Assurance framework of children placed outside of area to ensure that there were robust Personal Education Plans (PEPs) in place that were being reviewed effectively.

Members were also informed that when considering which children were to be returned to the Borough, it was taken into account where some of those children had established networks elsewhere. Members were assured that although finance was noted, it was not the driver to return children placed out of the area – it is whether it was appropriate to bring them back.

It was raised that although Doncaster could demonstrate that it had something to offer to neighbouring authorities, care needed to be taken

	<p>not to divert resources away from Doncaster children. It was commented this could be achieved through carefully thought out programme and discussions around investments for the future. Reference was made to Doncaster’s potential to be made the lead authority for the regional adoption work taking place.</p> <p>Members were informed that conversations were taking place around contingencies and how the governance will work. Members were told that the Trust was being encouraged to build up their own resources.</p> <p><u>Safeguarding Pressures</u> – In November 2018, the Association of Directors of Childrens Services (ADCS) published their Annual Safeguarding Pressures Report, which charts significant national increases in demand for safeguarding services over the last 5 to 10 years, with national trends forecasting a further increase in looked after children of a further 7 per cent over the next five years.</p> <p>Reference was made to the 1.35 up to 2 million initial contacts (increase of 78%) that had been made nationally. It was agreed that this had been challenging over the past year due to significant increases in demand for services across all categories of need. Members were informed that consideration needed to be given to the Trust and across partners to deploy what resources were available. It was felt that the Trust had provided value for money throughout its services and that demand has been managed well due to control in the management of the budget. It was noted that the Trust had seen an increased spend in Looked After Children of around 3% from 16/17 to 17/18and nationally it was close to 8%.</p> <p><u>Future</u> – Concerns were raised around future trends and the potential costs that could be incurred. It was questioned whether enough was being done to find out more about the causes and look at the best practice of other authorities. It was outlined that work had been undertaken to consider the impact of Universal Credit and austerity. Members were informed that the Council (alongside an external consultancy group) was considering Front Door need. Members also heard that undertaking auditing with Council and Early Help services indicated that there was a need to find solutions through providing the necessary support at the earliest opportunity and ensuring that voluntary organisations and partners both played their part.</p> <p>The Panel resolved to note the report and progress made.</p>	
6	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN JANUARY 2019</u></p>	
	<p>The Panel received a report updating Members on the Panels work plan for 2018/19. A copy of the work plan was attached at Appendix A of the report taking account of issues considered at the OSMC workplanning meeting.</p>	

Members were advised of the following changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Workplan;

- Brexit Update meeting – to be arranged for the end of February 2019
- Revised Company Structure at Doncaster Children's Services Trust (Forward Plan Item) – to be considered at the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

The Chair also made Members aware of the response made in relation to the correspondence raised by the Committee around “2018-19 Finance and Performance Report and Delivering for Doncaster Booklet” which would be circulated to the Committee.

Concern was raised that 10% was quite significant when looking at the figure. It was felt that this needed further explaining and agreed that the Panel would wait to see what Officers would say at the Committee’s meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

Reference was made back to the public statement and the potential of void properties being utilised and links that could be made with commercial premises. The Senior Governance Officer advised that the use of void shops were under the remit of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**RESOLVED** that the Panel note the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Workplan 18/19 – January 2019 update.