

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 3RD SEPTEMBER, 2020

A VIRTUAL MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held on THURSDAY, 3RD SEPTEMBER, 2020 at 12.30 PM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors John Healy, Neil Gethin, Mark Houlbrook, Richard A Jones, Andrea Robinson and David Nevett (Substituting for Councillor Majid Khan)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources  
Riana Nelson, Director of Learning, Opportunities and Skills  
Rupert Suckling, Director of Public Health  
Peter Dale, Director of Regeneration and Environment  
Phil Holmes, Director Adults Health and Wellbeing  
Nazir Dad, Head of Service Regulation and Enforcement  
David Smith, Licensing  
Paul Tanney, Chief Executive St Leger Homes  
Julie Mephram, Director of Children's Social Care  
Rob Moore, Director of Corporate Services and Company Secretary

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bev Chapman and Majid Khan

		<u>ACTION</u>
1	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	None.	
2	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	Councillor Gethin declared an interest during discussion, relating to Treasury Management, as part of the Q1 Finance and Performance report.	
3	<u>MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT</u>	

	<u>COMMITTEE HELD ON 25TH JUNE, 2020</u>	
	The minutes of the meeting held on 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2020, were agreed as a correct record.	
4	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	There were no public statements.	
5	<u>STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY 2021 - LICENSING ACT 2003</u>	
	<p>The Committee gave consideration to the proposed Statement of Licensing Policy 2021 report, including responses received during the consultation period, prior to being presented to Full Council. A number of specific areas were addressed as detailed below.</p> <p>Concern was expressed that there had been a couple of White Collar Boxing events in the Borough but it was confirmed that this type of event was required to follow the rules of the British Board of Boxing Federation Control. These events were classed as a legal boxing event required the same safety procedures, referees and medical assistance as a professional boxing event and could be held under a temporary event or premises license.</p> <p>In connection with the Licensing Policy being rigorous enough, particularly bearing in mind the alcohol related cardiovascular and liver disease health related concerns for Doncaster, the Committee was assured that the approach proposed in the Policy was satisfactory. It was explained that the Local Authority was acting under Government guidance in relation to what could and could not be considered under a Licencing policy. It was recognised that Public Health in Doncaster held good relationships with the Council's Licensing team and throughout the Covid-19 pandemic improved relationships had been developed with the Borough's licensees.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question about professional regional and national public health networks and would they seeking to influence Government, it was explained that Public Health always contributed to reviews through the Association of Directors of Public Health.</p> <p>The Committee was asked to recognise that the drive for a late night levy in the vibrant late night economy areas across the Borough, could be developed, with the resources used towards alcohol services. However, in the current environment it was not a route that would be explored.</p> <p>In relation to temporary pavement licenses the issues considered when an application was received, included assessing access for people with disabilities and pushchairs and where outdoor tables and chairs would be sited. Consultation was undertaken with, for example, the Police</p>	

	<p>and Highways to ensure the application would not impede users of the highway.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Licensing Policy 2021, be noted and supported.</p>	
6	<p><u>2020-2021 QUARTER 1 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair outlined that whilst giving consideration to the Local Authority’s 2020-21 Quarter 1 Finance and Performance Improvement report, the Committee wished to address how effective services were being delivered within available resources and it’s confidence in the budget bearing in mind the currently complicated picture. The areas below were therefore addressed in detail.</p> <p>The Director of Corporate Resources outlined that it had been a very difficult Quarter 1 due to the current Covid–19 environment. Members noted that a significant amount of resources had been provided to support Covid related activities and with regard to performance the report was variable due to some areas maintaining services and other having to stand down for a short period.</p> <p><u>Local Authority response to the long term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic</u> – Two broad approaches were currently being undertaken, one being specific to the NHS in relation to stopping and starting services, with the requirement to submit a plan to Government about how activity would increase. In line with this, the NHS had launched additional services for people who were or had suffered with Covid.</p> <p>It was noted that across Team Doncaster assessments had been undertaken for example in relation to environmental and economic impacts with a Recovery Renewal Plan being developed to respond. The four areas being focused on were Health and Care, Children and Young People and Families, All Age Mental Health and Covid specific control. To assist, a renewal and recovery Board had been established to agree what actions were required to get the four areas “back on track”. With regard to Scrutiny’s role, it was noted that officers were addressing how targets could be presented in future quarterly performance reports.</p> <p><u>Public Health England – Government announcement to discontinue the service</u> – In response to concern expressed about the impact this would have on Local Authority services, it was explained that no Public Health agency had remained unchanged following a pandemic and noted that it was sensible and easier to work with a single body rather than a number of organisations, as was currently the case.</p> <p>The Committee noted that there was currently no detail of what functions would be included in the new National Institute for Health Protection, however, concern was expressed about the broader work</p>	

currently undertaken by Public Health England, for example, data, health improvement and health inequalities. It was acknowledged that to deliver on the proposals, the Local Authority would have to undertake additional duties and that would require additional resources.

It was noted that the Public Health Grant currently funded Public Health, however, no details were currently available for the 2021/22 period but it would be linked to the comprehensive spending review.

The Director of Public Health reminded Members that Doncaster had established a Covid Engagement Board, chaired by the Mayor, to address how Covid control plans were being progressed.

Risks of the current position – the Committee sought assurance in relation of how these were being managed, particularly the delivery of statutory functions. It was explained over the last few months service provision could have been slightly different, depending on the nature of service. It was noted that in relation to:

Children's Services - there had been an increase in child referrals with some packages of care creating additional costs to the service.

It was noted that there were three areas of pressure for the Directorate, particularly due to the demand of Covid lockdown, being:

- Out of authority placements following the pressure placed on the Local Authority and the delay in implementing the Future Placements Strategy;

With regard to demand, it was noted that this was increasing.

- Transport – the local authority was unable to implement the travel assistance training aimed at reducing costs.

At the time of writing the report it was noted that Local Authorities were not aware of the national guidance for transport, but when received it was slightly better than expected.

- Pressures of children returning to school in the Autumn term.

Adult Services - there had been an underspend due to the threat of Covid-19, and some people had placed their packages on hold. With regard to care homes there had been a number of hospital admittances or sadly loss of life. However, the following areas were being actively managed:

- Home care provision – a number of people paused services with

- work now required to re-establish their packages;
- Covid in care homes – sadly, Doncaster like other areas nationally, had been impacted and therefore reduced the occupancy in the homes but new demand was not increasing due to Covid concerns. It was stressed that Doncaster care homes had done a good job trying to keep occupants and staff safe.
  - Financial support to care providers that could be at significant risk. The Government funding received, as outlined in the report would be aimed at this type of support;
  - Winter pressures in the NHS and increased demand, particularly flu and it exacerbating Covid;
  - Supported living – as Day Services were stood down this area received additional support;
  - Younger Adults – costs of provision transitioning to adulthood.

It was noted that the Local Authority was working alongside the NHS and under new arrangements subsidising some services due to the Covid pandemic.

With regard to the overall position pressures, the Local Authority reacted as required and the financial position outlined the cost of responding to Covid issues and reported the underlying position. It was stressed that the reporting method separated recurrent and non-recurrent spend, to highlight and understand the long term and underlying issues moving into 2021/22 and beyond.

In connection to the long term effects on people and their carers who had reduced their care packages and become more isolated, it was noted that it was the Local Authority's responsibility to remain in contact with their local communities.

Members acknowledged that there seemed to be different tiers of confidence when people were coming out of lockdown, for example some were very anxious and their isolation could increase whereas other were happy to go shopping and into cafes and pubs.

It was noted that the Local Authority had the flexibility to apply the three tranches of monies from Government for Covid, for example, supporting the Leisure Trust during the first 6 months of the Covid pandemic. Each issue and costs that presented itself were investigated in relation to Covid. Flexibility had also enabled the Local Authority to carry forward resources to manage the impact from loss of income through Council Tax and Business Rates. These were the areas of highest vulnerability for 2021/22 as there may be an increase for example in people not able to pay their Council Tax.

Impacts of Brexit – in response to a query raised it was noted that the Local Authority could not detail what the implication would be at this stage. The partnership working group ensured everyone was kept

informed and whether a Trade Deal could be reached was an area that would be focused on.

Medium Term Financial Strategy(MTFS) – In response to a question relating to ensuring all services were sustained it was explained that whilst formulating the budget on existing policy, a number of scenarios relating to service delivery, including possible income and volatility were addressed. A report was currently being produced for Cabinet consideration identifying medium and worse case scenarios, for example, Council Tax receipts. It was noted that Scrutiny usually undertakes two sessions during budget development, but due to the current economic position, this may require additional sessions being undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny.

With regard to receipt of the pre-Covid monies from Central Government it was explained that it was flexible and could be used against loss of income, including car parking charges, non-achievement of savings and additional cost pressures. A monthly return was required and made to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Funding availability for future emergencies – It was acknowledged that any emergency, for example, flooding had a massive impact on the Local Authority's financial position and priorities. Due to relocating staff to assist during these events, meant some service delivery could be slightly behind for a short time. It was explained that as part of the budget development the Local Authority was required to undertake an assessment of reserves to ensure it was adequately resourced to support any future emergency. When the 2020/21 budget was developed the Local Authority entered the year in a positive position with the General fund slightly increasing due to some underspends.

It was noted that the experience over the previous 6 months, with some many uncertainties, the risks and response made had been well managed and able to operate within the resources available to the Local Authority.

Loans that the Local Authority could access – it was explained that the Treasury Management Team regularly investigated lower interest opportunities however the Council always maximised it's internal resources keeping a healthy balance and cash flow position, rather than taking out high risk loans.

A Member commented that they were pleased to learn the Council was adequately financially supported rather than what was being reported in the local press.

Doncaster Learning

Service Delivery – It was noted that during the Covid-19 lockdown

period a number of services had work really well, staff had learned new skills and it questioned which areas would continue to be used, for example, virtual operations.

The Committee noted that the Local Authority was, at the time of the meeting, addressing how education services were moving forward, for example children returning to school, having a focus on behaviour management and children not attending school.

With regard to school transport:

- South Yorkshire Passenger Transport service had been very supportive.
- Guidance on home to school transport had been received very late.
- More than 800 routes were running successfully.
- Some parents were uncomfortable with their children using shared transport and had therefore provided personal transport.

Family hubs - five remained open with support for new families. It was noted that the virtual family hub had been established providing, story reading and sing alongs. The hub had received 882,000 views with 1,000 parents accessing the parenting classes.

Work through community cells had increased during lockdown assisting the development of locality working.

Vulnerable children – partners and schools have worked together learning more about where children were and ensuring they were supported, for example, children who were undertaking a carers role where parents were shielding.

With regard to Children with Special Educational Needs, on-line education had been provided and would continue ensuring services were more accessible.

The Stronger families work continued during the lockdown period with a 100% return of payment by result, meaning there had been a positive impact on nearly 3,000 families.

Future Pressures and family vulnerability – the Panel recognised the increase in demand for support with work being undertaken through a risk dashboard to pick up issues at an early stage. For example, a number of young people presented themselves with a mental health problem at hospital and through the Children's Cell, a quick response was able to be provided.

Poverty – It was recognised that families were feeling the strain following the Furlough period and possible redundancy, which could increase the number of vulnerable families due to their change in

financial circumstances. In response this was being addressed through Team Doncaster and the Anti-Poverty Strategy Group.

Adult Education – It was confirm that Doncaster College was part of the team providing support during the lockdown period. It was noted that the College was very well prepared to provide a virtual and blended offer to students including online learning platforms additional to personal guidance.

The Committee was informed that the Education and Skills Strategy was due to be launched in the near future, and would include post 16 learning. It was recognised that the Covid pandemic had helped realise that the priorities within the strategy were correct, particularly relating to future skills and enabling people to access the correct learning pathway.

#### Doncaster Living

Street Scene – The Committee was reminded that following the lockdown period the green waste collections had now returned to a normal service. The team was also catching up with the grass cutting and cleansing backlog. It was noted that staff safety had been addressed with the Unions.

In response to a query relating to enforcing fly tipping fines, it was explained that to make a case against offenders, portable cameras had been installed in certain locations across the borough. The Courts were currently clearing a backlog due to the lockdown period and unfortunately a number of Doncaster's fly tipping cases were still awaiting hearing.

High Street performance – It was noted that town centre footfall since June was gradually improving but had not returned to the pre-covid numbers. This assessment had been provided by using data captured through CCTV to assess the current position. Anecdotal information received from town centre businesses indicated that footfall was increasing. To assist businesses, the Local Authority had submitted a financial assistance bid for assistance with Covid-safe queuing systems, hand sanitiser provision, marketing and pedestrian schemes.

The Committee recognised that people's behaviours and patterns towards how they shopped had changed, for example, the increased use of on-line shopping. However, the Local Authority would continue to make Doncaster a safe place for the community to visit and shop.

With regard to office use in the current pandemic situation, Members were pleased to note that positive enquiries for town centre business office accommodation were still being sought.

Members were informed that the Urban Centre Mater Plan would

	<p>require a rethink in response to the Covid pandemic addressing how to increase footfall in the town centre and the possible increase in residential accommodation.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Committee:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the details contained in the Quarter 1 performance and financial information; and</li> <li>2. Continue to monitor the Medium Term Financial Strategy.</li> </ol>	
7	<p><u>ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER LTD PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY UPDATE: 2020/21 QUARTER ONE</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair, prior to discussion on this item, announced that Paul Tanney, Chief Executive of St Leger Homes of Doncaster was due to retire, and on behalf of the Committee wished him all the best for the future.</p> <p>In response to the Committees concerns relating to a number of the key performance indicators moving from green to red on the traffic light system, the Chief Executive provided an overview of the report, including:</p> <p><u>Rent Arrears</u> – Following an increase in April when lockdown commenced, following the work undertaken by the Tenancy Sustainment Team, who had proactively contacted over 600 tenants with the offer of financial management support, arrears had started to reduce.</p> <p><u>Void Properties</u> – Following Government guidance that properties could not be relet during the lockdown period, it was noted that the target to turn around void properties would not be met this year. The company had introduced a Covid safe working system ensuring maximum staff safety when renovating properties. Members acknowledged that there had also been problems obtaining certain materials, for example, high demand products including plaster and kitchen units.</p> <p>It was also noted that other capital improvement works to properties had been reassessed during lockdown, with more exterior renovations being undertaken. For example, guttering and fascia replacement, leaving the more intrusive internal works for when the pandemic started to ease. This has ensured the workforce has remained busy.</p> <p>It was noted that victims of domestic abuse had continued to be rehoused throughout the lockdown period.</p> <p><u>Housing Options and Complex lives Team</u> – It was reported that every homeless person had been offered accommodation during the</p>	

	<p>lockdown period with 415 people being rehomed since 1<sup>st</sup> April. Despite the work undertaken by the team, there were still a couple of people that refused to accept accommodation. At the time of this meeting, 56 people had been placed in bed and breakfast, 89 in temporary accommodation and 12 homeless. Personal development and housing plans had been set for each person affected.</p> <p>The Committee was informed that a bid, in partnership with the local authority, had been made to the Next Steps Fund to assist with creating housing capacity within the private sector. For example, to support landlords the creation of a private landlord insurance scheme providing additional security against any damaged caused by Council tenants.</p> <p><u>Gas Servicing</u> – It was recognised that tenants were anxious about letting workmen into their properties to undertake required gas servicing, however it was hoped that the 200 outstanding service certificates, which had reduced to 50 at the time of this meeting, would be completed by the end of September, 2020.</p> <p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The private landlord insurance system details be forwarded to the Committee; and</li> <li>2. The report, be noted.</li> </ol>	
8	<p><u>PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE OF DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST: QUARTER 1 2020/21</u></p>	
	<p>The Committee received a report setting out the Children's Trust quarterly performance and addressed the following issues:-</p> <p><u>Out of Authority Challenge</u> – In response to concern relating to risks, it was explained that unfortunately during the Covid lockdown period some out of authority placements had to be used. It was noted that work was continually undertaken to return children to Doncaster, where it was safe to do so. It was also noted that it could be very difficult to return a child to Doncaster when they were very settled and doing well in their existing placement.</p> <p>Future Placements Strategy – the Committee was informed that development had been delayed during the lockdown period because property viewings were prohibited. Viewings had now recommenced and when suitable properties were found, they would require refurbishment works, staffing and registration prior to use.</p> <p>It was noted that the work planned to acquire an additional two x two bedroomed properties planned for early 2021 would be brought forward.</p>	

	<p><u>Safeguarding</u> – in response to concerns raised, following children returning to school and maybe being identified as requiring support, it was explained that additional resources had been identified enabling the Trust to respond effectively. Members noted that the Children’s Trust was working very closely with all schools and health partners to respond to a possible spike in September and October.</p> <p><u>Partnership working</u> – Members noted that Team Doncaster had excelled with the new way of working and taking on a shared responsibility for all children. It was noted that it had been a very difficult but innovative time. Members recognised that some Children’s Trust staff had to shield and throughout the organisation officers had been assigned to different roles including delivery of food parcels or undertaking welfare telephone calls to children when it would usually be a personal visit. The Director explained that working in new ways had assisted development of the new locality model.</p> <p><b><u>RESOLVED:</u></b> - That the report, be noted.</p>	
9	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></p>	
	<p>The Senior Governance Officer presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan report for the 2020/2021 municipal year.</p> <p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan for 2020/2021 be approved; and</li> <li>2. The Council’s Forward Plan of Key Decisions, be noted.</li> </ol>	