

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 24TH JUNE, 2021

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE , DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 24TH JUNE, 2021 at 10.00 AM.

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors Daniel Barwell, John Healy, Leanne Hempshall, Majid Khan, Sarah Smith.

Co-optees – Antoinette Drinkhill

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources

Rupert Suckling, Director of Public Health

Dan Swaine, Director of Economy and Environment

Riana Nelson, Director of Learning, Opportunities and Skills

Andy Hood, Head of Young Peoples Services, Doncaster Children's Services Trust.

Rob Moore, Director of Corporate Resources and Company Secretary, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

James Thomas, Chief Executive Doncaster Children's Services Trust

Andrew Sercombe, Governance Manager

Rachel Wright, Governance Officer

		<u>ACTION</u>
1	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.</u>	
	Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bev Chapman, Councillor Richard A. Jones also Bernadette Nesbit, Paul O'Brien.	
2	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	None	
3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	None	
4	<u>MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND</u>	

	<u>SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 11TH AND 25TH FEBRUARY 2021</u>	
	The minutes of the meetings held on 11th and 25th February, 2021 were agreed as a correct record.	
5	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	None	
6	<u>2020/21 - QUARTER 4 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT</u>	
	<p>The Director of Corporate Resources provided an overview and reminded Members the report was a summary of activity that took place earlier in 2021, specifically looking at the performance and financial position.</p> <p>It was highlighted to Members that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Doncaster Council Covid-19 Timeline (Appendix A) identified key milestones and challenges for the Authority. • The Authority received significant additional financial support amounting to £166 million pounds of business. • Some Performance Indicators were modified, or set aside to take into account the affects of Covid-19. <p>The Committee acknowledged it had been a challenging year, and commended the maintained performance. The Authority ended the year with a favourable outturn position, given that it responded to Covid-19 as well as continuing to carry out normal business.</p> <p>Councillors then explored the following topics in more detail;</p> <p>CONNECTED COUNCIL</p> <p><u>Financial Risks</u> - In response to a question it was explained that COVID-19 had amplified risks the Council already had, the top three financial risks were identified as;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children – in terms of supporting children that have not been within the normal school environment with learning and attainment. 2. Environment – as a result of people being at home more, there was an increase in waste which had additional costs implications. 3. Council Budget – there would be challenge around the Council’s income, particularly business rates. A significant amount of relief was provided by Government during the pandemic, however the level of business support would not continue. 	

It was also advised that as an organisation a number of individual risks could accumulate, and this would be monitored over the coming months. The Authority had received unprecedented levels of initiatives, and some of those resources carried forward into 21/22 to help mitigate other impacts as a result of Covid-19. Implementing them effectively to manage the next phase of recovery was another risk identified to Members.

Council Tax and Business Rates – Members were assured that to help increase income, business rates were monitored monthly making sure appropriate business rate payments by the largest businesses in the Borough were made. This monitoring was to be extended to the next tier of 50 businesses with regular meetings with the Business Rates Team, and Business Doncaster. There were also number of initiatives described to Members that are running to support both existing and new businesses in Doncaster.

Staff Sickness - The Committee acknowledged the positive trend for staff sickness within the report and thanked management and staff for delivering services throughout difficult circumstances. Whilst specific reasons for the trend were unknown it was felt the new way of operating, with most employees working from home, allowed greater flexibility to manage personal wellbeing, childcare and people could work more effectively. Staff surveys showed a positive response to this way of working and therefore it was suggested the trend would continue.

DONCASTER CARING

Carers Additional Needs – Members were provided with a number of examples of initiatives put in place to support the additional needs of carers during and after the pandemic, these included;

- Fighting Back Fund – focussing on investment in the local assistance scheme and the voluntary sector.
- Better Care Fund – money pooled with NHS to develop the 'Time For You' scheme, using direct payments for carers.
- Carers Surveys – Recent surveys showed significant stress in communities. Staff working strategically with carers and partners.
- Carers Strategy – A new strategy for 2022, specifically built around what carers say they need to live fulfilling lives, and will have an all age focus.

A Member proposed that the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel have sight of the newly drafted Carer's Strategy.

A Member advised that Doncaster Carers Advice Line had received double the amount of calls during the pandemic, and The Committee

recognised it had been a very difficult 18 month period for carers.

Rough Sleepers – With regards to how the Council would continue to support those that were given temporary accommodation during the pandemic it was felt that the national ‘Everybody In’ policy and zero tolerance for homelessness, was helpful.

Issues that otherwise may have remained hidden were highlighted, for example some people placed in temporary accommodation would not traditionally have been recognised under the normal scheme.

Members were informed that through proactive work St Leger had reported fewer numbers of new referrals going into temporary accommodation. It was hoped this would continue with a focus on the most vulnerable cohorts, and through proactively working with them to find suitable alternatives. Signposting to the correct level of support also showed improvement.

Strategically it was believed too many people present as homeless too late, as a direct result of not enough preventative work and a range of those who do present as homeless have more complex needs.

The Committee understood that work would continue around homelessness prevention, including within anti-poverty work, correct supply of hostel and other alternative housing accommodation, and wrap around support and engagement.

Members considered that with correct funding levels and support from Government homelessness in Doncaster maybe eradicated. A Member voiced that it may be beneficial to look in more depth at homelessness and prevention at a later date.

Domestic Abuse – It was recognised the Council’s domestic abuse services worked incredibly hard during the pandemic and concerns were raised around workforce capacity and the intensity of need into those services. In order to alleviate some pressure Members were reassured a range of measures including additional funding and capacity had increased.

Currently the Domestic Abuse Strategy was being refreshed, with some tailored interventions and focus on particular hotspots, Members stressed they wished to review the strategy once refreshed.

A Member sought more clarity on how well the Domestic Abuse partnership that includes group partners such as South Yorkshire Police had been working. It was indicated that the partnership worked well, but in terms of funding and support provided on the

ground more was required.

Health & Social Care Vaccination Programme - Social care staff uptake of the vaccine was reported as good. The Committee were assured that work was ongoing with care home providers, specifically where uptake was low, to understand the reasons for hesitancy and support offered. In regards to the number of cases of Covid-19 in care homes, and those employed in care settings the numbers have decreased, and there was an understanding the vaccine helped during the most recent waves.

A Member queried the plans to help encourage hard to reach communities to accept the offer of a vaccine. Various sites including pop-up clinics and pharmacies were described and it was also explained there would be some groups e.g. those with some health conditions that could not be vaccinated.

Direct Payments – Members were advised that they should not expect to see an increase in the number of direct payments moving forward. As a Borough the use of direct payments was already higher than most. Going forward the focus would be on quality of payments and ensuring these were used effectively, as some of our numbers are as a result of traditional arrangements.

DONCASTER LEARNING

Skills and Learning Recovery – In response to a question about the learning and skills gap created during the pandemic, Members noted there was a focus on making sure schools had good systems and strategies in place to close any gaps, along with making the best use of existing resources. It was advised that there was a need for better engagement between the education system, schools, employers and learners.

A Member asked for clarification of what would be done in addition to the plans pre-COVID, and it was highlighted that;

- There would be a particular focus on read, writing, maths, across every age range.
- Primary level – intensive support and focus on schools where attainment is low.
- Secondary level – improve attainment levels especially around key stage 4 qualifications as there was a gap between level 4 & 5 skills.
- Reduction of fixed term and permanent exclusions remains a priority.
- Assist schools with their COVID recovery plans.
- Wellbeing and Curriculum group emerged in pandemic – particular focus on children’s mental health.
- Equality and diversity.

A Member stressed that the skills and learning gap and how that could be addressed should be looked at in greater detail at the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Panel.

Elective Home Education - Members were advised the Authority saw elective home education rising, with significant increases since the beginning of lockdown. However, the overall proportion of children that continued to be educated at home reduced. This was achieved through implementing a personalised approach with families, or brokering better relationships between families and schools. As a result 19% of cases closed and children returned to school. Working with schools on having a graduated approach with behaviour, and changing approaches of delivering education helped to keep children in school.

Mental Health – In response to a question it was noted there was a significant increase in mental health cases presenting at hospitals this year and families were struggling with emotional wellbeing. A Social and Emotional Mental Health monitoring group established that was tasked with identifying children at risk. Once identified appropriate packages of support were offered to children and their families.

Members were advised a Children's mental health strategy was emerging with partners, and of a successful trail blazing funding bid for mental health support teams allowing a rollout to all schools.

It was noted higher numbers of children were presenting with eating disorders, therefore preventative campaigns were running in schools and on social media.

In regards to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service access the authority were in the top quartile nationally for response times with waiting times lower than the national average.

DONCASTER LIVING & WORKING

Recycling during Christmas – In regards to the drop in recycled waste over Christmas, Members were advised that was a normal trend. Currently recycling rates were down, and this was reflected nationally. In response opening times were being increased across the recycling sites, and the Authority was working with site providers to educate and encourage more recycling.

Fly Tipping – Following a question, Members were informed that there was a backlog of fly tipping cases but this was being addressed week on week for example it was stated during the previous week 200 cases were reported but the number resolved and closed was 265.

It was explained that with the 466k extra budget received the department employed additional staff, litter pickers, vehicles, back alley workers and set up a base at North Bridge, it was however too soon to report on the results.

Other areas being considered were the effectiveness of Street Scene shift patterns, structures and resources, online reporting issues and Councillors reporting online. The Authority must continue to reduce the backlog, and to measure and monitor volumes. A new Assistant Director was also appointed and would be looking at furthering Street Scene and the fly tipping programme.

A Member indicated that C&E Scrutiny Panel should also look at the work carried out on shift patterns.

Tree plotting – A Member enquired if there was going to be an increase in the target for tree plotting .It was explained that with partners further locations were being looked at. The challenges noted would be purchasing the trees, allocating the right resource and right expertise internally and managing the ongoing maintenance costs.

Household waste - In response to a question it was stated that the only trend was that there was more waste at all levels, in both black and blue bins and an increase in fly tipping.

Business – Members were informed that in order to effectively communicate with businesses during the pandemic Business Doncaster’s existing networks links were used with the Chamber and businesses in the Borough.

Demonstrating those links were effective the Committee noted that various grants totalling £106 million were administered during that time.

In addition we administered additional grants from Sheffield City Region Fund. Sheffield City Region also financed advisors for businesses on a temporary basis who can offer advice to the authority with business advice and how businesses can access grants.

Local Spend – It was noted by the Committee that there was a need to retain the local spend target as a Local Authority. It was advised that to help the local economy it was important that our spend remains local as much as possible. This could be achieved by facilitating dialogue between businesses and retaining contracts and spend within Doncaster.

RESOLVED that the following be noted;

	<p>The quarter 4 performance and financial information provided within the report.</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p><u>ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER LTD (SLHD) PERFORMANCE & DELIVERY UPDATE: 2020/21 QUARTER FOUR (Q4) AND YEAR END OUTTURN</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair of the Committee welcomed the Director of Property Services of St Leger Homes of Doncaster to the meeting.</p> <p>In response to questions there was discussion on the following;</p> <p><u>Performance affected by COVID</u> – Members acknowledged a positive outcome from COVID was that rent arrears had been dealt with more efficiently.</p> <p>It was reported that access to customer’s properties was incredibly difficult during that time. The gas servicing programme required access to every home, which took a disproportionate amount of effort given the extra safety measures and different ways of communication.</p> <p>Voids were a key priority to the organisation but were very challenging given the safe ways of working for trade groups meant scheduled clean downs and prolonged periods of times in homes. As social distancing is lifted this should ease.</p> <p>Nationally Members understood there was a shortage of materials and prolonged delivery times, but this again should ease with the lifting of restrictions, and be a short to medium term issue. Going forward this could affect carbon zero projects, it may push costs up and lengthen projects times. It was noted that currently additional costs were being absorbed, moving forward variations would have to be applied.</p> <p><u>Bed & Breakfast Accommodation</u> – The Committee learnt of some circumstances that led to individuals and families being placed in Bed & Breakfast accommodation during COVID lockdown. These included, evictions, some being asked to leave by family, prison discharge, and domestic abuse. The Government directive in March 2020 was “everyone in” and, and this was achieved in Doncaster.</p> <p>It was reported assistance requests had gone up significantly.</p> <p>Learning from the pandemic had taken place, enabling St Leger to be able to respond to any similar emergency.</p> <p>Members were informed that there were plans in place to move hotel placements into more secure accommodation, which does have its challenges as it is the individual’s choice. Some may not take up the places but work was ongoing to support them into sustained accommodation in the future.</p>	

	<p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the following be noted;</p> <p>The progress of SLHD performance outcomes and the contribution SLHD makes to supporting DC strategic priorities.</p>	
8	<p><u>PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE OF DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST: QUARTER 4, 2020/21</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair of the Committee welcomed the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Resources and Company Secretary, Head of Young Peoples Services from Doncaster Children's Services Trust to the meeting.</p> <p>The Committee addressed a number of areas as set out below;</p> <p><u>Early Intervention</u> – It was clarified to the Committee that whilst there was a significant increase in overall contact to front door services at Childrens Social Care, there was a reduction in those that converted into a referral into social care as families were diverted into early help and preventative services.</p> <p>Referrals into social care had shown evidence of hidden harm and those families were presenting at crisis point, had more complexities and likely to be cases that required Child Protection Plans, safeguarding referrals or care. The complexities were a direct result of the pandemic.</p> <p>It was noted that as the complexity of needs had gone up, the activity and work load of case workers increased.</p> <p><u>Out of area placements</u> – It was explained to Members that the majority of the Trust's budget was spent on the care ladder, of which out of authority placements was a cost pressure. Key to resolving that was the Future Placement Strategy which should see the opening of additional homes this year, bringing back 8 children into the area.16+ accommodation would become regulated this year moving another 4 children into the area. Importantly it was stressed that moving children back to the Borough was the right thing to do by the children, and also the most cost effective solution.</p> <p>The Committee understood that there would always be out of authority placements for various reasons, however they were reviewed regularly, with a focus on 16+ placements.</p> <p>A Member felt that as well as South Yorkshire Police and other partners, Councillors could help by utilising local intelligence, and advising the Trust to ensure any new accommodation was in the right environment for looked after children.</p>	

	<p>The Trust explained plans to reduce costs outside of the care ladder such as to increase in-house foster carers and reduce their estate by possibly co-locating. Also noted was the development of a social work academy, with 3 cohorts of social workers planned for this year. Cohorts would become financially beneficial over the next few years. The Trust described ways to retain and attract social workers with increased social worker pay, and reducing costly agency social workers. Members expressed that it was the right thing to do from a child’s perspective to offer stability and continuity of social workers and it was felt that retaining our own social worker was a priority.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the following be noted;</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Performance Challenge of Doncaster Children’s Services Trust Quarter 4, 2020/21.</p>	
9	<p><u>YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2021/22</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair of the Committee introduced the Head of Young Peoples Services, Doncaster Children’s Services Trust.</p> <p>The following areas were then discussed;</p> <p><u>Patterns of Offending</u> – The Committee were advised patterns of offending had not changed through the pandemic. What was seen for a number of years relates to young people’s emotional regulation, and offences that occur when they struggle to regulate their emotions. Offences that are reported were low level violence. The Trust reported that nationally and locally there was more child criminal exploitation.</p> <p><u>Multi Agency Approach</u> – Members were pleased to note that the multi-agency approach was very effective, and Doncaster as a partnership resources its Youth Offending Services very well. The Trust detailed services that other areas do not have access to such as psychology services, seconded police officers and speech therapists. Children in Doncaster have access to services that have significant impact on their lives, which has the ability to prevent offending.</p> <p>In response to the question it was noted that National Police National Computer data for reoffending reported Doncaster was jointly 12th lowest in UK, the best Doncaster had ever been. It was thought this was as a result of the strength of offer the service provides as well as not treating children as offenders. This was seen as an effective way of young people creating aspirations for themselves.</p> <p><u>Education, Employment and Training</u> – It was stated to the Committee that before COVID Doncaster had one of the best performance indicators for children in education and employment whilst subject to youth justice services, this year those figures had reduced but reflected</p>	

	<p>results nationally. The Trust detailed benefits Doncaster had and other areas do not such as a careers advice service, and dedicated staff to provide support and advice so that young people have minimum barriers to opportunities. The Trust believed that by next year the performance should come back to be around the same as in previous years, as the lifting of restrictions eased.</p> <p><u>Engagement with Youth Offending Services</u> – Members noted that all services were delivered in Children’s homes, as COVID restrictions meant in-house provisions were not permitted. The Trust described the process a child goes through when they arrive in to the Youth Offending system such as building relationships with a Case Worker, dyslexia screening and speech and language assessment. It was explained that it was the same offer for all, but if a child did not want to do that at home, then a safe alternative space could be provided.</p> <p><u>Speech and Language Assessment</u> – In response to a question the Committee were informed that due to capacity and a national shortage of speech and language therapists the ability to offer preventative solutions was limited. Although it was agreed that it would be a good idea to have earlier intervention at school level.</p> <p>The Chair concluded that a letter to the Mayor advising of the Committee’s support of the Youth Justice Plan should be submitted, highlighting the shortage of speech and language therapists and need dyslexia screening as these issues had been considered before.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The draft Youth Justice Plan 2021/22, be approved.</p>	
10	<p><u>EDENTHORPE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - ADOPTION 'MAKING' OF THE EDENTHORPE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair and Members of the Committee recognised the development of the plan and the work of all involved.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the following be noted;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Edenthorpe Neighbourhood Plan – Adoption ‘making’ of the Edenthorpe Neighbourhood Development Plan.</p>	
11	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN 2021/22 AND THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair welcomed comments from all the Committee Members, and each described the work of their panels going forward.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that;</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2021/22 Overview and Scrutiny work programme – latest version, be approved.• Council's Forward Plan of key decisions, be noted.• Terms of Reference of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be noted.• Appointment of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be noted.	
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