

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 9TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 9TH SEPTEMBER, 2021 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors John Healy, Daniel Barwell, Leanne Hempshall, Richard A Jones and Sarah Smith

Co-optees – Antoinette Drinkhill

Invitee: - Paul O'Brien (GMB)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Nigel Cannings
Councillor Martin Greenhalgh

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources
Phil Holmes, Director of Adults Health and Wellbeing
Rachael Leslie, Assistant Director 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
Dulcie Aulton, Head of Customer Service
Dawn James, Doncaster Children's Services Trust,
Carl Lewis, Head of Communications at Doncaster Culture Leisure Trust
Louise Robson, Customer and Communications Manager for St Leger Homes Doncaster.
Caroline Martin, Senior Governance Officer
Rachel Wright, Governance Officer

		<u>ACTION</u>
9	<p><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Majid Khan, David Nevett, Bev Chapman and Bernadette Nesbit.</p>	
10	<p><u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING</u></p> <p>None.</p>	
11	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u></p> <p>A declaration of interest was declared by Councillor Jane Kidd by virtue that she works for the voluntary sector.</p>	
12	<p><u>MINUTES FROM THE MEETINGS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 4TH FEBRUARY 2021 AND THE 24TH JUNE 2021.</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meetings held on 4th February and 24th June, 2021 were agreed as a correct record.</p>	
13	<p><u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u></p> <p>There were no public statements made.</p>	
14	<p><u>2021/2022 - QUARTER 1 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT</u></p> <p>The Director of Corporate Resources provided an overview and highlighted that it had been a challenging period. As national restrictions had lifted, the authority had managed the transition and recognised the health and safety of staff, customers and those using services who still required protection from Covid-19. It was also noted that the pandemic had an impact on service delivery and the long-term performance implications for some services would need to be carefully monitored and performance indicators may alter as a result.</p> <p>Key areas impacted as a result of Covid-19 were highlighted as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Violence. • Waste Collection. • Fly Tipping. <p>Areas that performed well were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Rates Collection. 	

- Council Tax Collection.
- Directing spend within the local community.

Members were informed that the authority's financial position was described as being balanced, having utilised resources given from government. It was outlined that going forward there would need to be a detailed look at the challenges faced by services, and the implications on performance and resulting costs.

Councillors explored the following topics in more detail;

CONNECTED COUNCIL

Potential risks – In response to a question around potential risk, it was explained that there were three risk areas for the Council's budget identified in the last quarter.

An update on each was provided as follows;

1. Children – there were unprecedented numbers of children referred to the service with increased costs for direct placements and social work support. It was explained that this leads to delays in delivering savings as a result of the focus on children needing protection. Members were reminded how the Future Placement Strategy, which sought to develop further provision within the borough had been delayed, and in the current market it was proving to be increasingly more challenging to deliver.
2. Environment – Members heard that as a result of more people being at home, waste levels had increased since lockdown and the waste collection service had also experienced staffing challenges due to Covid and HGV driver shortages. Fly tipping levels continued to be a challenge and additional resources had been introduced to manage this effectively.
3. Business rates – It was recognised that whilst we need to monitor closely, performance in quarter 1 demonstrated that the top 50 largest businesses were on track to meet payment requirements. Members were informed that consideration was currently being given to those on tapering arrangements to ensure they maintain pre-covid payment levels. It was concluded that overall, the collection and payment rates were now at a pre-covid level.
4. Sickness indicator – The committee noted an increase of absence and it was explained the authority set a challenging target due to low levels of sickness last year. It was reported that there were a number of staff on maternity leave and the workforce had become tired as a result of the pandemic.
5. Staff Sickness and Long Covid – A Member raised concern about

the impact of Long Covid on staff performance, and the future analysis of overall sickness and Covid related sickness within the authority.

DONCASTER LEARNING

Attendance and remote lessons – It was acknowledged that Doncaster School's attendance levels during the pandemic were above national average. It was explained that significant work had been carried out looking at how all children learn differently, and virtual learning and support helped transition those children who were absent for a range of reasons back into a school environment. Members heard that there was concern about children going back to a largely populated environment; however, there would be an opportunity to transition into a smaller populated environment first. Members heard that the authority looked at blended learning between virtual and physical as it was believed this helped students transition back into a physical setting, however, a full virtual offer would not be seen as formal attendance by the Department for Education.

Long Covid and Children's attendance – Members were informed during the pandemic that welfare calls to families had been maintained, and it was reiterated that attendance levels remained above the national average. Members heard that long Covid was an emerging issue with schools, therefore the authority had not issued fines for absences due to Long Covid or those with Covid anxieties.

Education and Healthcare Plans – A Member questioned whether the increase in the need for Education and Healthcare assessments in Doncaster was directly related to Covid. It was confirmed that there was a direct correlation, and that the increase in Doncaster reflected an increase nationally. It was explained that as demand increased the authority increased resources funded by a temporary grant. The grant then enabled the team to model the demand trajectory, and effectively remodel services, bringing Special Educational Needs and Disability Services closer to Early Help provision.

Post-16 Support – In response to a question, it was explained that in order to support those that start post-16 education (post-Covid) the authority had established groups to discuss the support needs of students with providers.

Returning to School Approaches – The Committee were advised of a number of approaches taken by schools to support children returning. These included;

- Holiday activities, which were accessible to all, that bridged the end of a term and beginning of another.
- Work with schools and the Wellbeing and Curriculum group on a recovery curriculum model.

- The virtual environment.
- Regular communications with schools through the holidays to update risk assessments.
- Successful Summer Staycations, particularly for those transitioning from year 6 to year 7.
- Regular group meetings with Headteachers and multi-academy trusts.
- Edulog system monitored to respond to queries from schools and parents.

Members were reminded of the relaxation of measures at schools and advised they were being considered on a school-by-school basis.

It was clarified that all schools took part in the school programme of summer sessions, with some providing supplementary sessions in partnership with voluntary partners.

Preparation for exams – It was advised there would be a move back to formal exams, and children would be prepared for this transition over a period of time. The Committee noted that pupils continued to be assessed by teachers during the lockdown period, with some schools undertaking internal assessments.

Members acknowledged the significantly reduced numbers of children excluded during Covid, and it was explained that those children remained on roll until allocated a school place. Members were assured that no young person dropped off the radar, and that children missing in education figures were reviewed weekly by officers.

Volunteers in Libraries – With regards to the shortage of library volunteers, it was noted that there was a review of the provision looking at the valuable resource, how to elevate their presence and finally, to expand numbers. There was a focus on looking at the delivery of service and encouraging engagement with volunteers.

Supporting existing and recruiting new volunteers – It was explained that to help encourage new and existing volunteers with concerns about Covid, assurances were given that all sites were now Covid secure. Engagement work with communities demonstrated this and the expectations of volunteers would follow and give them confidence, with Members supporting the process.

DONCASTER CARING

Care Assessments and Packages – In response to a question, the Committee acknowledged that the waiting times for people requiring care assessments had increased nationally and this was reflected in Doncaster.

The reasons for this in Doncaster were explained as;

- Increased demand and backlog within the NHS.
- Increased complexity of needs within communities, including self-neglect issues.
- The pandemic lasted longer than first thought resulting in higher sickness levels.
- Recruitment issues, resulting in increased agency usage (already challenging due to competitive markets).
- Temporary impact of a new case management system in place that had experienced teething problems alongside difficulties in resolving issues (due to staff not physically working together).

Regarding waiting times for care assessments, it was explained that emergency cases were being prioritised but others were waiting too long.

Members were informed that redesign work was taking place around access to the provision, involving those with lived experience to help remove unnecessary barriers and receive help quicker. It was advised that help may not always be provided by adult social care but through better connections with the voluntary sector.

Members noted that the Principle Social Worker was new in post to build a better pipeline and links with education, so that social work development was carried out in a more focussed way.

In reference to waiting times for people needing care packages, it was advised that wait times in Doncaster were not as long as in other areas. Members heard how there were cases where a care arrangement was agreed but the wait time for the package to begin was too long. It was explained that in order to mitigate this, work was taking place with care providers and investment had been provided to relieve financial pressures.

It was stressed whilst there were financial pressures on the authorities' budget, people's care continued to remain the focus and priority.

Reporting Data – A Member requested that the presentation of data within future reports be improved so that data relating to Doncaster was clearer.

Service complaints and complements - In response to a question it was explained the number of complaints and length of time taken to resolve issues had improved.

Mosaic – Members were informed that overall the Mosaic system would improve efficiency and productivity for the service and the implementation of the system was going well.

Safeguarding Concerns/Healthy Living – It was advised that to help

ensure a better and safer commissioning of independent residential provision, that safeguarding and operational commissioning came together under the same Head of Service to help develop and improve joined up working.

Occupational Therapists - A Member of the Committee highlighted that there may be a lack of Occupational Therapists to carry out assessments for housing adaptations. Members were advised that there were cases where the wait for a Therapist was longer than the authority would like. It was noted that contributing factors included absences in the workforce and a lack of supply of occupational therapy. It was recognised that there was a need for better partnership working with St Leger Homes Doncaster to help both organisations streamline systems and processes.

DONCASTER LIVING & WORKING

Manufacturing – A Member questioned whether the authority should work with the Chamber on a new manufacturing base model and the Committee were informed of engagement taking place with not only the Chamber but a range of partners such as the LEP, Sheffield City Region Combined Authority and Schools and Colleges. Members were reminded of the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy based around 6 drivers. It was recognised that manufacturing was diversifying with emerging technologies. Members were reminded of the proposal for an innovation hub at the airport, which could be integral to a manufacturing base within the borough.

Green Bin Service – The Committee were reminded that green bin collection was not a statutory service but reassured that there was a plan to manage any further disruption to the green bin service. It was also explained that home and community composting would be linked to the Sustainability Strategy and that the authority aspired to champion good practice. In regards to community composting, it was mentioned that where communities come forward with proposals, officers may assist with a composting scheme with involvement from the Environment Agency.

Street Scene catch up – It was noted there was a need to repurpose and refocus resources and provisions in order to catch up with weed-killing, flower bed maintenance and detritus clean up. Members were told that working arrangements at depot level would be reconsidered due to the easing of restrictions, but also taking into account that the authority had a duty of care to staff. The Committee acknowledged and thanked the team for their commitment and hard work in maintaining service delivery during difficult circumstances.

Green Flag Status – It was acknowledged that the authority could be more ambitious with parks by aiming for more green flag parks, which

	<p>would be demonstrative of the quality of the place. It was suggested that using the green flag criteria could help set a good standard across all green spaces, however this would need to be properly resourced.</p> <p><u>Naturalisation Programme</u> – It was stressed that the driver for the naturalisation programme was not financial but to ensure consistency with the carbon neutral target by 2040. It was outlined that the key areas of learning from the programme was around communications particularly in relation to bio-diversity, engagement with communities and Ward Members.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Quarter 1 performance and financial information provided within the report be noted</p>	
15	<p><u>ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER LTD (SLHD) PERFORMANCE & DELIVERY UPDATE 2021/2022 QUARTER 1 (Q1)</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair of the Committee welcomed the Chief Executive of St Leger Homes, Dave Richmond to the meeting.</p> <p>In response to questions there was discussion on the following;</p> <p><u>Re-letting Properties</u> – It was recognised that the indicators for rent loss, total number of voids and time taken to re-let voids showed an improving trend. Members were informed of a number of properties that would not be re-let due to reasons such as demolition and it was reported that the total number of voids had been improving significantly over the previous 6-9 months. It was hoped that the number of voids would reduce further making Doncaster comparative to other organisations in other areas.</p> <p>It was noted that the challenges to turn properties around were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condition of properties being in poor state of repair. • Covid restrictions affecting the number of operatives allowed inside a property at one time. • Supply of materials. • Customer’s decision to decline properties offered. <p>A Member was keen to understand the reasons why more properties were being handed back in a poor state. It was explained that many tenants did not provide the required notice period to end their tenancy, returning keys on the day they leave and therefore preventing a final check taking place on the property. Further reasons included tenants with more challenging lifestyles and poverty was also viewed as a contributing factor.</p> <p>The Committee enquired about the refurbishment costs or best estimates of the damaged homes be provided.</p>	

	<p><u>Impact of Covid-19</u> – The impacts of Covid-19 on working practices at St Leger Homes Doncaster were identified as an issue, in addition to difficulties experienced by those in trades due to the supply of materials because of haulage issues.</p> <p><u>Hotel Placements and Temporary Accommodation</u> – It was explained significant progress was made to reduce numbers of people in hotel placements during the quarter. Members heard how there had been a significant rise in the number of people fearing they would be made homeless (St Leger Homes Doncaster having received 2000 referrals a month, compared with 500 per month during the same time last year). It was acknowledged that increased pressure had been placed on temporary accommodation with 99 households in temporary accommodation. It was explained that in order to manage increased workloads, St Leger Homes Doncaster had worked extensively with both the Council and colleagues. Members were assured that in order to help with additional pressures, teams were fully staffed with additional resources also being provided and workloads reallocated. It was recognised that during Covid lockdowns, properties had not churned as normal and people, particularly families, had not given up tenancies meaning there were fewer opportunities to place people into larger homes. The Committee wished to note their concerns that homelessness cases were increasing.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the Committee note the progress of St Leger Homes Doncaster performance outcomes and the contribution made to support Doncaster Council strategic priorities.</p>	
16	<p><u>PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE OF DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST QUARTER 1, 2021/22</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair of the Committee welcomed James Thomas, Chief Executive and Rob Moore Director of Corporate Resources and Company Secretary of Doncaster Children's Services Trust.</p> <p>The Committee considered the following areas as set out below;</p> <p><u>Front Door Referrals</u> – It was reported that there were 6134 contacts received during Quarter 1 to social care front door services, which were made up of requests for guidance or information, or people considering the need to make a referral because of concerns for a child or family. The Committee noted the process after initial contact made which included a multi-agency triage approach and then an initial decision made as to whether the response required a referral, early help intervention, another agency response, advice and guidance provided or redirecting people to other organisations.</p> <p>In terms of how children or families met the thresholds for a referral, it was explained that there were four threshold levels (universal, levels 2 and 3 are an enhanced service and then statutory intervention).</p>	

Members were informed that most contacts came from the police and this was perhaps due to their protocols and the nature of the incidents being dealt with.

Parent and Family Support Services – In response to a question, it was confirmed that PAFSS had remained open and continued to practice during Covid-19, with a reduction in referrals being experienced during the first lockdown. It was continued that when referrals were made, an increasing number had higher complexities, with more children being referred to level 4 due to the complexities of their needs. It was explained that the pathways into a service did not change during lockdowns, so that schools and professionals could make contact in the same way with an opportunity to see if early help was the right pathway.

Children Taken into Care – It was explained that the increase of children taken into care (when there had been a reduction in social care referrals) was because the complexity of needs within the home of those presenting to front door services had increased during the lockdown period. It was also noted that families presented with delayed need or increased complexities required a response at a higher level.

Child Protection Plan – The Committee were advised that a child protection plan was the step before child protection proceedings were actioned and the increase in children subject to a plan was due to the families presenting having more complex issues. It was also acknowledged that those that required a higher level of response were new to the system or had required involvement some time ago, therefore presenting with new need.

In-House Foster Costs – In terms of the costs of foster care, it was reported that using in-house foster carers was the preferred option because they provide a better service to children and families and were also financially better for the authority. It was stressed that it was a challenging environment but the hope was to move the ratio of foster carers used to 75% in-house and 25% external. Members heard that the result would be an increase of in-house fostering costs but that the external costs would decrease.

Future Placements Strategy – The two key areas of the strategy were identified as;

- Increase the number of in-house foster carers.
- Increase the number of in-house residential homes.

The Committee noted the progress made on recruiting in-house foster carers and it was explained that to help carers were encouraged with rewards and benefits.

	<p>Members heard that securing properties for residential homes was proving more challenging as private buyers had the ability to outbid and have less processes to go through to purchase properties. It was added that work was ongoing with private building providers as another option, which would have additional lead times but the properties would be new and built to specification. Members were also informed that converting existing properties within Doncaster, from one use to another brought up legal challenges.</p> <p><u>Localities</u> – Members were assured that the Trust was aligned with the localities model and it was advised that Early Help Co-ordinators within the Locality Hubs would potentially open up the early help pathways much earlier to families in need.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the progress of DCST performance outcomes and the contribution that the Trust makes to support the Council’s strategic priorities be noted.</p>	
17	<p><u>COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair of the Committee welcomed Dulcie Aulton, Head of Customer Service at Doncaster Council, Dawn Jones, Customer Experience Manager from Doncaster Children’s Services Trust, Carl Lewis, Head of Communications at Doncaster Culture Leisure Trust and Louise Robson, Customer and Communications Manager for St Leger Homes Doncaster.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the following topic areas;</p> <p><u>Impact on Complaints and Compliments</u> – Members were advised that during the pandemic, complaints and compliments functions continued to operate across all four organisations and each experienced a reduction in complaints. It was explained that due to staff working on Covid response, the time taken to resolve a complaint was on average longer than pre-pandemic. Members heard how there were rise and falls in the number of complaints during the lockdowns with an increase in compliments both internally and externally.</p> <p><u>Types of Compliments and Complaints</u> – The types of complaints the organisation received were noted as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doncaster Council reported a reduction in complaints overall, in further detail; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Waste and Recycling saw a reduction by 20% even though the service faced numerous challenges. ii) During Quarter 4, there was an increase in complaints in relation to Household Waste Recycling Sites being closed and traffic management around the sites once they had reopened. iii) Adults Health & Wellbeing saw a 30% reduction, the complaints received were about house visits and Personal Protective 	

	<p>Equipment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doncaster Children’s Services Trust noted a 150% increase in complaints around family time arrangements that resulted in the Trust working with families to offer solutions. • St Leger Homes Doncaster received a marginal increase in complaints about the length of time that repairs took due to a supply and materials issue. It was added that during 2021 there had been a reduction in complaints received. • Doncaster Culture Leisure Trust received complaints about payments for memberships during lockdown, and a decrease in complaints about cleanliness of facilities. <p>Members were pleased to hear that the compliments received were heartfelt thanks from residents in relation to a positive response during the pandemic.</p> <p><u>Management of Complaints</u> – Members acknowledged that this was the third annual complaint and compliments report and as each year passes and as it evolves, all four organisations continue to work more closely together in the management of complaints to achieve a consistent response. It was acknowledged that the most significant factor from working together was how all four organisations collectively used feedback and identified lessons learnt, capturing any trends that appeared and addressing them at an earlier stage.</p> <p><u>Councillors online</u> – A Member referenced the Councillor online process and communication about complaints, it was suggested that there could be a workshop to support Members to develop a better understanding of the process and how it can be developed further.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the Complaint and Compliment Report for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 be received and noted.</p>	
18	<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 Members of the Committee who were Chairs or Vice Chairs, and each provided an update of the work of their Panels and summarised what they would be looking at over the coming months.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The 2021/22 Overview and Scrutiny work programme was noted and approved; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">That the Council’s Forward Plan of key decisions, be noted.</p>	