

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 31ST MARCH, 2022

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 31ST MARCH, 2022 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors John Healy, Sarah Smith, Nigel Cannings

Co-optees – Antoinette Drinkhill (Church of England Education representative)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Other Councillors;

- Councillor Martin Greenhalgh

Cabinet Member;

- Councillor Andrea Robinson - Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

DMBC;

- Lee Tilman, Assistant Director, Policy, Insight and Change
- Phil Holmes, Director of Adults Health and Well-being
- Dan Swaine Director of Economy & Environment
- Riana Nelson, Director of Learning, Opportunities and Skills

Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST);

- Andy Hood – Senior Head of Service – Youth Offending Service

St Leger Homes Doncaster (SLHD);

- Dave Richmond, Chief Executive, SLHD

		<u>ACTION</u>
9	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.</u>	
	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gemma Cobby, Leanne Hempshall and Majid Khan.	
10	<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 where the press and public should be excluded	

	from the meeting.	
11	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations made at the meeting.	
12	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	There were no public statements made at the meeting.	
13	<u>DMBC 2021-22 QUARTER 3 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT</u>	
	<p>The Committee received the 2021/2022 Quarter 2 Finance and Performance Improvement report introduced by the Assistant Director of Policy, Insight and Change. Following the brief introduction, the Committee asked a number of questions as follows:-</p> <p><u>Connected Council and Overview</u></p> <p>Increase in Covid Cases/Staff Sickness – In terms of increases of Covid cases (Omicron) and staff sickness, it was recognised that Covid, in particular, had presented a constant challenge for the Council. It was explained that this had been addressed through the Tactical Co-ordination Group bringing Team Doncaster agencies together to manage risks and their implications.</p> <p>Regarding staff sickness, it was noted that this had impacted across both the Council and Team Doncaster, particularly within the health system. It was noted that the increase in the Council's sickness rate (since the previous quarter) had slowly reduced but further progress was required to reach its target. It was commented that the types of illnesses were non-Covid and Covid related, which was in keeping with the winter period and relevant mechanisms had been put in place to support staff returning back to work.</p> <p>Reference was made to the Council being able to respond to the pandemic whilst operating its normal business. It was acknowledged that certain projects had been delayed due to the refocusing of resources.</p> <p>In terms of businesses continuing to trade despite staff absence (due to sickness), it was recognised that this presented an additional challenge to that of recruiting and retaining staff.</p> <p>Rise in Cost of Living – It was recognised that this was becoming more challenging with time. In terms of the partnership approach, it was explained that the following was being considered;</p> <p>1. How can some of the impacts be mitigated?</p>	

2. What routes out of poverty will help support our residents and communities?

It was outlined that there was a Poverty Group (as part of Team Doncaster) in place to look at this issue. Members were reminded that this issue would be further considered as part of OSMC's workplan.

Regarding tackling poverty through one off grants, it was recognised that there had been a number of one-off grants introduced and that efforts were being made to ensure that they were communicated effectively. The Assistant Director of Policy, Insight and Change commented on the number of schemes available which could create a challenge.

Agency Staff – A Member sought clarification about what Value For Money (VFM) had been achieved from using agency staff. It was also asked about whether there had been progress in recruiting permanent staff within those roles and what future workforce planning there had been within the Council.

It was acknowledged that workforce planning was important as part of the Council's Performance Management Framework and the Assistant Director of Policy, Insight and Change outlined a number of mechanisms, which supported this. Reference was also made to specific targeted campaigns, some that had been for particular sectors such as Adult Social Care.

Overall, it was noted that turnover of staff across the organisation was low although with challenges in certain areas. It was continued that the pandemic and backlog of demand had resulted in an increase in the use of agency staff. It was explained that within Adult Social Care, there had been a legacy of issues within Social Work and Occupational Therapy.

The Committee was informed that all Children's Social Workers presently within the Doncaster Children's Services Trust would be transitioning to the Council from the 1st April 2022. It was explained that although agency rates within the Trust had reduced, demand in terms of the caseloads held by Social Workers had increased significantly resulting in spikes and therefore the need for more agency workers. It was acknowledged that in terms of recruitment, many authorities were offering more competitive terms of employment with higher pay rates and grades. It was explained that work was being undertaken to establish a Memorandum of Understanding across the Yorkshire and Humber Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) collective to manage rates of pay for agency workers and Social Worker recruitment.

Members were provided with the current picture of vacancies and cover for demand and maternity leave within children's social care. It

was explained that the agency rate had stabilised over the last 12 months although the demand still presented challenges. It was also explained that there had been a higher number of permanent social workers recruited during the last month than the number of permanent social workers who had left. In terms of recruitment, it was outlined that Doncaster had its own Social Worker academy and for the last three quarters have recruited Social Workers or newly qualified Social Workers with a package that consisted of reduced caseloads, enhanced supervision and better peer support to help them. In terms of retention rates, it was explained that there were 18 Social Workers recruited over the last three quarters, of which 17 had remained.

An offer was made to provide information on those recruited that had remained prior to April 2021.

Regarding the need to recruit agency staff, the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care assured Members that everything possible was being done to meet the needs of Doncaster residents and avoid long waits for assessments. Reference was made to the importance of the continuity with the relationship that forms with the carer. The point was also made that in many instances Government funding was tied to the completion of project work within tight timescales and the only possible means of delivery was via agency staff sometimes to take direct responsibility and in other instances to backfill posts. It was considered better to take up the opportunity to complete these pieces of work for the benefit of residents of the borough than to decline because it necessitates the use of agency staff.

Performance Against The Average Number Of Day To Process A New Housing Benefit Claim – It was explained that this performance indicator was off target for Quarter 3, as the teams behind the new housing benefit claims were also processing grants for other schemes. It was anticipated that through extra resources brought in and the end of certain Covid related grants, that this performance indicator would reach its target by Quarter 4.

Delayed Council Projects – The Peer Review was provided as an example, of an activity which was previously scheduled for the end of March but had been put back to May 2022. Members were told that another instance of this was where changes being made to the officer meeting system had also been deferred by a few weeks.

Healthy and Compassionate

A number of questions were asked as follows:-

Impact of ongoing Covid issues - Reference was made to Doncaster's rate of transmission of the Omicron variant, which were lower than that of the South and South West. It was noted that although there was a relatively high numbers of people in hospital with

Covid, only about half of those had Covid on admission and there had been no sign of a significant impact of intensive care. It was explained that health and care settings had been more effected by staff absence as a result of Covid where more testing was being undertaken. Reference was made to the new testing regime, where free testing applied to certain cohorts and services. It was commented that the position on long Covid was unclear at this point.

Adult Social Care Workforce – Further to a question raised by a Member of the Committee about the “Proud to Care” campaign, it was responded that this campaign was in its early stages and further work would be done to build on it and improve perceptions. It was explained that the Social Care Academy had been launched early 2020 with the ‘Proud to Care’ campaign being built on that. Members were informed that there had been an investment in staffing to run the campaign and infrastructure behind that, a 12-week induction programme run alongside care providers of which the first tranche has been running one month. It was noted that February figures were very modest. Reference was made to ongoing issues around staff within care homes impacted by Covid in the long and short term as well as challenges around competition with other markets and confidence in the sector.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care told the Committee how through her involvement with providers, had found it a very encouraging experience with positive relationships established with officers. It was also stated that Doncaster had a training offer to be proud of through the partnership with Doncaster College. It was considered that the fundamental issue was to be able to offer a pay rate that reflects the knowledge and skills within that sector and compete with other sectors.

Adult Social Care Waiting Times for Assessments – Concerns were raised around fluctuations in waiting times for an assessment for those referred to Adult Social Care compared to previous quarters. It was recognised that historical issues had been exacerbated in Doncaster by the pandemic and needed to be addressed. Reference was made to existing national issues, such that there was a waiting time target of 28 days with a further 28 days to carry out follow up work after the assessment. It was outlined that the number of assessments undertaken in a month was quite stable at between 150 and 180. It was explained that the length of one assessment could affect the overall average. In terms of locality working, it was explained that it was about linking local knowledge with local people and responding to people in the different communities we live in.

Health Care Assessment Review – It was explained that the national expectation was that everyone received a Health Care Assessment review within a year. It was noted that the overall issue was at the beginning of the process with new people waiting to be seen. It was explained that the front end needed to be addressed before the rest.

Care Homes at Risk – It was acknowledged that during 2021, there had been significant issues with care home vacancies and more recently, that targeted work had been undertaken to understand occupancy levels. Members were assured that efforts were being made to stay connected with care homes but there was no awareness that any were on the brink. Concern was raised about homecare providers and travel costs and Members were assured that there was an awareness of the pressure on the care sector and delivering care in the community alongside the rising cost of petrol. Members were informed what was currently taking place through the Council to support care home providers.

Increasing Referrals of Domestic Abuse – Members were told that a campaign had taken place in late 2019 with the purpose of raising awareness of Domestic Abuse. It was outlined that the reporting of domestic abuse had increased and that restrictions during the pandemic had exacerbated the level of abuse in Doncaster. It was explained that the Council had continued with its campaign and investment in this area through one-off funding streams. It was outlined that during late 2020 and early 2021, there had been concern around the ability of the Domestic Abuse hub being able to respond to the increasing number of referrals.

It was explained that a proportion of funding had been rolled forward. It was acknowledged that funding for domestic abuse had often been one-off or undertaken through different funding streams. Members heard that although the situation was currently satisfactory, there were no guarantees for the future.

Direct Payment Action Group –The Director of Adults Health and Wellbeing offered to provide further information about this group outside of the meeting.

Wellbeing Team – It was explained that the Wellbeing Team had provided support around wellbeing, in addition to that of the Stronger Communities' Team (taking on this additional single strand piece of work). It was noted that the Wellbeing Team now had their own waiting list and commented that the underlying issue with the front door demand was how it was managed. It was acknowledged that the Wellbeing Team would have a role in prevention and adult social care.

Prosperous and Connected

A number of questions were asked as follows:-

Capital Projects Doncaster Gain in Residual Finance - The Director of Economy and Enterprise told the Committee that an overall metric was not available for the £111million spend on capital projects, as the delivery of the projects were at different stages. It was noted that each

scheme that had secured external funding would require certain metrics for example, jobs, active travel and modal shift. It was felt that there was an opportunity to look at the impact of the schemes on a more individual basis.

Maximising Investment – Examples were provided of investments from national funding made within Doncaster. These included;

- Two Town Deals.
- Levelling Up Fund (LUF 1 and 2).
- Significant proportion within the Sustainable City Region Transport Scheme.
- Bid for Rail Headquarters aligned to the Town Deal, which also provides for the new office development next to the station.
- Significant money for active travel for cycle lanes from investment from Transforming Cities Fund.
- £3.5 million from Sheffield City Region which is Revenue Gain Share for project feasibility funding
- Further £26 million across South Yorkshire of gain share capital, which could be split across the authorities.

It was added that these opportunities also presented their own challenges as market prices were increasing, there were difficulties in signing-up people to do the work and there were certain constraints in spending the money.

Fly-Tipping Improvement – It was outlined to Members that more had been learnt about fly-tipping which included people's behaviours, conditions that were enabling it, resources that needed to match the Council's aspirations, being more intelligence led, the need for closer working with Streetscene and Enforcement Teams and feedback from frontline staff. It was noted that previously there had been backlogs around fly-tipping and that targets were not being met. It was noted that through reductions in Government funding, staffing had reduced and this had left a gap. There was an outline of the successful events and opportunities taking this agenda forward.

In terms of recruitment and availability of appropriate skills, it was noted that there was an ageing workforce within the Council, which could result in issues down the line. Members were informed that succession planning was a part of the Streetscene review.

Externally, it was outlined that there had been various impacts within certain sectors such as hospitality and care. In terms of skill levels, it was explained that there was more demand than supply for higher skilled workers yet more supply than demand for lower skilled.

Recruitment and Training Opportunities – a member of the Committee asked what was available in terms of opportunities for training to replenish those skills that had been lost. Reference was

made to issues around grading and pay making jobs more attractive and market competitive. It was explained that although people were coming through the system, the main challenge was retaining them when there were better pay offers elsewhere. It was noted that there were opportunities in place within Doncaster such as career-graded posts.

Skilled and Creative

Schools Funding & Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) - Concern was raised about overspends of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and further clarification was sort around the devolution of elements of the grant. It was expressed that it was a complicated landscape in terms of the high needs block and due to how the funding was distributed. Members heard that a piece of work had started prior to the pandemic, to help understand block support for young people in mainstream school. Assurances were provided that the aim was to keep children within mainstream school and that significant needs would be addressed. It was explained that there was now a need to reassess this work in the context of a green paper recently released. Members were told how the green paper proposed some significant changes and therefore consideration was needed about what should be devolved to a locality level that provided specialist support to keep young people within mainstream school. Reference was made to what other authorities were proposing.

Education, Health and Care Plans Issued Within 20 Weeks – Clarification was sort around progress made in respect of this target and whether there were any significant issues or risks that may prevent further improvement. It was explained that although Doncaster had historically been a high performer, there were challenges coming through. Details were provided that outlined further context around the current picture of increases over the last 3 years. It was explained that this was due to children presenting with need and requiring Health and Care Plans and demonstrated the significant demand and pressures placed on that team whilst maintaining current plans as well. Members heard that capacity within that team had been bolstered but that there were challenges in recruiting SEN Officers. Reference was made to the fact that improving performance should continue over Quarter 4 2021/2022 and then onto Quarter 1 2022/2023.

It was explained that there were a number of issues coming forward that included increased requests around young people with Social Emotional Mental Health problems and behaviour. In addition to this, it was noted that due to the increase in Early Help Care Plans (EHCP), there had been an increase in demand of Special School Placements and that social schools were currently running at full capacity. It was acknowledged that the key issue was to prepare mainstream schools to support these children.

	<p>Number of People with a Learning Disability Supported into Work</p> <p>Further detail was sort regarding how performance would be improved to achieve this target. The Director for Health and Wellbeing explained that the performance reported had been influenced by a change to the IT system and previously ‘over-reporting’ the number of people supported into employment (which had included volunteers). It was stated that the latest statistics submitted should therefore be more realistic. It was outlined that there was a range of routes and support mechanisms to assist people with learning disabilities into employment. It was felt that the target was unrealistic as the national average at 5.1% and Doncaster was at 4.7%.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the Quarter 3 performance and financial information be noted.</p>	
14	<p><u>PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE OF DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST: QUARTER 3, 2021/22</u></p>	
	<p>The Committee considered the performance challenge report of the Doncaster Children’s Services Trust for Quarter 3 2021/22.</p> <p>Transition to Mosaic – Members heard that the Trust and the Council continued to work closely on improvements to the Mosaic case management system. It was reported that staff training compliance (in respect of Mosaic) had been an issue in the past, and targeted training for staff has already been implemented by individual service areas. It was reported that the major risks to progress remained the lack of high quality performance dashboards, which allowed managers to interrogate both compliance and quality. Members heard that individual service areas have created localised performance information to ensure that managers and leaders maintain line of sight, and this complimented by the completion of learning reviews, audits and the interrogation of audit information to identify practice issues and trends . One of the best developed localised systems sits within the care leaving service IFT, which was has supported improvement in this area of practice.</p> <p>However, the combined aim of both the Council and Trust leadership is to ultimately negate the requirement for localised systems, by continuing to engage and develop Mosaic with the support of all stakeholders and to maximise the usage of the existing system through rigorously monitored staff training, which is regularly reviewed.</p> <p>Concern was raised by a member of the Committee around the potential problems from running 2 separate systems. Members were informed of the previous decision taken to have a single case management system, and it was acknowledged that the transition has not been smooth. It was commented that Mosaic should provide the appropriate capability once transition has taken place. Members head how there was concern that performance through the system could not</p>	

	<p>be reported effectively which was more apparent because of safeguarding element within the Trust. Members were assured that work was being undertaken to amend the forms and make sure that pathways and workflows worked effectively. Need to make sure that reporting was undertaken to pull information from input by Social Workers and that the risk was being managed and overseen by Ofsted. Members were informed that there was a Rapid Improvement Plan in place. Going forward, it was hoped that performance would be in an improved position by Quarter 1 2022/2023.</p> <p>Clarification was sought on whether home-working during the pandemic had created any further issues. The Director of Learning, Opportunities and Skills noted that demands on Social Workers during this present time was immense, dealing with potentially quite complex number of cases safeguarding cases as well as trying to navigate a new system. It was acknowledged that by not working next to colleagues would have some impact on implementing the system quicker. It was recognised that this was not the only factor and other issues needed addressing such as report writing.</p> <p>16+ Children in Care Placements – Concern was raised about the cost and increase of 16+ Children In Care. Clarification was provided that the average weekly rate was c. £3.7k of the 18 expensive packages and with all but one less than £5.2k per week. Members heard how in-house there was a small 16+ provision, which at full occupancy was £125K per year, (the current forecast actual cost was £129K per bed) compared to the current forecast actual of £262k per bed for Out of Authority (OOA) placements and £136k for external placement for 16+ specifically.</p> <p>Members heard how the Future Placement Strategy aimed to build more homes in Doncaster or purchase brand new children's home. It was explained that it was difficult to purchase properties and repurpose due to restricted covenant. Members were informed of the some of the potential options available to take this forward.</p> <p>It was explained that locally figures had risen by 150 Looked After Children based on demand in 2019 and significantly increased. It was noted that there were more young people were coming into care later on which brought with it greater complexity. Regarding the recruitment for more foster care, Members were told that this would be continuing and transferring back to Doncaster Council.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the progress of the DCST performance outcomes and the contribution that the Trust makes to support the Council's strategic priorities be noted.</p>	
15	<p><u>ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER LTD (SLHD) PERFORMANCE & DELIVERY UPDATE: 2021/22 QUARTER THREE (Q3)</u></p>	

Impact of Ongoing Covid Issues – It was reported that there were currently 12 members of staff with Covid and the previous highest figure had been 15. It was explained that staff members with Covid have been able to continue working. It was noted that the main impact of Covid on the workforce was in respect of trade staff who were unable to carry on working or had been redeployed. Other areas impacted have included repairs and the supply chain of materials where contractors were involved. It was reported that the main issue resulting from customers with Covid, was refusing access to the property, which impacted on activities such as electrical inspections and reporting repairs, although post lockdown there has been a significant increase in the latter and this had remained consistent over the period of time that followed.

Regarding the recruitment of the right level of staff, it was explained that it had been challenging to attract into certain trades such as electricians due to the competitiveness of the market. It was added that there had been surprising difficulties recruiting into administration posts.

Rent Loss/Void Rent Loss (Lettable Voids) – Members were informed that Void Rent Loss (a subset of KPI 1 Rent loss) as referred to in the Value For Money report was when benchmarked nationally, performing well and was in the top quartile when compared to national data for the end of the last financial year.

It was explained that a challenging target had been set around void rent loss. Members were informed that there was a great deal being undertaken around this area, such as how quickly those properties can be repaired and turned around to be let. Members were informed about various issues addressed such as material supply issues and strengthening the supply chain. It was reported that other issues included staff vacancies, staff sickness and lettings staff returning to the office and being placed next to void staff to facilitate better working together as teams. Members heard that further work had been done to ensure that data reported was accurate by trying to assess properties prior to becoming void and undertaking viewings whilst void. It was explained that in the region of 50-75% of all current voids were in fact let and waiting to be fully repaired or for the tenant to move in. It was explained that reasons for the refusal of a property were being considered, and that consultation was being undertaken around the new Housing Allocation policy, which would include what can be done where particular customers continuously refuse reasonable offers.

Regarding the Accessible Housing Register, it was outlined that there was an ongoing review about this. It was also noted that there had been a significant fall in the availability of houses but that bungalow turnover had remained static. It was explained that the process could take a long time due to waiting for individual assessments to be undertaken by Occupational Therapists.

	<p>Number of Homeless Preventions- Members were informed that SLHD was seeing a significant increase of people who were concerned about becoming homeless, and that this had remained at a high level for over a year. It was continued that there was also a high number of 'homeless tonight' presentations that approached SLHD on the day of becoming homeless. It was explained how it was those people who presented around 60 to 100 days prior to the threat of becoming homeless and received more basic level advice at the time of presenting. It was recognised that more needed to be done in not only dealing with the immediate crisis of preventing immediate homelessness but also in getting back upstream into early prevention. It was considered that there was a high level of success when this was undertaken and Members were provided with examples of what was being done. Concern was raised whether private sector evictions was linked to local benefit rates not being in line with rising rents (as Doncaster had traditionally been a low rental area) and was therefore a national DWP issue. Regarding partnership working, it was felt that this had improved between SLHD and the Council over the 6-12 months and was now extremely constructive.</p> <p>Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) – Concern was raised regarding the increase of anti-social behaviour and the cases that had been resolved. Members were informed that SLHD resident's annual survey had indicated a positive response around how SLHD deals with ASB. It was continued that high levels of satisfaction were also expressed following complaints reported. Finally, it was commented that more was being done to improve progress updates back to the complainant. It was felt that there had been good partnership working undertaken with the Council and the Police. It was noted that there had been some ad-hoc issues across the Borough and concern was expressed about the level of Organised Crime Group (OCG) issues experienced in Doncaster.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the progress of SLHD performance outcomes and the contributions it makes to supporting Doncaster Council's strategic priorities be noted.</p>	
16	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND 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>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>(1) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan be noted and approved; and (2) the Council's Forward Plan of key decisions, be noted</p>	