

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2022

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2022 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors Jake Kearsley, Gemma Cobby, Leanne Hempshall, Richard A Jones, Gary Stapleton, Sue Farmer and Martin Greenhalgh

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Riana Nelson – Director Learning, Opportunities & Skills

Debbie Hogg – Director Corporate Resources

Dan Swaine – Director Economy & Environment

Rupert Suckling – Director Public Health

Phil Holmes – Director Adults Health and Wellbeing

Pam Allen – Interim Assistant Director Children’s Safeguarding

Dave Richmond, St Leger Homes Doncaster

Dulcie Aulton, Head of Customer Service

Jackie Linekar, St Leger Homes Doncaster

Dawn Jones, Doncaster Children’s Services Trust

Toni Illman, Doncaster Culture Leisure Trust

		<u>ACTION</u>
12	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.</u>	
	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Majid Khan and Sarah Smith	
13	<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	

14	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations made	
15	<u>MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 10TH FEBRUARY 2022, 9TH JUNE 2022, 23RD JUNE 2022 AND 7TH JULY 2022</u>	
	<b>RESOLVED;</b> that the minutes of the meetings dated the 10 <sup>th</sup> February 2022, 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2022, 23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2022 and 7 <sup>th</sup> July 2022 be agreed and signed as a correct record.	
16	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	There were no public statements made	
17	<u>PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE OF DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST: QUARTER 1 2022/23</u>	
	<p>The Committee gave consideration to the report received on the Performance Challenge of Doncaster Children's Services Trust: Quarter 1, 2022/23.</p> <p>Members recognised that the transfer of services from Doncaster Children's Services Trust to the Council had only taken place recently, but explained they were particularly interested in what this meant going forward for the organisation.</p> <p>In response, it was advised that the transition had gone well, and would result in a better integrated level of service for the families of Doncaster in the future.</p> <p>The following areas were then explored by the committee:</p> <p><u>Mosaic</u> – It was noted that the transfer process to Mosaic, a new case management system, was making slow progress. Members were updated that 96% of staff had been retrained to use the system and IT were now in place to support staff with using the system.</p> <p><u>Data Quality and Validity</u> – The Committee were assured that the service was able to check the validity of the data input and had an understanding of the practice and performance of the team. It was explained to Members that data within the report required validation and was not yet at a stage of being recorded in the correct way. Assurances were provided that work was ongoing to rectify this and the quality of data provided in future would continue to improve.</p> <p><u>Performance Measure Supervisions</u> – Members noted from the report</p>	

that staff supervisions were not being recorded accurately or in a timely manner. Officers explained that a new supervision model was recently introduced, and that training on how to use the new model was being provided. It was stressed that supervisions were taking place, and it was hoped that there would be an improvement in the data provided in future reports.

Number of Referrals – It was explained that to improve information exchange and communication between partnership organisations, the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was now located in the same building. It was anticipated that as a result, the numbers of referrals would initially rise. Officers explained that the partnerships within the MASH were developing well, and there was active work taking place to address the number of inappropriate referrals that the MASH receives.

Caseloads – The Committee was assured that officers were aware of the number of caseloads managed by individual staff and within teams. It was explained that officers could determine within teams, those staff who were part-time and those that were Advanced Practitioners, for example, in order to help manage caseload numbers the service had a Caseload Policy. It was explained that caseload numbers had risen due to high demand and the service also was experiencing a high number of vacancies. Members heard that the recruitment programme had been hindered by the transfer of the Trust to the Council, and it was expected that caseload numbers would improve as newly qualified Social Workers formed their own caseloads alongside improved recruitment levels.

Corporate Risks (Red) – In response to a question, it was explained that the reported Red performance indicator for ‘the corporate risk of safeguarding children and young people’, was due to the instability of transferring DCST back to the Council and the volatile environment that this created. It was explained that as the service stabilised, the workforce and improved practice would help to mitigate the risks. To reassure Members, it was highlighted that an Ofsted inspection had found no children were at risk. It was also noted that the service faced major challenges, such as, increased levels of deprivation, increased numbers of referrals, the challenging financial position of the Council and the cost of living crisis. Members were therefore advised that it maybe some time before the level of risk reduced and that the current risk management arrangements would mean this indicator remained in focus.

**RESOLVED that:-**

The Doncaster Children’s Services Trust performance outcomes, finances and the contribution the Trust makes to support the Council’s strategic priorities relating to safeguarding the Borough’s children, be noted.

18	<p><b><u>2022-23 QUARTER 1 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT</u></b></p>	
	<p>The Committee received the 22/23 Quarter 1 Finance and Performance Improvement Report introduced by the Director of Corporate Services, Debbie Hogg.</p> <p>Members were advised of the new style of report to align it with the Borough Strategy, giving more prominence to the aspirations of the organisation. This gave the opportunity to consider not only current service standards but also outcomes and the longer-term ambitions of Team Doncaster.</p> <p>It was explained that even though there was an increase in the number of service standards being reported on, a higher proportion were green indicating that even against a challenging operating environment, service standards had not fallen.</p> <p>The significant underlying financial pressures that the organisation faced were highlighted to the Committee. It was stressed that the organisation would not be able to deliver a balanced budget and live within its means whilst delivering and maintaining the present high service standards levels.</p> <p><b><u>REGENERATIVE COUNCIL</u></b></p> <p>The following areas were discussed;</p> <p><u>Rising Costs</u> – Members were told how in order for the organisation to live within its means, all available budgets would be reviewed including re-evaluating staffing costs taking into consideration the service need, and by reviewing current vacancies. In the instance that the organisation could not manage through good housekeeping, there would be a re-evaluation of the capital programme. Projects that received grant funding such as Levelling Up and Town Deals would continue, but those projects through borrowing would need to be reconsidered. It was explained that it may be necessary to utilise revenue reserves in order to achieve a balanced financial position by year-end. These measures were described as a tactical response to the current situation. Members were advised that there would be a need to look at service prioritisation for a sustainable future and that the organisation had some difficult decisions ahead.</p> <p>It was advised that vacancy management would continue to be under review but staffing within key service areas would remain a priority in order to ensure that essential services were delivered. The Committee were assured that as part of the budget report, information included staffing levels in terms of decisions being taken, proposals going</p>	

forward and the implications.

Overspend – It was explained that the non-recurrent spending mitigated the overspend by recognising that borrowing was not at the level it could be. It was also acknowledged that the use of non-recurrent spend was not a negative action to take and should be used as part of a strategy.

DCST Overspend – Members were informed that now DCST had transferred to the Council, there would be better control over decisions and resources including managing the back office function more effectively. It was explained that the transfer of teams were still in its early stages but a further integration plan would be developed during the coming months.

Out of Authority (OOA) placements were reported as having the greatest overspend due to rising costs and rising demand. The service being brought in house would mean that further rigor could be implemented in keeping children and young people, where it was safe to do so and with the family unit for as long as possible. It was noted that this may help manage the overspend better although this may prove challenging against the backdrop of the current operating environment.

Increased Borrowing – The Committee were advised that the organisation could only borrow funding for Capital purposes, and that it was unable to borrow for revenue purposes.

Strategic Risks – A Member sought assurances around the indicator reporting that the organisation was at high risk of preventing a cyber attack. It was explained this was in order to keep this indicator in focus and to make sure the organisation was constantly vigilant to potential attacks.

Capital Programme Risks – The organisations Capital Programme was described as ambitious, and it was concluded that a full programme had never been achieved over the last 5 years. It was explained that more rigor had been introduced for schemes entering on to the Capital Programme, by only approving those that were funded. It was recognised that the programme was over ambitious for the resources the organisation has. Finally, it was noted that the operating environment was also difficult and it was becoming increasingly challenging to engage with contractors.

It was clarified that there was a capital programme in place for schools although the allocation from the Department for Education was minimal. Members heard that a large proportion of Doncaster schools were academies who had their own budgets to be used for capital programmes.

Mansion House and Cusworth Hall – In relation to questions about the amount of time the Mansion House and Cusworth Hall could be opened to the Public, Members were informed that the number of volunteers used to keep the buildings open, had reduced significantly during Covid. Members were advised that work was ongoing to recruit more volunteers. On a separate issue, it was noted that Cusworth Hall required building work to make it viable for use again.

### **DEVELOPING THE SKILLS TO THRIVE IN LIFE AND WORK**

Education Welfare Officers – It was clarified that the Education Welfare Officer posts within secondary schools were formed as a result of reallocating and reprioritising services, and not as additional resources. It was felt that those posts should mean better communication with schools and better quality information about attendance being produced in a more timely manner.

High Needs Block Overspend – In order to mitigate the overspend in this area, it was noted that;

- The service continued to improve decision-making but more work was required to aid young people to stay local for as long as possible.
- A backlog of Out Of Authority placements was being managed.
- A new performance dashboard was being introduced, to allow the service to negotiate cheaper block contracts with contractors in those areas identified as having a greater need.
- The needs assessment was being reviewed as it had identified that the needs of children had changed over the past few years, resulting in the need for more appropriate provisions to be commissioned.
- Social and Emotional Mental Health Hubs were being developed in the community to support children. It was hoped that children would continue to live within the authority rather than needing to move out of the area.
- The Future Placements Strategy was progressing to help to keep children within the borough and reduce costs.
- Internally, there had been a Head of Service restructure and as a result , a Head of Service post for Sufficiency had been created with the task to review Out Of Authority placements and spend.
- A proposal was going to be taken to the school forum to transfer funding into the high needs block in order to mitigate the overspend.

Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) – As reported, there had been a decline in the number of Educational Health Care Plans being issued within the 20 weeks timeframe. Members were pleased to note that an additional post had been created to help with the backlog and that delays in receiving information required from its partners to develop the plans were being addressed.

Homes for Children – The Committee were informed that as the numbers of children needing care were increasing, so was the need for a variety of provision to support them. Members were told how in the near future, there was a recruitment drive planned for additional in-house foster carers within the borough. There would also be a relook at what sufficiency was needed, post Covid. Officers advised that there would still be an element of out of authority placements due to growing numbers of children with complex needs.

Hesley Hall Group – In response to a question, it was confirmed to the Committee that the Hesley Group had closed the three homes within Doncaster that it owned and an investigation was under way with a report being submitted to Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Panel.

### **PROMOTING THE BOROUGH & ITS CULTURE, SPORTING & HERITAGE OPPORTUNITIES**

Promotion of Doncaster – It was explained to Members, that in order to help promote Doncaster, the Council had continued to invest in heritage during Covid. It was added that there was a new culture service in place to develop community interests in Doncaster heritage and that a new culture strategy would be presented to Cabinet in the coming weeks.

### **BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTHIER, HAPPIER & LONGER LIVES FOR ALL**

Adult Social Care Needs Assessment – It was noted that the time taken to complete an assessment was 52 days, longer than the 42 day target. Officers highlighted that the service would like to be more ambitious than the current target of 42 days for Doncaster. It was explained that the target was not being met due to issues with recording data in a timely manner, but these should be input by the end of September. To improve assessment times, work was underway with staff to ensure they understood the importance of recording data effectively. A recruitment target had been put in place to help bring the assessment times down, but it was felt that some recruitment processes could be improved and better marketing of the service would be advantageous. Members were informed that agency staff were being used for a short period to help with the backlog. It was felt that in some instances bureaucracy made the process too complicated, therefore a pilot scheme was underway to help make systems and processes quicker so that people are provided with the appropriate level of support much earlier.

Direct Payments Working Group – The Committee were advised that there was still a lot of work to do with direct payments, and the working group had so far gathered information around policy, practice and guidance. The working group had decided that the policy needed to be

updated, along with more training for staff and including further work with people with lived experience.

### **BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTHIER, HAPPIER AND LONGER LIVES**

- Adult Safeguarding Referrals – It was reported that the time taken for an adult safeguarding referral from referral to completion was longer than expected. In order to address this, a Team Manager had been recruited to ensure consistent leadership and management of performance. It was outlined that all cases remained open over 100 days and were being audited and cases were prioritised appropriately. It was identified that South Yorkshire Police generated a high proportion of referrals, therefore work was being carried out to educate referrers so that people had access to the correct support that best fits their needs.

### **CREATING SAFER STRONGER GREENER AND CLEANER COMMUNITIES WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS**

- Recycling Rates for Household Domestic Waste – Members were reminded that the data used for the performance indicator within in the report was from the previous quarter, and the target set was a national target and difficult to achieve. It was commented that people's behaviours over the last few years throughout Covid had changed, and the bin collections had been significantly affected during this period. Regular meetings were now in place with the contractor Suez and it was felt that bin collection had improved, but the recruitment of HGV drivers still posed a challenge. There was more work to be done alongside the contractor around re-educating the public post-pandemic on recycling and disposing household waste appropriately.

Street Lighting – In relation to the overspend reported on street lighting it was emphasised that the organisation had halved its energy usage on street lighting since 2015, however, energy costs were now rising. Members heard how new technology was being used in order to help with costs, and the service was consulting on lone working practices to enable those staff to repair lighting to reduce maintenance costs. It was felt that the organisation would not want to turn off street lighting and risk community safety in order to bring costs down. Regarding the risk of blackout, this was considered a national problem that the organisation may face at some point in the future.

### **MAKING DONCASTER THE BEST PLACE TO DO BUSINESS AND CREATE GOOD JOBS**

- Helping people with disabilities into work – The performance level was not where it should be in terms of helping those with disabilities into work. It was hoped that a local employment cluster bid being developed which included a Job Coach position, would actively work

	<p>with the Adult Learning Disability team and employers to generate opportunities for people and could improve the service’s performance.</p> <p><u>Housing and infrastructure</u> – It was recognised there were challenges with new housing developments as some have a lack of infrastructure links and access to schools and amenities. Members were reminded of the Section 106 process that generated money for new amenities, however they were advised that developers often raised the questions of affordability and viability. Members were reminded that the organisation was also operating within a challenging economic climate, and rising construction costs may result in not delivering all that had been proposed.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:-</b> that the report, be noted.</p>	
19	<p><u>ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER LTD (SLHD) PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY UPDATE: 2022/23 QUARTER 1</u></p>	
	<p>The Committee received the Quarter 1 Performance and Delivery Update 2022/23 Quarter 1 report, which gave the opportunity to provide Members an over view of the successes and challenges during the previous months.</p> <p>Members of the Committee then explored the following topics in more detail;</p> <p><u>Void Rent Loss</u> – It was highlighted that in terms of rent loss, quarter 1 had seen the organisations best performance for 6 years, and it showed that rent was being paid by occupants. In answer to a question on void rent loss, it was explained that the organisation was a little way off where it wished to be, however, was performing the best by far in comparison to other South Yorkshire neighbours. It was said that the biggest risk for turning round a property, was the condition that the property was returned in, and it was hoped that staff would recommence property visits within the next year. It was added that for some properties, there was a problem with re-letting due to location and people’s fears of anti-social behaviour. Due to issues within the local neighbourhood, there were 3 properties in Edlington that were unable to be let at present, but it was hoped that investment would make them lettable again.</p> <p><u>Evictions from private rentals</u> – It was noted that there had been an upswing in private rental evictions primarily due to affordability issues.</p>	

	<p>National statistics showed an increase in private rental costs during the last year, and the number of families now struggling to pay their rent was increasing as a result. Members heard how the numbers of people in temporary B&amp;B accommodation was now higher than pre-pandemic levels, therefore the organisation was trying to use more of its own housing stock to bolster what was available. However, this meant that those properties used for temporary housing could not be used for lettings.</p> <p>Members were also reminded that the numbers of people presenting as homeless had risen fourfold since the pandemic, and that the authority had supported SLHD with additional staff and financial support to help manage demand. Members were informed that SLHD were now undertaking work on homelessness prevention, looking at the causes of homelessness and the support options that people have, if homelessness cannot be prevented.</p> <p>In answer to a question, it was explained that there were plans to expand the housing stock by building new properties which would take time and unlikely to resolve the issues that the organisation currently faces.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:-</b> that the report, be noted.</p>	
20	<p><u>COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22</u></p>	
	<p>The Committee considered the Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2021/2022.</p> <p>Members then asked questions on the following areas:</p> <p>Increase in complaints – Members recognised there had been increase in complaints received across all four organisations compared to the previous year 2021/22 and it was explained this was because during Covid the volume of complaints and communications from the public had significantly decreased. Particular peaks in complaints over the four organisations were noted as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o DMBC (licensing service) – This is due to delays in service and dissatisfaction when contacting the service. However the service were reinstating the telephony contact.</li> <li>o SLHD (repair appointments) - The rollout of a Repairs Excellence Model was underway to improve communications with customers.</li> <li>o DCLT (service delivery) - This was particularly around swimming lessons. It was explained that since Covid, the Trust struggled to recruit swimming instructors resulting in cancelled lessons, which was also a national issue.</li> <li>o DCST (corporate complaints) - The demand for resources continued into this reporting year, but there had also been staffing</li> </ul>	

	<p>issues for the service. Members were told how priority had been given to safeguarding and statutory areas, but this led to delays in non-statutory issues being dealt with and a rise in complaints.</p> <p>Service improvements – The Committee were advised that Doncaster Council and its partners have dedicated staff providing expert advice on handling communications and complaints, capture performance information and work with teams to reduce complaints. However, it was dependent on what the organisation was dealing with during the year as the types of complaints changed year-on-year.</p> <p>DCST complaints – An overall increase in complaints within DCST was noted and it was reported there were a number of complaints received around fostering. Members were assured these had been addressed and there was now a focus on improving this service.</p> <p><u>DCLT complaints</u> – In addition to the increase in complaints relating to swimming lessons, officers also advised that there had been a number of complaints about the external collectors (that collected direct debits on the organisations behalf). The Committee was told that the process had moved in-house to give customers a better service and prevent further complaints.</p> <p><u>Complaints and corporate complaints</u> – Members were reminded of what the organisation recognised as being a complaints and corporate complaints. This was described as an expression of dissatisfaction that effected a customer or group of customers. It was explained that customers might contact the organisation about a missed bin collection or report a pot hole, which would be classed as a service request. However, if the organisation failed to act on those requests then the customer would have the opportunity to submit a corporate complaint.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:-</b> that the report, be noted.</p>	
21	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan and the Councils Forward Plan of key decisions.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:-</b> that the report, be noted.</p>	