

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 16TH DECEMBER, 2019

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on MONDAY, 16TH DECEMBER, 2019 at 1.00 PM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors Mark Houlbrook, Richard A Jones, Majid Khan and Andrea Robinson

Other Councillors: Councillor David Nevett

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources

Rob Moore, Director of Corporate Resources and Company Secretary, DCST

Alan Adams, Interim Chief Executive, DCST

Julie Crook, Director of Corporate Services, St Leger Homes Doncaster

Scott Cardwell, Assistant Director of Development

Gill Gillies, Assistant Director of Environment

Rebecca Mason, Head of Engagement & Partnerships

Louise Parker, Head of Service Strategy & Performance Unit Manager

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Healy and Neil Gethin and Paul O'Brien

		<u>ACTION</u>
5	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest.	
6	<u>MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 12TH SEPTEMBER AND 3RD OCTOBER 2019</u>	
	<u>RESOLVED</u> that the minutes of the meeting held on 12th September and 3rd October, 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	
7	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	

	There were no public statements.	
8	<u>2019-20 QUARTER 2 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT &amp; 'DELIVERING FOR DONCASTER' BOOKLET</u>	
	<p>Debbie Hogg summarised the headline issues within the report as follows:</p> <p>Financial position – The budget was projecting a £2m underspend at Quarter 2. However, the flooding emergency, which occurred during November, was not reflected in the report. The costs involved in responding to the emergency were likely to have an impact on the overall financial position and the Council’s performance.</p> <p><b>Caring</b> – positive signs were seen in respect of less reliance on residential care and an increase number of residents using direct payments.</p> <p><b>Working</b> –The target for processing Major Planning Applications was positive. Collection of non-domestic rates was still slightly below target but was improving.</p> <p><b>Learning</b> – whilst a number of targets in respect of attainment were off track, the results from the 2019 exams would be included within the next quarter outturn and would show a more accurate and positive outturn.</p> <p><b>Connected Council</b> – Time taken to process applications for Council Tax Support had improved from last quarter. Further work was taking place with the Department for Work and Pensions to improve this further. The average days lost per employee through sickness was currently off track against the corporate target.</p> <p>Overall Performance and Financial outturn projections were positive at the end of quarter 2.</p> <p>Members were invited to ask questions and the following issues raised:</p> <p><b>CARING</b></p> <p>Members asked if improvements in the Delayed Transfer of Care would have a negative impact on other service areas. Phil Holmes explained that ensuring patients were out of hospital and living at home was positive. However, if it led to individual’s being discharged before they were ready or the necessary support or equipment was not available at home this target was not an effective measure. The Council worked closely with health colleagues to ensure the transition from hospital to home was efficient and effective.</p>	

Members asked for more details around the help given to veterans. Phil Holmes agreed to forward a written response to Members.

In reference to direct payments used to pay for a personal assistant, Members asked if those taking the payment had to tell the Council how it was being used. It was explained that this information was currently not available through the Care First system. It was recognised that moving forward more support needed to be given to clients wishing to employ personal assistants.

Members asked about the time taken for completion of assessments which was currently 49.6 days against a target of 42 days. Phil Holmes reported that this figure varied for different groups. In particular, assessments took longer for those with more complex needs and disabilities. Further work would need to be undertaken to analyse the wait times both geographically and by need. This would ensure a greater understanding of the necessary actions to improve performance in this area.

Members asked about the key financial pressures in adult social care and where areas of most and least progress would be made. Members were informed that greater use of assistive technology to keep people in their own homes would reduce expensive residential care costs. In addition, further analysis would take place to identify the higher cost care providers to identify how this could be reduced.

Members asked what actions would be put in place to address the projected overspend of £315k on commissioning and contracts which was attributable to an overspend on community equipment. Members were informed that this was being investigated further to understand how to manage demand, ensure correct usage and get maximum value from the equipment. Some of the more bespoke equipment could be very expensive such as hoists and other equipment used to transfer individuals from beds to chairs. Members were also reminded about the complexity of the care ladder and the interdependencies that exist between the various services to deliver care packages that meet the needs of the client.

### **CONNECTED COUNCIL**

It was confirmed that the Council wide effort in supporting communities affected by the flooding would have an impact on both finance and performance in the next quarter. Members recognised and acknowledged the hard work of Council staff and the connectedness and co-operation of partners in working together to respond to the emergency.

Members referred to current performance in respect of days lost through sickness absence and it was reported that staff in HR worked with managers to support attendance. Investigations were currently

underway to identify reasons for non-attendance at Occupational Health meetings and to identify ways in which this could be improved for example through a text reminder service. This issue had been identified as a cause for concern during the quarterly review of sickness absence. Similarities were drawn with both dentists and doctors who highlight the number of missed appointments to identify the impact this has on providing an efficient and effective service. It was reported that currently there were no sanctions for staff not attending appointments with Occupational Health.

The Committee was also informed that there was a managing attendance process and mechanisms were in place for managers to identify sickness absence patterns but also identify where staff required support to prevent or reduce sickness. This included liaison with Occupational Health for advice and ensuring reasonable adjustments were made for those needing support.

The Committee requested a more detailed report on actions being taken to address sickness absence and details of potential actions to address the number of missed Occupational health appointments.

The Committee asked how the Council worked with organisations and education providers to help identify and encourage apprenticeships and courses that would support Council services where there were skills shortages such as social care, Occupational Therapy and Planning. It was reported that there were close working relationships between the Council and the NHS including work rotations to support social care and work experience opportunities. Phil Holmes reported that more work could be undertaken with schools to raise the profile and encourage more young people into the social care profession.

The Committee asked for clarity on the number of higher-level apprentices detailed in the report as this was expressed as a percentage.

### **LIVING/WORKING**

In respect of the increase in new homes built, the Committee asked if these were the right type of houses and located in the right area. Scott Cardwell confirmed that a new indicator was being developed and would be included within the Quarter 3 report around number of affordable houses built. This would not show affordable housing on a geographic or ward basis but that information would be available if required. Members confirmed that a mechanism for identifying affordable homes on a geographical basis would be useful.

Members asked if the recent flooding emergency would impact on house building in the Borough and whether sites allocated for housing should be re-evaluated following the floods. The Committee was

informed that the Council was required to have a housing delivery figure and whilst there would always be the potential for flooding in certain areas of the Borough no housing sites would be reallocated. The Environment Agency and Highways Department are consulted over housing applications this provides an opportunity to comment on the likelihood of flooding. It was confirmed that no housing had been allocated in Flood Zone 3.

Members were informed of the formula used to calculate the numbers of affordable houses, discussion took place in respect of the gap for affordable housing that existed in the South East, and the type of affordable housing that was expected In the Borough.

The Committee asked for an update on the Street Scene review and also asked what impact the £1m saving would have on service delivery.

Scott Cardwell informed Members that the recent flooding emergency had led to a delay in the completion of the Street Scene review. Members were reminded that across the Council, officers were tasked with managing services with fewer resources and colleagues would be identifying how the service would be transformed to deliver services with reduced resources.

Members asked if the exercise undertaken with One Carbon World would form part of the Environment strategy. Members requested initial findings and baseline information arising from this exercise

In respect of a question around the £13.2m shortfall in capital receipts, it was confirmed that this programme would be reviewed to ensure there was no significant impact on the major capital projects.

## **LEARNING**

The Committee acknowledged the improvement in persistent absence rates and asked what mechanisms were in place to improve the attendance of those children in care. Rebecca Mason informed the Committee that close liaison was taking place between the Local Authority, Doncaster Children's Trust and schools to identify what offer could be given to schools to help and support them to address this.

A Member asked if the Council supported schoolchildren attending events such as the climate change strikes as this could be perceived as encouraging children to be absent from school. The Committee was informed that it was ultimately down to each school to determine whether it supported attendance at these type of events.

A Member asked if the figures for persistent absence could also be included as a number as well as a percentage to enable the Committee to understand the impact of the performance indicator.

	<p>Members enquired about the effectiveness of the admissions process and whether this was being completed within a 20-week timescale and if children were absent from school because there were delays in processing their applications. Members also enquired about satisfaction surveys to help inform improvements to the service. The Committee was informed that a review of the admissions team had been undertaken and a number of recommendations for improvement had been made. This information would be forwarded to the Committee outside of the meeting.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the Chair and Members of the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Management Panel receive and note the quarter 2 performance and financial information; including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The allocations of block budgets in the Capital Programme, detailed in the Appendix A - Finance Profile in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules;</li> <li>• The earmarked reserves creation approval, detailed in paragraph 45;</li> <li>• The virements for approval per the Financial Procedure Rules, detailed in the Appendix A - Finance Profile ; and</li> <li>• The changes to the Strategic Risks detailed in paragraph 52 and in the Appendix B – Strategic Risk Profile</li> </ul>	
9	<p><u>PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE OF DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST: QUARTER 2, 2019/20</u></p>	
	<p>The Chair welcomed Alan Adams Interim Chief Executive, James Thomas and Rob Moore to the meeting.</p> <p>Members asked what strategies were in place to encourage school attendance of children in care. Members were informed that processes were in place to ensure those responsible for children in care understood the value of education and attendance, whether this was children placed in foster care or those in a residential setting. Arrangements were built in to the commissioning process to ensure regular attendance and reduced absenteeism of children in care.</p> <p>The Committee enquired whether there were any specific challenges around children in care accessing placements in schools. Members were informed that for children in care there were sometimes additional factors that needed to be considered to ensure the placement was appropriate in meeting their needs. Whilst children were generally supported to remain in their current school, alternative placements would need to be sought where this was not in the best interest of the child. The virtual school advocates on behalf of children in care and each child has a personal education plan with attendance being monitored and reviewed regularly. The Committee sought assurance that children in care were placed in schools quickly. It was reported that</p>	

there were frameworks and expectations in place but more work needed to be undertaken with partners to improve this further.

Members asked about the provision in place for those children in care who were moving back to live with their families. It was reported that the Trust ensured there was effective support mechanisms in place and the children were moving on to a nurturing environment with a strengthened partnership offer to support the transition.

Members asked what the impact would be on the delivery of services to children as the Trust sought to make £3m savings over the next 3 years. It was reported that the DCST had begun to achieve its savings earlier as detailed in the Medium Term Financial Strategy to lessen the impact and allow for better planning.

It was reported that the improved changes to services would also bring about savings and efficiencies. Two of the key pressures on the service were the high cost of placements and the increased costs and complex needs of children accessing the service. Improvements to bring more children in care back into the Borough and creating more residential homes in the borough were included in the Future Placements Strategy. In achieving savings, any action had to be right for the child and meet their care requirements. The Future Placement strategy scheduled for Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> December proposed the building of a number of 2-bedroomed accommodation units for children in care. This was a more effective and efficient solution than allocating places outside of the Borough.

In terms of foster care provision, there was encouragement to use the Trust's foster carers, which were up to a third less than the cost of external foster care, this also kept children closer to home and their friends and families.

Members asked about shared arrangements with other local authorities to manage placements and partnership arrangements. The Committee was informed that joint arrangements worked well with the Regional Adoption Agency. Working regionally helps recruit new families more effectively, enables children to be placed in a more timely way and improves adoption support services as well as improving services by sharing best practice. It was reported that the DCST had also signed up to the White Rose Framework, which was a Residential Contract Agreement with providers to deliver the provision of residential children's homes placements for children and young people across Yorkshire.

A Member asked if staff vacancies in Family Support Services and Youth Justice had an impact on the quality of service and if agency staff were covering those vacancies. It was reported that DCST was not looking to make savings in these areas. In terms of performance, the Youth Justice Service was likely to be inspected next year and

	<p>contained some areas of very high performance, which provide positive outcomes for young people. DCST would look at recruiting to these vacant posts.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Management Committee note the progress of DCST performance outcomes and the contribution that the Trust makes to supporting the Council's strategic priorities.</p>	
10	<p><u>ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER LTD (SLHD) PERFORMANCE &amp; DELIVERY UPDATE: 2019/20 QUARTER TWO (Q2)</u></p>	
	<p>The Committee asked what action was being taken to mitigate Void Rent Loss. It was reported there were a number of actions taking place including close monitoring and arranging multiple viewings on these dwellings. It was reported that this target had reduced from previous years but an additional 100 properties had been taken on which had led to an increased workload.</p> <p>Members enquired about the target around the average number of days to re-let standard properties, which was above target at 23.83 calendar days. It was reported there was an expectation this would be back on track in the future. The recent flooding emergency would however, have an impact on future performance as a number of properties had been held back and not re-let as they were allocated to families affected by the flooding emergency.</p> <p>The Committee asked what strategies were in place to help tenants budget, manage their finances and pay their rent on time. Members were informed that there was an expectation that arrears would increase due to tenants moving to Universal Credit and choosing not to pay SLHD directly. Members were informed that tenants are assessed to determine what support is needed to assist them in managing their finances and paying their rent on time.</p> <p>Members asked about the actions to reduce homelessness. Members also asked about SLHD involvement in the Social Isolation and Loneliness Alliance, it was reported that information would be provided to the Committee outside the meeting in respect of this.</p> <p>Members asked about the implication for tenants when repairs were not completed on the first visit. It was reported that urgent repairs such as boiler and heating issues were generally repaired within 24 hours. Wherever staff had the equipment available, they would repair first time. Where there was a repair requiring a specific part or a replacement window, which needed to be measured and ordered, this would require a second visit. In the case of broken windows, staff would look to secure the property until the replacement was made available.</p>	

	<p>The Committee thanked Julie Crooks for her attendance.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that members of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee note the progress of SLHD performance outcomes and the contribution SLHD makes to the Council's strategic priorities.</p>	
11	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></p>	
	<p>Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny work plan. Councillor Robinson provided a summary of work undertaken by the Adults Health and Social Care Committee and referred to a meeting with South Yorkshire Ambulance Service and informed Members of the expansion made to the ambulance station located at Clay Lane West. This included a complete refurbishment remodelling the existing ambulance station to a new hub design comprising operational staff changing rooms and refreshment areas as well as management offices, training and meeting rooms and expansion of garage and repair facilities.</p> <p>Councillor Houlbrook provided an update on the work undertaken by the Communities and Environment Panel. Members were informed that a number of agenda items scheduled for the 18<sup>th</sup> November including an update on the work of the Internal Drainage Boards had been deferred as staff were involved in the flooding emergency. These issues would be picked up in the New Year.</p> <p>Members also considered the Forward Plan and were informed to contact officers initially if they had any queries in respect of forthcoming decisions.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that Members received and noted the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan update.</p>	