

Public Document Pack

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 2ND DECEMBER, 2021

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 2ND DECEMBER, 2021 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors Leanne Hempshall, Richard A Jones, Majid Khan and Sarah Smith

Co-optees – Bernadette Nesbit (Diocese of Hallam Roman Catholic Church) (Agenda Item 7 only).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources

Phil Holmes, Director of Adults Health and Wellbeing

Riana Nelson, Director of Learning, Opportunities and Skills (DCS)

Dan Swaine, Director of Economy and Environment

Rupert Suckling, Director of Public Health

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

Clive Chambers, Head of Quality, Performance and Standards (DCST)

Andrew Sercombe, Governance Services Manager

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Healy, Daniel Barwell, Bev Chapman and Antoinette Drinkhill (Co-optee) and Paul O'Brien (GMB)

| | | <u>ACTION</u> |
|----|---|---------------|
| 26 | <u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u> | |
| | No declarations were reported at the meeting. | |
| 27 | <u>MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH SEPTEMBER AND 4TH NOVEMBER 2021</u> | |
| | RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 9 September and | |

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| | 4 November approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. | |
| 28 | <u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u> | |
| | There were no public statements made at the meeting. | |
| 29 | <u>ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER LTD (SLHD) PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY UPDATE 2021/2022 QUARTER 2 (Q2)</u> | |
| | <p>The Committee welcomed Dave Richmond, to the meeting and raised the following questions:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members asked what improvements were expected t in relation to reducing the number of voids and the re-letting of properties in a timely manner. They also asked which of the strategies undertaken were likely to have the most immediate impact. In response, it was reported that there was not one solution for improvements but a number of mechanisms for tackling existing problems in terms of voids to enable those improvements to be made. A number of examples were shared with members including improvements on the turnaround time for void properties. It was acknowledged that in terms of turnaround, an improvement in reducing the number of voids may have a detrimental impact on other associated indicators. However, further gradual improvements on performance in this area were expected in the future. • With regard to void rent loss, it had been stated that Doncaster compared well with similar authorities, it was asked what effective measures were being taken to achieve this.. In responding, it was reported that St Leger were not where they wanted to be in terms of voids. However, the service keep a close eye on the industry and benchmark regularly with neighbouring authorities. It was acknowledged that these issues are not just isolated to Doncaster, everyone was experiencing similar problems. There was significant pressure on staff in trying to hone down and address the causation factors.. It was stated that Doncaster’s target was set at 20 days which is ambitious and the service would try its best to achieve that target. • In relation to processes for effectively reducing voids, Members were advised that the two key issues; were turnaround and re-letting . In response to this, it was stated that the lettings team were now back in the office and working closer with the voids team. This closer working arrangement had improved liaison and co-ordination and it was expected to bring about a greater improvement. It was also noted that the Chief Executive had regular fortnightly meetings with managers to monitor the situation. | |

- A question was raised with regard to the increasing trend of properties being handed back in a poor state of repair and whether re-chargeable repairs were adequately enforced. The Committee heard that often the state of the property is not known until the time at which the tenant vacates and this may be the point at which significant repairs are required. The Committee was informed that verification visits were to be introduced on a scheduled basis, rather than in response to a request which would provide early information on the current state of repair and in some cases enable less costly repairs to be undertaken early. Furthermore, this pro-active approach would also provide an opportunity to check on the welfare of tenants and potentially identify early intervention or additional support enabling some to maintain their tenancy before they reached crisis point.

The Committee recognised that scheduling visits across 20,000 properties was challenging and would require prioritisation. However, it wished to record its support for this initiative and requested further consideration be given to how SLHD and its partners could assist this process by feeding back relevant information during other visits to properties for example when carrying out routine repairs and annual gas testing checks..

- Further discussion took place with regard to the back log of repairs. It was reported that there were still some ongoing issues that were Covid related such as supply chain issues resulting in delay in receiving materials. Whilst the team had ordered supplies in advance there was no guarantee supplies would be available on schedule. In terms of quality assurance, it was asked whether there were known percentages of the properties that the team would have to return to in terms of repairs. It was advised that this data was not available but if repairs are identified they are e added to the scheduling service.

A question was raised with regard to support for tenants particularly those that were recovering from addiction and whether they are supported by St Leger staff to maintain their tenancies. Members were advised that there was a range of support and assistance from other agencies and services such as Complex Lives Team. However, St Leger has its own in-house support team where tenants are supported on issues such as rent management for up to six months. However, there were case-loads that extended to 2 years. It was advised that the staff covered a range of issues including mental health problems.

In addition, it was reported that a lot of work had been undertaken to bring agencies together to provide a wrap- around support service shared across a number of agencies, the

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| | <p>Council and SLHD. It was acknowledged that there needed to be a more joined up approach and as well as linking the Complex Lives Alliance, the service needed to bring together community advice agencies and provide services such as a digital offer to ensure people are aware about what they need to do at an early stage. Officers acknowledged there was still further work to do in this area.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) the progress of SLHD performance outcomes and the contributions it makes to supporting Doncaster Council's strategic priorities be noted; (2) the appropriate Panel be asked to look at the process for recharging of repairs for those properties that have been left in a poor state by tenants; and (3) the Committee support the process for the re-introduction of verification visits and requested further consideration be given to how SLHD and its partners could assist this process by feeding back relevant information during other visits to properties. | |
| 30 | <p><u>2021/2022 QUARTER 2 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT</u></p> | |
| | <p><u>Connected Council and Overview</u></p> <p>The Committee received the 2021/2022 Quarter 2 Finance and Performance Improvement report introduced by the Director of Corporate Resources. The report presented a new format which was structured around the Borough Strategy. It was reported that the overall position remained very challenging as the authority were still in response and recovery mode in light of the ongoing Covid pandemic. It was also important to recognise that the Council had been successful in receiving £64m in funding.</p> <p>In terms of performance, service standards had been met and staff had gone the extra mile this was reflected in the significant improvements from quarter one. With regard to overspends, it was reported that it was helpful to recognise that this was being managed carefully. Overall, it was noted that the report presented a good position.</p> <p>Following the brief introduction, members asked a number of questions as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of savings targets, were officers confident these could | |

be met and would a balanced budget be met particularly with rising social care costs. In response, it was stated that the report identified that in relation to savings the Council was £2.7m off track, but it was important to note that through funding for Covid, the Council had mitigated the overall overspend.. Members were advised that delivering savings was only one part of the management of the Council's finances and overall this was being managed successfully under challenging circumstances.

- With regard to staff sickness, it was asked how many staff were suffering from longer term issues resulting from Covid, and were they being supported adequately in the workplace. In response, Members were advised that there were not many people that were identifying as suffering with long covid. It was recognised that the sickness target was ambitious as the Council was delivering, business as usual whilst responding and recovering from the pandemic. This created a challenging environment for staff. It was noted that the Council was in a better position than last year and staff were being supported. Regular supervision was being provided by Occupational Health and there were regular bulletins posted on staff wellbeing.
- Clarification was provided with regard to Homelessness placement claims and the reasons for them taking longer to process. It was reported that this issue had also been reviewed by the Council's Internal Audit Team in order to optimise the system. It was advised that the Council only action the payment when the provision is in place and the invoice is received, which leads to a delay and the costs can vary depending on the nature of the provision.

Doncaster Learning and Caring

Members asked a number of questions as follows:-

- In terms of overspend, it was asked what strategy was in place to reduce these. In response, Members were advised that overspends were a particular focus for the service and this was being looked at on a weekly basis. Overspend with regard to children with disabilities was due to the children being placed in out of area placements. There had been delays with the introduction of the Future Placement Strategy due to the lack of properties available within the current housing market. However, this was now back on track and 3 homes had been secured for children in the new year. It was noted that further work was required in terms of recruiting more foster carers and this was ongoing. Details were also shared in relation to the SEND Transformation Programme and work was ongoing with schools to ensure the right provision was available for children at an earlier stage.

- In relation to permanent exclusions being reduced, it was asked whether the reduction in the number of exclusions could be sustained. With regard to exclusions it was important to recognise that Doncaster was bucking the trend. Collaborative work had taken place with schools looking at behaviours. Support had been provided to schools through the memorandum of understanding. It was noted that in terms of exclusions the trend has been similar to that of last year. However, the Council will continue to work with schools and particular focus will be made in relation to mental health.
- A query was raised with regard to how the Council were reducing the number of young people who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). In response, it was acknowledged that this continued to be a good story for the Council. At the end of October, this was 6.8% below the 12.5% average and was also below the national average. Robust tracking of the 16-18 cohort had been responsible for this as well as advice and guidance through collaborative working with stronger families. It was emphasised that more support was required for Looked after children (LAC) to enable them to access training, this can be followed up through home visits to encourage those young people to access and engage with the training on offer. In terms of percentages for LAC, it was acknowledged there was a higher rate of LAC that were NEET, those details would be forwarded to Members outside of the meeting.
- It was asked whether there was any data or correlation between exclusions and Off-Rolling. It was advised that whilst there were no figures to offer members, it was reported that the number of pupils Off-Rolling were decreasing and if the Directorate was made aware it would intervene appropriately.
- In terms of providing a consistent approach in funding across schools in the Borough in relation to providing summer activities, the Committee was provided with details of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme. It was noted that the Council had been working closely with schools on this initiative and Members looked forward to the delivery of the programme.
- In terms of the Doncaster Integrated People System detailed at paragraph 48 of the report, it was advised that this system was not open to public access.

Doncaster Caring

A number of questions were asked as follows:-

- In response to a question regarding fuel poverty, members were

advised that the current advice in relation to fuel prices was not to switch deals. There were a number of household efficiency grants available and support would be given to those household that seek and need that support. It was also recognised that staff can be made aware of fuel poverty whilst out meeting people in their properties. Members were also advised that the Fuel Poverty Strategy was also being designed, which would be considered at a scrutiny session in the new year. It is likely that the increase in fuel prices is likely to have the greatest impact on fuel poverty.

- In referring to the MOSIAC Case Recording System, Members were advised that the contract for the former Case Management system had come to an end and the new system had been introduced. It was acknowledged that with all new systems it takes time to adjust and the system is reliant on the quality and accuracy of information inputted. It was also important to note that the system needs to be accurate and recording needs to be carried out in a timely manner and not left to be completed later. In terms of training staff on the new system, take up had been positive as this has been carried out virtually.
- In referring to page 42 of the report regarding the Domestic Abuse Hub, it was asked what barriers there were in encouraging those impacted by domestic violence in engaging with support services.. It was acknowledged that victims of domestic abuse were extremely vulnerable and it takes a great amount of courage to report domestic abuse. Members were advised that some of the time it can be difficult to follow up on as the person is no longer contactable or wishes to not to proceed. The service has tried to establish a more proactive approach through Community Engagement Workers with links into locality working. It was also stated that work was also being carried out with a Survivor Liaison Worker recently employed to bring about more credibility to a person and build their confidence in reporting the abuse.
- A query was raised in relation to the reason for the reduction of high risks cases to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). Members were advised that MARAC was a system for referring high risk issues that require a multi-agency response. It was stated that the decision that had been made with regard to MARAC was that for repeat issues, officers would endeavour to filter these before they automatically come back to MARAC, to avoid duplication, which was the reason for the reduction. It was emphasised that this did not mean repeat issues would not be investigated and safeguarding actions would continue to be undertaken with that person/family. However, what officers had recognised previously if there are too many repeats coming through the system, the same

conversations and actions are taking place and can impact on the support available for new cases.

- In referring to the market position statement detailed at paragraph 75 of the report, it was asked how crucial this was and when it was likely to be available. It was reported that this was paramount and a positive way of identifying and signalling to both providers and stakeholders what the Councils future intentions are and what the key care challenges are particularly now in terms of uncertainty. It was reported that the market statement will be structured into modules, this would be a set of documents looking at individual groups of people and it is expected that the first modules will be considered by Directors for approval before Christmas and publication was expected in the new year. This would provide guidance to care providers on the types of services to be commissioned what will be commissioned. It was also noted that the Social Care White Paper would also need to be taken into account with the development of the market position statement.
- In referring to paragraph 68 of the report, it was asked if officers could expand on what e-cohort studies were/would be and were there any lessons that were learnt from the process. Members were advised that e-cohort studies were a technical way of identifying groups of people that officers were interested in following up overtime and tracking their impact of interventions and outcomes. The first e-cohort established is called 'Born and Bred in Doncaster'. It was noted that this was still at early stages of development. Officers had learnt that it is difficult to recruit data analysts that have significant capacity and capability. This is because this is not the only programme that Doncaster has that are requiring capacity around data analytics.

Doncaster Living

A number of questions were asked as follows:-

- In terms of inward investment, it was asked how soon Doncaster's economy would start seeing the benefits and how were the Council maximising the effectiveness of this with its partners. It was reported that an impact was expected to be seen in 2022/23 with regard to delivery and a wider impact in terms of growth would be evident in 2023/24. It was reported that there had been some immediate impact as a consequence of the Towns Deals, whilst these were not economically driven it did lead to improvements at Elmfield Park and the play park at Stainforth. It was noted that the Council had £18.6m of Levelling Up Fund (LUF) and the 3 elements were the Waterfront, Enterprise Market Place and Civic and Cultural Quarter.. In terms of LUF funding, the Government have determined that the

funding should be delivered within 3 years, it is envisaged that economic benefits will be seen between 2023/24 but in terms of some of the work been delivered that will be in 2022/23,. There will be an emphasis on using local companies to deliver some of those works such as demolition, wherever possible to help stimulate the economy.

In terms of maximising the impact of the LUF partnership engagement would be integral to its success. The Council will need to work with a varying degree of partners to maximise the impact of proposed schemes, such as the Waterfront.

- In relation to paragraph 27 of the report, it was asked how the Council were ensuring new jobs in excess of £29k were accessible to Doncaster people. In response, it was advised that funding given to the Council would look to secure local labour agreements in some of the major capital developments. In ensuring jobs were above £29k, primary work is being carried out with Business Doncaster and the Enterprise Team. Members attention was brought to the incentive grants, which were up to £350,000 for commercial entities and within those the parameters for job growth were based on £500 per job above £29k and £100 below £29k. It was reported that for the high wage jobs resulting from the £64m funding the Council will continue to promote the need for well paid jobs for local people.
- Discussion took place in relation to fly-tipping and the links to organised crime., Members asked whether this could be effectively tackled locally and whether locality working was an opportunity to be more effective, or whether it was a more regional/national issue. In response, it was reported that locality working can assist in the fight against fly-tipping and unfortunately this was a national issue that was linked to organised crime. An example was shared with Members of a the challenge created by the number of companies advertising or offering a van to clear rubbish which is then disposed of unlawfully. It was reported that there was a significant backlog in fly-tipping. However, the team were responding well and are meeting the target of 65% of fly tips investigated and removed from public areas within 7 days, as opposed to 36% in quarter 1. The team has become smarter in the way of tackling fly-tipping although there were still opportunities for further improvements.
- In referring to paragraph 17 of the report, it was asked how successful fixed penalty notices had been in discouraging fly tippers, is it effectively communicated and how are the Council raising public awareness to deter fly-tipping. Members were advised that the Team do work with the Communications team around littering. In relation to fly-tipping there was certainly more to be done around education. It was noted that there also seems

to have been a behavioural shift due to Covid, resulting in more waste. It was acknowledged that unfortunately fly-tipping would never be eradicated but the Council need to ensure they deal with demand and educate people of the importance of disposing of their waste appropriately.

- With regard to affordable housing, it was asked whether the Council were meeting the needs of the Borough and whether they knew what and where the needs were. It was reported there can be a distinction between need and demand, in terms of meeting demand, the answer would be yes. Details of the numbers were shared with the Committee based on the needs of the Housing Assessment 2019 and what the programme had delivered so far and into the future. In relation to needs, it was reported that the Housing Needs Programme was very much focussed on where rather than type of housing. It was acknowledged that there needed to be much wider consideration given in terms of need for housing than there necessarily is for demand. Further work was being carried out with regard to wider determinants of need and demand rather than going back to the Housing Needs Study. It was also advised that land availability needed to be looked at and liaison with developers would be ongoing to determine the land was available and the most appropriate types of properties to be built.. It was advised that the Council were on track to meet the Housing Needs Assessment. However a further piece of work was needed to identify needs that were demand driven.
- In relation to roads, it was asked for the definition/qualifications of a road that needs maintenance. In response, it was reported that principle roads, were A,B & C carriageways that are determined by a survey, that determines any maintenance requirements. On estate roads the figure would be 83%. It was noted that there was difficulty with this indicator as it makes it look like all the roads generally seem to be in good condition. However, it is known that there are pockets of the borough where road maintenance needed to be addressed. Members were advised that the Team were looking at a more intelligence based indicator that will provide confidence that when there are areas that have issues with resurfacing that require immediate attention due to risks in health and safety those are dealt with. It was acknowledged by officers that there needed to be a set of smarter indicators produced with regard to road repairs that were beyond major roadworks.

RESOLVED that the quarter 2 performance and financial information be noted.

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| | | |
| 31 | <p><u>PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE OF DONCASTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST QUARTER 2 2021/2022</u></p> | |
| | <p>The Committee considered the performance challenge report of the Doncaster Children's Services Trust for quarter 2 2021/22.</p> <p>As the Committee had read the details within the report, the Chair stated that the Committee would continue onto questions, as follows:-</p> <p>In relation to the impact of transition to MOSAIC as a reporting system, it was asked what the approximate timescales would be for resolution of the transition issues. In response, details of the impacts were highlighted to members. It was acknowledged that the impacts had been anticipated and collaborative work was underway to address the issues that need to be resolved in order to restore confidence with regard to the performance. In terms of timescales, at present there was no certainty about this. However, as part of the governance process a 'Doncaster Integrated Peoples' System (DIPS) programme had been developed and issues had been identified that were part system, part human. It was acknowledged that with any new reporting system, it will take time to develop and for system improvements to be made. It was also important to understand, that the system will require an upgrade as this was now an old version. It was stressed that in terms of reporting systems there will need to be ongoing development as the system and practice evolves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members asked whether staff had received appropriate training. It was reported that staff had engaged with the system as well as other partners such as early help practitioners. Access to training had been on-line which had proved easier for staff. It was pointed out to Members that work began on a new system 4 years ago and the go live date had been rescheduled from last October. • In relation to incorrect/or unavailable information because of the migration to the new system, it was asked whether officers had any particular areas of concern. Whilst there was no specific issue or concern to bring to members attention, it was noted there were a number of measures in place to ensure improvements are being made. It was noted that pressure with regard to children subject Protection Plans had been reduced. However, there had been an increase of Children coming into to care, which had focussed the Trusts priorities. • A question was raised with regard to the Strategic Partnership Indicators, it was asked whether the positive trend with regard to staff turnover and youth offending would continue. It was reported that officers were taking a range of measures to | |

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| | <p>achieve a stable workforce. It was recognised that there were two elements to this, recruitment and retention. It was noted that all staff had been given the opportunity to come into the office to enable them to support each other. Staff summits had also taken place. These measures were in response to feedback from staff about their support need.</p> <p>In relation to staff recruitment, it was acknowledged that this had been more challenging and was a national issue. Investments were being made with regard to social worker pay and recruitment of newly qualified social workers and it was envisaged that the benefits of this would be seen next year. However, it was recognised that there had been instances where children had too many social workers.</p> <p>Officers brought to Members attention the excellent partnership work and packages of support for young people being delivered by the Youth Offending Service, which they had not seen in practice anywhere else.</p> <p>In terms of new children homes, it was reported that there are 4 to 5 new homes being developed which was good news for the Trust and Council. However, staffing of those homes would be a challenge</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>RESOLVED</u> that progress of the DCST performance outcomes and the contribution that the Trust makes to support the Council’s strategic priorities be noted.</p> | |
| 32 | <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 style="text-align: center;"><u>RESOLVED</u> that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan be noted and approved; and (2) the Council’s Forward Plan of key decisions, be noted | |