



REPORT OF: The Scrutiny Support Officer

REPORT TO: Health and Adults Overview & Scrutiny Committee

ON: 9th March 2015

RE: End of Year report for 2014/15

1. Purpose of the Report

For members of the Health and Adults Overview & Scrutiny Committee to note the outcomes of their work programme 2014-15.

At the first meeting of the municipal year, the Executive Member for Health and Adults presented the Committee with an overview of the key priorities and risks for his portfolio for the year. Using this information as a guide the Committee identified target areas that they felt were significant and required further scrutiny.

The following headlines were agreed to be scoped as the work programme for 2014-15;

- “Independence through preventative support”
- “Reducing health inequalities in vulnerable communities”
- “The effective delivery of the nationally mandated Public Health Programmes”

Within those headings, the Committee selected specific key areas upon which to focus and timelines over which to scrutinise each item:

Topic	Timeline	Completed
Effective delivery of the nationally mandated Public Health programmes	August	✓
Obesity and the environment; healthy people healthy places	August-October	✓
Social isolation and loneliness	February-October	✓
Food banks, food poverty and the effects of the welfare reform	October-February	✓

2. Recommendations already agreed and/or submitted

The following topics have been completed throughout the course of the municipal year and recommendations were agreed as outlined below. However, Members may wish to consider additional recommendations based on the information and evidence received.

The Effective delivery of the nationally mandated Public Health programmes

Following the outline of the health priorities by the Executive Member, it was felt that it was important to understand the statutory requirements to be fulfilled by Public Health throughout the course of the year. Subsequently an in-depth briefing on the nationally mandated Public Health programme was held on the 27th August 2014 to provide the Committee with an overview of the Public Health service. At this task group briefing, the Director of Public Health delivered a presentation explaining each nationally mandated service, the purpose for them being mandated, who was to deliver the service and plans for the service going forward. A salient message from this task group was that there was a need to re-educate the residents of the borough about health eating, but also a requirement for a strong focus on the companies that were producing and selling un-healthy products. Members agreed with this, and felt that the accessibility of high density food, sugary drinks and takeaways was very concerning and needed to be addressed.

Members challenged the Director of Public Health as to whether departments were working together to assist Public Health with the delivery of its mandated services and were advised that there were plans to work collaboratively with the culture and leisure service to invest in the health and wellbeing of the borough.

The Committee were satisfied with the current position of the Public Health department at that time and with the outcomes provided.

Obesity and the environment; healthy people healthy places

At the meeting held on the 20th October 2014, statistics were provided by the Director of Public Health as to the obesity levels within the borough. It was reported that the most effective method of tackling obesity was through collaborative working with partner organisations.

At that meeting, the report 'The Health OSC Collaborative Inquiry; Obesity and Fast Food' was presented which advised that there was a direct correlation between obesity and takeaways/fast food outlets. Consequently a second task group with members of the Planning Committee, alongside officers from the Planning and Licensing departments, to discuss the possibility of the introduction of a fifth Licensing objective to reject applications on the grounds of health was arranged.

At this task group, held on the 28th August 2014, it was reported that the Licencing department were looking to implement a 'Cumulative Impact Policy' in locations where the Authority had evidence to suggest that an area was saturated with alcohol/fast food premises already, and the addition of any more outlets would compound the problems caused. As there were concerns that currently there were no legal regulations to support the rejection of an application on the grounds of health, it was deemed necessary to lobby Government for the introduction of a Licensing objective.

Concerns were raised that the market was saturated with cheap, high density and sugar products, the majority of which were being marketed directly to children, and you felt that this was an area which needed further attention.

The task group noted that the sale of high sugar drinks within Council buildings and within partner organisations was prevalent, and questions were raised as to if this could be changed and fizzy drinks in vending machines removed or a levy imposed.

It was recommended;

1. That, in order to achieve two of the top ten Public Health priorities on high sugar drinks, the Council look to collaborate with partner agencies to achieve its aims.
2. That a meeting be set up in the new municipal year with business stakeholders from the brewery trade to hear the opinion of those in the business about introducing a minimum unit price for alcohol, limit trading hours and restrict the supply of high percentage beers and ciders.
3. That a letter be drafted to the Secretary of State to demonstrate the imminent need for a fifth licensing objective, and to lobby for a Private Members Bill to be passed.

Social isolation and loneliness

In addition to the meetings of the Committee, two task groups were held to explore independence through preventative support; preventing the consequences to health of social isolation and loneliness.

At the task group held on the 15th October 2014, Members acknowledged that whilst there were already several schemes in place to assist vulnerable residents there was still much more that could be done. It was noted that the implementation of preventative measures was imperative to combat the long term health effects of social isolation and loneliness.

A key outcome of the task group held on the 9th February 2015 was that the identification of vulnerable and isolated residents was difficult, which created a

significant drawback to the notion of early identification and intervention. The consensus was that breaking the taboo of the word 'lonely' would be paramount to the success of the incentive to strive towards independence through preventative support.

It was recognised and agreed that early intervention was the key to effectively address social isolation, and that collaborative working was paramount to ensure successful outcomes. Agreement was made to further investigate this topic with the mind to open lines of communication for inter-agency working relationships.

The Committee recommended;

1. That a directory of support services and social activities within the borough be collated and published.
2. That the Adult Services department look to run a training course for family members acting as carers.
3. That Adult Services look to run a positive marketing campaign be drawn up to break the taboos surrounding loneliness.

3. Final Recommendations on remaining topics

Foodbanks, food poverty and the effects of the welfare reform

Concerns were raised at the 1st December 2014 meeting of the Committee that as there were so many different agencies providing food aid to those in crisis, a true picture of the magnitude of need may not be accurately identified. It was agreed that an overview of the provision already in place throughout the bough would be beneficial. Subsequently representatives of the three largest local Foodbanks, namely Blackburn Foodbank, Darwen Food Larder and Tauheedul Charity & Food For All, were invited to attend the January meeting of the Committee to provide an overview of the service they deliver to residents of Blackburn with Darwen, along with a national representative from Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP).

After hearing presentations from each Foodbank representative at the meeting on the 21st January 2015, Members suggested that the Council could arrange and facilitate a 'Foodbank Forum' to open dialogue between Foodbanks and other agencies to enable them to share information and best practice. It was acknowledged that this would be a good place to identify where the Council, or other partner agencies, could assist.

At the Committee meeting to be held on the 9th March 2015, Members are asked to consider the following points prior to making recommendations on the topic of a 'Foodbank Forum';

- What is the purpose of the forum?
- Who will lead on its implementation?
- When and how frequently should meetings take place?
- What would be the remit/terms of reference of the forum?
- What do Members want the forum to achieve?
- How will progress be measured and when would be a realistic timeframe for this?

4. Next Steps

In examining the successfully completed areas of the work programme, it became apparent that there was a level of frustration felt with regards to the legislation that is in place which restricted the topics within the scope and range of Health Scrutiny. The new lines of accountability prevent Members from looking at certain areas they deemed to be of key interest to the public.

Consequently, representatives of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen, two of our new partners, have been invited to attend the final Committee meeting of the municipal year, the purpose being “How Scrutiny and Health Watch can work in partnership to ensure better performance delivery across the areas we jointly hold to account in the next year municipal year (2015-16).

5. Legacy

Members are asked to consider (what if anything) they feel this Committee should leave as legacy items for a future Health and Adults Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider. All recommendations made by the Committee will automatically have a response brought back at an appropriate time.

Councillor Ron O’Keeffe
Chair

Councillor Phil Riley
Vice Chair

Health and Adults Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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