

HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE.

Monday, 5 August 2024

PRESENT – Councillors, Humphrys, Johnson, Kapadia and Whittingham.

ALSO PRESENT – Executive Members Councillors Damian Talbot and Jackie Floyd, Officers -Mark Warren, Abdul Razaq, Steve Richards and Phil Llewellyn

RESOLUTIONS

6 Welcome and Apologies

The Vice Chair, Councillor Stephanie Brookfield, welcomed all present to the meeting.

Apologies were noted from the Chair, Councillor Suleman Khonat and Councillors Dave Smith and Parwaiz Akhtar.

7 Minutes of the last meeting

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the last meeting be agreed as a correct record.

8 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

9 Place Based Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Strategy

Abdul Razaq presented the contents of the new Blackburn with Darwen Place Based Mental health and Suicide Prevention Strategy and the timeline for completion.

The purpose of the strategy was to have a shared document, that drove actions and held the Partnership accountable over the upcoming five years (2024 – 2029.) It would :

- Describe the vision for Blackburn with Darwen for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and outline six strategic priorities that bring together the ambitions for improvement across the full mental health continuum.
- Describe the leadership and governance that provides the mandate for this vision and the contributions that can be made across all sectors.
- Define the values and the approach that underpin how the vision will be achieved and that align with other key documents in BwD.
- Present the current picture in the borough, the assets and the needs drawing on local lived experience, and public health data.
- Under the six Strategic Priorities will sit action plans for delivery across sectors.

The Strategy had been developed in consultation with members of the public, staff and people with lived experience of mental health and suicide.

As part of the development of the strategy, the Place Based Board would form a subgroup, namely the BwD Mental Health Delivery Group, with an accountable structure that would deliver the action plans in alignment with the values and approach of this strategy. The Place Based board would provide regular assurance updates to the Integrated Care Board, and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Strategy was in its final stages of development, and was due to go for sign off at the Place Based Board in September 2024, the Council Exec Board in October 2024 and the Health and Wellbeing Board in December 2024.

Members discussed the report, and noted the issues relating to Severe Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health relating to young people. The Cost of Living Crisis was identified as an ongoing issue, and Members noted some of the initiatives and ongoing work to address these areas.

Work was ongoing to make improvements to the Junction 5 M65 bridge, which involved the input of the Growth Team and Highways Agency.

Members discussed the importance of sustained and accelerated funding from NHS England to help tackle Mental Health issues.

Councillor Jackie Floyd encouraged all Members to become Orange Badge holders under the 'Assist' Scheme, which would see promotional work ahead of Suicide Prevention Day on 10th September.

The Vice Chair requested that the Executive Board report be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

Abdul Razaq also agreed to share additional information the Committee, relating to Latest version of the Mental Health & Suicide Prevention strategy (v2.4) and the ICB update on SMI health checks.

RESOLVED –

That the Committee note the contents and timeline of the Blackburn with Darwen Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Strategy.

10 Housing

Members received a report and information from Mark Warren and Steve Richards on the various Housing functions of Blackburn with Darwen Council including the supply of and demand for housing, homelessness, and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The report provided a brief context to the BwD Housing market and updates on recent trends and activity across the various Housing services provided by the Council.

In terms of the Housing Market the Governance and approach to the Housing agenda in BwD was reviewed and updated in July 2024 with Directorate responsibility now as follows:

- Adults and Health takes responsibility for housing needs, homelessness, asylum seekers, refugee's and HMOs.
- Growth takes responsibility for housing strategy and housing standards.

Both areas form part of a revised Housing and Public Health lead member portfolio overseen by Councillor Talbot.

The Census 2021 showed that 39% of households in Blackburn with Darwen were in rented accommodation, with increasing rates of social and private renting in the Borough. The increasing levels of privately renting in the Borough was significant, with almost 12,000 households in this tenure in 2021.

Census data also showed the number of households by property type in BwD, with over 25,000 (or 43.4% of total households in accommodation) residing in terraced housing which was mostly built in the 1900's pre-war.

In addition to the high proportion of terraced housing in BwD which could bring with it challenges regarding quality and energy efficiency due to the age profile of the housing stock, there was concern about the high number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the Borough – 128 known HMOs of which 40 were licensed. The Council had recently undertaken consultation on a proposal to re-introduce and extend Selective Licensing in the Hollins Bank and Mil Hill area of the Borough. The Council had developed several initiatives to help manage and control the quality of accommodation and internal environment provided by smaller scale HMOs, including the HMO Strategic Group, HMO Tactical Group and Article 4 Direction, as well as inspections of licensed and unlicensed HMOs.

The report also noted the high demand for Social Housing and outlined the priority bandings.

Additionally, the report outlined the approach to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, highlighting that in 2023/24, BwD successfully prevented or relieved the homelessness of 1,120 households who approached the Council for assistance. There were a further 2,294 approached from households who required advice only to help them resolve their housing needs.

The most acute and visible form of homelessness was rough sleeping. BwD received Rough Sleeping Initiative Funding 2022-2025 from government and had taken strides in tackling rough sleeping with a range of initiatives supported by the funding.

In terms of recent pressures, BwD had seen a stark increase in the number of homeless approaches from households who had been required to leave asylum accommodation after receiving positive decisions on their asylum claims.

Work was ongoing in developing a Housing Strategy for BwD over the next 12 months. In addition to looking at the supply, delivery, quality and type of

housing in BwD. The new Housing Strategy would also consider the needs of vulnerable people including those who were homeless and those requiring housing with care to help set a strategic direction for the Housing agenda in the coming years. Elected members and all stakeholders would be provided opportunities to help co-produce this strategy in addition to opportunities to participate in a formal consultation in 2025.

Members discussed the information presented, with comments made relating to the affordability of rents for local people and the Council's allocation rights with providers. It was noted that rents needed to be viable in order for housebuilders to build properties.

In terms of Asylum Seekers, the impact of them being granted the 'Right to Stay' meant they became homeless, and the Government was tackling the application backlog at pace, which added to the pressures to an already stretched homelessness service.

Concerns were raised about HMOs that were not known about, with the increasing number of phone consultations for Mid-Wife appointments meaning that home visits and the capacity to raise concerns about potential HMOs were diminishing.

Members welcomed the extension of Selective Licensing, and discussed waiting lists for rented accommodation in the Borough, with 4 bedroom properties being almost impossible to rent.

Mark Warren also updated the Committee on the approach to Extra Care Housing, and the removal of properties that were not fit for purpose, with a focus on appropriate accommodation and care.

Members commended the work of the Housing Needs Team and thanked the Executive Members and supporting officers for the information presented.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

Signed:

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed