

## **Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**26<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

### **Progress of the People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committees.**

The Overview and Scrutiny committee met in July and looked at how the borough was meeting the challenges of the Covid19 pandemic.

#### People Overview and Scrutiny Committee 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

##### Youth Forum Update

The Committee received an update on the work of the youth forum. The Forum were very busy looking at a range of issues that affected young people in the borough. The current issues being examined included:-

- Vaccination and supporting the drive to get people vaccinated
- Young people and crime
- Mental health in young people
- The website and accessibility together with links to poverty.

The previous meeting had looked at the review of safeguarding and the youth forum would be getting involved to give the perspectives of young people. The views of young people would also assist in the vaccination programme achieving maximum take up by dispelling myths and fears and promoting immunisation.

#### Update on Covid19 and Public Health

The Committee looked at the current position with regard to COVID 19 in the borough. The rates of infection and the methods being used to reduce this and ensure that there was a maximum uptake of the vaccine in all sections of the community to break the cycle of infection. The Committee looked at the use of surge testing and close work that was being undertaken with the NHS and other partners. The Committee were informed of current vaccination rates in the borough and the uptake by age groups. The Committee looked at the rates of current hospitalisation and the lobbying that was being carried out to recognise the links between rates of infection and deprivation in areas. The Committee were keen to support the work being done to try and get younger people of school age vaccinated to break the cycles of infection and that ideally this should be done before the end of the summer term.

Members discussed efforts that were being made to ensure maximum vaccination and the myth busting and members of the youth forum would get involved with this work from a young person's perspective.

The Committee complemented officers on the work that is being carried out to seek to reduce infection in the borough.

#### Update on the impact of Covid19 on Residential and Domiciliary Care Market.

The Committee received an update from the Strategic Director Adults, Health and Strategic Commissioning on the impact of the pandemic on the residential and domiciliary care market.

The Committee were informed that the Covid-19 Pandemic had presented an unprecedented peace time challenge. In particular the health impact on vulnerable adults had been the greatest resulting in emergency policies being put in place by Government and subsequently

NHS and Local authorities. Covid-19 has had a major and sustained impact on social care in England. Impacting on an already under resourced and neglected Policy area. There have been 27,179 excess deaths among care home residents in England since March 2020, 20% increase overall. 9,571 excess deaths reported among people receiving domiciliary care, 62% increase. Social care staff have been at higher risk of dying from Covid-19 than others same age and sex. Wider health impacts harder to measure but significant. Workforce have been exceptional and continue to work long hours, have not been able to take annual leave and risk of fatigue and burnout. The Policy response to Covid-19 was complex and evolving with multiple demands from different sources.

Help Hub had been supplying essentials and food and volunteer support to keep people safe and resilient. Food packs, daily calls, volunteers to get prescriptions and help had been supported for those on the national shielding programme. Apart from the elderly and frail, adult social care also provides services and support for all vulnerable adults, homeless people and other vulnerable groups. All have been impacted by Covid.

The Committee were informed of the unprecedented demands on the Council and Adult Social Care had been working under significant pressure and demands since March 2020. The service had been working 7 days and 12 hours daily to meet demand from the NHS but also supporting registered care settings and our most vulnerable. Since March 2020 Home First service was required to develop further to meet the requests from central government and adhere to 'Hospital Discharge Service : Policy and Operating Model (2020)'. New pathways such as discharge to assess and designated settings introduced. The Council had done everything to help the regulated care sector and have been fair and proportionate. Some authorities had chosen to do other things based on their resources. Funding support for the Care Sector for Infection Prevention Control, testing and workforce support has been fully passed through to recipients as quickly as possible.

The Committee were informed of the key issues going forward. Many of these impacted on regulated care and on the core issues such as PPE, Infection Prevention Control, testing, vaccination, quarantine, isolation etc. the Council has done everything it could to support the regulated and domiciliary care sector.

The Committee recognised the work that had been undertaken in the domiciliary care sector to ensure that the residents were safe and secure and that their needs were met.

#### Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

The Committee looked at the way that the service was seeking to meet the challenges for the future and how demand meant that future provision for an additional cemetery was required.

#### Cemeteries and Burials.

The Committee were informed that the average 5 year burial rate in Blackburn was 349 per annum (of which 269 are new graves and 80 re-openers). In Darwen the rate was 69 per annum (of which 30 are new graves and 36 re-openers) plus the burial of cremated remains. Due to the planning and resources required to establish a new cemetery, it was hoped to identify 2 new sites, one in Blackburn and one in Darwen, to provide burial space for at least 20 years. Investigations into various sites for burial land were continuing, with potential sites in both Blackburn and Darwen being assessed for water courses and private water supplies. Once the land investigations have been concluded, intrusive land investigations would commence with trial pits and bore holes on the sites planned. Progress on the issue would be reported to the Committee in due course.

### Development of a new Household Recycling Centre

The Committee were informed of progress on the proposed development of a new Household Recycling Centre. The development of a new purpose built HWRC was continuing to be investigated, including Local Plan public consultation. Onsite intrusive land investigations were taking place to identify any issues on a potential new site off Goosehouse Lane near to the Suez recycling and recovery plant. Subject to investigations, a business case will be completed with capital and revenue projections. A report will then be presented to the Executive Board later this year, to consider the merits of the project and approval of the funding for a new HWRC.

The Committee looked at the progress of the waste collection and recycling services. The weekly waste tonnages have on occasion increased by up to 20% due to a significant number of residents being at home during COVID lockdowns, however, since the move to Step 3 in the Government's roadmap, tonnages have returned to average levels. A large percentage of the refuse collection crews have been absent from work due to the need to self-isolate or having tested positive for Covid due to family transmissions. As a result of these absences, ancillary services, such as the waste transfer station at the depot, was closed temporarily with staff redirected on to collection services for waste and recycling. The Council's waste and recycling services had continued without interruption since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and this was a great credit to the service.

The Committee noted the progress on the Household Recycling Centre and the hard work that had been undertaken by the service to ensure that services were maintained during a very difficult and challenging time.

### The Economic Recovery of the Borough.

The Committee looked at the work that was ongoing on the economic strategy for the borough. The economic strategy included development of housing, commercial and town centre projects within the Borough, Disposal of Council's surplus strategic assets for housing and commercial developments and Strategic Planning functions and development of the Council's Local Plan and Policies.

One of the parts of the strategy was to Bring Empty Homes back into use through negotiation and enforcement. This had returned 1000 the borough in 3 years. A further key part of the strategy was securing developer contributions for local infrastructure and engagement with investors and developers. There was a rolling pipeline of over 200 projects, with annual priority projects agreed via Exec Board. 35 projects had been completed since 2017.

The Committee thanked the executive member for the work on the strategy and would consider the next steps in the development and the publication of the Local Plan at a future meeting.

Sylvia Liddle, Chair, People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Suleman Khonat, Chair, Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.