

People Overview and Scrutiny

7th March 2022.

Present: Councillor Liddle, in the Chair, Akhtar, Humphrys, Smith, Hussain, P., Hussain, M., and Whittle.

Also Present: Jayne Ivory,

Joanne Siddle,

Dominic Harrison,

Paul Conlon, Democratic Services

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting. Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Irfan.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th December 2021.

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2021 were submitted.

RESOLVED- that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

3. Declarations of interest.

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

4. Adult Safeguarding Annual Report.

The Committee received a report of the adult safeguarding board for Blackburn with Darwen. The Committee were informed that the chair of the Board had been unable to attend the meeting however the Committee were invited to consider any questions they had arising from the report that would be forwarded to the board and incorporated into their presentation to the next meeting of the Committee in June.

Resolved That any questions that members would wish to see incorporated into the report to the June Committee be forwarded to democratic services by 15th March for forwarding to the Adult Safeguarding Board.

5. Public Health Update.

The Committee received an update on public health in the Borough from Professor Dominic Harrison Director of Public Health. The Committee were informed of the actions that had been

taken by the council and other directors of public health in the northwest following the government's decision to step down restrictions and reduce testing. He outlined local guidance that included the continued wearing of masks in shops, on transport and public places, the continued testing when symptoms are displayed and self-isolation where necessary. He stated that 75 year olds would be eligible for a 4th jab in spring along with vulnerable adults and this would be administered through GPs. Professor Harrison drew attention to the recent infections which now included one third reinfections with one of the two Omicron variants. The Committee were informed that in the future it was assumed that the virus would follow a cycle like the cold virus and that it would re appear in the population in summer and if not by autumn.

The effects of long covid was discussed and it was stated that about 2%-4% of those who had had Covid were likely to suffer from long covid and this was not related to the severity of the infection. The symptoms of long covid were similar to those ME. The complex issues including the effects on mental health that young people would have in future years. The lack of access to face to face GPs appointments was discussed and the Committee were informed that the borough had the 8th lowest number of GPs per population in the country and this has been raised with the CCG.

Resolved- That the current situation be noted

2. That the Committee continue to be kept informed of the situation relating to Covid and especially how the long term effects of covid will be dealt with in the borough.

6. Child of the North.

The Committee received a joint presentation from the Strategic Director Children's Services and The Director of Public Health on the Child of the North report. The report had been published in December 2021 by the Northern Health N8 research Partnership Science Alliance and written by over 40 leading academics from across the North of England. The report highlighted the inequality for children growing up in the north of England compared with those in the rest of the country. The report called for policies to reduce child poverty and increase funding for preventative services. The report contained 18 recommendations that addressed the greater risk for children in the north of becoming involved with statutory Children's services, the care system and acute mental health services.

The Committee discussed the ways in which the recommendations affected the outcomes for children and how we could make sure that a difference was achieved. The Committee considered ways that all members of the Committee were aware of the challenges outlined in the findings and requested that a presentation be made to all members of the council and partner organisations in the delivery of services to children. Members were also conscious of the need to ensure that the delivery of all council services were considering the implications for children.

Resolved-

1. That the Committee note the implications of the Report on Child of the North and the negative outcomes for children in the borough in comparison with those in the South of England.
2. That the Committee recommend to the executive member that a seminar be held for all members outlining the findings of the report, the implications for the children and ways

that the Council can shape its policies and services to mitigate the effects on children in the borough.

3. That the Executive Board be recommended to consider the introduction of a paragraph on all policy reports outlining how the recommendations in those reports affect the outcome of children in the borough in a similar way to how financial and legal implications are outlined.

7. Send Methodology Testing Feedback

The Deputy Director of Children's Services presented to the Committee the findings of the of the joint Ofsted and CQC inspection that had been carried out to see how well local areas fulfil their responsibilities for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The borough had been approached by Ofsted and the CQC to support them to test their new methodology for local area SEND inspections.

The process had been carried out over three weeks in November 2021, the purpose being-

- To test out some new ways to gather evidence about the way children and young people with send are supported
- Provide the inspectorates with valuable information about how well possible new approaches work in practice and help to identify where further improvements or thinking was needed.

The Committee were informed of the work that had been required by the departments and Health partners and the challenges that had been met. These had included meeting very tight deadlines in tracking evidence and gaining consent from parents and carers of children and young people.

The Committee were informed of the views of the department of the review which included feedback on

- Dedicated and passionate staff who know children and young people well
- Send support services- school staff highlighted the valuable support.
- Clear examples of creative approaches to provide support.
- Practitioners were positive to find a way around things
- Practitioners appreciated practical hand holding with additional support to access
- Children and young people and parents and carers views were listened to and acted upon.

The Committee were informed of the areas that they were aware needed to be looked at and the steps being taken to improve together with the areas that had been exacerbated by covid. The next steps of the inspection process were outlined.

Resolved

That the feedback on the Send methodology testing be noted.

8. Feedback from the Youth Forum.

The Committee were updated on the work of the youth forum and in particular the make your mark campaign and that the members of the forum had now been approved as young inspectors and could now take part in inspections of health and commissioned services.

Resolved-

That the work of the Youth Forum be noted.

9. Retirement of the Director of Public Health

The Committee were reminded that this would be the last meeting that Professor Harrison would be attending as Director of Public Health before retiring at the end of March. The chair drew attention to the great assistance that he had given to the Committee through at times very difficult circumstances.

The Committee were reminded of one meeting in particular which had looked at the “new” corona virus and the how the Borough would meet the challenges to be faced. This was before the first cases had arrived in the country. This early action and preparation predated the government’s response and ensured that the Borough was best placed to meet the challenges that we all faced.

Members joined the praise for the work of the Director and the open, honest and supportive approach that he had always had with the Committee.

Resolved- 1. That the best wishes of the Committee for a long and happy retirement be forwarded to Professor Dominic Harrison, Director of Public Health.

2. That the Committee places on record their great appreciation and thanks for the outstanding work he has done with the Committee and in the Borough over the last twelve years.

signed.....
Chair at the meeting where the minutes were approved.

Date.....