

Council Forum, 14th March 2024

Overview and Scrutiny Committees Update

Purpose of the Report

To update the Council Forum on the latest meetings of the Policy and Corporate Resources, Health and Social Care, Children and Young People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At the meeting on 5th February 2024, a report was submitted that provided feedback from the visits of the Task and Finish Group to three care homes in the Borough. The care homes selected provided a good overview of the diverse range of care home provision and quality status within the Borough. The feedback from the Task and Finish Group was detailed in the report, with a response from Quality, Commissioning and Finance provided to each issue raised. Mark Warren also provided updates on the work of his staff in following up areas of concern with the Care Homes themselves, with satisfactory evidence and processes in place.

Also at the meeting, Claire Richardson, Director of Health and Social Care Integration (Blackburn with Darwen) at NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) provided an update on progress since the last update at the August meeting. In terms of Darwen Health Centre, an ICB led health centre utilisation review was underway. Darwen Primary Care Network commenced their review in November. The review would identify current and future predicted demand, key clinical priorities and estimated estate requirements. Updates were also shared on the BwD Place-based Partnership and the ICB.

Members of the Committee made a number of observations and comments, relating to access and future demands for Darwen Health Centre, Barbara Castle Way, and planning for the future demands arising from new home building, recruitment and retention issues relating to NHS Dentists. Members also commented on support for Mental Health Groups, and the funding and support available for them from various sources. Additionally, concerns were raised about housing conditions in Blackburn South East, and it was noted that a Housing Strategy was required for the Borough, and a Housing Survey was needed, and work was ongoing in this regard, with outcomes being considered. Members also noted that no Borough Councillors sat on the Together Housing Board, which was now covering several regions.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At the meeting on 12th February 2024, the Committee received an update from the Youth MP and Youth Forum on their recent events and activities.

The Committee considered a report and received a supporting presentation from Michelle Holt, Deputy Director for Education on the School Effectiveness Strategy

2023-26. The Council commissioned an independent review of the School Improvement Strategy. This took place around 18 months ago, included key stakeholders and was conducted by Steve Munby (CBE and former CEO of Education Trust). Following the review, there was a further period of consultation on the recommendations made. In September 2023 the Council launched the co-produced revised School Effectiveness Strategy for 2023-2026.

Five missions were contained in the Strategy, along with six public commitments, as well as agreed joint priorities that all schools across the Borough would collectively work on. Safeguarding was reflected across all priorities. School Improvement Groups (SIGs) would be working on the 6 key priorities over the next 3 years, with School Effectiveness Board (SEB) supporting the progress of the SIGs towards identified priorities. The presentation gave detailed data on the performance of the Borough for Primary and Secondary age pupils in comparison to others in the North West, and nationally.

Also at the meeting, Michelle Holt presented two reports containing information on Education Data and the Speech, Language and Communication Initiative, along with a supporting presentation. Information was provided on Early Years Foundation Data, Phonics data, and Key Stages data. The report highlighted the significant progress over 2022-23, in respect of improvements relating to improved outcomes for children with a low level of Speech, Language and Communication, English as an Additional Language, and in Children's Centres.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At the meeting on 4th March, the Committee will receive a report containing responses from the Highways Team to the issues raised relating to Highways Infrastructure, and the main agenda item will be scrutiny of the Council's fleet management plans around use of alternative fuels.

Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At the meeting held to be held on 11th March, the Committee will receive an update on Digital Management at the Council, particularly focussing on help for residents who are digitally excluded and lessons learnt from procurement of IT systems over recent years.

Councillor Tony Humphrys, Chair of the Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Jacqueline Slater, Chair of the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Sylvia Liddle, Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Brian Taylor, Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1st March 2024