

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 24 January 2022

PRESENT: Councillor John Eagle (Chair)

Councillor(s): D Burnett, J Wallace, R Beadle, D Bradford,
B Clelland, D Duggan, T Graham, S Green, M Hall,
R Mullen, I Patterson, S Ronchetti, J Simpson and J Turner

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): L Caffrey, P Foy and K Wood

CR58 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

CR59 PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT SIX MONTH REPORT 2021/22

The Committee received a report and presentation to update on the performance on the delivery of Council priorities for the 6 months period April to October 2021.

The development of the new approach to performance management began in autumn 2020. Stages included engagement with councillors through Advisory Groups and Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Engagement with employees has taken place on a regular basis through employee workshops and Management Team discussions. Engagement with partners has taken place at the Health and Wellbeing Board with the Voluntary and Community Sector (Connected Voice).

The Performance Management and Improvement Framework is approved by Cabinet and Council. All of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees of the Council will consider performance assessments appropriate to the role and remit of each Committee on a six monthly basis.

There are some risks and limitations to highlight in relation to the six month reports. It is clear that the Council is still responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and that service disruptions have impacted on performance at the six month stage. The Council's Business Impact Assessment and Business Continuity Plan framework has enabled the Council to prioritise critical services to ensure that they can still be delivered.

The development of the Performance Management and Information Framework is ensure it remains a relevant tool for the Council to understand how well it is delivering against it agreed priorities.

The aims of the Performance Management and Information Framework are to

deliver Thrive, give clarity on Priorities, inform how resources are allocated and budget determination and measuring the impact to inform policy and resource decisions.

The framework is based on the 6 policy objectives of the HWB Strategy and an organisational health check.

The analysis has highlighted some area where improvements have been made as follows:

- More people are moving from Vulnerable to Coping according to LIoN data, although more assessment is needed to understand movement across the themes.
- External assessment from OFSTED rated as Good providing reassurance
- The Voluntary Undertaking with the Social Housing regulator has been successfully completed
- Budget savings are regularly monitored and 97.5% of savings are projected to be achieved in 2021/22

Some actions which have been identified as part of the response to improve performance:

- A new budget approach has been agreed in the context of the MTFs
- Business Impact Assessments and Business Continuity Planning is continuing to address service pressures and service disruption.
- Work is ongoing to develop and implement an effective employee engagement framework in response to new ways of working and improve employee morale.
- Work will continue to take forward the customer experience and digital improvements to service delivery whilst ensuring there is support for people who are unable to access services digitally.
- Development of Community Wealth Building

The next steps in the process are as follows;

- Align the Performance Management and Information Framework to the new budget approach agreed by Cabinet in December 2021 to inform cross council reviews and zero based budgeting.
- Further develop the priorities and actions as part of the iterative approach
- Take the six month performance reports to Cabinet for consideration in March
- Bring a year end report to Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

It was queried whether the locality based working is doing what it says is being done in this report as it doesn't seem to be and will officers in the field continue as they are currently. It was noted that locality working is identified as an action which needs to be developed. The action will be to work with councillors to develop.

It was suggested that commissioning a happiness survey should be something which should be done with caution as the responses can very much depend on how

someone is feeling on that particular day. It was noted that we have baseline information from residents surveys undertaken in 2016 and 2018 and that will be incorporate with some questions around satisfaction with Gateshead as a place to live.

It was noted that if our overwhelming policy is for everyone to Thrive the figures seem to show that we are a long way from thriving. It was noted that this is to be the policy direction going forward the stories from residents are that things are getting worse the inequality gap is worse and resources are limited. It was noted that this is why the categories have been identified as to where we prioritise resource.

It was noted that the point of the budget deliberations is where we put resources into those areas and target the areas where we have the biggest impact.

It was requested that with regards to locality working effort is made to include ward councillors, it is not a one size fits all and it feels like a top down process with very little input from local councillors. It was noted that there is a report but it is understood that it is about developing some principles and then lets talk to councillors about how its developed. It will be complex as it will be different for each locality.

It was queried whether businesses were being paid within the timescales and whether there was something which could be done to improve where they are not. It was noted that a new system has been put in place which will make sure businesses are paid more promptly, often the delays are due to an order number not being on the invoices.

It was queried whether when designing measures the no of bin collections missed was something which would be counted. There are the areas which residents base their replies on when completing the survey. It was noted that with regards to environmental type performance the framework wouldn't be everything there are still performance management measures in place.

RESOLVED - (i) That the comments of the Committee be noted.
(ii) That the Performance Management and Information report be presented to Cabinet for consideration in March 2022.

CR60

CORPORATE COMMISSIONING AND PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2021/22 - 2026/27

The Committee received a report to provide an update on the Corporate Commissioning and Procurement Strategy. The draft version had previously been brought to Committee and the comments have been incorporated. The revised strategy has been circulated for consultation to partners and stakeholders and their views have been considered as part of the revised version.

One of the comments was about the development of an action plan and this has been developed separately and will be available to view.

RESOLVED - (i) that any final comments be incorporated into the Revised Strategy
(ii) that the Strategy proceed to Cabinet for consideration.

CR61 COVID 19 PANDEMIC - KEY UPDATES (VERBAL)

The Committee received a verbal update on the current position with regards to Covid-19 in Gateshead.

It was noted that we came out of the New Year with a significant spike in cases. More recently there has been a rapid reduction in cases. Primary and Secondary care are still under pressure and whilst we are seeing 12% unoccupied beds it doesn't mean that they are available to use.

In regards to vaccinations 85% have received their first dose, boosters are at 60% across Gateshead of eligible adults.

There are 5 active vaccination sites across Gateshead. There is a recognition of emerging inequality across some ethnic minority groups. We are working closely with colleagues across the wider health system to address this.

We have taken vaccination hubs into the communities with a degree of success and will continue with this. National communications will change slightly and our communications will follow the same message.

Isolation measures will be reviewed and there may come a point when these are relaxed.

It was queried how many vaccinations had been delivered by the bus in Trinity Square. It was noted that prior to Christmas there was two sessions held in Trinity Square one was more successful than the other with 400 plus on one and only about 100 on the other day.

It was queried how we know we are comparing like for like with regards to testing now that we are not required to carry out a PCR. It was noted that there isn't a huge amount of change. The system is as robust as it can be at this point.

It was queried whether we have information on people who are refusing to have the vaccine who work for us in a capacity where we would be looking at terminating contract due to vaccine status and this would add pressure to the existing.

It was queried whether we have figures in specific areas and can identify whether there has been a low or high uptake. It was noted that Bridges ward as a whole has a low uptake.

RESOLVED - That the update presented in relation to Covid-19 be noted.

CR62 OLD TOWN HALL UPDATE

The Committee received a report to provide an update on the current position at the Old Town Hall Quarter. The Quarter comprises, Old Town Hall, Swinburne House, the Nelson Street Office Building, the former Police House, two surface car parks and vacant land.

In 2017 following a review of the property management and maintenance costs, the Council decided to dispose of the Old Town Hall and neighbouring buildings. The Council's objective was for the refurbishment of the historic buildings to ensure their long term sustainability whilst reducing the Council's property management costs, plus redevelopment of the vacant land/car parks to provide accommodation for town centre uses comprising retail, office, hotel, leisure (including cultural) and residential across the whole site. This was first outlined in Fit for a City (2008) and made explicit through the Urban Core Area Action Plan.

The Council appointed an external agent, Cushman & Wakefield (C&W) to market and assist with the disposal of the OTHQ. C&W prepared marketing particulars; contacted a long list of potential developers, investors, agents and end users; and conducted accompanied viewings. Adverts were also placed in the property press and a dedicated web page was prepared by the Council's Communications Team.

Marketing commenced on 27th March 2017 and closed on 26th June 2017 and was undertaken in accordance with the regulations contained in the Localism Act and Assets of Community Value.

Following receipt of bids, Officers worked with C&W to analyse the bids and draw up a recommendation for a preferred bidder. Consultation took place with Planning, Highways, Conservation, Urban Design, and Culture, as well as C&W leading on the financial deliverability of each bidder.

The conclusion of C&W and the project team was that the highest bidder, Tier One Capital / Dinosauria Ltd, should be invited to discuss terms of disposal because -

- Their bid would provide the highest financial receipt to the Council
- It posed the least risk to the Council in terms of the legal/development conditions requested by the bidder
- The mix of uses and particularly the Museum would best benefit the Town Centre in terms of regeneration, tourism and footfall
- They were confident in their ability to deliver on site and also within a shorter timescale than the other offers received, also benefitting the town centre.

Tier One Capital's Directors also had a track record of the refurbishment of similar buildings, for example:

- Town Hall Chambers, Wallsend (former North Tyneside Town Hall), Grade II Listed building converted into serviced office

- accommodation;
- Clervaux Exchange, Jarrow (former Jarrow Police Station) converted into serviced office accommodation; and
- Commerce House, Middlesbrough (former Teesside Chamber of Commerce) a Grade II Listed Building redesigned to provide serviced office and conference facilities.

The Tier One Capital / Dinosauria Ltd (“Dinosauria”) proposal was:

- operating the Old Town Hall and Old Police House as The Unnatural History Museum;
- Swinburne House to be refurbished for new business space;
- a new building located to the rear of the site for leisure/cultural uses was proposed to support the main uses on site;
- the car parking at the front of the Old Town Hall to be retained.
- The long term plan was to expand the Unnatural History Museum into Swinburne House. The project management team would relocate to Swinburne House during the refurbishment of both the Old Town Hall and Swinburne House.

In terms of job creation, Dinosauria envisaged that the Unnatural History Museum, with additional café/restaurant would create 86 permanent direct jobs (based on 7 days a week opening multiple shifts). Indirect jobs could total 143 overall, all of which were expected to be local labour. As the concept was further developed and attractions and supporting elements expanded, it was envisaged that the total jobs created could peak at 300.

Dinosauria estimated that the Unnatural History Museum would be ready to open within two years of the grant of the 250 year lease of the site, before moving on to refurbish Swinburne House as serviced office space. Investment phases were proposed as follows:

- Purchase of Old Town Hall Quarter for £650k
- Phase 1 – create Unnatural History Museum, investing approx. £7m - £12m
- Phase 2 – Remediation/supporting provision of serviced office space, investing approx. £1.5 - £2.0m
- Phase 3 – Development at rear of site/Nelson street, approx. £10 - £12.5m

Following portfolio briefings and a well-attended Members Seminar, in which Dinosauria’s directors presented their proposal and took questions, Cabinet approved in January 2018, the council granting Dinosauria a 250 year lease for the OTHQ.

Members made clear that this was to facilitate the protection and maintenance of the Old Town Hall building specifically, including public access, through redevelopment into the Unnatural History Museum.

In order to protect the Council’s aspirations for OTHQ, should the proposed timetable for redevelopment not be met, the lease provided the Council with a “buy-

back” provision should a series of milestones not be achieved. Additionally, to ensure the Council retained an element of control over the future use of OTHQ any change of use requires prior consent of the Council.

Following engagement with the investor market, Dinosauria subsequently approached the Council with a request to review the mechanism for determining the buy-back price. After an extensive officer review of Dinosauria’s business model, it was recommended that a variation to the existing lease be granted as it would provide Dinosauria with the necessary flexibility to attract further investment for the Unnatural History Museum and to facilitate the development of the OTHQ. The variation was approved by Cabinet at its meeting of 15th October 2019.

1. Unfortunately, the global pandemic struck shortly after the variation to the Lease was agreed, which – according to Dinosauria – put off potential investors in the Unnatural History Museum due to ongoing uncertainty and restrictions having a devastating impact on the leisure and retail sectors worldwide. Specifically:
 - uncertainty and unpredictability of visitor numbers / viability of leisure attractions.
 - the impact of multiple and ongoing lockdowns or new variants, any prospective government enforced limits to the numbers of people gathering in any one place at any one time (or indeed in any one building at any given time)
 - smaller scale investors being cautious across all sectors
 - the natural and inevitable cautiousness of the general public in having confidence to go back to normal life / activities.
2. As a consequence, Dinosauria told the Council that due to the lack of confidence in the sector, they would not be able to use their preferred mechanism to raise funds to take forward their unique concept of the Unnatural History Museum as the first phase of development.
3. During this difficult period, however, Dinosauria continued to invest in the assets to keep them safe and secure despite limited progress on the redevelopment plans, including:
 - A dedicated IT line has been installed at the OTHQ, which will provide the critical superfast internet / Wi-Fi suitable for both the commercial market and for the leisure and entertainment sector.
 - Electrical and heating system upgrades in Swinburne House
 - Repair to exterior of Swinburne House following anti-social behaviour and attempted break-ins – including bringing in Orbis to secure ground floor windows and entrances after a spate of break-ins in the autumn.
 - Continuous monitoring and repair of the roof and roof slates.

The leaseholder remains committed to redevelopment of the OTHQ and is keen to identify a new route forward based on what can be delivered with confidence (within the short and longer term) whilst still subject to the impact and level of ongoing uncertainty caused by coronavirus – and crucially, with the support of the Council.

The company directors have acknowledged the need for a new development and phasing plan. The principles of this new plan have been presented as –

- Need to take a step back to properly appraise and construct a new, deliverable strategy.
- Sensitive renovation of the Old Town Hall and Swinburne House is the top priority. To make these buildings a centre piece of regeneration in Gateshead / Tyneside.
- Appraising development on the plots around the Old Town Hall, with surpluses being recycled into renovation of the listed buildings.
- Aspire to deliver a top destination / attraction, exploring other linked tourist opportunities.
- Want to work collaboratively with the Council, and optimise impacts on the wider aspirations for the surrounding area.

A new development team has been appointed, and they are having conversations with institutional funders about investing in the wider site. The Strategic Director and Major Projects Team are being kept informed of progress.

If the Council, acting as Landlord, is minded to agree to any revised proposal, variations to the lease would need to be agreed by the two parties, and then approved by the Council, to include:

- Any changes to the Permitted Use, e.g. to include residential use.
- Updated milestones and trigger dates for the Council to be able control and monitor the scheme, to ensure it will move forward quickly, etc.
- clarity on how and when this new proposal will secure/save the Old Town Hall asset – i.e when will it be redeveloped?

It is also important to note the Council cannot unilaterally end the lease at this point, should it not agree to a new proposal. The next point that the lease can be terminated, and the buyback option triggered, is 28 June 2022.

The Council awaits a revised proposal for the redevelopment of OTHQ, including confirmation that funding is available and the scheme is viable. The proposal will be reported to Members for consideration and approval, as per usual consultation and decision making procedures.

After the lease was signed there was an issue and the Cabinet agreed a variation, not long after that Covid Hit and the developer raised concerns about not being able to get investors and the viability of visitor numbers. They have since confirmed following multiple meetings with officers they won't be able to take the original scheme forward.

The developer has continued to invest and look after electrical and heating upgrades as well as roof repairs, they do appear to be committed to the re-development. They retain the aspiration for a top tourist attraction and invest in the area.

It was noted that the next point in terms of ending the lease would be 28 June 2022, however we are currently waiting for a proposal from them on how they will take this forward and we will update members accordingly. If insufficient progress has been made with the development then the council will have to consider its options

including buying back , but at current market value.

It was queried as to what evidence we have that they have undertaken the maintenance they say they have and it was queried whether it would be possible to identify what costs they have laid out.

It was queried what the terms of the buy back option would be.

It was noted that the next provision in the lease for buy back is 28 June 2022 and that will be commenced if they haven't made any development on site. The rate of buy back would be at current market value.

Councillors expressed concern that it was stated that they would be ready to open within 2 years of the grant of lease and that the lease was signed in June 2018 with no evidence that anything had been done. It was acknowledged that they have not worked at the pace that we wanted them to.

It was suggested that we need to be talking to partners in Tyne and Wear Museums and in other Arts organisations for training such as Drama school. It was suggested that we put feelers out to look at National Bodies we might want to partner with.

It was suggested that we need to look at alternatives and think about moving back into the Town Hall and renting out this building.

It was noted that we are looking at options and are preparing an options appraisal.

It was queried what kind of cost would there be in buying back. It was noted that there would need to be a survey of the properties to consider the price, however, there is no planning application been submitted, which would have increased the value and there is no works been undertaken which would increase the value.

Concern was expressed about the current leaseholder and their ability to move the project forward and it was suggested that we should be playing hard ball.

RESOLVED - (i) that the update on the Old Town Hall Quarter be noted.
(ii) that the comments of the Committee with regards to the Old Town Hall Quarter be noted.

CR63 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received the Annual Work Programme report and it was requested that as no business was scheduled for the 7 March meeting, that the meeting be postponed and the next meeting would take place on 4 April.

RESOLVED - (i) That the provisional work programme be noted.
(ii) That the Committee noted that future reports on the work programme would be brought to Committee.

Chair.....

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

**HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING**

Monday, 31 January 2022

PRESENT: Councillor B Clelland (Chair)

Councillor(s): T Graham, A Geddes, D Burnett,
H Weatherley, H Kelly, Reay, R Waugh and Anderson

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): A Wheeler, F Geddes, J Green, J Turnbull,
K Dodds, S Dickie, S Hawkins and K McClurey

CPL15 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December be agreed as a correct record.

CPL16 MATTERS ARISING

It was noted with regards to the Housing Improvement Plan some end to end mapping work has been done a report will be brought back to the next Committee to show some of the pilot schemes that have been undertaken.

With regards to issues with customers unable to access the phone lines. The issue has been identified and ICT are working on a solution. Officers have also been recruited into the team which should improve issues.

CPL17 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK - SIX MONTH PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22

The Committee received a report and presentation to update on the performance on the delivery of Council priorities for the 6 months period April to October 2021.

The development of the new approach to performance management began in autumn 2020. Stages included engagement with councillors through Advisory Groups and Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Engagement with employees has taken place on a regular basis through employee workshops and Management Team discussions. Engagement with partners has taken place at the Health and Wellbeing Board with the Voluntary and Community Sector (Connected Voice).

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There are some risks and limitations to highlight in relation to the six month reports. It is clear that the Council is still responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and that service disruptions have impacted on performance at the six month stage. The Council's Business Impact Assessment and Business Continuity Plan framework has enabled the Council to prioritise critical services to ensure that they can still be delivered.

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The aims of the Performance Management and Information Framework are to deliver Thrive, give clarity on Priorities, inform how resources are allocated and budget determination and measuring the impact to inform policy and resource decisions.

The framework is based on the 6 policy objectives of the HWB Strategy and an organisational health check.

The analysis has highlighted some area where improvements have been made as follows:

- More people are moving from Vulnerable to Coping according to LIoN data, although more assessment is needed to understand movement across the themes.
- External assessment from OFSTED rated as Good providing reassurance
- The Voluntary Undertaking with the Social Housing regulator has been successfully completed
- Budget savings are regularly monitored and 97.5% of savings are projected to be achieved in 2021/22

Some actions which have been identified as part of the response to improve performance:

- A new budget approach has been agreed in the context of the MTFS
- Business Impact Assessments and Business Continuity Planning is continuing to address service pressures and service disruption.
- Work is ongoing to develop and implement an effective employee engagement framework in response to new ways of working and improve employee morale.
- Work will continue to take forward the customer experience and digital improvements to service delivery whilst ensuring there is support for people who are unable to access services digitally.
- Development of Community Wealth Building

The next steps in the process are as follows;

- Align the Performance Management and Information Framework to the new budget approach agreed by Cabinet in December 2021 to inform cross

- council reviews and zero based budgeting.
- Further develop the priorities and actions as part of the iterative approach
- Take the six month performance reports to Cabinet for consideration in March
- Bring a year end report to Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Committee were advised with regards to Housing there are two big areas which are causing concern. The first area is the Housing Delivery Target. We need to keep numbers up and delivery on new homes. The priorities for development are monitored by this Committee.

Tenant Satisfaction is a big issue, the Regulator will have more powers and will inspect on a cyclical basis every four years. They will be looking at our customer satisfaction to decide where/when the inspections will kick in.

The Housing Improvement Programme is the biggest area of dissatisfaction.

It is not all areas of concern there are some achievements. We have the new HRA Business Plan which we need to keep on top of, we are not allowed to have a negative balance. We have developed the Asset Management Strategy. The New Homelessness Strategy and Charter has been approved at Cabinet and the Review of Allocations and Lettings is underway. We are making sure we link up with other work across the Council, Mental Health Work and it plays into Thrive and the Council's ambitions for Thrive. We have a successful Community Renewal Fund bid and there is a project up and running on the impact housing can have in giving people confidence.

The Housing Improvement Change Programme with the work on repairs and maintenance some of which has been triggered by member feedback. The three key outcome messages are to: Support Thrive, Improve Customer Satisfaction and Efficiencies.

It was noted that customer contact is really important to get right communication, contact, quality and timeliness are all important and can currently be fragmented. We need to get better and look at areas where we can join up. The Action Plan for the Housing Compliance is in place out the Regulatory Intervention.

Further reports will be brought back to this Committee over the coming months.

The Committee heard about issues with regards to the Environment and the Economy. Significant areas of the economy have been impacted by Covid-19 in particular there are currently a lower number of active businesses this is thought to also be due to Brexit and impacts on the supply chain.

There has been a significant increase in costs within the construction industry, fuel poverty increasing is having a real impact on residents day to day lives and causing significant financial difficulties. In terms of areas of excellence there are four key areas of focus. Work has started on the Conference and Exhibition Centre we have hosted some major events in Gateshead, including two Diamond League events. The Council administered £18m of Grant Funding to business early in the

pandemic. This was successful given our early involvement of Audit in making sure we carried out the proper checks before businesses accessed the grant.

It was requested that information on Community Wealth Building be brought to a future Committee. It was also suggested that in areas where it was relevant a section on Community Wealth building be included in individual reports.

RESOLVED - (i) That the comments of the Committee be noted.
(ii) That the report be presented to Cabinet at its March meeting for consideration.

CPL18 HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received a report to update on Housing Performance Results at the end of Quarter 2. This meeting is too early to report Quarter 3 results.

It is important that the Council robustly monitors a wide range of performance measures to ensure that its key housing services and functions are effective and responsive to the needs of residents, are compliant with any regulatory requirements and offer good quality and value for money.

The new framework of Housing indicators can be broadly broken down into five objectives:

- Increase the supply of, and access to suitable affordable homes
- Ensure the effective management and maintenance of the Council's homes
- Reduce homelessness
- Housing Revenue Account 'health'
- Resident Satisfaction

The framework was presented to and approved by the HEHC OSC at its meeting on 30 September 2021. Some performance indicators are reported annually and therefore performance for 2021/22 will not be reported until year end.

Four of the performance indicators in the report relate to customer satisfaction measured by a survey of all tenants, this was carried out in October 2021.

A lot of the responses were sat in the middle of the scale so neither / or in terms of satisfaction with Gateshead Council. The Regulator for Social Housing has signalled a move to a more proactive regulation regime of social landlords including local authorities. This includes the introduction of a set of detailed customer satisfaction measures which will be mandatory for all social landlords to collect, publish and submit performance to the regulator. The proposed indications have been published for consultation and it is expected that they will be introduced during 2023/24.

The proposed satisfaction measures including:

- Keeping properties in Good repair
- Maintaining Building Safety

- Effective Handling of Complaints
- Respectful and Helpful Engagement
- Responsible Neighbourhood Management

It is expected that with the improvements being made to services there will be an overall impact on customer satisfaction, however, as we put the emphasis on service re-design it may be the offer isn't at a standard and this would lead to a satisfaction dip.

The Rent and Income Team will feature in the next report. An update on the new indicators and the implications for social landlords will be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

It was queried what the level of sickness was like in repairs team. It was noted that currently out of 100 staff there are 20 vacancies, 20 on sick and 5 have just handed in their notice. It was noted that Newcastle are offering more money for electricians than we are paying our site managers.

It was suggested that if we do a survey and someone is having a bad day it might be that you'd get a negative response. It was noted that the survey is to give a degree of feedback and tracking to see if there has been a service failure.

RESOLVED - that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

CPL19 BUILDING SAFETY COMPLIANCE

The Committee received an update on the current position with regards to building safety and compliance within the Council property portfolio.

Gateshead Council own and operate over 350 non-domestic buildings and 19100 domestic properties across the Borough. The Council has a duty to identify and manage hazards within its buildings and to ensure specific levels of health and safety are maintained usually met through risk assessment and planned maintenance programmes as well as reactive repairs and timely remedial actions.

With regards to Domestic Buildings the following key risks have been identified:

- Legionella Risk Assessments have not resumed
- There is a lack of internal resources to complete remedials from risk assessments and inspections
- Crowhall Towers safety programme has been impeded by asbestos
- Management of specialist contractors failing to meet programme dates
- Strain on budgets from statutory fire structural surveys and fire strategies
- Fire safety plan at Redheugh and Eslington Court not fully implemented
- Active 'headhunting' of staff.

Fire risk assessments are up to date but the December target for high rise block remedials was not met, 6 of 12 are now targeted to be completed in January and we

are waiting for an update on the remainder. The Fire Safety Act has changed existing legislation, a lot of which came from Grenfell. We have a qualified person in our team, however, there are only 3 in the Country and he is potentially being offered jobs all over the world. The impact of losing this member of staff will cost approximately £400,000 in contractor fees.

With regards to the overall domestic risk profile we are prioritising the highest risk. With regards to the Non domestic properties if you control the building you need to have a competent person to keep the building safe. It has not always been the case that there have been qualified/experienced staff to work in the buildings. Some buildings are not always listed on electronic systems. It is the intention to look at one building at a time we need to look at the leases and see whether we have retained the repairs and maintenance function. An action plan is in place to recover compliance and monitor and maintain compliance.

It was queried whether this was in relation to buildings transferred already or those in the process of being transferred. It was noted that this is for all buildings. These issues will result in a slowing down of the initial process of transfer.

A process has been agreed and an initial condition survey will be undertaken and cost options provided. We need to make sure the building is safe when they move in and they need to know what they have to do to make sure to keep the building safe.

It was queried that on domestic properties where we are aware of asbestos are we making residents aware. It was noted that where we have asbestos we are undertaking an ongoing risk assessment with regards to the butterfly roofs we have only just now identified them and we are part ceiling lofts off. It's there but as long as its not disturbed it will be fine. Once the ongoing programme is commenced information will be made more public.

RESOLVED - That the comments of the Committee be noted.

CPL20 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the update report on the current position with regards to the Work Programme. The Committee were advised that the Results of the Covid-19 Survey has been dropped into the issues to slot in. It was also requested that Community Wealthbuilding be an issue which can be brought to the Committee to be considered.

RESOLVED - (i) that the provisional programme for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year be noted.
(ii) that the Committee will receive further reports to identify any additional policy issues which the Committee may be asked to consider.

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CARE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, 1 February 2022

PRESENT: Councillor S Green (Chair)

Councillor(s): M Charlton, W Dick, B Goldsworthy,
M Goldsworthy, R Mullen, I Patterson, J Wallace,
A Wheeler, P McNally, M Hall, J Gibson, P Diston, H Haran,
K McClurey, J McCoid and D Robson

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): K Ferdinand

CHW209 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 19 October 2021 were approved as a correct record.

CHW210 UPDATE ON DENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR ADULTS

The Committee received a presentation from Pauline Fletcher, Senior Primary Care Manager (Dental Commissioning Lead – North East and Cumbria) NHS England and NHS Improvement and Jennifer Owen (a practising Dentist), Chair of the South Tyneside and Gateshead Local Dental Committee.

The presentation provided an update to the Committee on NHS General Dental Services for Adults and looked at background/context, general dental access provision, NHS Dentistry pressures and challenges, national dental COVID constraints, safely restoring access to services and local measures/actions to date with access and next steps.

The presentation summarised the following key points to note:

- All NHS dental practices still operating at significant reduced capacity due to requirements to continue to adhere to national infection control guidance.
- It is therefore necessary for dental practices to triage patients who contact them to ensure that patients with the greatest clinical need, i.e. those requiring urgent dental care and vulnerable patients are prioritised, which likely means a delay for patients seeking non-clinically urgent and more routine dental care such as check-ups.
- Progression to resume the full range of routine dental care is being risk managed by individual practices in compliance with national guidance.
- This position is likely to continue until at least end of March 2022, when we are expecting further national guidance to be published.
- All opportunities are being explored to increase the clinical treatment capacity available.

- In the interim all patients are being asked for their understanding and co-operation during this unprecedented and difficult time for the NHS.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

CHW211 GATESHEAD SYSTEM COVID 19 UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation from Edward O'Malley (Public Health Team) and Steph Downey (Director of Adult Social Care) on the Gateshead System Covid-19 update.

The presentation provided the current epidemiology update, vaccination update, primary care update, secondary care update, mental health update, social care update - Commissioning and social care update -adult social care.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

CHW212 HEALTHWATCH GATESHEAD UPDATE

The Committee received a report from Siobhan O'Neil, Chief Executive, Healthwatch Gateshead which provided an update on the range of work being carried out by Healthwatch Gateshead.

The report covered the domains within Healthwatch England (HWE) Quality Framework. This tool has been developed to support local Healthwatch to take stock and make improvements and to help local councils in their commissioning and monitoring of Healthwatch. The domains are:

- Leadership and decision making
- People
- Sustainability and resilience
- Collaboration
- Engagement, Involvement and Reach
- Influence and impact

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

CHW213 NEW PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK - UPDATE

The Committee received a report and presentation from Lindsay Murray, Service Director, Trading and Communications, Corporate Resources on the new performance management and improvement framework.

The Committee were asked to submit ideas for scrutiny and recommended the performance report to Cabinet in March 2022.

RESOLVED i) That the information be noted

- ii) That one area for further scrutiny be suggested for consideration
- iii) That the performance report be recommended to Cabinet in March 2022 for consideration

CHW214 ADULT SOCIAL CARE UPDATE

Steph Downey, Service Director, Adult Social Care provided the Committee with a report and presentation on the Adult Social Care White Paper.

The Committee received details of the overview and main objectives, key themes and what this would mean for Gateshead as well as details of the finance headlines.

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the information be noted
 - ii) The Committee requested that local MP's lobby government to convey the message surrounding the pressures being faced in Adult Social Care in Gateshead and the financial implications for the authority.

CHW215 OSC WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report which set out the provisional work programme for the Care, Health and Wellbeing OSC for the municipal year 2021/22.

The Committee's provisional work programme was endorsed at the meeting held on 22 June 2021 and Councillors have agreed that further reports will be brought to future meetings to highlight current issues/identify any changes/additions to this programme.

Appendix 1 (attached to the main report) sets out the work programme as it currently stands and highlights proposed changes to the programme in bold and italics for ease of identification.

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the information be noted
 - ii) The Committee noted that further reports on the work programme will be brought to the Committee to identify and additional policy issues, which the Committee may be asked to consider.

Chair.....

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GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, 3 February 2022

PRESENT: Councillor M Hall (Chair)
Councillor(s): H Kelly, D Bradford, C Buckley, D Burnett,
L Caffrey, B Clelland, P Craig, S Gallagher, K McCartney,
E McMaster, M Ord, R Oxberry and D Robson

CO-OPTED MEMBERS Ayodele Akin and Rachel Walton

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor G Haley

F22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Davison, Councillor S Craig, Councillor Mohammed and Councillor Reay.

F23 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2021 were approved as a correct record subject to the following inclusion;

F19 – Corporate Parenting Training

Paragraph 2 - The following wording to be included;

“Councillors who may wish to take this on should have their contact details provided to care leavers to provide a source of advice and support.”

It was noted that now the Young Ambassadors are in post this will provide a key link to Councillors within the Civic Centre and provides an opportunity for interaction. It was confirmed that conversations will be held with the Young Ambassadors and Chris Hulme as to how this can practically be taken forward. A report will be brought back to Committee on this.

F24 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO DENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN GATESHEAD - UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation on NHS dental services for children and young people in Gateshead.

It was reported that all practices operate in a highly regulated environment, however these regulations do not allow for patient registration. This means that any resident can access dental care from any NHS dentist. NHS dentistry contracts are demand led and contracts are measured in units of dental activity (UDAs). Each practice is

therefore contracted for a certain level of access across the year.

It was noted that there are 24 NHS dental practices across Gateshead, contracted to provide general dental service, commissioned for 364,347 UDAs. Pre-Covid approximately 98.3% of the commissioned capacity in Gateshead was utilised. Covid has had an impact on access to dental care and work is ongoing to increase access for patients locally.

Challenges in the dental service is also around recruitment and retention of dentists and dental nurses, although the position in Gateshead is better than in other parts of the region. The service was put under pressure with the emergence of Covid-19, because this was an airborne virus it was important to keep staff safe. A small number of urgent care centres were set up, however there were issues in terms of accessing PPE for staff and further training, which meant that these did not open until June 2020. Due to the majority of dentist accommodation being previously residential, this led to an impact on the number of patients these practices could safely see. In view of the reduced capacity dentists were required to prioritise patients based on clinical need, children were within these priority groups.

There remains a large backlog and dental practices are still being advised to keep priority groups and increase gradually. National guidance has been set to increase capacity to 85% from January to December 2022.

In order to improve access incentives for all NHS dental practices are in place to prioritise those patients who have not been seen within 12 months for children, and 24 months for adults. There has been further investment into clinical triage through the 111 service to ensure those with the greatest need are being prioritised.

It was reported that expressions of interest are being sought from practices who have capacity to deliver additional in-hours access until the end of March 2022, with a focus on the priority groups. All practices have also been requested to maintain short notice cancellation lists in order to reduce clinical downtime as missed appointments remain an issue as it was pre-Covid.

It was questioned whether there are any records kept of those children not accessing any dental care. It was acknowledged that because there is no registration requirements it is difficult to know, however there is data to show who has accessed. It was noted that smaller geographies could be analysed to identify where there is a low uptake of children accessing appointments. It was also noted that there is links with the authority around looked after children and ensuring they are accessing dental appointments. It was confirmed that once a child becomes looked after, Children's Services ensure the child or young person has regular routine dental checks, however this was a challenge throughout the pandemic.

It was questioned whether there is any help for those young people who are getting to the threshold of having to pay for treatment. It was confirmed that there is no flexibility around payment as this is set by NHS England, however there is constant dialogue between practitioners and NHS England around the cost of care being an inhibiting factor.

It was questioned what has happened to dental practices as a result of them not achieving UDAs during Covid. It was confirmed that practices had to meet minimum expectations and these expectations on patient numbers were lowered during Covid to a level that was safe. The practices remained open the same hours and although usual UDAs were not met they were still fulfilling NHS expectations.

The point was made that more needs to be done to look at children and young people accessing dental provision as there are a lot of adults who do not use dental services and therefore their children do not access it either. It was noted that the full extent of the problem is not known and therefore it was suggested that further work should be taken up with Public Health around this and how we work together to ensure people are using the services. It was proposed that this be included in the work programme for next year.

It was also suggested that there remains gaps to be filled to provide a more joined up system between GPs and Dentists, for example to encourage pregnant women to access check ups and therefore stop potential future problems for them and their children.

The point was made that dental appointments are unaffordable for a lot of families at the moment and that this will have a long-term effect on dental health as choices are prioritised elsewhere. It was noted that this is a topic for lobbying for a different system because this does not work for a proportion of the population.

It was questioned what service is in place for specialist dental care. It was confirmed that this service is not monitored on UDAs as they have longer appointments and are referred through GPs, dentists as well as self-referrals. There is a limited criteria around who can access this service as it works with specific groups, will visit Special Schools and has strong links with the rest of the care system.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

F25 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE

Committee received a report on the Corporate Parenting Board. Two meetings have been held so far, chaired by the Portfolio Lead. It was noted that attendance has been strong at these meetings, although the Police were not represented at the last meeting. There has been challenges around recruiting a voluntary sector representative and work is ongoing to fill the vacancy. It was noted that the Young Ambassadors are now in post so they will be identified to be part of the Board going forward.

Partners are also involved in the partnership group which is a sub-group of the Board.

In terms of the Young Ambassadors it was noted that these are young people who have been in the authority's care and have moved to support accommodation or independent living. The recruitment process for these posts was rigorous and it is hoped this will help forge links between services and offer opportunities to shape

policies, help with recruitment of other posts and participation in hearing the voice of the child.

The point was made that there will be certain areas that require more help. It was confirmed that details can be provided of where the highest number of looked after children are. It was noted that a Social Worker post was developed in Beacon Lough because this was a particular area in need of Child Protection Services. Committee requested a further report on this be brought back.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the contents of the report.

F26 COVID-19 UPDATE

Committee received a report giving an update on the Covid response and in particular the impact of Omicron over the festive period. As a result of Omicron there were staffing pressures due to staff isolating, however the service continued to see a high level of commitment of staff who, if well enough, continued to work remotely.

Risk assessments were produced for all Children's Homes and short break care provision remained open for respite care.

Fostering Panels are now being held face to face in order to be regulatory compliant. RAG rated performance data trackers have been re-established to ensure those children at highest risk are being seen and supported. Recruitment and progression trackers ensure that staff absences are being covered. In addition, senior officer rotas are in place to ensure management presence in the Civic Centre at all times.

There have been additional service pressures due to the implementation of a new IT system, Mosaic. The system went live on 24 January 2022 and this has been labour intense for practitioners. There has also been the highest number of children in care, 463, during the Christmas period, this therefore impacted on placement sufficiency and was a real challenge for the service.

It was questioned whether there has been young people not returning to school after Covid, as has been seen nationally. It was confirmed that attendance is not where it was pre-Covid but this relates to a small number of pupils who have been identified and the service is currently working with. In terms of the largest secondary school in Gateshead, they have confirmed that attendance is just about back to normal. Committee was reassured that schools and practitioners continue to monitor the most vulnerable children.

It was questioned as to the workload for Social Workers. It was confirmed that the service is continuing to adhere to its caseload policy and this is monitored on a weekly basis through meetings with practice leads. It was noted that this was highlighted during the focused visit as something the service works hard on. Additional Social Worker posts have been advertised due to the increased demand, also development of the Social Worker Academy has allowed investment into newly qualified Social Workers.

Budget pressures in relation to placements was raised as an area of concern. It was

noted that all children's Homes are looked at to ensure all beds are utilised and that there is no bed locking in any of the homes. Investment through capital funding has been agreed for an additional two Children's Homes, however there has been issues in terms of finding the appropriate properties to meet the criteria.

It was confirmed that the main factors for children coming into care during Covid was; neglect, domestic violence and mental health.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the contents of the report.

F27 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK - SIX MONTH PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22

Committee received the six month Performance Management and Improvement Framework (PMIF). The Committee was reminded of the background and development of the PMIF.

It was noted that the PMIF links performance to the budget approach, resource allocation is now included to link performance to priorities. It was clarified that the document is live and tries to identify areas of challenge and analysis rather than looking at specific data.

Areas of continuing challenge were identified as; increasing numbers of families requiring support, increased numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals and pressure in terms of recruitment and retention as the lifespan of a Social Worker is only 8 years. There is also pressure in the medium term financial strategy, the increase in demand mean higher costs for external placement as providers are driving the market, this presents a real challenge when trying to make savings.

Areas of excellence were highlighted as the recent successful Focused Visit which highlighted the commitment of the staff within Children's Services. There has also been a reduction in the time of children being in care as well as an increase in the number of early help cases being closed as more families are being offered and accepting family group conferencing.

Actions going forward were identified as; a focus on early intervention, development of an additional two residential homes for children with autism and learning disabilities and a therapeutic home, there is also a focus on developing strategies and the implementation of the AYSE Academy for progression opportunities.

It was acknowledged that there are concerns around employee morale with Occupational Health under increased pressure, work is therefore underway to develop a framework to support employees morale and wellbeing. It was noted that there are recruitment and retention risks across the Council and therefore succession planning is being looked at.

The next steps are to align the PMIF to the new budget approach, further develop the priorities and actions and report the six month performance to Cabinet.

It was questioned what the Youth Justice Divert from Charge referral process is. It

was explained that this is a national programme for those young people on the fringes of offending, they are supported to move away from crime before they have criminal charges. This does not apply to all young people, there is certain criteria and access onto the programme must be agreed by the Police and the Youth Justice Services, this tends to relate to low level behaviour.

The point was made that employees are crucial in delivering services and therefore low staff morale is an inherent weakness. It was questioned whether there is or if there should be a strategy to increase wages at a time when people are struggling and the Council is not paying them enough. It was acknowledged that the recruitment and retention challenges for Social Workers is not to do with pay as Gateshead is very competitive and benchmarks salaries against neighbouring local authorities. It was noted that good Ofsted's are what attracts Social Workers to an organisation opposed to salaries. The point was made that it would be counter productive for one local authority to pay more than other authorities and instead need to act regionally to uplift salaries together. It was also suggested that aside from wages, the support in place for employees needs to be considered.

The point was made that the document is difficult to read electronically and as it was quite dense was not very user friendly. It was noted that this is being looked at for the year end report.

Further information on the PAUSE Programme was requested. It was explained the programme is commissioned for women who have had at least two children removed from their care. Practitioners work with them to break the cycle, through for example employment, learning skills, budgeting and improving their mental health and wellbeing. 27 women have engaged since the start of the programme and there are currently 18 women on the programme. It was reported that none of the women who have completed the programme have gone on to have any further children removed from their care. It was acknowledged that this is a significant cost saving for every child the service does not remove. It was confirmed that only two women dropped out of the programme so far.

The point was made that there is nothing to show the gaps in SEND / EHCPs performance data. It was agreed that this could be looked at further for next time.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the comments of the Committee be noted for areas of further scrutiny.
 - (ii) That the performance be reported to Cabinet for consideration in March 2022.

F28 WORK PROGRAMME

Committee received a report on the work programme for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Committee noted the provisional programme.
 - (ii) That the Committee noted that further reports on the

work programme will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional policy issues, which the Committee may be asked to consider.

Chair.....