

Regular Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee

Chair: Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey

Division and Local Member: All

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1. Summary

- 1.1** The Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee is required by the Constitution to provide full Council with a summary progress report and outcomes of scrutiny. This report covers meetings in November 2020 and January 2021.
- 1.2** The Committee agreed their work programme would comprise of items considered directly at meetings plus other items considered or 'commissioned', using flexible arrangements outside of the formal committee structure.
- 1.3** Members of the Council are reminded that:
- all Members have been invited to attend meetings of the three Scrutiny Committees and to contribute freely on any agenda item;
 - any Member could propose a topic for inclusion on the Scrutiny Work Programmes;
 - any Member can be asked by the Committee to contribute information and evidence and to participate in specific scrutiny reviews.
- 1.4** The Committee has 8 elected Members.

2. Background

2.1 Scrutiny Work Programme

Each of our meetings had specific agenda items to consider the work programme and allow members and officers to suggest items we should scrutinise in more depth. We also frequently review how we monitor our suggested outcomes and/or recommended actions so we can understand the impact of our work so we can learn how to better focus our scrutiny work to ensure we have made a difference.

Scrutiny Members have endeavoured through the Committee meetings to make suggestions and express opinions to Directors and Cabinet Members

after discussion and debate. We have constructive relationships with our sister Scrutiny Committees, particularly the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee.

2.2 12 November 2020

1. Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board Plan and Annual Report

We heard a comprehensive presentation summarising the forward plan and annual report of the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB). Keith Perkin, the Independent Chair of the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board started by thanking Richard Compton; the previous chair of the Board for his dedicated stewardship. The main objective of the Board is to seek assurance that local safeguarding arrangements and partner organisations act to help and protect people aged 18 and over who:

- have needs for care and support; and
- are experiencing, or at risk of, abuse, neglect or exploitation; and
- are unable to protect themselves from the risk of, or experience of, abuse or neglect as a result of their care and support needs.

We discussed the report and echoed thanks to Richard Compton and added thanks to Stephen Miles. We expressed an interest in knowing how children services were included in the Board's model. They were assured that although there was no representative from Children's Services on the Board there were strong links with partners supporting children.

We were interested in any opportunities for reaching more vulnerable people as a result of the pandemic and the increased awareness of vulnerable groups. It was acknowledged that the pandemic had led to more groups becoming vulnerable. The Board had decided that the sub-groups would focus on any learning the pandemic offered and this would be reflected in the next annual report.

We considered the Annual Report and the proposed plans for 2020/21. We noted the progress highlights during 2020 and committed to continue to promote adult safeguarding across the County Council and in the services that are commissioned.

2. Winter Planning

We had a report covering The Adult Social Care Winter Plan. This plan is aligned with the actions required by local authorities (LA's) detailed in the DHSC (Department of Health and Social Care) plan. It also takes the opportunity to highlight additional work that has been undertaken by both the LA and wider system to date, that will continue during the winter period or which it is planned to undertake.

The Somerset Adult Social Care Winter Plan has been structured around the same themes as the DHSC plan. These are:

- Preventing and controlling the spread of infection in care settings
- Collaboration across health and care services
- Supporting people who receive social care, the workforce, and carers
- Supporting the system

We heard that the coming winter period was likely to be extremely challenging for the entire system. While Somerset had seen relatively low numbers of Coronavirus cases the numbers are rising. Coupled with normal winter pressures it is expected the system will experience unprecedented levels of stress if current trends continue.

We considered the Adult Care Winter Plan for Somerset and supported the action contained therein. We noted the risks and the mitigations to address these contained in the Winter Plan.

3. Scrutiny Review

We were given a presentation setting out an update on the Scrutiny Review that started in 2018. We were reminded that a Peer Challenge identified that a review of scrutiny function was required in order to make it more effective, ensure all councillors are equipped to play an active role and contribute to policy making and key decisions and governance arrangements need to reflect this. There were eleven recommendations and the Committee were given the following update on the status of each recommendation.

We discussed the presentation and raised the question of public participation in scrutiny meetings. It was recognised that since the introduction of virtual meetings there has been a marked reduction in the number of public questions and attendance. We acknowledged that progress had been made in relation to clarity around the roles on Scrutiny Committees making it clearer for members of the public to be able to identify the members of Committees and Officers supporting.

2.3

4. Devon Doctors - Out of Hours report

We had a report on the Integrated Urgent Care Service provided by Devon Doctors Limited. Devon Doctors Limited is a social enterprise group which is run by healthcare professionals and reportable to a board of directors. The organisation does not have any stakeholders and is a non-profit organisation. Meddcare Somerset, a trading name of Devon Doctors Limited, is the provider of Somerset's Integrated Urgent Care Service. The Integrated Urgent Care Clinical Assessment Service delivers a "consult and complete" model of urgent care access that streamlines and improves patient care across the urgent care system. Patients receive a complete episode of care concluding with either: advice, a prescription, or an appointment for further assessment or treatment.

In July 2020, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) carried out an announced focussed inspection of the service which resulted in the application of urgent conditions to the provider registration of Devon Doctors Limited. The Care Quality Commission Report was published on 14 September 2020 and noted some Requirement Notices relating to regulations that had not been met. The Care Quality Commission took account of the exceptional circumstances arising as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic when considering what type of inspection was necessary and proportionate.

The report has resulted in plans to improve the out of hours service, improve governance and improve safety.

We discussed the report and asked why it took such a challenging report to introduce these changes as the service must have been aware of failings. It was recognised that the previous leadership arrangements were not open to learning but that has changed.

02 December 2020 -Meeting cancelled due to Coronavirus pandemic

27 January 2020 (limited agenda due to the ongoing Pandemic)

Medium Term Financial Planning

We had a presentation that summarised the key areas of specific interest within the Medium-Term Financial Plan. It outlined the key points that were included within the report made to Cabinet on the 20th January 2021. There was an overall narrative from the Directors of Adults Services and Public Health Services to provide assurances around the changes made to funding and spend. A review of this detail through Scrutiny will be presented as part of the overall challenge and assurance process to Cabinet on the 8th February and Council on the 17th February in setting the final budget for 2021/22.

The MTFP links pressures, growth, and savings to the delivery of the Council's key priorities within the Council's vision to create:

- A thriving and productive County that is ambitious, confident and focussed on improving people's lives;
- A county of resilient, well-connected and compassionate communities working to reduce inequalities;
- A county where all partners actively work together for the benefit of residents, communities and businesses and the environment, and;
- A county that provides the right information, advice and guidance to enable residents to help themselves and targets support to those who need it most.

We considered the proposed budget for 2021/22 and indicative budgets for 2022/23 and 2023/24 for Adults and Public Health Services budgets. We reviewed specific proposals for changes from previous years and commented

on them. We welcomed the projected increase in spending, in particular the proposed Capital Expenditure.

Meetings Overview for 2020-21

We have considered a number of reports on a range of topics and these have included:

- Fit for My Future
- Deprivation of Liberty -revised guidance
- Care Homes and Nursing Home Support Service (LARCH/CCG)
- Regular clinical quality review reports from Somerset Clinical Commission Group (CCG)
- Dementia Report
- Reports regarding the performance and transformation at Weston Hospital
- Regular updates regarding Adult Social Care Performance
- Somerset Safeguarding Annual Report and strategic plan
- Somerset CCG finance and performance issues
- Community Hospitals
- Council performance reports
- Learning Disability Service Contract
- NHS waiting times for Somerset patients
- Somerset suicide prevention
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Medium Term Financial Plan
- Out of Hours service - update

2.4 Suggestions for the Future

We look forward to an interesting and informative year ahead

Many of the reports we have considered have been information reports where our ability to make constructive input or provide feedback has therefore been limited.

We have always endeavoured to approach our task as a 'critical friend' by trying to be supportive to officers and encouraging them to highlight areas of concern to us, whilst hopefully providing a suitably robust challenge to question poor performance and seek reassurance that appropriate action is taken to achieve improvement. We feel the Council would benefit from Scrutiny being asked to undertake more pre-Cabinet decision work to help the transition from policy development to implementation.

3. Consultations Undertaken

The Committee invites all County Councillors to attend and contribute to its meetings.

4. Implications

The Committee considers carefully and often asks for further information about the implications as outlined in the reports considered at its meetings.

For further details of the reports considered by the Committee, please contact the author of this report.

5. Background Papers

Further information about the Committee including dates of meetings and agendas and reports from previous meetings, are available via the Council's website:

www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.