

## **Quarterly Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee**

Chairman: 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 since November 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 Programme.
  - any Member can be asked by the Committee to contribute information and evidence and to participate in specific scrutiny reviews.

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 Meeting 08 December 2021**

This meeting was cancelled due to the immense pressure on Adult Social Care services and the GGC and NHS locally. The agenda items were moved forward to meetings in 2022.

## **2.3 Meeting 26 January 2022 (Advisory Board Meeting) Fit For My Future (FFMF) - Update**

We had an interesting update on the Strategy. The progress of the Fit for my Future programme continues to be impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic as staff across the health and care system continue to prioritise the system response, including the delivery of the vaccine programme. The Fit for my Future programme has prioritised some key areas going forward, in conjunction with colleagues from across the system. This includes:

- Refresh of the Fit for my Future strategy moving into an ICS
- Working to develop the vision for community hospitals and how to utilise community hospitals, including inpatient facilities
- Reviewing MIU services at Minehead Hospital
- Hyper acute Stroke Care
- Focus on prevention, specifically healthy weight and hypertension

We discussed the proposed key areas and welcomed the inclusion of Community Hospitals as having a key role to play. It was recorded that they were a valued part of the service and would continue to be so. The overnight closure of the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) in Minehead was raised as a concern as West Somerset was quite isolated as a community and there were many elderly residents with limited personal transport and limited public transport. A Workshop followed the meeting and the invitation to attend was extended to District Councillors, Healthwatch and the Health and Wellbeing Board. The workshop was well attended by a broad representation and the early feedback was that it was welcomed and valued and will help the refresh of the FFMF Strategy.

### **NHS Dental Services**

We had a report from NHS Dental Services setting out the proposals for addressing the accepted shortfall in NHS Dental provision which had been exacerbated by the pandemic. We heard that the South West would be given about £5 million of the announced £50 million to boost the service. The challenge was making the NHS contract appealing and attracting Dentists to working the South West as many were choosing to stay in bigger cities. We discussed access and waiting times as well as areas where NHS services were not available. We were assured that the new contracts out for tender were more attractive, and interest had been positive.

There was a request for support in progressing a Dental Reform Bill in Parliament as this would help to address the findings of the Oral Health Needs Assessment published in early 2021.

## **Adult Social Care (ASC) Performance report**

We had a report which provided an up-to-date information on key developments in relation to demand and performance activity across adult social care both nationally and locally, as well as associated risks, mitigation activity and reform plans. Demand for care and support has risen sharply since the start of the pandemic. In 2019, Somerset Direct (the Council's 'front door') handled 53,379 adult social care related enquiries; this figure rose to 64,413 in 2020 and has again remained well above pre-pandemic levels this year with a total of 70,139 contacts/calls received between 1st January and 31st December 2021.

We welcomed the report and positive performance achievements. Assurance was sought to confirm that the increase in payments and higher pay was permanent and sustainable, and this was given.

## **Adult Social Care (ASC) Budget Report**

The report highlighted the robust planning and challenge that underpinned the proposed budget increase. We were assured that this increase was sustainable.

We welcomed the proposed increased spend on Adult Social Care that was included in the MTFP (an increase of 12.8%).

### **2.4 Consultations:**

We have during the period shared and commented on a number of papers that were circulated to the Committee as we have not been able to meet as frequently as usual. These have covered: -

Stroke Services

Temporary closure overnight of the Minehead MIU

### **3 Meetings Overview for 2021-22**

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

- Fit for My Future (FFMF)
- Access to Dental services
- Waiting lists post Covid 19
- Integrated Care Boards
- Changes to Stroke Services
- Improvements to Out of Hours Service
- Care Homes and Nursing Home Support Service (LARCH/CCG)
- Regular clinical quality review reports from Somerset Clinical Commission Group (CCG)
- Dementia Report
- 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

## **2.4 Suggestions for the Future**

We look forward to an interesting and informative year ahead.

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](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers)

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