

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 JULY 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.50 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Adrian Mather (Chairman), Beth Rowland (Vice-Chairman), Andy Croy, Phil Cunnington, Rebecca Margetts, Alistair Neal, Jackie Rance and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

Others Present

David Hare, Executive Member Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services
Madeleine Shopland, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist
Tracy Daszkiewicz, Director Public Health
Lyndon Mead, Public Health
Matt Pope, Director Adult Services

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR 2022/23

RESOLVED: That Adrian Mather be elected Chairman for 2022-23.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR 2022/23

RESOLVED: That Beth Rowland be appointed Vice Chairman for 2022/23.

3. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 March 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Andy Croy declared a general personal interest on the grounds that he worked for an Adult Social Care company.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

7. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

8. OPTALIS UPDATE

The Committee received an update on Optalis from David Birch, Chief Executive of Optalis.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:

- Optalis was the Council's own Adult Social Care company. It worked closely with the Council's Adult Social Care Team.
- Matt Pope and Councillor David Hare were Directors of Optalis.
- Optalis was jointly owned by Wokingham Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council.
- The contract had recently been renewed for a further 5 years which gave continuity in provision.

- Optalis' formal aims were to:
 - Transform and improve the delivery of adult services
 - Secure the stability of the workforce
 - Identify and deliver opportunities for joint commissioning
- David Birch highlighted the range of services provided to residents including day services for residents with learning disabilities and with physical disabilities, extra care services, residential care, and supported employment services.
- Members were informed that services continued to run well. However, a current spike in Covid was creating some pressure on service delivery.
- In terms of the last 3 years, efficiency savings had been consistently delivered. In 2021/22 the budget had been met and additional savings of £184,000 had been delivered to the Council.
- With the support of the Council, staff were paid at the rate of the National Living Wage or above in 2022/23.
- David Birch stated that it was anticipated that the next few years would be increasingly challenging from a financial perspective, primarily because of the impact of the rising cost of living on the recruitment and retention of care staff. Use of agency staff was expensive, and work was being undertaken to minimise this in a very difficult employment market.
- Optalis was supporting the Council by taking on at least 10 new and existing services across the Borough, covering a wide variety of different care needs. This expansion had been made possible by the Council's investment in a new Peripatetic Team which had given capacity to expand, and initiative new service as required.
- Members were informed of the new Learning Disability and Mental Health services at Hatch Farm in Winnersh. Feedback from customers and their social workers had been very positive.
- The respite service at Loddon Court in Earley had recently transferred from the previous provider Dimensions to Optalis.
- David Birch provided an update on how existing services were being improved.
- Capacity and productivity enhancements were planned for the START team, to support residents where reablement would give them a higher quality of life than they would receive through traditional care packages.
- Optalis had relaunched its Day Services for those with physical and learning disabilities, under the Community Lives brand. The pandemic had shown how much residents and their families had valued the services and the difficulties that they had experienced when they had been unavailable. There had been increasing demand for a wider range of more innovative activities taking place across and within the local community, instead of traditional buildings-based services. Optalis was therefore working with the Council to develop an enhanced range of services.
- Members were informed of the Ability Travel Service. Wokingham was the number one Council in the South East for this service in terms of outcomes for service users, and second nationally.
- Other opportunities that were being worked on were highlighted.
- Members asked about the impact of Covid on staffing levels. David Birch responded that there were enough workers to continue to run the services safely, but the situation had been difficult particularly in the last week, as Covid cases had spiked. Optalis was able to draw down on agency staff if required. Many staff were not ill for long periods of time, but the situation was being closely monitored. A Member went on to ask about looking ahead to the autumn period and was informed that Optalis was trying to fill as many vacancies as possible to reduce the

reliance of agency staff. The Resourcing Manager had been very active in advertising Optalis, for example to those in vaccination teams in Frimley who were now looking for alternative employment.

- In response to a question as to the impact of Brexit on staffing, David Birch commented that it had been less than anticipated.
- A Member questioned how inflationary pressures would be dealt with; whether it would be through staff budget management, income optimisation, or something else. David Birch commented that the approach taken would be a mixture, making sure that services were not compromised, and that the workforce was stable. Income generation would take place where possible and further efficiencies would be looked for. David Birch referred to the electronic Care Management package which would potentially create further savings. Members were assured that this would not create redundancies.
- In response to a Member question regarding the interaction with Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM), David Birch informed the Committee that operations were kept separate from a financial perspective. However, opportunities were taken to share good practice and ideas.
- A Member noted that paying the National Living Wage had assisted in staff recruitment and retention. He questioned whether there was an increased willingness from other providers to pay the National Living Wage. David Birch stated that as Optalis had taken over services from existing providers, there was a general willingness from existing staff to join Optalis because of its culture and the fact that it paid the National Living Wage. He was not able to comment on other providers. He went on to confirm that it was the Outside London National Living Wage which was sometimes a challenge given the Borough's proximity to London.
- Members asked whether the new services would be replacing or enhancing existing services, and what the financial impacts would be. David Birch referred to the enhancing of existing services, and in particular to the proposed dementia care home at Toutley. Matt Pope added that one of the strategic aims for Optalis was to help manage the market. Some services would enhance existing services, whilst others were new business cases which had been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- Members asked about the governance structure. Matt Pope indicated that when he had become Director, he had had concerns about the Council's level of control over Optalis and its direction. The Shareholder Agreement had been redrafted and he was comfortable with the current governance structure.
- In response to a Member question regarding the integration of data into WBC systems and the levels of transparency and accessibility, Matt Pope indicated that the Optalis' IT sat on the same infrastructure as the Council's. David Birch added that the Council undertook routine audits to ensure continued quality.

RESOLVED: That the update on Optalis be noted and that David Birch be thanked for his presentation.

9. HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

Tracy Daszkiewicz, Director Public Health Berkshire West and Lyndon Mead, Public Health, provided an update on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- Matt Pope commented that the agenda items were to provide the committee with a high-level overview of some of the important areas of work in Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing.
- Members were advised that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy had been adopted jointly across Berkshire West. Wokingham had developed a Strategy into Action delivering the Wellbeing outcomes specifically for the Borough.
- The Health and Wellbeing Strategy aimed to incorporate all aspects of local authority input into residents' health and wellbeing and across the whole life course.
- Health inequalities and equity were important topics.
- Resident's health and wellbeing sat within a broad context:
 - Wider determinants of health – e.g., housing, jobs, school readiness, schools, and economic prosperity;
 - Health behaviours and lifestyles – e.g., green open spaces and active travel;
 - Integrated health and care system – planning future services and joined up thinking;
 - Places and communities we live in, and with – ensuring safe and thriving communities.
- The Committee considered a diagram representing the Social Determinants of Health. Consideration was given to how services were accessed throughout the life course.
- The development of the Integrated Care System gained Royal Assent on 1 July. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy sat within the Health and Wellbeing Board and was the springboard from which the Integrated Care Partnership strategy was being derived. Having a clear and needs driven Health and Wellbeing Strategy was essential for meaningful representation of the health and wellbeing of residents within the Integrated Care System.
- Guided by the overarching principles of the Berkshire West Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the Wokingham Strategy into Action (SiA) determined the priorities for focus within the Borough to improve resident health and wellbeing.
- Five Berkshire West wide priorities had been adopted as well as a Wokingham specific priority of 'Creating physically active communities.' The priorities had been mapped to a range of relevant action or partnership groups. They were developing action plans on delivering against their particular area. Each action/partnership group was responsible for delivery of their action plan and for reporting progress to the newly established SiA Steering Group, who provided operational oversight of SiA delivery on behalf of the Wellbeing Board.
- The Committee noted the governance and reporting structure. Some areas were further along in terms of action.
- A Member was of the view that the Committee should monitor the work on making the Borough dementia friendly and particularly how this was filtered out to the parishes, which could be more isolated.
- A Member commented that a lot of the action identified for improving physical activity already appeared to be underway. Matt Pope commented that the action plans had a good focus on the priorities and were making a difference.
- Members felt that it was important to highlight action that would otherwise not have taken place had the Strategy not been in place.
- In response to a Member question, it was clarified that the Strategy had been updated as the previous strategy had been out of date. Priorities had been selected following consultation.
- A Member wished to focus further on the priority around achieving a better outcome for children and young people. Matt Pope emphasised that it was important that the

work of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee not be duplicated.

- In response to a question regarding reporting timelines, Lyndon Mead indicated that each group had reported to the Steering Group at least once. It was hoped that those groups that had reported first would be able to evidence progress within the next 2-3 months. He emphasised that different groups were at different stages. Members felt that it would be useful to see what areas were progressing and what were not.

RESOLVED: That the update on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy be noted and that Tracy Daszkiewicz and Lyndon Mead be thanked for their presentation.

10. ADULT SOCIAL CARE PRIORITIES - ADULT SOCIAL CARE REFORMS

Matt Pope updated the Committee on one of the main Adult Social Care priorities, the forthcoming Adult Social Care Reforms.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- The proposals in the 'People at the heart of care' White Paper represented an enormous change for Adult Social Care. Matt Pope suggested that the Committee may wish to focus on the matter as it developed.
- Adult Social Care had been chronically underfunded and needed reform.
- Matt Pope believed in order to reform Adult Social Care, funding, how it was funded and how it was paid for, should be considered. Other areas of Adult Social Care also needed improvement and reform including quality and workforce, control of care and tailored support.
- Matt Pope felt that there should be a National Social Care Minimum Wage which was on par with the NHS.
- The amount and variety of support available needed to be addressed.
- Members were reminded that the Government had put a health and social care levy on National Insurance which raised approximately £12billion a year of which £1.8 billion in the first 3 years was planned to go to Social Care.
- The Charging reform would have a massive impact on the Borough giving a huge funding gap. From October 2023 more private funders would be able to come to the Council, either for the Council to set up care accounts to monitor against a capped amount or, be able to access local authority rates where they had been unable to do so previously.
- Wokingham had a high level of private funders. At present approximately 1,800 people received formal social care support. This could increase by in the region of a further 3,000 people, which would require additional staff, services, and IT systems, to support. Without central government funding, the delivery of services to an additional 3,000 residents would be extremely challenging.
- Members were advised that it was proposed that the proposals come into effect at the same time, which was very difficult from an operational stand point. Matt Pope highlighted the timetable for the reforms.
- The principles and the content of the White Paper had been well received by the social care world, but the funding and detail needed to be correct.
- Key themes of the White Paper were highlighted.
- A Member questioned how the shortfall would be manifested – would the Borough have insufficient revenue to pay, and would the Council receive insufficient funding from the Government to address the shortfall? Matt Pope advised that over 3 years the funding gap would be significant, possibly £20million.

- In response to a question regarding IT systems, Matt Pope advised that guidance stated that if an individual wanted to start metering their spend against their care cap, the local authority had to undertake an assessment and decide what the needs for the individual were and an appropriate amount. The local authority had to set up a care account on an IT system as the individual paid for their care, which monitored the spend. This would require a new IT system.
- The Committee asked how likely it was that the Council would be able to fill the funding gap and the implications if it could not. Matt Pope commented this was still under review. Government was being lobbied.
- A Member asked how the Council could think outside of the box to lessen the impact and referred in particular to the recruitment and retention of social workers. She questioned whether more non-social workers could be used to undertake assessments. Matt Pope indicated that the Association of Adult Social Services was asking for a national approach to training for Occupational Therapists and Social Workers prior to the bringing in of the reforms. Locally, the Council looked to grow its own staff and also had apprenticeship schemes in place.
- Industry studies showed that Councils in the South East would be disproportionately impacted by the proposed reforms due to the number of private providers and high costs of care, and the differential between local authority and private rates.

RESOLVED: That the update on the Adult Social Care Reforms be noted and Matt Pope thanked for his presentation.

11. ADULT SERVICES KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Matt Pope presented the Adult Social Care Key Performance Indicators for Q4.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- A Member referred to the KPI ‘% of safeguarding concerns leading to an enquiry completed within 2 working days.’ She felt that 2 days was a long time for a very urgent issues and sought clarification about the triage arrangements. Matt Pope indicated that all referrals were triaged and something which appeared to be very urgent would be dealt with very quickly. There had been some issues regarding staffing that were being ironed out. There has been a large increase in safeguarding reporting. Certain agencies such as the Ambulance Service had been over reporting and not undertaking their own triaging. The Council was working with them to improve this. Whilst performance against the indicator had decreased because of increased demand, Matt Pope anticipated that it would improve.
- A decision had been taken in several areas to work with stretch targets. A Member questioned if there were any indicators where a lot of money would need to be spent to make minimal improvement. Matt Pope commented that this varied according to the indicators. Some targets were deliberately set to push services in a particular direction or to have a high standard. Matt Pope also commented that some of the KPIs and stretch targets would be reviewed and potentially amended over the next 12 months. Given the backdrop of the forthcoming Adult Social Care reform maintaining a performance level was a likely future target.
- Members were encouraged with the KPI performance.

RESOLVED: That the Adult Social Care Key Performance Indicators for Q4, be noted.

12. FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the forward programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:

- It was noted that mental health post Covid, and also the Autism Strategy had been delayed several times. Members felt that these topics should be brought forward.
- The Chairman commented that regular updates from Healthwatch were useful.
- Members felt that it would be useful to look at work regarding dementia and how this was being disseminated around the Borough.
- A Member was of the view that the Committee had traditionally had a smaller workload than some of the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

RESOLVED: That the forward programme be noted.

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