

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

AGENDA



Thursday 16 December 2021

at 10.00 am

in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

A limited number of members of the public will be able to attend the meeting with spaces being available on a first come, first served basis. Those wishing to attend the meeting should phone (01429) 523568 or (01429) 523193 by midday on Wednesday 15th December 2021 and name and address details will be taken for NHS Test and Trace purposes.

“You should not attend the meeting if you are required to self-isolate or are displaying any COVID-19 symptoms such as (a high temperature, new and persistent cough, or a loss of/change in sense of taste or smell), even if these symptoms are mild. If you, or anyone you live with, have one or more of these symptoms you should follow the NHS guidance on testing”

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:

Councillors Boddy, Cook, Cowie, Feeney, Hall, B Loynes, D Loynes, Picton, Richardson, Riddle.

Standards Co-opted Independent Members: - Mr Martin Slimings and Ms Tracy Squires.

Standards Co-opted Parish Council Representatives: Parish Councillor John Littlefair (Hart) and Parish Councillor Alan O'Brien (Greatham).

Local Police Representative: Superintendent Sharon Cooney.

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 3. MINUTES**
 - 3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2021 and 11 November 2021.**

CIVIC CENTRE EVACUATION AND ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE

In the event of a fire alarm or a bomb alarm, please leave by the nearest emergency exit as directed by Council Officers. A Fire Alarm is a continuous ringing. A Bomb Alarm is a continuous tone.

The Assembly Point for everyone is Victory Square by the Cenotaph. If the meeting has to be evacuated, please proceed to the Assembly Point so that you can be safely accounted for.

4. AUDIT ITEMS

- 4.1 Internal Audit Plan 2021/22 Update – *Head of Audit and Governance*

5. STANDARDS ITEMS

No items

6. STATUTORY SCRUTINY ITEMS

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny

- 6.1 Safer Hartlepool Partnership Performance – *Director of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services*

Health Scrutiny

- 6.2 Child Poverty Investigation:-

- i) Covering Report - *Statutory Scrutiny Manager (to follow)*; and
- ii) Further Evidence - *Head of Housing, Hardship and Welfare*

- 6.3 Accessibility of Services to People with Disabilities and Lifelong Conditions – Council Referral:-

- i) Covering / Scoping Report – *Scrutiny Manager* Covering Report - *Statutory Scrutiny Manager (to follow)*; and
- ii) Setting the Scene Presentation – *Various organisations*

7. OTHER ITEMS FOR DECISION

No items

8. MINUTES FROM THE RECENT MEETING OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

- 8.1 Minutes for the meeting held on 15th October 2021

9. MINUTES FROM THE RECENT MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE RELATING TO PUBLIC HEALTH

No items

10. MINUTES FROM RECENT MEETING OF TEES VALLEY HEALTH SCRUTINY JOINT COMMITTEE

- 10.1 Minutes of the meetings held on 22 June 2021 and 24 September 2021 (*to follow*)

11. MINUTES FROM RECENT MEETING OF SAFER HARTLEPOOL PARTNERSHIP

No items

12. REGIONAL HEALTH SCRUTINY UPDATE

No items.

13. DURHAM, DARLINGTON AND TEESSIDE, HAMBLETON, RICHMONDSHIRE AND WHITBY STP JOINT HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

No items.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

For information: -

Date and time of forthcoming meetings

Thursday 13 January, 2022 at 10.00 am

Thursday 10 February, 2022 at 10.00 am

Thursday 17 March, 2022 at 2.00 pm

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

14 OCTOBER 2021

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm in the Civic Centre

Present:

Councillor: Rob Cook (In the Chair).

Councillors: Moss Boddy, Brian Cowie, Tom Feeney, Dennis Loynes, Stephen Picton and John Riddle

Co-opted Members:

Gillian Holbrook – Independent Member
Parish Councillor John Littlefair

Also Present:

Tracey Herrington, Thrive Teesside / Aple Collective
Richard Sorton, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Officers:

Neil Wilson, Assistant Chief Solicitor
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning
Penny Thompson, Head of Housing, Hardship and Welfare Services
Joan Stevens, Statutory Scrutiny Manager
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Prior to commencement of business the Chair welcomed additional Members to the Committee - Councillors Boddy, Cowie and Picton.

66. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors B Loynes, Richardson and Martin Slimings, Independent Member.

67. Declarations of Interest

None at this point in the meeting. However, the Chair reported an interest later in the meeting on behalf of Independent Member Martin Slimings (Minute 71 refers).

68. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) – Annual Report *(Chief Solicitor)*

The Assistant Chief Solicitor presented the annual report on the activities relating to surveillance by the Council and policies under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. The report highlighted that in the period 2020/2021 there had been on RIPA authorisations sought.

The report also highlighted that the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) had undertaken a desktop examination of the Council's policy and practices around RIPA in July 2021 and had made a number of recommendations. These were outlined in the report and an amended policy had been made available on the Council's Intranet. The proposed amendment was the inclusion of a Non-RIPA form at Appendix 3 and section 5.7 of the Policy had been updated accordingly.

Recommended

That the amended RIPA Policy be approved.

69. Child Poverty Investigation - Covering Report/Insight into Poverty and How Best to Effect Change *(Statutory Scrutiny Manager/ Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

The Statutory Scrutiny Manager reported that the purpose of the report was to present the Audit and Governance Committee with evidence to inform the next stage of the Committee's Child Poverty investigation. Reference was made to the background to the investigation and the first evidence gathering session on 9 September when the Committee agreed a definition of child poverty for the purpose of the investigation and gained an understanding of the officer concerns/challenges in relation to child poverty.

The Assistant Director, Head of Housing and Welfare Services together with representatives from The Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Housing Trust and Thrive Teesside/APLE Collective had been invited to attend the meeting to provide evidence as part of the next stage of the investigation.

The Head of Housing and Welfare Services presented a report which provided Members with information on what other local authorities were doing to alleviate poverty, to introduce two agencies who had experience of working collaboratively on poverty and to share with Members potential opportunities to effect change. Members were referred to supplementary data, requested at the meeting held on 9 September 2021, attached at Appendix A.

Through the North East child Poverty Commission discussions had taken place with Brent Council and with the Combined North of Tyne authorities to look at their anti-poverty approach, details of which were provided. The

North of the Tyne Combined Authority had also embarked on a child poverty prevention programme to introduce poverty interventions at a school level, provide welfare and benefit advice in schools and work with employers to reduce in-work poverty. Stockton Borough Council had also begun a Scrutiny investigation into poverty and particularly wanted to address the digital divide. A Food Poverty Strategy in collaboration with the voluntary and community sector had also recently been approved.

Emphasis was placed upon the importance of recognising that poverty is more than simply being poor and that this needed to be recognised as part of the investigation. In addition to this, it is clear that significant work is being undertaken across organisations / sectors. The timing of these pieces of work, however, means that the effectiveness of many of the resulting actions and outcomes will not be available for consideration as part of the Hartlepool investigation. One element of the outcome of the Audit and Governance Committee investigation is, however, to inform the development of the Poverty Strategy currently being undertaken by Hartlepool Borough Council and it was suggested that exploration of the actions and outcomes of the work referenced above should be incorporated into the process for the monitoring, implementation and further development of the Poverty Strategy and the action plan underneath it.

Emphasis was placed upon the importance of input into actions for the reduction of poverty, and mitigation of its effects, from not only expert organisations in Hartlepool but residents with first hand lived experience. The Committee noted that Brent Council had made a concerted effort to speak to residents and supported the intention for direct resident engagement as part not only of its current investigation but also the ongoing development and implementation of actions to prevent / mitigate the impact of poverty in Hartlepool.

In relation to Brent Council, attention was also drawn to issues raised during the course of the investigation in relation to the level of those experiencing poverty that are also in private rented accommodation. It was noted that the Brent investigation highlighted the belief that private rented sector (PRS) licensing is a necessary tool to improving standards and that for licensing of landlords to be effective it also needs to be enforced. This had resulted in a recommendation that more investment in social housing, build even more affordable homes. The Head of Housing and Welfare Services agreed to provide further detail of how Brent Council had explored the issue of landlord licensing as part of its investigation and provide clarification following the meeting.

A number of Members reinforced the link between this year's poverty investigation and the request for consideration of landlord licensing as a potential investigation for the 2022/23 scrutiny work programme.

Members were referred to the Socio Economic Duty in England, as set out in the report, what was currently in place in Hartlepool and what the department had started to do to tackle poverty. In the discussion that

followed the Head of Housing and Welfare Services responded to issues raised arising from the report. Clarification was provided in relation to the Equality Act and the proposed process should the Committee choose to formally endorse HBC becoming one of a limited number of authorities who have adopted Section 1 of the Act. It was noted that adoption of Section 1 would include a requirement to incorporate poverty and socio economic disadvantage in decision making processes and strategies and whilst an overview of potential resource implications for Hartlepool of adoption was outlined it was recognised that more detailed consideration of the implications was required to enable the Committee to formulate an informed view on the feasibility of adoption.

Recommended

- i) That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted.
- ii) That as part of the Audit and Governance Committee's role in informing the development of the Poverty Strategy currently being undertaken by Hartlepool Borough Council, exploration of the actions and outcomes of the work referenced above be incorporated into the process for the monitoring, implementation and further development of the Poverty Strategy and the action plan underneath it.
- iii) That in order to allow an informed view to be taken in relation to the potential adoption of Section 1 of the Act, further information be provided on the actions required to fulfil the requirements of Section 1 and possible resource implications.
- iv) That Member engagement with residents / organisations as part of the investigation be co-ordinated with activities / events being undertaken as part of the ongoing process for the development of the Council's Poverty Strategy. An update on the potential programme of engagement to be presented to the Committee at its next meeting to allow Members to consider which sessions / events they wish to participate in.

70. Child Poverty Investigation - Presentation *(Thrive/APLE Collective)*

As part of the evidence gathering process, the Chair welcomed the representative from Thrive/Aple Collective who provided a detailed presentation which updated Members on their approach to poverty. The presentation included background information to the work of Thrive, the principles adopted in terms of working with people who lived in poverty and socio-economic disadvantage and how this would work in practice, details of collaboration and partnership working, the impact of the pandemic on working arrangements as well as feedback from case studies of individuals living in poverty.

The representative highlighted the importance of bringing a range of expertise together, the potential benefits/outcomes of people living in poverty taking a lead on challenging leaders to work with them on tackling poverty, whether new solutions to poverty would be discovered, whether people would listen and whether this approach would lead to a better understanding in terms of the challenges that poverty brings. Reference was also made to the benefits of meaningful poverty impact assessments, the importance of engaging with residents and voluntary and community sector and sharing best practice.

In the discussion that followed the representative responded to issues raised arising from the presentation. The Committee endorsed the principles for working with people who lived in poverty and socio-economic disadvantage and in particular the importance of 'Recognising: knowledge about how best to tackle poverty and inequality is held in communities who have live experiences of socio-economic disadvantage'. The need being to establish relationships and really listen, rather than one off focus groups and surveys. In exploring how this could be facilitated Members noted with interest the development of a network of 25 Poverty Truth Commissions across the country as a two way means for people living in poverty to challenge / influence leaders on their work to tackle poverty and create an increased understanding of the financial / resource restraints that exist for service providers. Further information on Truth Commissions was requested to allow more detailed discussion and consideration of any potential resource implications associated with their establishment, in order inform the Committees discussions in relation to the formulation of potential recommendations.

The Committee recognised that responding to lived experiences is at the heart of delivering socio economic equality and in doing so the value of engaging with as many individuals as possible who could share current or past personal experiences of living in poverty to enable a better understanding of the issue, the benefits of exploring the links between poverty and poor nutrition including vitamin and mineral deficiencies and the ideas around challenging borough leaders and linking decision making to poverty were also supported. The importance of individuals understanding the constraints within the local authority were discussed as well as emphasising the links between poor private sector housing and poverty. The Assistant Director reiterated the importance of engaging with residents at an early stage in the consultation process to help inform the strategy.

Elected Members went on to share personal experiences of individuals living in poverty and views were reiterated on the importance of undertaking meaningful conversations with these individuals. Concerns were raised that some individuals living in poverty were too proud to share their difficulties, examples of which were provided. Suggestions in terms of how this could be managed going forward were debated. The Statutory Scrutiny Manager advised that as part of the scoping report the need to engage with residents and communities had been identified and would be progressed as part of

the investigation. The detail in terms of how Members would participate in those activities would be agreed with this Committee.

Recommended

- i) That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted.
- ii) Further information on Truth Commissions was requested to allow more detailed discussion and consideration of any potential resource implications associated with their establishment, in order to inform the Committees discussions in relation to the formulation of potential recommendations.

71. Child Poverty Investigation - Presentation *(Joseph Rowntree Foundation)*

As part of the evidence gathering process, the Chair welcomed a representative from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation who provided a detailed presentation which updated Members on their experience and approach to poverty. The presentation included the following issues:-

- What do we mean by poverty? – JRF understands poverty as when a person's resources are well below their minimum needs.
- Poverty moves and changes – it is complex and rarely the result of a single factor.
- Poverty is indiscriminate but some people are at greater risk as poverty intersects with other characteristics.
- The beginnings of an effective approach:-
 - need to take a long term view
 - solving poverty is a shared collaborative activity with public sector, businesses, employers, landlords, goods and service providers, VCSE, citizens and communities all have a role to play.
- What have we learnt through Hartlepool Action Lab
 - need to work together on causes as well as symptoms
 - poverty and the pandemic have hit people already struggling the hardest.
- New ways of working.
- First steps – find solutions to rising costs of living, high energy bills, daily food costs, missing out on benefits.

In the lengthy discussion that followed, the representative responded to issues raised arising from the presentation.

The Committee expressed a number of views/suggestions/queries which included the following:-

- (i) In response to a number of concerns raised regarding the difficulties of eradicating poverty given the current Central Government budget constraints and the limited powers of local government, the representative, whilst acknowledging the issues around budget, referred to the potential through collaboration and different ways of working with people experiencing poverty would be a positive step forward. Reference was made to the benefits of supporting individuals with food distribution, benefit claims, housing need and financial circumstances.
- (ii) The need to adopt a proactive approach in terms of the causes of poverty as opposed to mitigating its symptoms were highlighted.
- (iii) Further examples of the impact on individuals living in poverty were discussed at length and the need to continue to support individuals, share information and examine good practice elsewhere was emphasised.
- (iv) In relation to the issues around individuals being reluctant to ask for support, the need for a pro-active approach in the community and dedicating resources accordingly was suggested.
- (v) Emphasis was placed upon the need to push for change nationally as well as locally.
- (vi) The Chair reported the following comments on behalf of Independent Member Martin Slimings who had submitted his apologies for the meeting and also wished to declare a personal interest as his wife, prior to her retirement, was a former manager of Hartlepool Children's Centres:-
 - Whilst reactive solutions are often supported as they can be quick and measured e.g. financial input, food banks etc, they are not always maintained or sustainable causing more problems for families. Proactive solutions are long term but usually more sustainable. Long term solutions are about changing cultures and is founded on education and communication and is the key to opportunity. To successfully address poverty will require long term support and funding.
 - Given the reduction in Children's Centres in Hartlepool access to information and short courses like money management and cooking to a budget are now restricted, there is a need to consider how this can be delivered in future.
 - Opportunities should be explored in terms of engaging with schools to achieve a co-ordinated approach to child poverty – encourage parents/carers to become part of a peer support group to share information.

- Address the stigma to poverty.
 - Consider support for reintroducing Credit Unions.
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Recommended

That the contents of the presentation and comments of Members be noted and actioned as appropriate.

72. Minutes of the meetings held on 23 September 2021 and 29 September 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September were confirmed and the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September, a copy of which were tabled at the meeting, were confirmed.

73. Minutes from the recent Meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 26 July

Deferred to the next meeting.

74. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman ruled that the following item of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

75. Any Other Business – Face the Public Events for Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Hartlepool Partnership

The Chair reported that following cancellation of last year's Face the Public Event due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the annual Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Hartlepool Partnership Face the Public events were moving online this year. The event will be replicating the original face-to-face events in an online format with the added bonus that participants can join the conversation any time over the two-week event. Members were encouraged to promote the event and encourage people to participate. People will also be able to:

- Like and comment on other people's ideas to get conversations flowing;

- Submit questions to agencies on the Board with answers to be posted on the project page for everyone to see; and
- For the Safer Hartlepool Partnership respond to its annual community safety survey.

Members were advised that links to the Face the Public pages can be found on the Hartlepool Borough Council website.

76. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Chair reported that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 11 November 2021 at 10.00 am.

The meeting concluded at 4.05 pm.

CHAIR

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

11 NOVEMBER 2021

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre

Present:

Councillor: Rob Cook (In the Chair).

Councillors: Moss Boddy, Brian Cowie, Tom Feeney, Ged Hall, Stephen Picton, Carl Richardson and John Riddle

Co-opted Members:

Gillian Holbrook, Martin Slimings and Tracy Squires –
Independent Members
Alan O'Brien – Parish Council Representative

Also Present:

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2 Chief Inspector Rachel Stockdale was in attendance as substitute for Superintendent Sharon Cooney
Gavin Barker, Mazars

Officers:

Chris Little, Director of Resources and Development
Craig Blundred, Director of Public Health
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning
Penny Thompson, Head of Housing, Hardship and Welfare Services
Joan Stevens, Statutory Scrutiny Manager
Angela Armstrong, Scrutiny and Legal Support Officer
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Prior to commencement of business the Chair announced that a 2 minute silence would be observed by the Committee at 11.00 am.

77. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors B Loynes, D Loynes, Parish Councillor John Littlefair and Superintendent Sharon Cooney.

78. Declarations of Interest

None.

79. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2021

Deferred to the next meeting.

80. The 2020/21 Financial Report (including the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts) *(Director of Resources and Development)*

The Director of Resources and Development submitted for the Committee's consideration the Audit Completion Report and the final audited 2020/21 Financial Report. Background information in relation to the Accounts and Audit Regulations as well as the timescales for completion of the Annual Report were provided, as set out in the report. The Council had been informed by its external auditors Mazars that their annual report would not be published by the deadline of 30 September, the reasons for which were outlined. The representative from Mazars, outlined the principle findings of the audit report and commented on the challenges facing Mazars in completing the 2020/21 annual report. Information from Teesside Pension Fund was still awaited and was expected by the end of the week whereupon the audit opinion could be signed off and the final financial statements published on the website. There were also delays in the production of the final audit certificate, details of which were provided.

In concluding the presentation, the representative from Mazars referred the Committee to the appendices attached to the report and advised that there were no significant issues to report to Members and that the financial statements were of good quality.

In the discussion that followed the Director of Resources and Development and Mazars representative responded to queries raised arising from the report. Clarification was provided in relation to the challenges facing the external auditor in terms of staffing resources and recruitment and the impact as a result as well as the anticipated timescales for completion of the Council's audit. In response to a query raised, it was reported that the value for money work should be completed by the end of the year and in terms of the final certificate, which was dependent upon receipt of Government guidance, this could be towards the end of January. Members were advised that whilst any changes to pension figures would be reported to Members, there would be no impact on the Council's reserves and this would be purely a technical adjustment.

Recommended

1. Members noted the matters raised in Mazars' Audit Completion Report (ACR) detailed in Appendix A to the report.

2. That the adjustments to the financial statements set out Section 5 of the ACR under Disclosure amendments be noted.
3. Members noted the Letter of Representation at Appendix B.
4. That approval be given to the final 2020/21 Financial Report (Appendix C)

81. Child Poverty Investigation – Opportunities for the Council to Impact on Poverty *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

As part of the ongoing investigation into Child Poverty, the Head of Housing and Welfare Services presented the report which provided Members with information on opportunities to talk to residents about hardship (poverty), further information on 'Poverty Truth Commissions', Socio Economic Duty, progress of ongoing work to reshape Local Welfare Support Services as well as details of potential opportunities to reduce poverty in Hartlepool.

The report included information in relation to the work of (APLE) Collective, based in Stockton, which included speaking at national party conferences and details were also provided in relation to the implications/considerations of introducing the socio economic duty in Hartlepool in terms of fulfilling the requirements under Section 1 of the Act as well as details of local welfare support schemes as set out in the report. A short video was presented to the Committee in support of the report.

At this point in the meeting the Chair, Councillor Cook vacated the Chair in order to observe the 2-minute silence in remembrance of Armistice Day at the Cenotaph in his position as Deputy Mayor of the Council. The Vice Chair, Councillor Richardson, took the Chair.

In the lengthy discussion that followed officers responded to issues raised arising from the report. Clarification was provided in relation to local welfare support activity, the number of requests to access the local welfare support scheme by type, crisis awards information, the definition of the terms absolute poverty and 'moving in and out of poverty' as well as estimated numbers of individuals in absolute poverty in Hartlepool, examples of which were provided. In response to a query raised examples of unforeseen events were also outlined. In relation to the level of support needed for individuals in poverty it was noted that there was a reliance on collaborative support from other providers in the town. Some of the challenges facing the department were outlined and given the impact of such challenges, emphasis was placed upon the importance of the need for a full scale review of the welfare support scheme, the benefits of which were highlighted.

Concerns were raised regarding the number of crisis awards declined and the impact of the pending savings proposals to reduce the welfare support

budget given that current needs were not being met. The Assistant Director provided background information to the significant budget deficit facing the Council and the reluctance to cut budgets of this type.

At this point in the meeting a 2 minute silence was observed.

The Committee went on to debate the contributing factors to poverty at length during which concerns expressed at earlier meetings were reiterated in terms of the impact of the withdrawal of the £20 universal credit support, increases in national insurance contributions and gas and electricity charges. It was suggested that poverty prevention and the causes of poverty be included in the Committee's recommendations. Given the concerns raised around welfare support and proposed budget savings, views were expressed that an urgent review of welfare support was required.

As the evidence gathering elements of the investigation draw to a close, the Committee's final report and recommendations were timetabled for presentation to the Finance and Policy Committee in January 2022. Members, however, expressed concern that poverty remained a significant issue in Hartlepool despite the provision of extensive interventions to prevent and mitigate its impact over many years. In light of this, and with indications that many of the actions required to comply with the additional duty were already in place, it was felt that consideration of the Committee's recommendation that the duty be adopted should not be delayed until publication of the final report in January 2022.

In relation to the recommendation – “to establish a working group to look further into what is required to formally adopt the Socio Economic Duty, its benefits, how this might reduce poverty and what this means in practical terms for officers of the Council” the Committee was of the view that this should not delay the adoption of the voluntary duty.

On this basis, as an interim recommendation from the Audit and Governance Committee, it was agreed that approval to the adoption of the Socio Economic Duty should be recommended to the meeting of Full Council in December.

At this point in the meeting, the Vice-Chair, Councillor Richardson vacated the Chair and Councillor Cook returned to the Chair.

Recommended

1. That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted and actioned as appropriate and discussions be utilised to inform the recommendations within the final report.

2. That the evidence provided supported the undertaking of collaborative working with organisations such as Thrive Teesside and The Poverty Truth Network to establish a Poverty Truth Commission in Hartlepool.
3. That adoption the Socio Economic Duty should not be delayed until publication of the Committee's final report in January and that, as an interim Committee recommendation, Full Council in December be requested to adopt the voluntary Socio Economic Duty.
4. That following completion of the Local Welfare Support project evaluation in January 2022 the Audit and Governance Committee be given the opportunity to consider and comment on the research findings and proposed options appraisal.
5. That evidence provided supported the need for collaborative working between the Council, residents, the VCS and other partner agencies on the development of a Child and Family Poverty Strategy built on the voice of lived experience.

A brief comfort break was observed prior to consideration of the following item of business

82. Covid 19 Update (Presentation) *(Director of Public Health)*

The Director of Public Health provided an update presentation to the Committee on the ongoing coronavirus position in Hartlepool which included the following issues:-

- Hartlepool and England Covid 19 cases rate per 100,000 population from 1st June
- Teesside Covid case rates per 100,00 population from 1st June
- Hartlepool Covid 19 related death rates per 100,000 from 1st June
- Percentage of 1st Dose Covid Vaccinated Population by Age
- Percentage of 2nd Dose Covid Vaccinated Population by Age

The Director commented that whilst case rates in the older age groups had started to decline there was still a need for a cautious approach. Case rates were predominantly in the unvaccinated and 11 to 19 age groups. Vaccination programmes were being rolled out in schools and it was hoped that case rates would decline as a result.

Death rates had started to increase in Hartlepool and were higher than the England average. There continued to be challenges around vaccine hesitancy in the younger age groups. The measures in place to address vaccine hesitancy and increase take up were shared with Members which included visits to secondary schools.

The Director of Public Health responded to issues raised arising from the presentation. In relation to concerns around the problems associated with long Covid and a previous request for up to date data in terms of numbers in Hartlepool, the Director of Public Health advised that the local Primary Care Group and the Trust currently had no records available, the reasons for which were reported, and work was ongoing to make such data available as soon as possible. Views were expressed in relation to the need to publicise and communicate the benefits of the vaccine to parents as well as the need to address inaccurate information being posted on social media and via local news reports. Emphasis was placed upon the need to undertake targeted work in colleges to convey accurate messages in relation to the vaccine. A Member requested a breakdown of the number of flu related deaths over the last two years.

In concluding the debate the Chair took the opportunity to thank the public health team for their hard work and contributions during the pandemic.

Recommended

That the contents of the presentation and comments of Members be noted and actioned as appropriate.

83. Director of Public Health – Annual Report *(Director of Public Health)*

The Director of Public Health reported on the background to the requirement for the Director of Public Health to write an annual report on the health status of the town and the Local Authority duty to publish it in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

The theme of the 2020 Annual Report was Hartlepool's Covid 19 Journey. The report included information in relation to the key responsibilities arising as a result of the pandemic, how schools had responded, how vulnerable people had been supported, role of the community support hub and Covid community champions, test and trace, testing and vaccination details as well as the role of the Health Protection Board.

Recommended

That the Director of Public Health's Annual Report be noted.

84. Minutes of the recent Meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 26 July 2021

Received.

85. Minutes from the recent Meeting of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership held on 19 July 2021

Received

86. Minutes from the recent Meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 26 July

Received.

87. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman ruled that the following item of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

88. Any Other Business – Home to School Transport Appeal

The Committee's approval was sought for the establishment of a 3 Member Sub Committee to consider a home to school transport appeal. Nominations were sought for 3 Members of the Committee to sit on the Sub Committee and to determine who would act as Chair.

Recommended

1. Councillor Cook and Independent Members Martin Slimings and Gillian Holbrook were appointed to the Sub-Committee.
2. Councillor Cook was appointed as Chair.
3. Councillor Tom Feeney and Independent Member Tracy Squires were appointed as Substitutes.

89. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Chair reported that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 16 December 2021 at 10.00 am.

The meeting concluded at 12.05 pm.

CHAIR

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

16 December 2021



Report of: Head of Audit and Governance

Subject: INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2021/22 UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the progress made to date completing the internal audit plan for 2021/22.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In order to ensure that the Audit and Governance Committee meets its remit, it is important that it is kept up to date with the ongoing progress of the Internal Audit section in completing its plan. Regular updates allow the Committee to form an opinion on the controls in operation within the Council. This in turn allows the Committee to fully review the Annual Governance Statement, which will be presented at this meeting of the Committee, and after review, will form part of the statement of accounts of the Council.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 That members consider the issues within the report in relation to their role in respect of the Councils governance arrangements. Table 1 of the report detailed below, sets out the school audit that has been completed and the recommendations made. Recommendations to mitigate the risks identified have been agreed and a follow up audit will be carried out to ensure satisfactory implementation.

Table 1

Audit	Objectives	Recommendations	Agreed
High Tunstall Secondary	Ensure school finance and governance arrangements are in line with best practice.	- The School should ensure that records of declared pecuniary interests for staff who can influence are brought up to date at the earliest opportunity. There is no requirement to include these declarations on the School website.	Y
		- Annual checks should be undertaken to ensure inventory records are accurate and assets held by the school have not been lost / stolen.	Y

Audit	Objectives	Recommendations	Agreed
		- A timetable should be established to carry out exercises to test / validate the emergency response plan. Results of such exercises should be reported to Governors and any lessons learnt incorporated into future emergency planning.	Y

3.2 In terms of reporting internally at HBC, Internal Audit produces a draft report which includes a list of risks currently faced by the client in the area audited. It is the responsibility of the client to complete an action plan that details the actions proposed to mitigate those risks identified. Once the action plan has been provided to Internal Audit, it is the responsibility of the client to provide Internal Audit with evidence that any action has been implemented by an agreed date. The level of outstanding risk in each area audited is then reported to the Audit and Governance Committee.

3.3 The benefits of this reporting arrangement are that ownership of both the internal audit report and any resulting actions lie with the client. This reflects the fact that it is the responsibility of management to ensure adequate procedures are in place to manage risk within their areas of operation, making managers more risk aware in the performance of their duties. Greater assurance is gained that actions necessary to mitigate risk are implemented and less time is spent by both Internal Audit and management in ensuring audit reports are agreed. A greater breadth of assurance is given to management with the same Internal Audit resource and the approach to risk assessment mirrors the corporate approach to risk classification as recorded in covalent. Internal Audit can also demonstrate the benefit of the work it carries out in terms of the reduction of the risk faced by the Council.

3.4 Table 2 summarises the assurance placed on those audits completed with more detail regarding each audit and the risks identified and action plans agreed provided in **Appendix A**.

Table 2

Audit	Assurance Level
Covid Health and Safety Arrangements	Satisfactory
Covid Food and Essential Supplies Grant	Satisfactory
Computer Audit – Virus Checker Defence Systems	Satisfactory
Computer Audit – Internet/Email Controls	Satisfactory
Officers Expenses	Limited
Pupil Admissions	Satisfactory
Pupil Admissions EYES Computer Application	Satisfactory
Troubled Families Grant	Satisfactory
Covid Expenditure Analysis	Satisfactory
Debtors	Satisfactory
Local Transport Highways Capital Grant	Satisfactory
ESF Routes to Work Grant	Satisfactory

For Members information, Table 3 below defines what the levels of assurance Internal Audit places on the audits they complete and what they mean in practice:

Table 3

Assurance Level	Meaning
Satisfactory Assurance	Controls are operating satisfactorily and risk is adequately mitigated.
Limited Assurance	A number of key controls are not operating as intended and need immediate action.
No Assurance	A complete breakdown in control has occurred needing immediate action.

3.5 Members will have noted that the Officers Expenses audit was assessed as limited assurance for the reasons outlined below:

- potential over claim of employees home to work mileage;
- expense and car mileage reports state the claim has been authorised but do not show who the authorising officer is;
- for the sample of 20 claims reviewed no VAT receipts had been provided;
- 4 of 20 insurance documents checked could not be located;
- of 20 payments reviewed 4 claims were made via paper based claim forms 2 of which could not be located.

Comprehensive actions to mitigate the risks identified have been agreed with the Assistant Director (Finance) and follow up work will be undertaken to ensure satisfactory implementation.

3.6 As well as completing the audits previously mentioned, Internal Audit staff have been involved with the following working groups:

- Information Governance Group.

3.7 Internal Audit staff are providing assurance to the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Department (BEIS) in respect of the payments of the Governments Business Support Grant Scheme and the Discretionary Business Support Grant Scheme. This requires us to provide detailed evidence supporting payments made to individuals and firms who were awarded those grants.

3.8 Internal Audit staff continue to support the Councils local system of track and trace and have also supported the Benefits team in the initial payment to individuals of the national Test and Trace Isolation Grant.

3.9 Table 4 below details the audits that were ongoing at the time of compiling the report.

Table 4

Audit	Objectives
Information Protection Policy	Ensure adequate policies/procedures are in place in line with statutory requirements.
Salaries and Wages	Ensure payroll is managed in line with statutory requirements.
Cash/Bank	Ensure clearly defined procedures are in place for the collection and banking of income and procedures for collecting income via the Internet & Cash Office are adequate and effective. All cash collections are promptly, completely and accurately recorded in the Authority's systems.
Insurances	Ensure strategies and policies are adequate and procedures are in place to manage day to day claims.
Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery	An appropriately skilled and resourced emergency planning and continuity function is maintained which has developed a BC Policy and a BC Management System.
Energy Management	Seek assurance that the Council has effective arrangements in place to manage energy consumption that optimise cost savings and contribute to climate change strategies.
Risk Management	Ensure risk management strategies and policies are embedded across the organisation.
Council Tax	Council Tax bills are issued in accordance with regulations and are accurate and complete; effective arrangements are in place to ensure all payments received in respect of Council Tax are identified promptly and accurately posted to individual accounts.
Creditors	Systems and procedures are in place for ordering, receiving and paying for goods and services to ensure that the supplies of goods and services are properly authorised and comply with the Authority's Financial Procedure Rules.
Non Domestic Rates	Payments are received and processed accurately to bill payers' accounts.
Members Allowances	To ensure that payments made in respect of allowances and expenses incurred are paid in accordance with the rates approved by Council and the Independent Remuneration Panel and are bona fide; and records are maintained in a secure manner to enable claims to be validated and that allowances and expenses are published in line with legislative requirements.
Nursing and Residential Care	Review legislation / regulation / guidance; safeguarding adults board; commissioning and contracts; quality standards framework; financial governance; performance and returns and information governance.
Stores/Joiners Workshop	Ensure stocks and stores are adequately managed, secured and issued.
Grounds Maintenance	Ensure service is delivered in line with policies plans and procedures.
Highways Repairs and Maintenance	Effective budgetary control arrangements are in place; Work on the highways is procured in line with Contract procedure rules; Schemes are effectively managed to ensure that work is carried out to an appropriate standard, within budget and on time.
In House Looked After Allowances	Provide assurance on the payment processes for fostering allowances and the carer banding allowances.
Leaving Care Allowances	Review eligibility to payments, carers payments are accurately and promptly processed and are in accordance with the Pathway Plan, care leavers payments are accurately and promptly processed and in accordance with the Pathway Plan, ensure a Pathway Plan is in place and this is regularly reviewed and ensure a Personal Advisor has been appointed.
Fens Primary	Ensure school finance and governance arrangements are in line with best practice.
Golden Flatts Primary	Ensure school finance and governance arrangements are in line with best practice.

Lynnfield Primary	Ensure school finance and governance arrangements are in line with best practice.
Iclipse/Enterprise IT system	Ensure adequate IT controls are in operation.

4. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There is a risk that if Members of the Audit and Governance Committee do not receive the information needed to enable a full and comprehensive review of governance arrangements at the Council, this would lead to the Committee being unable to fulfil its remit.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial considerations.

6. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal considerations.

7. CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 There are no child and family poverty considerations.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 There are no equality and diversity considerations.

9. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 There are no staff considerations.

10. ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 There are no asset management considerations.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report.

12. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 To ensure that the Audit and Governance Committee meets its remit, it is important that it is kept up to date with the ongoing progress of the Internal Audit section in completing its plan.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

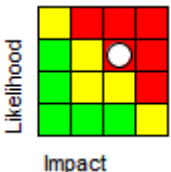
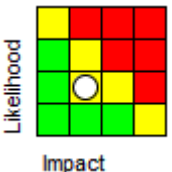
- 13.1 Internal Audit Reports.

14. CONTACT OFFICER

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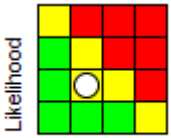


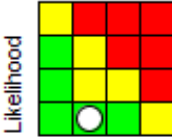
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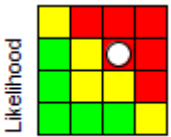




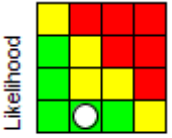


Email: noel.adamson@hartlepool.gov.uk









Audit	Objective	Assurance Level		
Covid Health and Safety Arrangements	Adequate arrangements are in place to comply with relevant legislation in relation to Covid response.	Satisfactory		
Risk Identified	Risk Level prior to action implemented	Action Agreed	Risk Level after action implemented	
Covid-19 Risk Assessments are not undertaken resulting in potential and actual health & safety risks not being identified. Avoidable risks are not addressed.		<p>Action 1: Responsibility for risk assessments sits with the team manager and heads of service, though the task can be delegated to other competent persons within the team. To ensure that the process is understood the Health, Safety and Risk Manager will action the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the risk assessment and guidance to set out roles and responsibilities relating to the risk assessment. • A process map which sets out the required steps for creating, maintaining and reviewing risk assessments • Standard email reply when risk assessments have been checked to identify who should be responsible for identifying, implementing and reviewing additional controls to reduce the risk level. <p>Action 2: Develop an online H&S action management system with the internal digital team. The system will be used for H&S actions relating to audits and risk assessments.</p>		

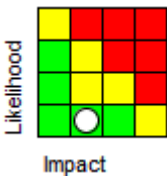
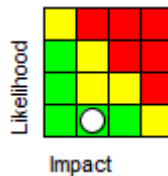
Audit	Objective	Assurance Level		
Covid Food and Essential Supplies Grant	Terms and conditions of the grant funding are compiled with.	Satisfactory		
Risk Identified	Risk Level prior to action implemented	Action Agreed	Risk Level after action implemented	
No unmitigated risk identified.				

Audit	Objective	Assurance Level		
Computer Audit – Virus Checker Defence Systems	Ensure adequate IT controls are in operation.	Satisfactory		
Risk Identified	Risk Level prior to action implemented	Action Agreed	Risk Level after action implemented	
No unmitigated risk identified.				

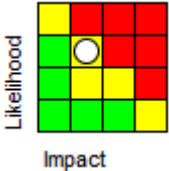
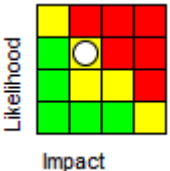
Audit	Objective	Assurance Level		
Computer Audit – Internet/Email Controls	Ensure adequate IT controls are in operation.	Satisfactory		
Risk Identified	Risk Level prior to action implemented	Action Agreed	Risk Level after action implemented	
Access to the Internet & email is not adequately controlled resulting in potential misuse and inappropriate use of facilities.		<p>Following section added to IT access policy (May 2021):</p> <p>6.8 Manager's Responsibilities</p> <p><i>When an employee leaves the Council (or moves role), their access to all computer systems and data must be suspended (or updated as required) at the close of business on the employee's last working day in that role. It is the responsibility of the employee's current line manager to request the suspension of the access rights via CICT immediately.</i></p>		
Access to the Internet & email is not adequately controlled resulting in potential misuse and inappropriate use of facilities.		<p>There is now a policy in place that automatically locks a user account after 30 days of inactivity. There is also a policy that locks a device off the HBC network after 30 days of inactivity.</p>		

Audit	Objective	Assurance Level		
Officers Expenses	Expenses are paid in line with all statutory and Council requirements.			Limited
Risk Identified	Risk Level prior to action implemented	Action Agreed	Risk Level after action implemented	
Claims and allowances may be paid without entitlement if appropriate arrangements for authorising/validating claims are not in place.		Provide report to Internal Audit.		
Information may not be secure if access is not restricted to authorised persons only and in a manner which ensures sufficient segregation of duties.		Provide documentation to Internal Audit.		
Claims and allowances may be paid without entitlement if appropriate arrangements for completing and authorising claims are not in place.		All claim forms and receipts should be scanned into Enterprise, this may have been due to Pandemic and staff not in the office. Procedures to be reviewed regarding both MyView and Enterprise by System Support & Development.		
Claims and allowances may be paid without entitlement if appropriate arrangements for completing and authorising claims are not in place.		Report to be provided to Internal Audit.		

Failure to maximise income due to the council, resulting in potential budget shortfall.	 <p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>	Emails will be issued to remind staff to provide VAT receipts for mileage claims.	 <p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>
Claims and allowances may be paid without entitlement if appropriate arrangements for completing and authorising claims are not in place. Claims submitted may not be accurately processed and paid in a prompt manner. Vehicles may not be adequately insured and roadworthy resulting in a claim being made against the local authority.	 <p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>	A review of paper based claim forms and where these are received from will be completed. An exercise to move these onto MyView, where appropriate will be undertaken, including reminder to collect and scan VAT receipts.	 <p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>
Claims and allowances may be paid without entitlement if appropriate arrangements for completing and authorising claims are not in place. Claims submitted may not be accurately processed and paid in a prompt manner. Vehicles may not be adequately insured and roadworthy resulting in a claim being made against the local authority.	 <p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>	Guidance information to be reviewed and re-issued to include the need for accurate travel routes and descriptions. Also a reminder issued to managers re their responsibility to check the accuracy of claims.	 <p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>
Claims and allowances may be paid without entitlement if appropriate arrangements for completing and authorising claims are not in place. Claims submitted may not be accurately processed and paid in a prompt manner. Vehicles may not be adequately insured and roadworthy resulting in a claim being made against the local authority.	 <p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>	Reports to be provided to compare missing licence and insurance information with mileage claims made in 2021 to date. Action to be taken following the determination of how significant an issue this is at that point.	 <p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>

Audit		Objective		Assurance Level
Pupil Admissions		Service is operated in line with all statutory and Council requirements.		Satisfactory
Risk Identified		Risk Level prior to action implemented	Action Agreed	Risk Level after action implemented
Non-compliance with Pupil Admissions Code.			<p>To Create and maintain a record (to be updated annually) to demonstrate:</p> <p>a) that panel members are not disqualified per the criteria noted in the code;</p> <p>b) whether each individual panel member is a teacher, teaching assistant, governor and/or whether there are any conflicts of interest with schools in Hartlepool that might prevent a panel member being available for an appeal;</p> <p>c) when training was completed and that the training complied with requirements of the code; and</p> <p>d) that each individual panel member understands and will comply with confidentiality of the appeal information they are provided with.</p>	

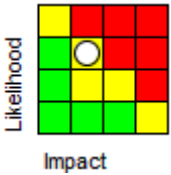
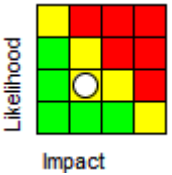
Audit		Objective		Assurance Level
Pupil Admissions EYES Computer Application		Ensure adequate IT controls are in operation.		Satisfactory
Risk Identified		Risk Level prior to action implemented	Action Agreed	Risk Level after action implemented
No unmitigated risk identified.				

Audit	Objective	Assurance Level		
Troubled Families Grant	Terms and conditions of the grant funding are complied with.	Satisfactory		
Risk Identified	Risk Level prior to action implemented	Action Agreed	Risk Level after action implemented	
Incorrect data may be recorded resulting in a reduction of grant award.		The Troubled Families programme is reliant on information from external and internal services. As numbers attached to the programme continue to rise, issues such as timeliness of case recordings and discrepancies between data held by different services become more apparent. Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy at the time of claim, however, due to the changing and sometimes chaotic lifestyles of our cohort, we are not always aware of changes in benefit status. This is further compounded by being a full service Universal Credit authority as DWP have not updated their automated data sharing process to include Universal Credit.		

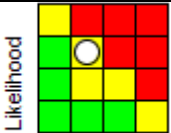
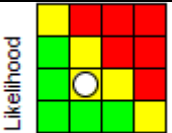
Audit	Objective	Assurance Level		
Covid Expenditure Analysis	Spending is in line with expectations and follows national guidance.	Satisfactory		
Risk Identified	Risk Level prior to action implemented	Action Agreed	Risk Level after action implemented	
No unmitigated risk identified.				

Audit	Objective			Assurance Level
Debtors	The correct person/organisation is charged the correct amount, at the correct time and is only charged for those goods and/or services they have procured/received and are as per the agreement made and payments are received in full and correctly processed on the debtors system.			Satisfactory
Risk Identified		Risk Level prior to action implemented	Action Agreed	Risk Level after action implemented
No unmitigated risk identified.				

Audit	Objective			Assurance Level
Local Transport Highways Capital Grant	Terms and conditions of the grant funding are compiled with.			Satisfactory
Risk Identified		Risk Level prior to action implemented	Action Agreed	Risk Level after action implemented
No unmitigated risk identified.				

Audit	Objective	Assurance Level		
European Social Fund Routes to Work Grant	Terms and conditions of the grant funding are compiled with.	Satisfactory		
Risk Identified	Risk Level prior to action implemented	Action Agreed	Risk Level after action implemented	
Documentation required as part of the decision-making process is not provided/retained resulting in grants not being awarded in line with grant condition requirements. Grants are awarded without adequate approval.		<p>The ESF Project Team have updated and condensed the Due Diligence Form. This means that only one template is used instead of two and this is being implemented for all new applications from 1st September 2021. It also ensures the responsibility for policies being implemented remains with Grant Recipient with the ESF Project Team simply checking that a policy is in place. A copy of the Due Diligence Template has been provided to Internal Audit.</p> <p>It will also be mandatory for the completed Due Diligence Template alongside the Application Form to be presented to Head of Service/Project Coordinator in the standard meeting prior to Grant Awards Panel. If there is not a completed Due Diligence Template then the Application Form therefore cannot proceed to the Grant Awards Panel.</p> <p>Documentation provided has not been viewed by Internal Audit at this stage. This will be checked as part of the next quarter's audit programme of work.</p>		
Documentation required as part of the decision-making process is not provided/retained resulting in grants not being		This was mainly due to Grant Recipients requiring their existing project to be fully completed before they can commence their next ESF Community Grant. It should		

4.1

<p>awarded in line with grant condition requirements. Grants are awarded without adequate approval.</p>	 <p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>	<p>be noted that an organisation can submit an application as long as they have at least received their second payment but the new project cannot commence until the existing project has fully completed and being audited by the ESF Project Team.</p> <p>The internal guidelines have therefore been reviewed and updated from 1st September 2021 to note an expected maximum timescale of two months from approval from Grant Awards Panel to receiving an executed Funding Agreement. The only exception is existing projects if they have not had the current project fully audited/completed by ESF Project Team.</p> <p>To streamline the process further all applicants will be notified within two working days following a Grant Awards Panel. There have been two template emails created; one for if they were successful and the other if they were unsuccessful, which will be utilised by the ESF Project Team. A copy of the template emails have been provided to Internal Audit.</p> <p>Documentation provided has not been viewed by Internal Audit at this stage. This will be checked as part of the next quarter's audit programme of work.</p>	 <p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>
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AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

16th December 2021



Report of: Director of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services

Subject: SAFER HARTLEPOOL PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For information. To provide an overview of Safer Hartlepool Partnership performance for Quarter 2– July - September 2021 (inclusive) against key indicators linked to the priorities outlined in the draft Community Safety Plan 2021/24. Given the impact that COVID had during Q2 of 2020/21, figures for some of the indicators have been included from Q2 of 2019/20 to provide a more representative comparison.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In July 2021, a draft Community Safety Plan for 2021/24 was presented to the Partnership with a strategic objective to “make Hartlepool a safe, prosperous and enjoyable place to live, work and visit”. Members agreed that the priority areas of focus to achieve this objective should be Anti-Social Behaviour, Drugs and Alcohol and Domestic Violence and approved the plan for consultation.

3. PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 3.1 The report attached (**Appendix A**) provides an overview of performance against key indicators linked to the agreed priorities during Quarter 2 of 2021, with comparisons made to the same time period in the previous year, where appropriate.

4 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Risk Implications	No relevant issues
Financial Considerations	No relevant issues
Legal Considerations	No relevant issues
Consultation	No relevant issues

Child/Family Poverty Considerations	No relevant issues
Equality and Diversity Considerations	No relevant issues
Section 17 of The Crime And Disorder Act 1998 Considerations	No relevant issues
Staff Considerations	No relevant issues
Asset Management Considerations	No relevant issues

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That the Audit and Governance Committee note and comment on the information provided for Quarter 2.

6. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The Audit and Governance Committee has within its responsibility to act as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee and in doing so scrutinize the performance management of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:-
Safer Hartlepool Partnership – Draft Community Safety Plan 2021/24

8. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Safer Hartlepool Partnership Performance Indicators**Quarter 2 - July to September 2021****Community Safety Plan Priority – Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

The following indicators have been identified to assist in the monitoring of this priority area.

During this quarter, ASB incidents reported to the Police reduced in all four Local Policing Area across Cleveland. The lowest reduction in the actual number of incidents, Hartlepool continues to have the second highest ASB rates per 1,000 population as detailed in the tables below:

Indicator - ASB Incidents reported to the Police	Year to Date Apr – Sep 21	Jul – Sep 19	Jul – Sep 20	Jul – Sep 21	Difference	% Difference
Hartlepool	2046	1327	1187	983	-204	-17
Redcar & Cleveland	2878	1672	1644	1423	-221	-13
Middlesbrough	3950	2567	2409	1980	-429	-18
Stockton	3430	2316	2386	1671	-715	-30

Police Anti-Social Behaviour Incident rate per 1,000 population	Hartlepool	Redcar & Cleveland	Middlesbrough	Stockton
	10.5	10.4	14.0	8.5

Anti-social behaviour incidents reported to the Police in Hartlepool reduced by 17% when compared to the previous year. All 3 categories of ASB incidents reduced as outlined in the following table:

ASB Incident Category	Jul – Sep 20	Jul – Sep 21	Difference	% Difference
Environmental	63	16	-47	-75
Nuisance	954	878	-76	-8
Personal	148	95	-53	-36

Police data is now available for the new ward boundaries that came in to effect in May 2021 as detailed in the following table.

Recorded ASB Incidents by Ward	Number of Incidents	% Town Total
Burn Valley	134	14
De Bruce	93	9
Fens & Greatham	29	3
Foggy Furze	131	13
Hart	31	3
Headland & Harbour	140	14
Manor House	93	9
Rossmere	75	8
Rural West	22	2
Seaton	37	4

Recorded ASB Incidents by Ward	Number of Incidents	% Town Total
Throston	64	7
Victoria	134	14
Grand Total	983	100

More than half (55%) of ASB incidents occurred in 4 wards; Burn Valley, Foggy Furze, Headland & Harbour and Victoria. Incidents in the Burn Valley, Foggy Furze and Headland & Harbour wards predominantly related to vehicle nuisance and youth related ASB. Incidents in Victoria were predominantly alcohol related and mainly reported as occurring in residential areas, with only 15 incidents linked to the night time economy within the Town Centre.

Number of ASB complaints received by the ASBU	Year to Date Apr – Sep 21	Jul – Sep 19	Jul – Sep 20	Jul – Sep 21	Difference	% Difference
	192	128	140	105	-35	-25

Anti-social behaviour complaints received by the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit also reduced by 25% in this quarter compared to the same period in the previous year.

ASB complaints have been aligned to the new ward boundaries and analysis identifies that 7 of the 12 wards reported less than 10 complaints as outlined in the following table.

ASB Complaints by Ward	Number of Complaints
Burn Valley	10
De Bruce	16
Fens & Greatham	<10
Foggy Furze	14
Hart	<10
Headland & Harbour	<10
Manor House	13
Rossmere	<10
Rural West	<10
Seaton	<10
Throston	<10
Victoria	20
Grand Total	105

Complaints received in this quarter predominantly related to nuisance behaviour (25 complaints), rowdy behaviour (12 complaints), drug misuse (13 complaints) and intimidation/harassment (11 complaints).

Number of ASB cases opened by Thirteen	Year to Date Apr – Sep 21	Jul – Sep 20	Jul – Sep 21	Difference	% Difference
	Not available yet				

Data not available yet

Indicator	Year to Date Apr-Sep 21	Jul – Sep 19	Jul – Sep 20	Jul – Sep 21	Difference	% Difference
Number of noise complaints received by the Council	274	149	179	147	-32	-18

Noise nuisance complaints received by the Council's Public Protection Team reduced by 18% when compared to the previous year, but remained stable in comparison to the same period in 2019 (pre COVID).

Noise nuisance complaints have been aligned to the new ward boundaries and whilst 6 of the 12 wards reported less than 10 complaints, analysis identifies that 46% of complaints were received from the Headland & Harbour, Burn Valley and Victoria wards as outlined in the following table.

Noise Complaints by Ward	Number of Complaints
Burn Valley	11
De Bruce	11
Fens & Greatham	<10
Foggy Furze	18
Hart	<10
Headland & Harbour	17
Manor House	15
Rossmere	17
Rural West	<10
Seaton	<10
Throston	11
Victoria	23
Grand Total	147

More than half of all complaints received in this quarter cited barking dogs (46 complaints) and music (44 complaints) primary issue.

Indicator	Year to Date Apr-Sep 21	Jul – Sep 19	Jul – Sep 20	Jul – Sep 21	Difference	% Difference
Number of fly-tipping reports received by the Council	560	517	848	560	-288	-34

The Council's Contact Centre recorded a 34% reduction in fly-tipping reports during this quarter compared to last year. Despite the reduction, fly-tipping continues to be a

significant blight on the local environment, creates potential danger to public health, and is a source of pollution and hazard to wild life.

Based on the ward boundaries prior to May 2021, analysis identifies that more than half (54%; 305 incidents) of all fly-tipping complaints were reported in the Victoria, Headland & Harbour and Manor House wards as outlined in the following table:

Fly-tipping Reports by Ward	Number of Incidents
Burn Valley	27
De Bruce	59
Fens & Greatham	38
Foggy Furze	39
Hart	23
Headland & Harbour	98
Manor House	47
Rossmere	27
Rural West	19
Seaton	15
Throston	54
Victoria	145
No ward recorded	11
Grand Total	602

Indicator	Year to Date Apr – Sep 21	Jul – Sep19	Jul - Sep	Jul – Sep 21	Difference	% Difference
Number of Deliberate Secondary (F3) fires	396	121	137	167	30	22
Number of Deliberate Vehicle Fires	35	14	14	10	-4	-29

Deliberate secondary fires (F3) are any non-accidental fires that do not involve property or casualties/rescues or where four or fewer appliances attend. Deliberate F3 fires in Hartlepool are predominantly refuse (rubbish) fires and grassland.

Deliberate F3 fires during Q2 have increased by 22%. More than two thirds (69%, 115 incidents) of deliberate fires in Hartlepool involve rubbish and grassland being set alight.

Fire Brigade data identifies that deliberate vehicle fires have reduced by 29% when compared to the same period in 2019 and 2020.

Fire Brigade data is now aligned to the new ward boundaries that came in to effect in May 2021. Analysis identifies that more than half (56%) of all deliberate F3 fires occurred in the De Bruce, manor House, Headland & Harbour and Hart wards as displayed in the following table. Of note, when compared to Q1 of 2021/22, deliberate F3 fires attended by the Fire Brigade reduced by 27% equating to 62 less fires.

Deliberate Fires by Ward	Number of Incidents
Burn Valley	15
De Bruce	25
Fens & Greatham	<10
Foggy Furze	10
Hart	21
Headland & Harbour	23
Manor House	25
Rossmere	14
Rural West	<10
Seaton	13
Throston	<10
Victoria	<10
Grand Total	167

Problematic locations for repeat incidents in these wards are identified as Mainsforth Terrace (Burn Valley), Gulliver Road (Manor House), Brus Tunnel (De Bruce) and Crocus Gardens (Hart).

Community Safety Plan Priority – Drugs and Alcohol

The following indicators have been identified to assist in the monitoring of this priority area.

Indicator	Year to Date Apr- Sep 21	Jul - Sep 19	Jul - Sep 20	Jul - Sep 21	Difference	% Difference
Drug Offences - Possession	125	64	73	61	-28	-16
Drug Offences – Supply	64	22	29	32	3	10

Responding to community intelligence a number of warrants were carried out during this period with positive results, particularly in respect of the identification and disruption of cannabis farms often linked to Organised Crime Groups (OCG's)

Complete Q2 data for the following indicators will not be released until 25th November. July – August data has been populated where available. However, the Public Health Analyst has confirmed that the drug and alcohol service is seeing improvement on the same period last year almost universally. There are more people in treatment, more successful discharges, and fewer re-presentations.

Indicator	Baseline 2020/21	Jul – Aug 20	Jul – Aug 21	Difference	% Difference
% of opiate drug users that have successfully completed drug treatment	3.6	3.1	3.9	0.8	25.8
% of non-opiate drug users that have successfully completed drug treatment	28.3	25	29.1	4.1	16.4
% of alcohol users that have successfully completed alcohol treatment	33.9	27.2	35.2	8.0	29.4
% of young people that have successfully completed treatment	46				
Number of young people known to substance misuse services	61				
% of people dependent on alcohol and not in the treatment system	75.0				
% of people dependent on opiates or crack and not in the treatment system	46.8				

Community Safety Plan Priority – Domestic Violence

The following indicators have been identified to assist in the monitoring of this priority area.

Indicator	Year to Date Apr – Sep 21	Jul – Sep 19	Jul - Sep 20	Jul – Sep 21	Difference	% Difference
Domestic Abuse incidents reported to the Police	1646	944	883	806	-77	-9
Rate of Domestic Abuse incidents per 1,000 population	-		9.5	8.6	-	-
Repeat Incidents of Domestic Abuse	699	401	425	347	-78	-18
Repeat Domestic Abuse incident rate	-	42.5	48.1	43.1	-	-

In Hartlepool, Domestic Abuse incidents reported to the Police during quarter 2 reduced by 9%, 77 less incidents than in the same period in the previous year and resulted in the rate of domestic abuse incidents per 1,000 population reducing from 9.5 to 8.6.

In comparison to the other local policing areas, Hartlepool experienced the greatest reduction in incidents, but has the second highest rate of incidents per 1,000 population as identified in the following tables.

6.1 APPENDIX A

Domestic Abuse incidents reported to the Police	Year to Date Apr - Sep 21	Jul - Sep 20	Jul - Sep 21	Difference	% Difference
Hartlepool	1646	883	806	-77	-9
Redcar & Cleveland	2048	1017	1000	-17	-2
Middlesbrough	2890	1566	1504	-62	-4
Stockton	2821	1422	1375	-47	-3

Rate of Domestic Abuse incidents per 1,000 population April – June 2021	Hartlepool	Redcar & Cleveland	Middlesbrough	Stockton
	8.6	7.3	10.7	7.0

Repeat domestic abuse incidents reported to the Police during quarter 2 also reduced by 18%, equating to 78 less incidents than in the same period in the previous year.

Despite the reduction, Hartlepool has the highest repeat incident rate across the four Local Policing areas as identified in the following tables.

Repeat Incidents of Domestic Abuse	Year to Date Apr - Sep 21	Jul - Sep 20	Jul - Sep 21	Difference	% Difference
Hartlepool	699	425	347	-78	-18
Redcar & Cleveland	826	418	384	-34	-8
Middlesbrough	1172	713	586	-127	-18
Stockton	1119	584	530	-54	-9

Repeat Domestic Abuse Incident Rate	Hartlepool	Redcar & Cleveland	Middlesbrough	Stockton
	43.1	38.4	39.0	38.5

The number of victims who experienced repeat incidents was lowest in Hartlepool with 229 compared to 246 in Redcar, 357 in Middlesbrough and 338 in Stockton.

Harbour data for Q2 is unavailable

Number of Domestic Abuse cases opened by Thirteen	Year to Date Apr - Sep 21	Jul - Sep 20	Jul - Sep 21	Difference	% Difference

Data not available yet.

Audit and Governance Committee

16th December 2021



Report of: Statutory Scrutiny Manager

Subject: CHILD POVERTY INVESTIGATION - COVERING REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To introduce evidence to inform the next stage of the Committee's Child Poverty investigation.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that on the 8th July 2021, the Committee agreed the following in relation to the conduct of its child poverty investigation:

- Aim for the Investigation

'To evaluate the true impact of child poverty and identify what the Council, and its partners, can do to make the positive changes required to reduce / eradicate it in Hartlepool.'

- Terms of Reference for the Investigation

- i) Agree a definition of child poverty for the purposed of the investigation.
- ii) To gain an understanding from a local, national, regional and peer perspective of the:
 - Scale and extent of child poverty;
 - Causes of child poverty; and
 - Impact of Covid-19.
- iii) To examine barriers out of child poverty and explore their prevalence and impact in Hartlepool.
- iv) To explore the effectiveness of activities and services currently in place to prevent, eradicate and remove barriers out of, child poverty:
 - In Hartlepool; and
 - Across other geographical areas and sectors (areas of potential best practice).

- v) To identify service improvements or changes through which tangible reductions in child poverty levels across Hartlepool can be delivered.

2.2 The Committee held evidence gathering session on the 9th September, 14th October and 11th November 2021 covering the below:-

9th September 2021

- i) Agreed a definition of child poverty for the purpose of the investigation as

Relative Poverty – is where a household's income is less than 60 per cent of the median UK household income average, HBAI* considers them to be living in poverty.

* Survey of income poverty in the UK called 'Households below average income' (HBAI).

- ii) Increased its awareness and understanding of:
 - Child poverty from a local, national, regional and peer perspective;
 - The drivers of poverty and who is most at risk;
 - Barriers out of child poverty (their prevalence and impact in Hartlepool); and
 - What is currently being done in relation to Child Poverty (prevention and mitigation) with further in depth scrutiny of activities at future meetings?
- iii) Gained and understanding of the officer concerns / challenges in relation to child poverty.

14th October 2021

2.3 The Committee explored:-

- i) Additional information as requested at the previous meeting;
- ii) Information in relation to other local authority activity in relation to child poverty and areas of best practice;
- iii) What can be done to reduce poverty and the consequences of social economic disadvantage; and
- iv) What is already in place and what has been started?

2.4 The Committee also welcomed expert evidence from the below covering their approach to poverty and examples of lived experiences:

- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation / Housing Trust (Richard Sorton); and
- Thrive Teesside / APLE Collective (Tracey Herrington).

11th November 2021

2.5 The Committee:

- i) Recognised the importance to implementing the statutory obligations laid down by the Equality Act and the potential benefits of extending implementation to include the voluntary socio economic duty (Section 1 of the Act). The Committee agreed that the learning from the lived experience is at the heart of delivering socio economic equality.

In order to enable the Committee to make an informed decision on the viability of implementing the voluntary social economic duty, evidence was provided on the additional impact of adopting the duty in Hartlepool and the implementation of the practical steps contained within the guide to local authorities.

- ii) Emphasised the importance of effective communication with residents (to really listen to them) and in exploring how this could be achieved further evidence was provided in relation to:
 - Poverty Truth Commissions; and
 - A programme for Committee involvement in resident engagement. The Committee to join arrangements organised as part of the Policy Strategy development process.
- iii) Noted that a considerable amount of work is being undertaken which could deliver examples of best practice and service improvement. However, they are not yet in a position where the impact of change can be effectively evaluated. On this basis, it was agreed that the Committee should include in its recommendations that when the Poverty Strategy currently being developed is reviewed a review of best practice / service change in other areas should also be undertaken.
- iv) Was asked to consider the reshaping of current welfare provision (and other relevant services) to support an effective child and family strategy, moving away from responding to crisis and focusing on impactful interventions that make long term change. This was supported by the Committee.

3. EVIDENCE TO BE CONSIDERED AT TODAYS MEETING

- 3.1 Evidence for consideration at today's meeting is outlined in the report attached at 6.2(ii) on the agenda.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Members of the Audit and Governance Committee consider the evidence presented and seek clarification on any relevant issues where required.

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AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

16 December 2021



Report of: Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services

Subject: FURTHER EVIDENCE - CHILD POVERTY INVESTIGATION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with a brief summary of the findings from talking to residents together with case studies from current service users.
- 1.2 To provide members with an opportunity to hear from the Trussell Trust Foodbank Co-ordinator.
- 1.3 To agree the recommendations for inclusion in the committee's final report to be presented to F&P in January 2021.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meetings of the 9th September, 14th October and 11th November 2021 discussions continued on Hartlepool's position in terms of rising levels of 'relative' poverty. Information was shared on what other councils are doing, on the 'Socio Economic Duty' and on the benefits of resident engagement through eg 'Poverty Truth Commissions'. Members were also provided with information on the current Local Welfare Support service which is operated by the council and on work underway to look at how this may be adjusted to work differently to better support reducing poverty in the town.

3. TALKING TO RESIDENTS / LIVED EXPERIENCES

- 3.1 As part of a research project into how we might re-shape current Local Welfare Support services, eight residents agreed to be interviewed about their 'struggles' and 'hardship'. They were all identified by the voluntary and community sector and were chosen at random. A number of open ended questions about their lived experience of hardship resulted in some of the following key themes:

- The benefit system ‘safety net’ does not work
- Financial hardship is endless – prioritising what to spend money on (housing, food, gas/ electricity) leaves next to nothing to live on
- Education – depending on your age people either do not know anything about how to manage money (never taught how to) or are old enough to know how to but are being pushed into doing everything online and don’t understand how to
- Digital exclusion – no access to suitable devices or wi-fi
- Availability of good quality, suitably ‘sized’ housing, the under 35 housing benefit rate (not enough to pay the rent) and sofa surfing
- Problems with mental and physical health – themselves and/ or their family
- Knowledge of and how to access available support
- A lack of self-worth and aspiration.

3.2 In addition to the interviews with residents, a series of case studies have been prepared to illustrate the situations residents are experiencing when they come to us and ask for help. These are genuine cases and can be found in **Appendix A**.

3.3 The Council works in collaboration with voluntary and community sector groups across the town, connecting residents to help and support wherever possible. The Trussell Trust Foodbank provides a twice weekly service to residents referred to them and the Local Welfare Support Service is by far their biggest referring agency. The Trust has experience of the residents interviewed and those illustrated in the case studies.

4. FINDINGS FROM AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE ENQUIRIES

4.1 Working with partners to develop a poverty truth commission

In previous meetings, information was shared on supporting the establishment of a Poverty Truth Commission. Following the “Nothing about us, without us, is for us” starting point, conversations are taking place with Thrive Teesside and the Poverty Truth Network. Lasting social change only happens when those who experience the struggle participate in generating change. Members have been supportive of being a partner in the development of a poverty truth commission.

4.2 Exploration of the adoption of the socio economic duty

In previous meetings the Socio Economic Duty (SED) as set out in The Equality Act 2010 was discussed. Whilst there are statutory obligations in the Equality Act, Section 1, the socio economic duty, is voluntary.

Members are supportive of the adoption of this duty with concern expressed that poverty remains a significant issue in Hartlepool, despite the provision of extensive interventions to prevent and mitigate its impact over many years. In light of this, and with indications that many of the actions required to

comply with the additional duty are already in place, the Committee recommends that adoption of the duty should not be delayed until publication of the finalised scrutiny report in January 2022. On this basis, as an interim recommendation from the Audit and Governance Committee, Council on the 16th December is to be asked to formally adopt the Social Economic Duty.

4.3 Local Welfare Support (LWS)

Local Welfare Support (LWS) has been in place for some time. Designed to support residents in a 'crisis' it has over time become a 'financial hardship' service and is currently overwhelmed with residents that cannot manage with what money they receive.

With this in mind, together with the need to develop a different and more effective approach to tackling poverty, a member of the LWS team has undertaken research into what a re-shaped service might look like. This has included looking at how the service is delivered elsewhere and also talking to residents about their struggles and what would help them.

The findings of this research are almost complete and will be available in January 2022. This will form the basis of proposed options for Members which will be presented to committee in February 2022.

5. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 To agree the recommendations for inclusion in the committee's final report to be presented to F&P in January 2021. To include:
- To work collaboratively with organisations such as Thrive Teesside and The Poverty Truth Network to establish a Poverty Truth Commission in Hartlepool.
 - To establish a working group to look further into what is required to formally adopt the Socio Economic Duty, its benefits, how this might reduce poverty and what this means in practical terms for officers of the council.
 - To consider the research findings and proposed options appraisal for Local Welfare Support when the project evaluation work is complete in January 2022.
 - To work collaboratively with residents, the VCS and other partner agencies on the development of a Child and Family Poverty Strategy built on the voice of lived experience.

6. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 Despite tireless work to mitigate the impact of poverty on children and families in Hartlepool, numbers continue to rise at an alarming rate.
- 6.2 Only those with experience of poverty can truly provide the insight necessary to design and deliver services that meet need.

- 6.3 An effective child and family poverty strategy needs to be undertaken in collaboration with partners that can support creative, new and innovative approaches not yet considered. Such a strategy will be created in the spirit of hope and on the basis that there is much that can be done to help those that are struggling in Hartlepool.

7. CONTACT OFFICER

- 7.1 Penny Thompson
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Local Welfare Support Case Studies

Case Study 1 – This resident is a single person who rents from a social landlord in the centre of town. He gets Universal Credit however came to the Civic Centre seeking support with food as he was short of money. He had never come to LWS before for help. One of the reasons he was short is because he has to pay the bedroom tax so we completed a DHP application form with him. Fortunately we had time to interview him and established he was in some difficult circumstances as he suffers anxiety and depression as a result of a relationship breakdown, losing two close friends this last year and losing his job due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The resident said he has not opened any post for a long period of time so he is liable for full Council Tax, which he was not paying. He had been sent letters regarding his Local Council Tax Support application, but failed to reply. We arranged for the appropriate evidence to be sent to Council Tax department for him to claim his single person discount. Also he was not paying his water bill so we rang Anglian Water and his outstanding balance was estimated at over £1,000. We have arranged for a water meter to be fitted as this is the cheaper option than a water bill and his bill has reduced by 70%. We also contacted his energy company as they estimated he had a large amount of arrears and were requesting £60.00 a month direct debit. We advised him to provide an up to date meter reading to bring his account up to date.

He does not have a washing machine so a lot of his money is spent paying other people to wash and dry his clothes, but having other people do his laundry affects his mental health. He has no support so we have signposted him to Let's Connect (formerly MIND). Lastly, we have helped him with a washing machine using the new Household Support Fund.

Case Study 2 – This resident is a single man whose life is controlled by his addiction to illegal drugs, prescription drugs and alcohol and what he has to do to support it: this can be criminal activity; borrowing from friends, family or loan sharks; or getting what help he can from DWP, LWS and the voluntary sector. Once he turned to crime to pay for his habit he has been regularly in and out of prison, therefore he is never able to hold down a tenancy or maintain regular benefit payments. Despite having five tenancies arranged by the council's Housing Team he has ended up sleeping on the streets, in a tent or 'sofa surfing' at a friend's house. Subsequently he is always at risk of having his belongings stolen or thrown away by landlords, being assaulted or being 'taxed' by his friends for staying with them. He has mental health problems and his family have tried to support him, but those relationships have broken down.

Since March 2018 he has made 47 applications to Local Welfare Support for food, gas, electric and clothes and we have supported him on many occasions usually because he is released from prison with little or no money, has no accommodation to go to and he is waiting for appoints with DWP before his benefits can be paid again. Sometimes we have limited or difficult choices to make, for example, if he is staying at a friend's we cannot top up their gas and electric even though he is being charged for staying there, but we can authorise a Foodbank voucher. Alternatively, when he is living on the streets he has no cooking facilities so Foodbank parcels are not appropriate, however there is always a risk that if we supply him with supermarket vouchers he will buy alcohol or trade them for drugs.

When his benefits are back in payment there are two main issues for him. Firstly, he rarely gets the full amount as his fines are deducted from his benefits along with other debts he owes. He is frequently sanctioned for missing appointments either due to his addictions, being in jail or having no access to a computer/smart phone to check his online journal, texts or emails. Secondly, whether

he is paid every month or every 2 weeks he is 'a payday millionaire' – in other words he spends all his money at once i.e. spends it all to feed his addiction.

Case Study 3 – This resident is a single parent with a teenage child living in a privately rented property and was a self-employed hairdresser. When she first contacted LWS in April 2020 they were isolating due to the pandemic and got a food parcel from the Foodbank. She contacted LWS twice in September 2020, when she stated she was not working anymore due to Covid and did not qualify for business support payments. LWS were unable to pay her outstanding bills, but supported her again with the essentials of food, gas and electric.

She contacted us many times over the last 12 months. In November 2020 she was very upset and was worried about her financial difficulties. She was overdrawn at the bank and the charges were increasing so she sold her mobile phone to a pawnbroker to get some extra money. Later that month her son was off school poorly and the gas emergency credit had run out. On this occasion she told us she had an appointment with MIND the following week and we referred her to West View Advice and Resource Centre for budgeting advice. By March 2021 her landlord wanted the property back by the end of the month. LWS could not help with rent payments but did support with energy top ups and food. The next time she contacted LWS her washing machine had broken, then she borrowed money to buy school uniform and by the summer of 2021 her mother had passed away.

She was badly affected by the Covid pandemic. She had never previously contacted LWS as she had her own business, could pay all her bills and provide for her son. Despite accessing the benefit system appropriately by the time her UC was paid she was in 2 months' rent arrears and the advance she got to pay other bills was immediately being deducted at £85 per month. LWS was frequent and generous, but limited to what help we could give her.

Case Study 4 – This resident lives alone in the centre of town and rents from a private landlord. Her child has just recently moved into their own accommodation and is claiming Universal Credit for themselves. The resident gets Universal Credit & PIP for herself totalling £240 per week. The addition of PIP means that she receives significantly more than other single people on benefits.

Over many years her and her child have had various problems: they have been the target of anti-social behaviour; both her and her ex-partner are drug users and continue to use drugs whilst also taking prescription drugs. Her child has not attended school for 4 years due to their mental health; Her mental and physical health have declined, especially in the last year. She has an abusive relationship with her ex-partner. Despite receiving all the benefits that she is entitled to she has been known to beg for money.

Her child has had a social worker for many years and the social worker has supported them both with gas, electric and food regularly.

Since November 2018 she has made 38 crisis applications for gas, electric, food, toiletries and clothes. She has had 5 non-crisis applications since April 2021 for various household items and has been provided with white goods and household items. She has had Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) for a bond for her tenancy and help to pay the bedroom tax.

She always comes to the Civic Centre to make applications for help. She can spend a whole afternoon filling out a form and if we see her face to face the conversations can be time consuming due to her level of coherence. We think she comes for company and someone to talk to. She has been signposted to many many organisations in town to help her. Despite her problems her motivation has always been to provide for her child the best she can. She lives alone in the centre of

town and rents from a private landlord. Her child has just recently moved into their own accommodation and is claiming Universal Credit for themselves. She gets Universal Credit & PIP for herself totalling £240 per week. The addition of PIP means that she receives significantly more than other single people on benefits.

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

16 December 2021



Report of: Statutory Scrutiny Manager

Subject: ACCESSIBILITY TO SERVICES FOR THOSE WITH
DISABILITIES AND LIFELONG CONDITIONS – COUNCIL
REFERRAL – SCOPING REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To make proposals to Members of the Audit and Governance Committee for their forthcoming investigation into Accessibility to Services to those with Disabilities and Lifelong Conditions in Hartlepool.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 On the 25th February 2021 Council considered a motion, as detailed below.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and emphasised the extent of pre-existing health inequalities in many towns and cities and particularly those in the North of England. Hartlepool has high numbers of residents with disabilities and lifelong conditions which often impact massively on their ability to access services, facilities and many aspects of day-to-day life which many of us take for granted. This can impact on physical and mental wellbeing and subsequently lead to isolation, loneliness and exclusion.

Over many years Hartlepool Borough Council has developed services and facilities aimed at supporting residents with disabilities and lifelong conditions and has invested in state-of-the-art facilities such as the Centre for Independent Living and worked closely with health and community and voluntary sector partners.

However, much still needs to be done if Hartlepool is to become a truly accessible town for all of our residents and visitors to ensure that the voices of residents living with disabilities and lifelong conditions are sought, heard and incorporated into future Council initiatives which may impact on the future physical, economic and social environment of the town.

To this end, the Labour Group calls upon the Council to agree that the Audit and Governance Committee will examine the contents of the Motion in the next municipal year:

A review of Council regeneration & development activity and accessibility to services for those with disabilities and lifelong conditions to ensure that any barriers, physical, procedural or otherwise, which may inhibit access to services and day to day living are identified, so that reasonable adjustments can be made”

- 2.2 Council approved the motion and referred the review to the Audit and Governance for consideration as part of its 2020/21 Work Programme.

3. ACCESSABILITY

- 3.1 Accessibility is not to be confused with usability, which is the extent to which a product (such as a device, service, or environment) can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency, convenience satisfaction in a specified context of use.

- 3.2 Accessibility is the concept of whether a product or service can be used by everyone and refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments to be usable by people with disabilities. Ensuring both "direct access" (i.e. unassisted) and "indirect access" (compatible with a person's assistive technology). It is more than just physical access, it is also relates to accessibility of lifetime opportunities (e.g. financial inclusion, routes to employment and transport, etc.).

- 3.2 At least 1 in 5 people in the UK have a long term illness, impairment or disability and discrimination can come in one of the following forms:

- *direct discrimination* - treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others; and
- *indirect discrimination* - putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage

- 3.3 Legislation in the form of the Equality Act 2010¹ legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society and defines disability and protective characteristics as follows:

- *Disability is defined as* ‘a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities’.
- *Protective characteristics*. It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- age
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

¹ [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010)

4. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

4.1 Contained within the public sector Equality Duty², which came into force across Great Britain on 5 April 2011. The duty replaced the three public sector equality duties for race, disability and gender and places a requirement on public bodies to ensure that the needs of all individuals are considered in their day to day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It also supports good decision making and encourages public bodies to understand how different people will be affected by their activities to ensure they are appropriate, accessible and meet different people's needs.

4.2 The three aims of the Equality Duty require public bodies to have due regard to the need to:-

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act;
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it:
 - Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
 - Taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it; and
 - Encouraging persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard to:
 - Tackling prejudice; and
 - Promoting understanding.

4.3 The Equality Framework for Local Government helps local Councils to meet their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 including the Public Sector Equality Duties (as referenced in Sections 4 and 5 above). The framework has four improvement modules:-

- i) Understanding and working with your communities;
- ii) Leadership and organisational commitment;
- iii) Responsive services and customer care; and
- iv) Diverse and engaged in workforce.

4.4 In addition, it has three levels of achievement, namely:-

- i) Developing;
- ii) Achieving; and
- iii) Excellent.

² [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

Fulfilling the Aims of the Equality Duty

- 4.5 Public bodies need to consciously think about the three aims of the Equality Duty within the decision making process with consideration given to how much that function affects discrimination, equality of opportunity and good relations and the extent of any disadvantage that needs to be addressed. The following principles explain what is essential for Public Bodies to fulfil the aims of the Equality Duty:

Knowledge – those who exercise the public body's functions need to be aware of the requirements of the Equality Duty. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves a conscious approach and state of mind.

Timeliness – the Equality Duty must be complied with before and at the time that a particular policy is under consideration or decision is taken – the Equality Duty cannot be satisfied by justifying a decision after it has been taken.

Real consideration – consideration of the three aims of the Equality Duty must form an integral part of the decision-making process and must be exercised in substance, with rigour and an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.

Sufficient information – the decision maker must consider what information they have and what further information is needed in order to give proper consideration to the Equality Duty.

No delegation – public bodies are responsible for ensuring that any third parties which exercise functions on their behalf are capable of complying with the Equality Duty, are required to comply with it and that they do so in practice and this duty cannot be delegated.

Review – public bodies must have regard to the Equality Duty not only when a policy is developed and decided up but also when it is implemented and reviewed as it is a continuing duty.

The key people to be aware of the requirements of the Equality Duty include:

- Board members;
- Senior Managers;
- Equality and Diversity staff;
- Human Resources staff;
- Policy makers;
- Communication staff;
- Analysts;
- Front line staff; and
- Procurement and Commissioning staff.

- 4.6 To ensure transparency, and to assist in the performance of this duty, the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public authorities to publish:

- Equality objectives, at least every four years (from 6th April 2012); and
- Information to demonstrate their compliance with the public sector equality duty (from 31st January 2012).

4.7 In complying with the duty actions include:

- Early intervention and adaptations to housing to improve accessibility or provide greater assistance;
- Information and advice - the accessibility and proportionality of information and advice;
- Ensuring coherence, sufficiency, availability and accessibility of information and advice relating to care and support across the local authority area;
- Staff providing information and advice within a local authority and other frontline staff should be aware of accessibility issues and be appropriately trained;
- Ensuring that products and materials (in all formats) are as accessible as possible for all potential users. Websites should meet specific standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and guidance set out in the Government Digital Service's (GDS) service manual, printed products should be produced to appropriate guidelines with important materials available in easy read, and telephone services should also be available to those with hearing impairments. Local authorities should particularly be aware of the needs of individuals with complex but relatively rare conditions, such as deaf-blindness;
- Making reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people have equal access to information and advice services. Reasonable adjustments could include the provision of information in accessible formats or with communication support;
- Consideration be given to the accessibility needs of the local population; and
- Housing and housing services can play a significant part in prevention, for example, from a design/physical perspective, accessibility, having adequate heating and lighting, identifying and removing hazards or by identifying a person who needs to be on the housing register.

Enforcement

4.8 The Equality and Human Rights Commission has powers to issue compliance notices to public bodies that have failed to comply with the Equality Duty and can apply to the courts for an order requiring compliance. The Duty can also be enforced by judicial review by the Commission or any individual or group of people with an interest.

5. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION/ENQUIRY

5.1 To review the Council regeneration and development activity and accessibility to services for those with disabilities and lifelong conditions to ensure that any barriers, physical, procedural or otherwise, which may inhibit access to services and day to day living are identified, so that reasonable adjustments can be made in Hartlepool.

6. PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION/ENQUIRY

6.1 The following Terms of Reference for the investigation are proposed as a starting point for discussion at today's meeting:-

- a) To gain an overarching understanding of national equality legislation, and in particular statutory duties as they relate to the activities of Hartlepool Borough Council.
- b) To gain an understanding of data in relation to the number of residents in Hartlepool with disabilities and lifelong conditions and consider existing evidence of the challenges they face in accessing services;
- c) From a Hartlepool Borough Council perspective:
 - Explore how the Council complies with its Equality Duty in ensuring accessibility to all areas of service provision (as detailed in the referral);
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's activities to ensure that people with disabilities and lifelong conditions have easy access to its services;
- d) To examine the barriers (physical, procedural and other) that may inhibit access to Hartlepool Borough Council services / activities, and day to day living, and ascertain their prevalence and impact (including the impact of Covid-19); and
- e) To identify if any changes / additions are needed to deliver tangible improvements to the accessibility of Hartlepool Borough Council Services.

7. POTENTIAL AREAS OF ENQUIRY / SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

7.1 Members of the Committee can request a range of evidential and comparative information throughout the Scrutiny review.

7.2 The Committee can invite a variety of people to attend to assist in the forming of a balanced and focused range of recommendations as follows:-

- (a) Member of Parliament for Hartlepool;
- (b) Leader of the Council;
- (c) Chair of each of the Policy Committees;
- (d) Directors of each HBC Department;
- (e) Officers from relevant service areas:
 - Adult and Community Services;
 - Children's and Joint Commissioning Services (Inc. Public Health);
 - Neighborhood and regulatory Services; and
 - Resources and Development.

- (f) Local residents;
- (g) Healthwatch
- (h) Hartlepool's Community Led Inclusion Partnership (CLIP)
- (i) The Voluntary and Community Sector (Directly and via Hartlepower) including Incontrollable, Hartlepool Deaf Centre, Hartlepool Access Group, 50 plus Forum, Motability, Hartlepool Blind Welfare Association, Hartlepool Carers, Parent Carer Forum (for children with SEND).
- (j) Representatives of minority communities of interest or heritage; and
- (k) Ward Councillors.

7.3 The Committee may also wish to refer to a variety of documentary / internet sources, key suggestions are as highlighted below:-

- (a) AccessAble - Your Accessibility Guide
(https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/hartlepool-borough-council/access_guides?vtag=false)
- (b) HBC published equality objectives.
- (c) Hartlepool Access Guides (including some HBC venues)
https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/hartlepool-borough-council/access_guides?vtag=false)
- (d) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty>
- (e) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

- 8.1 Community engagement plays a crucial role in the Scrutiny process and diversity issues have been considered in the background research for this enquiry under the Equality Standards for Local Government. Based upon the research undertaken, paragraph 7.2 includes suggestions as to potential groups which the Committee may wish involve throughout the inquiry (where it is felt appropriate and time allows).

9. REQUEST FOR FUNDING FROM THE DEDICATED OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUDGET

- 9.1 Consideration has been given, through the background research for this scoping report, to the need to request funding from the dedicated Overview and Scrutiny budget to aid Members in their enquiry. At this stage no additional funding has been identified as being necessary to support Members in their investigation. Members, however, may wish to seek additional funding over the course of the investigation and the (blank) pro forma attached at **Appendix A** outlines the criteria on which a request will be judged.

10. PROPOSED TIMETABLE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 10.1 Detailed below is the proposed timetable for the review to be undertaken, which may be changed at any stage:

16 December 2021 – Scoping and Setting the Scene (Covering Terms of Reference (a))

To gain an overarching understanding of national equality legislation, and in particular statutory duties as they relate to the activities of Hartlepool Borough Council.

13 January 2022 – Covering Terms of Reference (b) and (c))

- (b) To gain an understanding of data in relation to the number of residents in Hartlepool with disabilities and lifelong conditions and consider existing evidence of the challenges they face in accessing services;
- (c) From a Hartlepool Borough Council perspective (first group of service areas):
 - Explore how the Council complies with its Equality Duty in ensuring accessibility to all areas of service provision (as detailed in the referral);
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's activities to ensure that people with disabilities and lifelong conditions have easy access to its services;

*Agree survey questions and focus of surveys (staff and residents)

January – February 2022 – Evidence gathering, engagement and consultation (survey and focus groups) (Covering Terms of Reference d))

- (d) To examine the barriers (physical, procedural and other) that may inhibit access to Hartlepool Borough Council services / activities, and day to day living, and ascertain their prevalence and impact (including the impact of Covid-19); and

10 February 2022 – Covering Terms of Reference c) and d))

- (c) From a Hartlepool Borough Council perspective:
 - Explore how the Council complies with its Equality Duty in ensuring accessibility to all areas of service provision (as detailed in the referral);
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's activities to ensure that people with disabilities and lifelong conditions have easy access to its services;
- (d) To examine the barriers (physical, procedural and other) that may inhibit access to Hartlepool Borough Council services / activities, and day to day living, and ascertain their prevalence and impact (including the impact of Covid-19)

* Receive feedback from engagement / consultation activities

17 March 2022 (Covering Terms of Reference

- e) To identify if any changes / additions are needed to deliver tangible improvements to the accessibility of Hartlepool Borough Council Services.

* Receive feedback from engagement / consultation activities

June 2022 - Agree Final Report for submission to Full Council

June 2022 - Consideration of Final Report by Full Council

11. RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 That the Terms of Reference for the investigation into Accessibility to Services for those with Disabilities and Lifelong Conditions be approved.
- 11.2 For Members to identify and agree the following:
 - (i) Potential Areas of Enquiry/Sources of Evidence;
 - (ii) Community Engagement Diversity and Equality; and
- 11.3 Methods of Investigation.
- 11.4 That the timetable, including additional meetings where required for undertaking the investigation be approved.

Contact Officer: - Joan Stevens – Statutory Scrutiny Manager
Chief Executive's Department – Legal Services
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 284142
Email: joan.stevens@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper(s) was/were used in the preparation of this report:-

- a) Hartlepool Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- b) Long Term Conditions – Working Well – Health – Hartlepool Borough Council
- c) Care Act 2014
- d) [EQUALITY ACT 2010 PUBLIC SECTOR DUTY.pdf](#)
- e) Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018
- f) https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/hartlepool-borough-council/access_guides?vtag=false
- g) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty>
- h) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>

APPENDIX A

**PRO-FORMA TO REQUEST FUNDING TO SUPPORT
CURRENT SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION**

Title of the current scrutiny investigation for which funding is requested:
To clearly identify the purpose for which additional support is required:
To outline indicative costs to be incurred as a result of the additional support:
To outline any associated timescale implications:
To outline the ‘added value’ that may be achieved by utilising the additional support as part of the undertaking of the Scrutiny Investigation:
To outline any requirements / processes to be adhered to in accordance with the Council’s Financial Procedure Rules / Standing Orders:
To outline the possible disadvantages of not utilising the additional support during the undertaking of the Scrutiny Investigation:
To outline any possible alternative means of additional support outside of this proposal:

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

15 OCTOBER 2021

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Moore, Leader of Council (In the Chair)

Prescribed Members:

Elected Members, Hartlepool Borough Council – Councillor Feeney (as substitute for Councillor Howson), Councillor Lindridge (as substitute for Councillor Cook) and Councillor Tiplady

Representatives of NHS Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group

– Dr Nick Timlin and Karen Hawkins (as substitute for David Gallagher)

Director of Public Health, Hartlepool Borough Council – Craig Blundred

Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services, Hartlepool Borough Council – Sally Robinson

Representatives of Healthwatch – Stephen Thomas (as substitute for Christopher Akers-Belcher) and Margaret Wrenn

Other Members:

Representative of Cleveland Police – Chief Inspector Mark Haworth (as substitute for Superintendent Sharon Cooney)

Representative of North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust – Stuart Irvine (as substitute for Deepak Dwarakanath)

Also in attendance:-

Zoe Sherry, Chair of the Mental Health Forum

Amanda Whitaker, Democratic Services Team

16. Apologies for Absence

Elected Members, Hartlepool Borough Council – Councillors Cook and Howson

Managing Director, Hartlepool Borough Council – Denise McGuckin

Representative of the NHS England – Dr Tim Butler

Representative of Cleveland Police – Superintendent Sharon Cooney

Representative of North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust – Deepak Dwarakanath

Representative of GP Federation – Fiona Adamson

Director of Adult and Community Based Services, Hartlepool Borough Council, Jill Harrison

Representatives of Healthwatch – Christopher Akers-Belcher

Representatives of NHS Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group

– David Gallagher
Representative of Headteachers – Sonya Black
Representative of Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust – Elspeth
Devanney

17. Declarations of interest by Members

None

18. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2021 were confirmed.

19. Clinical Commissioning Group Annual Report 2020/21

Karen Hawkins presented the first annual report as Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group following submission of the report at the CCG Annual Meeting on 28 July 2021. The pertinent issues included in the report were highlighted to the Board including the immense challenges due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst the response to the pandemic had been the major challenge during the year, the report recognised successes and hard work across other areas during 2020/21.

Board Members discussed issues arising from the report including the collaborative work being undertaken to address health inequalities and the role of Primary Care Networks working with Local Authorities. In response to issues highlighted by a Healthwatch representative, responses were provided to concerns expressed regarding access to GP appointments and obtaining dentistry services. The Board was assured that capacity issues were being worked on and a report would be submitted to the Board when further information was received from NHS England with regard to dental care issues.

Decision

The report was noted.

20. Director of Public Health Annual Report

The Board was referred to the requirement for the Director of Public Health to write an Annual Report on the health status of the town, and the Local Authority duty to publish it, as specified in the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The theme of the 2020 Annual Report was 'Hartlepool's COVID-19 Journey'. Following the success of utilising an electronic format last year, the

report was again accessed via a link included in the report with a copy of the Director's report also appended to the Board report.

Board Members commended the report and the innovative approach in which the report had been presented. It was considered that the report and the videos shown at the meeting highlighted the positive impact of initiatives which had been introduced in response to the pandemic. Clarification was sought regarding long covid challenges and implications of the pandemic on mental health. The Board agreed to a suggestion by the Clinical Commissioning Group representative, that a report with further information on the issues raised be submitted to a future meeting of the Board.

Decision

The Board noted the report and its conclusions

21. Mental Health – Covid Recovery (*Director of Adult and Community Based Services*)

Zoe Sherry, Chair of the Mental Health Forum, presented the report which provided the Board with an update on the effects of Covid-19 on mental health. A report to Full Council in February 2021 by the then mental health champion Councillor Stephen Thomas had provided an overview on the early findings following the national lockdown in relation to mental health and wellbeing across the life course. The report had been compiled with the support of the Hartlepool Mental Health Forum which was sighted on the work of the North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS) mental health work stream. In addition, Board members were advised the Teeswide Mental health Alliance was invested in a number of work streams focused on the implementation of the Crisis and Prevention Concordat and the Community Mental Health Transformation work.

The report provided information in relation to the following:-

- Tackling Social Isolation and Loneliness
- Bereavement and Loss
- Mental Ill Health
- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies
- Enhanced Community Mental Health Services

Decision

That Health & Wellbeing board noted the update and response to the recovery plan for mental health.

22. Health and Wellbeing Board – Draft Communications and Engagement Plan 2021/22 *(Director of Public Health)*

The report sought consideration of the Health and Wellbeing Board's draft Communications and Engagement Strategy. The Board was advised that Section 7 of the Terms of Reference for the Board outlined the statutory duty to involve local people in the preparation of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It also referred to commitment to actively maximise the opportunities and mechanisms for involving local people in those processes and subsequent service provision.

Board Members were advised that the Board strives to meet the codes of practice and terms of engagement as set out in the Community Engagement and Cohesion Strategy. The key to achieving this was the development and delivery of a Communication and Engagement Strategy to set out how the work of the Board would be promoted and members of the public, key partners and the Voluntary and Community Sector would be able to engage with and contribute to the work of the Board. A draft Communication and Engagement Plan was appended to the report with the implementation of the Delivery Plan to be monitored, reviewed and developed on an annual basis.

Decision

That the Board approved the Draft Communication and Engagement Plan.

Meeting concluded at 3.10 p.m.

CHAIR

TEES VALLEY JOINT HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday 22 June 2021.

PRESENT: Councillors Hellaoui (Chair – Pro-Tem), Councillor Layton (Vice-Chair Pro-Tem), D Rees, E Cunningham and D Davison

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillor D Coupe

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: D Gardner (Director of Operations) (TEWV), A Lowery (Director of Quality Governance) (TEWV), C Lanigan (TEWV) and S Salvin (Head of Nursing Teesside) (TEWV)

OFFICERS: Scott Bonner, Caroline Breheny, Joanne McNally, Hannah Fay, Joan Stevens and Gary Woods

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: I Bell, Cook, B Clarke and S Smith

1 APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR

AGREED that Councillor Alma Hellaoui be elected as Chair Pro-Tem.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

AGREED that Councillor Layton be elected as Vice Chair Pro-Tem.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 MARCH 2021

The minutes of the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 19 March 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

5 PROTOCOL FOR THE TEES VALLEY JOINT HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Democratic Services Officer presented a report confirming the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee protocol and advised that a further amendment was required following the amalgamation of the three individual CCG's within the Tees Valley into a single Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The protocol would be amended and updated as advised.

NOTED

6 TEES, ESK AND WEAR VALLEYS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST - QUALITY ACCOUNT 2020/2021

Representatives from Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV) presented the Quality Account 2020-21 which provided an update on performance against their quarterly priorities for 2020-21, and sought to engage with the Committee in respect of their emerging priorities for 2021- 22.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to consider and comment on the quality of services at the Trust and the key features of the 2020-21 Quality Account. The Committee had met previously with the Trust representatives to consider the Trust's quality priorities and overall performance.

- The committee was concerned at the high number of incidents of physical

intervention / restraints, as Tees had the highest number of incidents per 1000 occupied bed days (OBD's) with 43.64 against the Trust target of 19.25. Previously the committee was advised that the high rates of restraints in Teesside were as a result of the eating disorder service being provided in the area and the use of nasogastric feeding. However, the service is no longer delivered on Teesside and the rates remain high.

- The committee was advised that Learning Disability services still have high levels of physical intervention / restraints although a number of initiatives were in place to address this issue. These include the introduction of Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Leads and investment in staff training and qualifications.
- The committee was very keen to see significant change in this area and looks forward to seeing the RAG rating for this metric change from red to amber and then green.
- The committee was also concerned that staff were not always giving dignity and respect to patients. The end of 2020/21 position was 84.59% against the Trust target of 94.00%. All localities underperformed in 2020/21, although Teesside were closest to the target with 88.62%. The committee acknowledged that progress had been made but was keen to see further improvement in this area.
- It was acknowledged that the launch of the 'Big Conversation' and the Trust's 'Journey to Change' highlighted TEWV's commitment to improving the patient experience and was a very welcome and positive development. Through this work TEWV had purposefully engaged with patients, carers, staff and partners and sharpened its attention and focus on areas for improvement. The committee was also pleased to see the inclusion of 'Compassionate Care' as a quality account priority for 2020/21 and looked forward to seeing improvements in respect of this metric.

The Quality Account Priorities for 2020-21 were identified as below. Two of the three were continuing priorities from the previous year.

- Making Care Plans more Personal
- Safe Care
- Compassionate Care (new for 2020-21)

The priorities were supported by the Committee. Members welcomed the updates on progress made to date and made the following observations and comments:

Progress:-

- The Trust's open and honest response to concerns raised by the CQC was appreciated. The Trust had listened and taken on board people's views in response to the CQC's findings.
- The notion of the 'Big Conversation', its extensiveness and involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders was very much welcomed and viewed as a key initiative.
- The need to embed and extend the provision of 'Compassionate Care' at every level and across the system was acknowledged.
- The Oxehealth Digital Care Assistant initiative undertaken to help prevent people in in-patient settings trying to commit suicide had been a very

positive step.

- The introduction of the IT system Dialog offered reassurance around the future delivery of personalised care planning.
- The 'Journey to Change' would take time and it would not happen overnight but the notion of the journey and the areas identified for improvement were fully supported.
- The simplicity of the priorities for 2021/22 were acknowledged. The priorities were easy to remember and understand.

Concerns:-

- The huge geographical footprint covered by TEWV and the differences in the socio-economic make-up of the areas served.
- Recruitment and retention of staff at TEWV remained an issue and was impacted upon by both the national and regional shortages of mental health professionals. There were also concerns in respect of the availability of local training provision.
- The CQC had raised concerns about care planning and risk management practices and it remained an area for improvement for TEWV.
- The huge challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and how these would be met in addition to those already faced by the Trust remained a concern.
- The potential for there to be a huge increase in demand for children's mental health service provision would also pose a real challenge in 2021/22.
- The trauma and bereavement which people had experienced as a result of COVID-19 had generated a need for additional proactive work and increased investment in this area.

On a more general point the Committee felt there would be benefit in producing an easy read version of the Quality Account document, as this would allow it to be shared more widely and easily. The Committee thanked the Trust for its continued and pro-active engagement with the Committee and looked forward to continuing to receive updates on progress against the priorities during the year ahead.

AGREED that the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account 2020-21 be noted and the Committee's comments submitted as part of TEWV's consultation on the Quality Account.

7

ANY URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR CAN BE CONSIDERED

None

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TEES VALLEY JOINT HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee was held on Friday 24 September 2021.

PRESENT: Councillors Hellaoui (Chair), M Layton (Vice Chair), D Coupe, Layton, B Clarke, Cook, Richardson, E Cunningham and L Hall

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: M Crutwell (Programme Manager - Community Transformation Tees Valley) (TEWV), D Gallagher (TVCCG), D Muir (Nursing & Chief Operating Officer) (CNTW), J Stewart (Associate Director for Children's Clinical Business Unit) (CNTW), D Gallagher (Chief Officer) (CCG), S Mayo (Head of Service - Operational Lead -) (TEWV) and B Shah (Clinical Lead for Teesside - Community Mental Health Transformation) (TEWV)

OFFICERS: C Breheny, A Pearson, Woods, Fay, M Adams and S Lightwing

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors S Smith, Loynes and C Gamble

8 **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

AGREED that Councillor Alma Hellaoui be elected as Chair.

9 **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

AGREED that Councillor Layton be elected as Vice Chair.

10 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

11 **MINUTES - TEES VALLEY JOINT HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 22 JUNE 2021**

The minutes of the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee held on 22 June 2021 were approved as a correct record.

12 **CNTW / TEWV UPDATES**

Lotus Ward – Acklam Road Hospital

Representatives from Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW) gave a presentation in respect of the recently opened Lotus Ward at Acklam Road Hospital.

In terms of background it was advised that CAMHS services at West Lane Hospital had been closed in 2019 following CQC regulatory action. A formal request was then submitted by NHS England/NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) to establish a CAMHS inpatient service in Teesside and following Board approval CNTW had agreed to provide a 10 bedded General Adolescent Inpatient Unit for young people aged 13-18 years.

'Lotus' had been selected as the name of the ward (a symbol of regeneration) following research and engagement with young people residing within Ferndene and Alnwood Wards and Lotus Ward was to be managed by the Trusts' Specialist CAMHS Clinical Business Unit within the North Cumbria Locality Care Group. It was advised that Lotus had opened on 5 April 2021 following NHSE/I approval and CQC registration and patient occupancy had commenced on 10 May 2021.

With regard to admissions there had been 15 admissions to date 13 transfers, 2 direct admissions and information was provided in respect of the localities from which young people had been referred into the service, as follows:-

Localities: Co Durham (6), Tees (4), Sunderland (2), North Yorkshire (1), Gateshead (1),

North Cumbria (1) and the average length of stay was 34 days.

As part of the ensuing discussions the following points/questions were raised:

- In response to a query as to how confident CNTW were that the measures taken this time would work and the issues experienced in the past would not be repeated. It was emphasised that CNTW was confident in the approach it had taken to establishing the unit and the whole team around getting the environment right and ensuring value based recruitment. In terms of staffing ratio it would be one of the better established wards, the clinical leadership and number of Band 6 staff appointed would ensure staff at the unit had considerable experience. This was further strengthened by the presence of Medical Directors.
- Reference was made to the need to at times use restraint to safeguard individuals, other patients and staff but there would be no use of mechanical restraint at Lotus.

AGREED that the information in the presentation be noted and a visit to Lotus Ward for members of the Committee be arranged in advance of the next meeting.

Working collectively to review the mental health system - Update

Representatives from Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV) gave a presentation entitled working collectively to review the Mental Health System. The presentation highlighted the vision and outcomes envisaged for Community Mental Health Transformation, the action that had been taken over the last 6 months, how staff and service users had been involved, the PCN pilot and developments including the introduction of PCN Mental Health Practitioners, Patient Feedback and the Design Event.

It was advised that the aim of NHS England's Community Mental Health Transformation Programme was to develop an operational place based model for Adult Mental Health (AMH) and Mental Health Services for Older People (MHSOP) functional community services which were integrated with Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and Voluntary Care Sector (VCS) services and delivered services to meet the needs of those with severe mental illness. The model needed to be coproduced with staff, stakeholders, the local community, service users and carers.

It was envisaged that the new model would ensure:-

- People received a good-quality assessment at whatever point they presented
- Meaningful interventions for mental health problems were readily available and accessible
- Location was most appropriate to people's needs
- Care could be stepped up where or when more specialist care was required, and stepped down, in a flexible manner without the need for cumbersome referrals and repeated assessments
- There were effective links with community assets to support and enable people to become more embedded within their community and to use those assets to support their mental health.

As part of the ensuing discussions the following points/questions were raised:

- Members expressed the view that it was quite overwhelming in terms of the scope and amount of work involved;
- In terms of feedback, often the percentages were low and it was queried as to the percentage of feedback received in respect of the PCN pilot. In response it was advised that every patient seen via the PCN Mental Health Practitioner was invited to provide feedback and the feedback percentage was approximately 6 per cent, which was quite significant. It was noted that 6 per cent in terms of the family/friends test carried out in the NHS was quite a high response rate. In effect that would equate to 1,440 responses from 24,000 appointments;
- A Member commented on the emphasis on patient need rather than service need, which was positive, however concerns were expressed that potentially there would be higher demand in certain areas and it was queried how this would be managed. It was acknowledged that the need for mental health support had increased significantly over the last few years and this investment was a real step forward in increasing the number of staff and services people could access from community mental health services. In addition there had been significant investment in the IAPT services in Tees so there was investment in increasing the number of

assessments at the front end. However, understandably demand in specific areas remained an area of concern. It was emphasised that some of TWEV's capacity was hampered by people being moved around the system whereas this was an opportunity for people to be seen once and to ensure that their care was co-ordinated. There was work currently undertaken that would no longer be undertaken once the system had been redesigned as a collective. Members expressed the view that this approach felt very encouraging.

- The work was such that no matter how much money was invested mental health services the work would increase, potentially a 40 per cent increase owing to COVID but if as a system we were able to get this right in terms of a system approach with Primary Care, VSC, TEWV and substance misuse services and agree on a system approach in which the patient came first and services would approach patients rather than the patient have to visit a whole host of services then we would have a service for the future.
- In response to a query it was emphasised that this was the start of a journey on what our interface of services would look like in the future. There was also the potential to look at locality working to strengthen the model as the 'ask' could be different in Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool, Darlington and Redcar & Cleveland.

AGREED that the information in the presentation be noted.

13

LOCAL NHS / PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Director of Public Health (South Tees) provided an update on the ongoing Covid-19 situation and made the following points:

- In terms of the national summary, it was shown where the Tees Valley was sat in the national rankings, with Middlesbrough in 36th and Stockton in 65th. The point was made that in effect all the rates in the Tees Valley were very similar, with sustained community transmission at around 300 cases per 100,000. The rate had fallen from around 400 per 100,000 in the previous week or two and whilst rates were high they did appear to be falling at the moment.
- In respect of cases by specimen date there was no real discernible fall, although the rates did show that rates were beginning to fall following an increase from when the schools had returned after the half term break. All of the local authorities in the Tees Valley were following the same patterns in terms of case rates.
- The cases by age band were highlighted and it was noted that for all of the local authorities within the Tees Valley the 10-14 and 15-19 age band up to 19 September 2021 had been significantly higher than the other age bands. There was also a slight increase in the older age group, which was potentially caused by waning immunity but further details would be provided to the Committee in respect of the booster
- Reference was made to the hospital data, the number of hospital COVID patients in County Durham and Darlington was 195, South Tees 75 and North Tees and Hartlepool 43. The figures for County Durham and Darlington appeared to be increasing and the Director of Public Health at Darlington had advised that the increase had largely been driven by an increase in Durham. It was unclear why the figures for North Tees were slightly lower than South Tees but potentially this could be owing to the overall numbers in the respective catchment areas.
- In terms of the hospital bed occupancy levels, these were currently around 80 per cent in North Tees, South Tees and Durham and Darlington, with Hartlepool moving into 90 per cent occupancy rates. The point was made that there was the potential that once winter emergency activity started to increase COVID patients adding to overall activity would become significant if the numbers did not start to fall.
- Mortality rates across the Tees Valley were significant and the rates were 260 per 100,000 for those with COVID mentioned on the death certificate to 307 per 100,000 for Hartlepool, with excess deaths above the average figures for the period 2015 – 2019 being significant.
- In terms of vaccination uptake, a phenomenal effort had been undertaken by the NHS supported by the local authorities, public health teams and broader teams in terms of supplementing the national programme with pop-ups in an effort to target communities that had lower vaccination uptake rates.
- In effect the percentage coverage reflected the deprivation demographics across the Tees Valley, with Darlington and Redcar and Cleveland being more affluent than Middlesbrough and Hartlepool and thereby having higher take up rates of the vaccine. Middlesbrough's figures were also impacted by a higher BME population, as vaccination rates in these communities tended to be a bit lower. Sustained efforts were being made to increase the

vaccination rates.

- The over 50's unvaccinated had remained an area of focus in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. However, the figures had remained stubbornly high. The figure for Middlesbrough, which currently stood at 4,300 had been reduced down from just over 5000 a few months ago. The figure was therefore coming down but clearly the highest level of risk for hospitalisation with COVID was in the unvaccinated over 50's. The majority of those over 50's that had not received a vaccination were in their 50's and there was an over representation of men, with approximately 62 per cent of those over 50 unvaccinated being men. Efforts were being made to target men over 50 in an effort to increase that uptake.

- In summary there was sustained community transmission and significantly lower rates of hospital activity, illness and mortality than would have been seen prior to the vaccine programme. However, there were still numbers in hospital that would cause issues as the winter period approached unless COVID admissions started to fall.

The Chief Executive of Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) provided an update in respect of the vaccination programme, hospital pressures and blood bottles and made the following points:-

- In terms of hospital pressures community infection rates remained high and colleagues in primary care and social care had expressed the view that in light of current demand on services it already felt as though it was January. This meant that there was an even greater need to undertake careful planning for winter assuming that COVID hospital rates would persist and pertain into the winter.
- There was effectively a double whammy in terms of pressures in that there were patients presenting with COVID but inevitably there were also staff contracting COVID or needing to self-isolate. This further added to the pressures along with the need to maintain infection prevention control measures – social distancing, wearing of masks further compounded the pressures.
- An added pressure in terms of public frustration was sadly exhibiting itself in un-condonable abuse, verbal abuse for reception staff, clinical staff and there was a need to work with all partners in order to ensure this stopped. Patients were being asked to be patient patients but their frustrations were understood.
- In terms of vaccinations there had been an immense and very well co-ordinated, collaborative process with not only the NHS and the Council but with the Fire Brigade, volunteers and a whole range of people who had worked extremely hard to get us to the point where we were at now.
- Reference was made to the recent guidance, as issued last week, in respect of healthy people and young children (age 12-15) and also the phase 3 booster vaccination. In terms of 12-15 year olds there was a universal offer with the Pzifer vaccine, which consisted of one dose that would largely be delivered in schools by those who normally delivered the school vaccination programmes. The objective was to get as many people safely and quickly vaccinated before the October half term. The programme was to commence no later than 22 September 2021, the programme had now commenced and was underway. There had been a huge effort from schools, who had enabled the facilities to accommodate the staff that went into schools to deliver this programme.
- With reference to the national advice in respect of the phase 3 booster programme it was noted that people who had received their vaccination in phase 1 would be offered after 6 months times. Consideration was therefore currently being given to how this would be best administered. There was a preference from the national committee, the JCVI, for the Pzifer vaccine to be used as the third booster dose irrespective of the dose given previously.
- In terms of the cohorts aspect the first phase of this phase 1 (cohorts 1-9) involved all residents of Care Homes, all adults aged 50 and above. Phase 2 (Cohorts 10-13) encompassed included those 15-60, as well as children and young people 12-15 that were at risk or in households where there were risks because of susceptibility to infection. Phase 3, which was the current focus, included the 12-15 year olds, the booster cohort and continued to offer phase 1 and phase 2 for those that had yet to be vaccinated (an evergreen offer).
- The vaccinations were being delivered by a range of partners including the Primary Care Networks (PCNs), mass vaccination centres, the pharmacy sites plus others. There were 14 PCNs across the Tees Valley including Darlington and they had been delivering vaccine services throughout phases 1 and 2. Some of the PCN's were signing up to Phase 3 and had been approved. Efforts were being made to reach a point where vaccinations could be given for flu and COVID at the same time where practical.

- It was noted that many people had received their vaccines through the mass vaccinations sites, which were operated by colleagues from Newcastle Hospitals. In the Tees Valley this included the Riverside Football Club in Middlesbrough and Darlington Arena. In addition there were now a number of pharmacy sites offering vaccinations, with 53 across the Tees Valley having expressed interest in providing this service. Some were currently awaiting approval from NHS England and once approved this would ensure the Tees Valley was able to provide a blended offer in terms of providing COVID vaccinations.
- It was highlighted that the key area of focus now was in encouraging those people that had not received their first or second vaccine to attend walk-in clinics, pop-up clinics and various vaccine buses, where appointments were not required.
- A further key area of focus was not to exacerbate the health inequalities already prevalent in the Tees Valley but to target vaccinations to try and reduce some of those.
- Reference was made to performance across the five Tees Valley Local Authorities and it was noted that for cohorts 1-9, quite good progress had been made with 89 per cent for first vaccines, 92 per cent for second vaccines. In respect of cohort 10 it was slightly less with rates of 75 and 80 respectively. Cohort 11 and 12 were harder to reach and more time was being spent on reaching these cohorts.
- It was acknowledged that there was still work to do and the national target was to achieve 90 per cent of people vaccinated.

It was queried whether the hospital figures were under control, as although there were events that being held where social distancing was taking place and there were others where this clearly was not the case. Vaccinations would soon be waning and there remained a cohort of people who had not received either their first or second dose and therefore was there a need to be concerned that hospitalisations would increase. It was advised that the health service and social care services were coping but only just but hopefully efforts could be made collectively as partners to get the message out to the public about vaccinations but equally the importance of still adhering to social distancing and the wearing of masks. Although not mandatory, convincing people that there was a safe way to get through the pandemic not only for them for the NHS and social services as well. The Director of Public Health expressed the view that the communications issue was difficult, as the clarity nationally on the wearing of face masks was an individual responsibility and lack of promotion of frequent testing to protect yourself, family and others but it was difficult to cut through national noise. The current national message was slightly more relaxed than that preferred by the Director of Public Health.

In terms of working with schools there was still significant demand for mass testing and interest from everyone in doing the right thing.

It was queried whether there was any data on the number of pregnant women having the vaccine and whether there were efforts to promote the take up the vaccine by women who were pregnant now there was more known about its safety. It was advised that it was part of the conversation during midwifery and health visitor visits and was built into the appointment process. Pregnant women were being advised that it was safe to have the vaccine and were being encouraged to do so. Statistical information in respect of this issue could be obtained from midwifery and fed back to the Committee.

Reference was made to current research in respect of the COVID vaccination for pregnant women and it was queried whether there was a best source of evidence that people could be referred to. The Director of Public Health advised that this information was available and sources would be shared with the Committee following the meeting.

In terms of other countries opting to vaccinate children under 12 it was queried whether this was something that would be considered in the UK. The point was made that any additional programme would bring capacity issues, however, as any vaccination programme for children under 12 would be delivered by the school immunisation teams it would be a pressure on that resource.

The Chief Executive of Tees Valley CCG advised that in terms of the blood bottle issue this was a global issue and there had been some severe supply issues. Tees Valley CCG had been notified of these in August 2021 and a national approach had been adopted. It was anticipated that the constraints would be removed in late September but in order to deal with the reduction in supply nationally measures had been taken to maximise the use of the resources available. Part of the approach had been about sharing tubes between hospitals

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and primary care but the latest guidance, issued on 16 September 2021, had advised that was that hospitals would try to optimise and reduce the amount being used by approximately 25 per cent until the 8 October 2021 when it was anticipated that the supply to be back on stream. In primary care there had also been an 'ask' for the tubes not to be used for non-urgent blood tests.

ORDERED that the information presented be noted and figures in respect of the number of pregnant women locally receiving their COVID vaccines be obtained.