

ADULT AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

26 June 2025

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Gary Allen (In the Chair)

Councillors: Moss Boddy, Ged Hall, Sue Little and Aaron Roy

Also present:

Councillor Rachel Creevy
Olivia Kerr-Morgan, Sophie Page, Logan Davies, Luca Poerio and Marc Phillips – Interns
Christine Fewster, Chief Executive – Hartlepool Carers

Officers: Jill Harrison, Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services
John Lovatt, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care
Gemma Ptak, Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services
Leigh Keeble, Head of Service Transformation
Trevor Smith, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Adults)
Sarah Scarr, Coast Countryside and Heritage Manager
Andrea Horsley, Project Officer (Allotments)
Hayley Watt, Targeted Employment and Volunteering Team Manager
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fiona Cook.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2024

Received.

4. Supported Internships *(Executive Director Adult and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To provide the Adult and Community Based Services with an update on the Supported Internships, including recent success stories and future plans.

Issue(s) for consideration

Adult Social Care had been working in partnership with DFN Project Search since 2023 to develop supported internships in Hartlepool. The Project had an excellent success rate with up to 70% of participants going on to gain full time employment. Further details were included in the report on the support that the programme provides along with feedback from employers and the young people who had participated in the programme. A cohort of 9 interns commenced the programme in September 2024 and were currently undertaking placements and it was noted that two interns had such successful first placements, one was now employed as a caretaker by HBC and another was employed as a handyman in a Hartlepool care home. The latest Intern Newsletter was attached to the report and included stories from some interns who had been supported by the programme.

Funding of £20,000 had been provided by the Department for Education (DfE) to support the programme for the last two years and it had recently been confirmed that this would be provided for a further year. It was noted that there were plans in place to build links with the Hartlepool Business Forum and a partnership with Asda was being developed to enable a further cohort of 15 interns to be supported.

The interns were introduced to the Committee and they individually provided presentations outlining their roles and responsibilities within their placements, the skills they had learned as part of their placements, challenges they had been faced with and the solutions they had developed and the lessons learned to take away from their placements. In addition they all outlined their plans for the future including potential employment, building their independence and keeping in touch through groups they had set up within the local community.

Members of the Committee all agreed that the young people were inspirational and provided very confident, informative presentations outlining their experience of the programme and the skills they had developed as well as some of the challenges they had overcome. The Chair acknowledged the support provided by local companies and asked if

anyone knew of other companies that could potentially provide placements to get in touch with the Head of Service Transformation in the first instance.

The Committee thanked the young people for taking the time to share their experience with Members and wished them well for the future.

Decision

The success that had been achieved to date in relation to supported internships was noted and the further development of the programme was supported.

5. Care Quality Commission Assessment of Adult Social Care Services *(Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To present the Committee with the outcome of the Care Quality Commission assessment of Hartlepool Borough Council's Adult Social Care Services.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services informed the Committee that assessing how local authorities were meeting their Care Act duties was a new responsibility of the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Assessments will be completed for all 153 local authorities nationally over a two year period. Hartlepool Borough Council received notification in May 2024 that an assessment would be completed within 6 months from that date. On site activity took place in the week commencing 11 November 2024 and a draft report was received in January 2025 with publication on 14 May 2025.

The overall rating of Hartlepool Borough Council's Adult Social Care Services was rated Good and a significant number of strengths were identified and these were detailed in the report. There were some areas for improvement identified, mainly in relation to equity of outcomes and further details were included in the report. The Executive Director for Adult and Community Based Services informed Members that in many of the areas identified for improvement, work was already underway and this was recognised by the CQC. A Continuous Improvement Plan had been developed, Appendix 1, which addressed the areas where the CQC

identified that improvements could be made, as well as existing improvement priorities within adult social care.

The Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services concluded by paying tribute to everyone who worked across Adult Social Care as the CQC assessment reflected the hard work and dedication of an incredibly loyal workforce.

The Chair echoed the comments of the Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services and encouraged everyone to read the CQC report in full on the Council's website as it was very informative. It was also noted that not many Adult Social Care services received such positive feedback from the CQC along with a rating of 'good' across Adult Social Care.

In response to a question from a Member, the Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services indicated that an update on the implementation of the action plan from the inspection will be included within the Annual Quality Assurance report that was presented to Committee. A Member sought clarification on the reference to the local authority's approach to equity and understanding the diversity in communities. The Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services confirmed that from an adult social care perspective, work was undertaken to ensure all advice provided was accessible to everyone and this linked into the work currently being undertaken as part of the corporate Cohesion Strategy.

Decision

The outcome of the CQC assessment was noted and the Continuous Improvement Plan that had been developed for 2025/26 was endorsed.

6. Adult Social Care Annual Quality Assurance Report – 2024/25 *(Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To present the Annual Adult Social Care Quality Assurance Report covering the period of 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services presented the report that provided the background to quality assurance within adult

social care. The aim of quality assurance was to ensure that services were safe, effective and centred around the needs of the people receiving support. The Adult Social Care Quality Assurance Report, Appendix 1, provided an overview of quality assurance activity undertaken within adult social care during 2024/25. Areas of work covered in the report included feedback from carers and people who use the service, case audits, a peer review and feedback from the workforce.

The Chair commented that the report highlighted the commitment to adult social care in Hartlepool which was acknowledged through the CQC rating of 'good', the national social care outcomes framework along with the Safeguarding Adults Board consistently positive outcomes in Hartlepool. In addition, it was also noted that the Centre for Independent Living (CIL) had achieved a national autism accreditation. Overall there had been some great steps taken towards the provision of adult social care in the town and this was highlighted through the receipt of the Social Worker of the Year Award and a Silver Award for Supportive Social Care in 2024 and the team were commended for these achievements.

In response to a question from a Member, the Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services confirmed that within Adult Social Care there were no external agency workers employed and that there was a good retention rate of employees within adult social care with no current vacancies. It was highlighted that Hartlepool was very fortunate as the feedback received from employees was that they felt well supported by management and their peers. In addition to this, for a number of years within Adult Social Care, there had been excellent opportunities for training and development which had led to a number of apprentices developing into social care roles.

The Chief Executive of Hartlepool Carers referred to the Audit Activity section of the report in relation to support for unpaid carers and the positive comments received as part of the survey undertaken. It was noted that Solihull Council had contacted Hartlepool Carers to ask that they share good practice on a national level which was a really positive endorsement of the excellent work undertaken by Hartlepool Carers supported by Adult Social Care. The Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services added that other local authorities had approached Hartlepool to look at areas of good practice being undertaken and the Team were fortunate to work alongside Hartlepool Carers through a long-standing commitment to support unpaid carers.

Decision

The Adult Social Care Quality Assurance Report for 2024/25 was approved and the work that had been undertaken to ensure quality of practice and to understand the views of the workforce and people with lived experience were noted.

7. Annual Report of Adult Social Care Complaints and Compliments 2024/25 *(Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

Non key

Purpose of report

To present the Annual Report of Adult Social Care Complaints and Compliments 2024/25.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services presented the report that had the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report attached at Appendix A. It was highlighted that during 2024/25, 32 compliments were recorded relating to adult social care. A total of 27 complaints had been received and of the 27, 2 complaints were resolved within 24 hours and 6 were not considered leaving 19 complaints investigated. Of the 19 complaints investigated, 18 had concluded through the local statutory complaints process with 1 complaint remaining ongoing to be carried forward to 2025/26.

As part of the Care Quality Commission assessment of adult social care services during 2024/25, it was noted that the complaints procedure was flexible to ensure that needs of complainants were met with procedures in place to learn from complaints and share that learning with management and the workforce.

In response to a request for clarification, the Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services indicated that the number of complaints received in relation to Older Persons (including User Property and Finance) reflected the fact that this was the service area that supported the highest number of users within adult social care. It was noted that users were encouraged to look for independent advocacy and were signposted to a range of different advocacy options including sensory loss providers, depending on the nature of the complaint.

A Member highlighted the excellent work being undertaken in the Community Hubs with support being provided to enable people to stay within their own home such as education around how to cook safely among other things.

The Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services confirmed that if complaints were received within a care home/service setting, the care provider can respond to the complaint on behalf of Adult Social Care. Complaints were monitored through the Quality Standards Framework and if the complainant was not happy with the response given by the care

provider they can raise it with the local authority. Where the appointment of an independent investigator was required, they investigate the complaint and the complainant has the opportunity to meet with the investigator. Independent investigators have no connection with the local authority and therefore able to maintain independence. A Member was pleased to note that where possible, complaints were dealt with at the first point of contact and this was reassuring to know. The Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services added that if a complainant was not happy with the outcome of the independent investigation, they were signposted to the Local Government Ombudsman and a number of people had taken up that opportunity.

Decision

The Annual Report of Complaints and Compliments 2024/25 was noted and would be published online.

8. Digital Innovation in Adult Social Care *(Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide an update regarding digital innovation and new technologies being introduced to enhance adult social care services, that aim to empower staff, partners and residents of Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Service Transformation and the Head of Strategic Commissioning (Adults) provided a joint presentation that explored the ways digital solutions were providing innovative change within Adult Social Care. This included a number of software applications for the provision of services within adult social care that would improve how people were supported and enhance quality, efficiency and the personalisation of care. Members were informed that the potential of digital working in adult social care was being seen as a means of significantly improving how people were supported by enhancing the quality, efficiency and personalisation of care. In addition to this, ways of exploring how digital working can be best used for the future development of adult social care.

It was highlighted during the discussions that one of the aims of the provision of digital access to services was to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the services required by the user. However, manual intervention would still be available to any users who do not wish to utilise the digital service. One of the key challenges faced by Officers was to

keep on top of the digital technology as it changed so quickly. It was noted that the developing technology would be used to support staff to be able to deal with an increasing volume of work. Where digital technology was used to record conversations with service users, their permission to utilise this technology was always sought beforehand. A copy of the presentation would be forwarded to the Committee as it contained a lot of detail of the different technologies being used and/or piloted.

Decision

The report was noted and the developments of digital working in adult social care was supported.

9. Allotment Strategy *(Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide an update on the Allotment Strategy and the proposed investment in sites in the coming months.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services presented the report which highlighted that the overall aim of the Strategy focussed on the needs of the current user group and wider community that allotment serve. A progress update on the action plan to deliver the Strategy was attached at Appendix 1. Alongside the delivery of the Strategy, there was a capital allocation of £149,000 to address issues on sites across the Borough. A total of £92,129 had been invested so far with £56,871 remaining. It was proposed that this funding would continue to deliver enhancements on site that had been developed after consultation with sites users as outlined in Appendix 2.

An independent review of the service was completed in 2024 and made a number of recommendations including streamlining practices and a number of changes to working practices had been implemented and these were detailed in the report.

A Member raised concerns that had been expressed by allotment holders that they had not received any feedback from the consultation undertaken in October 2024 and the fact that it appears to take a long time to re-let allotments once they had been vacated. The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services indicated that Appendix 1 highlighted progress to date in improving the allotment sites noting that

there were still further improvements to be made. The Coast, Countryside and Heritage Manager confirmed that this time of year was always a peak of people giving up their allotment tenancies. Recent changes had resulted in plots being made available to rent on a bi-monthly basis which was far more regularly than previously. It was noted that changes to working practices included visiting sites more often to ensure plots were being used/worked. The Project Officer (Allotments) informed Members that in the last couple of weeks, 19 new allotment tenancies had been taken up. The Chair emphasised the importance of undertaking regular engagement with allotment holders and was pleased to see the progress made in improving allotment sites.

Decision

The progress with the delivery of the Allotment Strategy and the agreed programme of capital works was noted.

The meeting concluded at 12 noon.

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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