

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the **Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 13 January 2017** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor A Batey (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, J Clare, M Davinson, B Kellett, H Nicholson, A Patterson and P Stradling

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Batson

Also Present:

Councillor C Hampson

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Crute, T Henderson, J Maitland, O Temple, A Willis, Mr I McLaren, H Smith and Mrs A Swift (Faith Rep).

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held 3 November 2016 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

5 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

6 Media Relations

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Diane Close referred Members to the recent prominent articles and news stories relating to the remit of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes). The articles included: rough sleeping on the increase, with the latest Government figures showing 3,569 rough sleepers on any one night in England, linking to Item 8; Durham County Council (DCC) celebrating its 1,000th apprenticeship supported following the launch of the County Durham Apprentice Programme in November 2011; a plea from the Federation of Small Business (FSB) to shop locally in the run up to Christmas, with Small Business Saturday; and the County Durham Plan (CDP) consultation being paused in light of a Government White Paper on Housing.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 DurhamWorks Programme - Youth Employment Initiative

The Chairman introduced the External Programme Manager, Helen Radcliffe who was in attendance to give an update as regards the DurhamWorks Programme – Youth Employment Initiative (for copy see file of minutes).

The External Programme Manager reminded the Committee of the previous updates given by the Strategic Manager - Progression and Learning, Linda Bailey in relation to the DurhamWorks Programme and noted that there had been good progress made, though still with some challenges to overcome.

Members noted positive aspects included: employer engagement; the Learning, Working, Earning Grant; support for vulnerable groups; marketing and communications; and programme evaluation. It was explained that challenges included: eligibility evidence; the Management Information System; and programme delays.

The Committee noted marketing and communications, utilising traditional methods such as advertising on the side of buses and radio as well as more modern social media channels adding that the marketing was targeted to areas specifically. Councillors noted a graph highlighting the impact of marketing campaigns and that the next steps included targeted campaigns focussing on young people and employers, plus the use of social media including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Members noted that there would be a comprehensive programme evaluation built into the programme, and that this would include feedback from the young people themselves as well as cost-benefit analysis.

The External Programme Manager referred Members to a slide setting out the current performance of the DurhamWorks Programme, split between all clients, and “verified” clients. It was explained that “verified” referred to the specific eligibility criteria as set out in the EU funding, with DCC waiting for evidence for around 400 clients from JobCentre Plus.

It was added that of those clients there was an approximate 50/50 split between 16-18 year olds and 19-25 year olds, though it was thought the number of those 18 and older would increase.

Members were referred to a slide highlighting outputs, with most measures heading comfortably in the right direction, though the issue of lone parents being highlighted as one that would have a specific programme and it was expected that another aspect to be looked at would be “inactive” young people. It was added that if there was a specific need identified, which couldn't be delivered by the existing Delivery Partners, then provision would be procured through the Sub-contractor Framework. Members noted information as regards the geographical distribution of DurhamWorks participants and an updated position in terms of the financial performance of the Programme.

Councillors were referred to examples of “DurhamWorks, Young People and Employers”, with case studies of young people working with: a staircase manufacturer in Newton Aycliffe; the Citizens' Advice Service; Weardale Adventure Centre; and a bearing and transmission manufacturer based at Consett.

The External Programme Manager commented that if Councillors knew of any young people that could benefit from the DurhamWorks programme to get in touch and let the young person know how to get in touch also. Members were asked to encourage employers to engage with DurhamWorks to discuss what financial incentives maybe available as well as sharing information about DurhamWorks through their local networks as widely as possible.

The Chairman thanked the Officer and asked Members for their questions.

Councillor J Armstrong noted an output figure of 1,205 up to July, giving approximately 250 per month, and asked was it a stretch target and how confident were Officers in terms of achieving the output targets. The External Programme Manager noted Officers were very confident and that the opportunities were huge in between May and November 2017 to be able to help those young people that have not been as successful at school, or to assist those completing A-Levels or a degree should they be struggling. It was noted that there was a small downward trend, however, it was felt that from May onwards that this would be remedied, having learned lessons from the previous year, with processes now in place to work with schools, colleges and JobCentre Plus.

Councillor J Clare noted that he had been speaking to a DurhamWorks Mentor who had a wealth of experience and had noted that the wraparound care being provided was the best they had ever seen. Councillor J Clare asked as regards the figures for Newton Aycliffe, specifically as regards those that were NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and what percentage of those had signed up to DurhamWorks.

The External Programme Manager noted 108 NEETs in Newton Aycliffe and a response as regards the sign up would be provided to the member. Councillor J Clare asked as regards the eligibility criteria, noting he had believed it was for 18-24 years olds only. The External Programme Manager explained that it was for those aged 16-24 (on the day that they registered on DurhamWorks or the day after they had left compulsory education) and that proof of age, residency, and unemployed or NEET status was required, as well as meeting the EU Programme eligibility.

Councillor E Adam noted the scheme was in the early stages, however added that he felt it was going in the right direction. He asked questions in terms of marketing and recruitment of young people to the programme, noting many organisations would be targeting young people at this time. The External Programme Manager noted that, in an ideal world, it would be preferable to prevent those at risk of becoming NEET actually becoming NEET. However conditions of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) funding meant young people could not be targeted while at school and they had to be NEET/unemployed before joining DurhamWorks. It was noted that other ESF funding is enabling this NEET preventative work to be undertaken and the Newcastle College Group were leading on this.

Councillor E Adam also asked questions in terms of structures in place to help identify those young people needing help to become work ready, and how employers would get knowledge of the programme and the support available. The External Programme Manager noted there were 6 Business Advisors and they would look to find opportunities and help “handhold” employers as some microbusinesses may not have had employed people before and would need assistance in terms of preparing a job specification, help with sourcing candidates and preparation of interview questions. It was added that there would be follow up with the young person post-start, with the young people having their own support workers too, helping at all stages to make placements sustainable. The External Programme Manager explained that in terms of identifying the needs of young people, the first stage would be to talk to the young person and ask what they wanted, where they were in terms of skills and knowledge, with issues of communication and confidence being assessed. It was added that not all young people understand the issues in terms of presentation and communication and therefore this is explained and each young person has an Action Plan specific to their needs. In some cases participants needs support to overcome basic barriers such as arranging travel or setting up a bank account. Members noted that young people would then move to either specialist DurhamWorks Delivery Partners or mainstream employment, training or education provision, depending upon the needs identified.

Councillor M Davinson noted the programme seemed excellent, noting the participation of lone parents and added that he felt this should be prioritised. Councillor A Patterson added that there were groups to look at, such as lone parents and care leavers where they could be financially disadvantaged if they were to take up a training opportunity, leaving those young people in a Catch-22 situation. The External Programme Manager noted that in terms of lone parents there was work with One-Point and Public Health with the Teenage Parenting Pathway and that with those aged 19-24 work was being undertaken with young people living in rural areas and care leavers. It was added that in terms of care leavers, the work of DurhamWorks was only one element, and the financial aspect was noted as an issue.

Councillor H Nicholson asked as regards figures for NEETs for his Electoral Division, with the External Programme Manager noting those could be supplied.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report and presentation be noted.
- (ii) That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to receive further progress reports on the delivery of the DurhamWorks Programme at future meetings of the Committee.

- (iii) That Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Overview and Committee be invited to future meetings of the Committee when an update on the DurhamWorks Programme is included on the agenda.

8 Homelessness - Update

The Chairman introduced the Housing Manager, Housing Solutions, Marie Smith who was in attendance to give an update on Homelessness (for copy see file of minutes).

The Housing Manager explained that the Housing Solutions service operated a Housing Advice Line (HAL), a first point of contact offering advice and access to specialist teams covering: Private Sector Housing; Homeless Advice; Home Improvement Agency; Gypsy Roma Travellers; Durham Key Options (DKO); Regeneration and Warmer Homes; and Family Intervention support.

It was explained that headline figures showed, from 2013/14 through to 2015/16, a steady increase in the overall contacts received by the Housing Solutions Team; a steady decrease in the number of homeless application and a decrease in the number of homeless acceptances. The Housing Manager reminded Members of the statutory duty in terms of homeless presentations and the work undertaken to provide early interventions to help people before they become homeless. The Committee noted that the main reasons for a tenancy breakdown were: a tenancy simply coming to an end and relationship breakdowns. It was added that the number of rough sleepers in Durham was low, however there would be a number of "sofa-surfers" and these people were harder to quantify and did not often present as "homeless". The Housing Manager added that the ages tended to be younger people; with acceptances often from lone parents and that geographically there was greater numbers in the North and East of the County. Members learned of the "Remain Safe" project and advice available in terms of finance and Welfare Reform. As would be mentioned in the next agenda item, there were well established links between housing and wellbeing, with the formation of the Housing Support Group. It was noted there was a need to understand the impact of upcoming legislation and the changes in terms of housing need. It was added that there would be a Supported Accommodation review and that direct access made available in terms of emergency accommodation.

The Housing Manager concluded by noting that challenges in the near future would include: the impact of the Homeless Reduction Bill, with initial estimates in the region of around a 60% increase in the duty for the DCC service; the Benefit Cap; a reduction in Housing Benefit payments; bids for funding pots, noting that successful bids were very specific rather than broad in scope; and monitoring and understanding housing need.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for her presentation and asked Members for their questions.

Councillor J Clare noted that the work in terms of the benefit cap was very joined up and very good and cited an example of a local resident who had contacted him and had a response from the DCC Team immediately. Councillor J Clare added that the response provided had been excellent.

In relation to rough sleepers, Councillor J Clare had tried to find a contact number in terms of reporting this and had been directed to speak to a number of charities rather than a DCC service, was this correct and if not who should he contact. The Housing Manager noted that while DCC worked with Streetlink, Members, or the public, could still contact the service via the Housing Action Line, and speak to someone 24 hours a day.

Councillor A Patterson noted the estimate in terms of potential additional work for the Housing Solutions Services, 60% and asked if this would be something that would be raised in terms of costs when the Bill was being considered by Parliament. The Housing Manager noted that the implication of a 60% increase in workload was being looked at by Officers.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That the Committee, as part of the refresh of the Work Programme for 2017/18, receives further updates on homelessness in County Durham.

9 Housing and Health - Collaborative Working - Overview

The Chairman introduced the Public Health Portfolio Lead, Tim Wright and the Senior Public Health Specialist, Graeme Greig who were in attendance to speak to Members in relation to Housing and Health - Collaborative Working (for copy see file of minutes).

The Public Health Portfolio Lead explained that the links between housing and health had been established for decades and the work of Public Health was precipitated by the peer review carried out by the Local Government Association (LGA) at the invitation of the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) around a year ago. One of the recommendations of the review was the Board to have more effective engagement with the housing sector. As a result the Board's Officer Development Group supported the need for the establishment of a Health and Housing Task Group. This is chaired by Paul Fiddaman, Group Chief Executive of ISOS Housing and Graeme Greig from Public Health. It was noted there was good representation on this group from the NHS, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Housing Providers; and DCC services, including Housing.

Councillors noted that from the initial meeting of the group there had been agreement to focus on 2 areas, a survey to determine what community based health projects Registered Providers were engaged in, and the piloting of a brief intervention training package, Making Every Contact Count (MECC). It was noted that colleagues from Spatial Planning had helped in terms of the survey work and that the training in terms of MECC was in recognition of the fact that any public facing staff in any organisation often had multiple contacts with the public. Members noted that MECC training involved what brief interventions were, the evidence for their use, raising an issue and using the 3 'A' approach (ask, advise and assist). To date 10 training sessions were held between September and December 2016, with 126 participants from 4 organisations. It was explained that there would be evaluation of the pilot and WFL had agreed to use two measures to assess individuals when they are first referred then at 2, 6 and 12 months.

The Public Health Portfolio Lead added that the next steps would include working with the Providers to determine any blocks on why Tenants were not being referred and how these could be overcome. The Registered Providers were keen to know whether, by being involved in this type of intervention, it could impact on their Tenants' life quality and more particularly whether any link with sustainable tenancies can be made.

The Committee also noted that there had been other Housing and Public Health projects that included: a workshop jointly facilitated by Public Health England and ISOS on the "Impact of Housing on Health"; "Routes out of Poverty" a series of training events for NHS, Children Services, Adult Services and Housing where each service outlined their role; the Home Environment Assessment Tool (HEAT), a tool used when Housing Solutions staff visit a home where there was a family with children under 18 years of age; and a primary care project to utilise DCC's fuel poverty programmes to target those patients with asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease to see if the uptake of the interventions impacted upon individual health and wellbeing and healthcare costs.

The Public Health Portfolio Lead concluded by noting that when looking at the practical interventions one needed to be mindful of the strategic picture in terms of reductions in budgets and these challenges were being looked at by the Head of Housing and the Director of Public Health.

The Chairman thanked the Public Health Portfolio Lead and asked Members for any questions.

Councillor J Armstrong noted it was encouraging to see joined up working and links with the many Registered Housing Providers in the County.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10 Quarter 2, Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2016/17

The Chairman introduced the Principal Accountant, Resources, Paul Raine to speak to Members in relation to the Quarter 2, 2016/17 Revenue and Capital Outturn (for copy see file of minutes).

The Principal Accountant noted that for future Revenue and Capital Outturn reports, the areas covered by the former RED Service were now part of Regeneration and Local Services (REaL).

Members noted the service had reported an outturn position with a cash limit underspend of £0.392 million against a revised annual General Fund Revenue Budget of £26.781 million, in comparison to the Quarter 1 estimate of £0.299 million. Members noted the variances within the budget, with the detailed explanations as set out within the report. The Committee were informed that the service grouping delivered the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings for 2016/17 of £1.118 million.

As regards the Capital Programme 2016/17, the Principal Accountant explained that the actual spend to date was £17.214 million with a breakdown of the major capital projects given at Appendix 2 to the report.

The Chairman thanked the Principal Accountant and asked Members for their questions on the report.

Councillor J Clare asked as regards an underachievement of rental income under asset management, set out on page 44 of the report, £366,000. The Principal Accountant noted that the service had started to look at the issues and work was ongoing as regards some of the properties, with it hoped that from 2017/18 there would be an improvement.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

11 Quarter 2, 2016/17 Performance Management Report

The Chairman thanked the Performance and Improvement Team Leader, G Wilkinson who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to the Quarter 2, 2016/17 Performance Management Report (for copy see file of minutes).

The Performance and Improvement Team Leader reminded Members of the bringing together of Regeneration and Economic Development and Neighbourhood Services to form the Regeneration and Local Services and that work was ongoing to bring the information together, with the remit and focus of the items reported to Committee to remain the same. It was added that following feedback from Members a new “dashboard” summary page was being included within the report with a more visual style to help present the performance information in a more concise and user-friendly way. The usual narrative and appendices with performance data would remain as part of the report.

Members noted the Indicators set out within the report including: a fall in the employment rate, still below the regional and national levels; the number of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), and those claimants aged 18-24 increased slightly, noting that this would change to reporting in terms of Universal Credit (UC) as people moved from JSA to UC. It was added that Business Durham activities had created or safeguarded 474 jobs and that the number of apprenticeship starts through County Durham schemes was 50. It was noted however that the number of apprenticeship starts sustained had fallen from last year, however this was linked to a lower number of apprenticeship starts overall this year as funding had reduced. Members noted that as funding was coming through it was thought this trend would be reversed. As mentioned in a previous report, there was a growing number of young people being helped through DurhamWorks, with 584 young people being registered.

The Performance and Improvement Team Leader explained that the number of affordable homes being delivered was in line with target, albeit less than the previous year though this was in the context of the Cluster Bids in 2015 which boost numbers that year.

Members noted the number of private sector homes brought back into use through Council intervention was slightly below target, noting interest-free loans available via the capital programme were accessible only by those landlords registered on the Accredited Landlord Registration Scheme. It was added that the number of net homes completed and affordable homes delivered were just below target, however there had been changes as regards affordable housing nationally.

The Committee were reminded of the work of Chapter Homes and noted 40 of 125 properties had already been reserved, with the first completions having taken place and some owners moved in. It was added that agreement had been made for Phase 2 and a planning application for the site at Chester-le-Street was being worked on.

The Performance and Improvement Team Leader added that in terms of tourism there had been a number of successes with an increase in the visitor numbers, an increase in visitor spend and an increase in the number of jobs supported by the visitor economy. It was added that activities had included: Lumiere; an Yves Saint Laurent exhibition at Bowes Museum; the Magna Carta event at Palace Green; and successful Visit County Durham (VCD) campaigns.

The Chairman thanked the Performance and Improvement Team Leader, noted the new dashboard summary sheet and asked Members for any feedback on this and questions on the performance report.

Members commented that they found the new dashboard summary very helpful.

Councillor P Stradling noted that the feedback from other Scrutiny Committees had been positive in terms of the new dashboard presentation.

Councillor H Nicholson commented that in terms of housing regeneration and the pausing of the County Durham Plan (CDP), there is a need to monitor the number of houses given planning permission versus those actually delivered. Councillor M Davinson asked as regards KPI 110, with a reduction from 67 to 21 core tourism businesses participating in the VCD Partnership Scheme. The Performance and Improvement Team Leader noted in terms of KPI 110 that previously there was a wide range of free advice being offered, however in the current funding environment this was now a fee-paying model. When the scheme was first introduced there was an influx to join however this initial momentum would not be maintained but the figure would continue to be monitored.

Councillor M Davinson added that in relation to KPI 94 in terms of clients accessing the Housing Solutions Service this had increased and was reported as "red", however there is a need for this indicator to be reviewed by the service as the number of clients accessing the Housing Solutions Service will continue to increase, as the number of homeless increase due to the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Bill, the Benefit Cap and the reduction in Housing Benefit.

Councillor J Clare asked as regards KPIs in terms of Housing Solutions and added that an increase in numbers was seen as a failure as reported, however he felt that this was not fair in that it showed the service was reaching more people and that this was a good thing.

He continued by asking whether those 3 indicators gave Members an accurate reflection of the performance. Mr T Batson agreed with Councillor J Clare that increased awareness of the service was helping to increase the numbers of people being helped.

The Performance and Improvement Team Leader noted that they were the correct indicators, however the “red, amber, green” reporting (RAG format) had limitations in being able to give a fuller picture and that possibly a new format with graphs showing overall trends not just per quarter or year-on-year would give a more accurate impression and that she would discuss this with the relevant Service Grouping.

Councillor A Patterson asked as regards REDPI 62 and what number of apprenticeship starts were as a result of the DurhamWorks programme, and also asked what reasons were behind the reduction in the number of affordable homes being delivered. The Performance and Improvement Team Leader noted that in terms of affordable housing there had been a change in the funding regime and while they were still being delivered, it was a changing picture. It was noted that Officers would look at the report in terms of how best to feedback to Members on apprenticeship numbers.

Councillor A Batey commented that in relation to RED PI 105, number of apprenticeships from Durham County schemes sustained at least 15 months had fallen and asked if Members could be supplied with information identifying the reasons for this. The Performance and Improvement Team Leader confirmed that she would be able to supply members with a breakdown of the reasons.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12 Minutes of the County Durham Economic Partnership

The Minutes of the meeting of the County Durham Economic Partnership held 11 October 2016 were received by the Committee for information.

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Stephen Gwilym noted that the next meeting would have had scheduled items in terms of the County Durham Plan (CDP), Housing Strategy and Regeneration Statement, however the Government White Paper on Housing meant that the CDP had been paused and therefore those items would not be reported at the February meeting of the Committee. Members were asked to note this impact upon the Work Programme for the Committee.