

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Joint Meeting of **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 5 February 2018 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor C Potts (Chairman)

Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Councillors H Smith, D Bell, P Brookes, J Charlton, J Considine, R Crute, C Hampson, I Jewell, A Reed, M Simmons and A Willis

Members of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Councillors J Grant and Mrs Hassoon

Also Present:

Councillors L Maddison and M McKeon

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Blakey, G Darkes, K Hopper, L Kennedy, A Patterson, S Quinn, J Robinson, L Taylor, O Temple, M Wilson, Mrs B Carr, Mrs C Craig and Mrs C Johnston

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from co-opted members or interested parties.

5 Obesity in County Durham

The Committee received a report of the Director of Public Health that provided a contextual overview for the presentation that focused on obesity and the work of the County Durham Healthy Weight Alliance (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chairman welcomed Karen McCabe, Kirsty Wilkinson, Jo Boyd and Liz Charles to the meeting who presented the following:-

- The aim and objectives of the Healthy Weight Alliance
 - The context of obesity and the costs and benefits of preventing it
 - The impact of the environment
 - The scale of the issue in County Durham
 - National and Local Drivers
 - The vision going forward – *‘to halt the rise in obesity in County Durham by 2022 and by focusing resources upon addressing inequalities, see a sustained decline in obesity rates locally to below England national average by 2025’*

Obesity was both a regional and a national issue, being overweight or obese in England in 2018 was the norm. The government states in their Childhood Obesity: a plan for action that the country spends more on obesity and diabetes than it does on police, fire service and judicial system combined.

Obesity was more complex than food intake and energy used it was interlinked with many other factors such as deprivation.

- Sugar Smart campaign
 - For Durham
 - Why was sugar such a problem
 - Statistics about the amount of sugar consumed and how it affect us
 - Community Survey Findings
 - Focus – raising, reducing, challenging, supporting and working with
 - Sign up to website

The presentation highlighted the fact that today’s children were the first generation predicted to live shorter lives than their parents because of their diet and inactivity. Sugar Smart Durham was focusing on raising awareness of the sugar content in foods, reducing unhealthy food and drink offers in leisure centres, challenging the tuck shop and sweet treats culture, supporting schools and working with businesses and restaurants to do more to keep customers and staff healthy.

- Early Years
 - Delivery, supporting children
 - The plan and where we are now

Members were advised of an early years tooth brushing scheme that was being targeted in Bishop Auckland and Peterlee areas which has support from dentists.

- Children and Young people
 - Working with schools to embed healthy eating, physical activity
 - Growing Healthy
 - Slow for 20 safer streets
 - Beat the streets
 - Active 30
 - FISCH
 - Childhood obesity pathway review

- HYPER – hearing young people’s views on energy drinks
 - What we know about energy drinks
 - Resources available – leaflets and short films

It was highlighted that whilst carrying out research on energy drinks it was found that there was no information to educate young people and families on the dangers of energy drinks so work was undertaken to produce a leaflet.

- Adults and Workplaces –
 - catering & vending,
 - Better Health at Work award,
 - stepjockey
 - Sport England Bid,
 - Business Durham
 - Adults and the wider environment

- County Durham Community Foundation
 - Background
 - DCC Healthy Communities Fund 2018
 - Going Forward – long term goals

The Chairman thanked the officers for the detailed and informative presentation.

Councillor Brookes referred to the links with alcohol and the contributory factor of the calorie intake associated with it. He added that the problem with obesity was that people were too inactive and did not account for the amount calories they consumed. Karen McCabe agreed that a lot of alcoholic drinks were calorie laden and people did not think about the calories they contained.

With regards to the dental problem Councillor Charlton asked if there would be a programme whereby school children were shown and encouraged how to brush their teeth. Kirsty Wilkinson confirmed that this would be carried out.

Councillor McKeon was concerned that mental health had only been mentioned once and queried if there was enough focus on mental health and obesity. She referred to the anti-smoking campaign that had been really successful and suggested that there could be any lessons learnt from that. Ms McCabe said that they were looking at this and she agreed that when people were suffering with low mental health they could comfort eat and become addicted to food.

Councillor Crute referred to the prevalence of deprivation and the socio economic factor and asked if funding was a problem as it was based less on need. He was advised that Public Health would never have enough funding to take forward what needed to be done. The generalised funding pot would help tackle obesity in County Durham with a focus on delivering targeted work. Ms McCabe added that it was important to work together, across the years, in schools, with oral health, to connect everything and make a difference.

With reference to smoking and tobacco health problems, Councillor Jewell asked if legislation could also be used in this context to combat the problem of obesity. He was also concerned that potentially solving the problem of obesity could have a knock on effect. Ms McCabe said that legislation was a driving force to combat tobacco and took years to put into place. It was also directed at a certain group of people whereas there could be no direct legislation for obesity as everyone was affected by food. Instead, there was a childhood obesity plan and products targeted at children and young people had to

reduce sugar. By 2020 the government wanted products to be re-formulated to contain less sugar. Ms McCabe went on to say that there were a number of complex factors about obesity, such as the environmental factors and the range of choices people had to make. People generally know about whether the choices they made were healthy and it was about putting that into practice. Councillor Jewell went on to say that there could become a problem with eating disorders if people took advice about obesity to another level. Ms McCabe that that this issue was being discussed at a regional level as it had been reported that some young people went on to have eating disorders. Further clinical information had been requested as a number of factors could have been responsible that made the young person vulnerable.

Mrs Hassoon asked if there would be hubs to support people in a detox environment who craved sugar, as it was an addiction. Jo Boyd confirmed that there was work ongoing to support people.

Councillor Maddison asked what was being done to tackle to food and drinks offered at cinemas, concerts and the fact that there were no warning signs up at these places to make people think about what they were consuming. Ms McCabe said that this was a very valid point and she advised that Sugar Smart were talking to these venues and retailers about looking at different options. The driver from government was to tackle this in public buildings and there was an opportunity to take this forward into the business sector. The Alliance were working with Business Durham and smaller businesses and it was about nudging what was available and what was acceptable. She added that businesses were becoming smarter and were looking at healthy options but that these changes would not happen overnight. Ms McCabe went on to add that a piece of joint work with the Planning Team was taking place looking at take aways and supporting policies in the County Durham Plan.

Referring to the Children and Young People's work, the Chairman commented that the Beat the Streets project had worked really well with positive feedback, with older people joining in.

Councillor Jewell suggested that this presentation be shared with other departments as he found it difficult when dealing with assets and planning teams at times. Recently he had been trying to organise exercise facilities within a local park and felt that departments would benefit from the knowledge gained today.

Councillor Smith said that the initiative to train staff offering childcare facilities was excellent but was concerned about training for parents and carers. She often found that parents could be defensive when help was offered about their child. Ms Wilkinson explained that nurseries work directly with families and developed menus with them, which could be used at nursery and at home. Family taster days were also arranged and work also took place directly with health visitors.

Ms McCabe added that Wellbeing for Life through the Public Health team were keen to promote trying new things and had arranged discussion and focus groups with parents. Alcohol would often be discussed at these events and the empty calories that it contains. Families were encouraged to participate in a range of activities. She did agree with Councillor Smith's point about parents often feeling defensive as they thought their parental skills were being questioned.

With regards to physical education, Councillor McKeon commented that there were many competitive activities taking place in schools and she asked what was being done to encourage schools to bring in non competitive elements. She was concerned that any interventions by the teachers and professionals in a school environment were carried out at the right time and in the right way. Ms McCabe explained that they were going into schools to develop healthy eating and physical activity at a level where everyone could take part. She agreed that there needed to be a shift in the culture and how we perceived things. She said that there also activities such as Beat the Streets that encouraged people to walk that could be carried out at all levels of fitness. The team were conscious that they should be taking activities rather than a sports programme forward.

Councillor Brookes said that the real cause of the problem was in the level of inactivity and that we should all be encouraging parents to walk to school and let our children be active. Ms McCabe added that it was about changing the social norms and did understand that often parents had to deal with a time factor if travelling to work and dropping the children off en route. She agreed that we all need to look at food, drink, exercise and whether streets were safe in terms of traffic and crime, and therefore a whole systems approach was required.

Councillor Charlton commented that a lot of parents would not let their children play on open space because the amount of dog waste. She went on to ask if the team would help local councillors to deliver a message in schools about the importance of dental health in their areas, with councillors funding being made available to help support this. Ms McCabe said that it was a three year programme that would be delivered to all children.

Further to a question from Councillor Jewell about sandwich shops and the dressings used being a contributory factor to obesity, Ms McCabe explained that it was a problem together with options for meal deals that some shops offer. Discussions were taking place with businesses about nudging at the norm and offering water and fruit as part of a deal rather than just the usual crisps and fizzy pop.

Councillor Reed asked what was required from local members in order to promote this piece of work. Ms McCabe said that she would like everyone to help raise the profile, let people know what work was going on, lobby, support us, help open doors for us and keep obesity as a topic for discussion.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report and presentation be received.
- (ii) That the Committee continue to provide commitment and support to the ongoing work to address obesity.
- (iii) That an update would be brought back to Committee in the next year.