



People and Communities Select Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 19 January 2024 at 10am in the Council Chamber, County Hall

Present:

Cllr Fran Whymark (Chair)
Cllr Sharon Blundell
Cllr Ed Connolly
Cllr John Crofts
Cllr Brenda Jones
Cllr Paul Neale

Substitutes Present:

Cllr Michael Chenery of Horsbrugh for Cllr Michael Dalby
Cllr Phillip Duigan for Cllr Julian Kirk
Cllr Chrissie Rumsby for Cllr Mike Smith Clare

Officers Present:

Hollie Adams	Committee Officer
Geoff Connell	Director of IMT & Chief Digital Officer
Sophie Leney	Head of Trading Standards
Ciceley Scarborough	Acting consultant in Public Health
Chris Scott	Assistant Director - Community Commissioning, Adult Social Services
Diane Steiner	Deputy Director of Public Health
Sarah Rank	Head of Digital Business Partnering

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Claire Bowes, Cllr Michael Dalby (Cllr Michael Chenery substituting), Cllr Julian Kirk (Cllr Phillip Duigan substituting), Cllr Brian Long (Vice-Chair), and Cllr Mike Smith-Clare (Cllr Chrissie Rumsby substituting).

2. Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest made.

4. Items received as urgent business

- 4.1 There were no items of urgent business.

5. Public Questions

- X.1 No public questions were received.

6. Member Questions and Issues

No Member questions were received.

7. Listening and engaging to refresh our Adult Social Services Promoting Independence Strategy

7.1.1 The Select Committee received the report giving information on the progress of Promoting Independence to date, and setting out how feedback would be gained from residents and used to update the strategy.

7.1.2 The Assistant Director of Community Commissioning introduced the report to the Select Committee:

- The aim of Promoting Independence was prevention and keeping people independent for longer.
- A public engagement exercise had been carried out and the level of response was shown in appendix 1 of the report. Most responses received were from British, white women. A quarter of respondents had disabilities and half were from people aged 55-57.
- Appendix 2 of the report showed a summary of feedback received from engagement. Key points were that people sometimes felt information could be difficult to find and so information in different formats would be beneficial. Residents wanted to be able to access support as early as possible and for the Council to be consistent in the way it communicated with people. People with sensory disabilities wanted more support accessing information.
- Coproduction and engagement would continue to be a priority to gain feedback and help people understand the difference their feedback had made.
- The updated draft of the Promoting Independence Strategy showed what people wanted from Adult Social Services.
- Information and advice would be updated to be user friendly and accessible so people could find options and services available and contact Adult Social Services for support.

7.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- The narrow age group of respondents to the survey was noted; The Assistant Director of Community Commissioning was unsure of the reason for this.
- A Committee Member asked whether people's difficulties getting GP appointments would impact on this strategy and people's care. The Assistant Director of Community Commissioning replied that there were examples of both good and poorer care in Norfolk. The Care Quality programme would help with this, and he encouraged people to get in touch with Adult Social Services if they were not receiving the quality of care that they expected.
- In response to a question the Assistant Director of Community Commissioning agreed that as people's needs became more complicated, and more than one agency was involved, there needed to be better coordination. Community support was valued and Norfolk County Council was represented at Health and Wellbeing Board partnership boards to ensure that community support was effective.
- A Committee Member raised concerns voiced by members of the public about the possible reduction of Minimum Income Guarantee. She asked what communication had been held with people in receipt of Minimum

Income Guarantee and their carers and whether a decision had been made to either keep Minimum Income Guarantee at the same rate or reduce it. The Assistant Director of Community Commissioning replied that he was unable to confirm specific information about Minimum Income Guarantee as this was not in his remit, however, when making changes officers would look at what consultations and conversations were needed with service users and the public.

- The expected high amount of population growth in the older age group and the impact on the adult social care sector was raised. The Assistant Director of Community Commissioning replied that having a clear workforce strategy in place was key to ensure the right workforce capacity and capability.
- A Committee Member asked how mental health support would be provided for carers. The Assistant Director of Community Commissioning **agreed** to bring a written response on support available to support mental health of carers.
- It was confirmed that InTran could provide translations of documents as well as easy read versions of documents, and sign language videos to help people access information where needed.
- Cllr John Crofts arrived at 10:15
- The support in place for older carers was queried. It was discussed that a system response was needed to support carers, across GP services, Adult Social Services front door and other services in the community. It was important for everyone to work towards a common aim of the role of the GP in support for carers.
- It was **suggested** that a report on support for carers, including Carers Matters Norfolk and support across the whole system, could be brought to a future Committee meeting. The Chair **agreed** with this suggestion.
- A Committee Member felt that some of the wording set out in the strategy was the same as in previous ones. The Assistant Director of Community Commissioning pointed out that the Promoting Independence Strategy had been produced over 5 years, and this report presented a refresh of the strategy. Feedback showed that the strategy was on track.
- A Committee Member asked about the support in place for young carers. It was confirmed that the department would work with Children's Services to ensure support was in place.
- The department would work with primary care to make sure they put steps in place to talk with people and find out if they had a caring responsibility. The Assistant Director of Community Commissioning **agreed** to take away a conversation about whether an ID badge for carers was possible.
- The Chair felt that the Integrated Care System could help progress things by improved joint working and that communication was an important aspect to this strategy.

7.3 The Select Committee **NOTED** the feedback from the public engagement activity called Conversations Matter and the supporting draft strategy. The Select Committee **highlighted** the importance of communication and working together with our partners.

8. Adult Social Services digital strategy

8.1.1 The Select Committee received the draft report setting out the Adult Social Care Digital Strategy for 2024/25.

8.1.2 The Head of Digital Business Partnering gave a presentation, shown in an appendix to the report:

- The council had RAG (Red Amber Green) rated itself against the areas set out in the “What Good Looks Like” framework to help support improvement.
- In prevention and early help, targeted intervention had been carried out with district councils. This work would help the department see what work could be done to impact on loneliness and early intervention.
- Funding had been received from the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) to purchase Alcove Devices for the Virtual Care Agency, and piloted with people who could not attend day centres. The Alcove Device was a tablet with a video phone and acted as a digital device for people with low or no digital skills. It could be used to help with medication prompts or wellness checks via video calls. There had been further investment in this service via a three-year contract following success of the pilot.
- Norfolk County Council was a leader in the country in some areas of its digital strategy.
- Assistive technology achieved the biggest savings out of the original offer, and this was being reviewed.
- The council was preparing people for the digital switchover in 2025.
- Funding had been received to fund digital coaches. On 8 January 2024 these coaches had seen 2981 people compared to the target of them seeing 1000 people by March 2024.
- The shared care record would enable people to tell their story once and save time for staff to care for people.

8.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- A Committee Member asked whether internet speed restricted who could receive a visit from services. The Director of IMT & Chief Digital Officer replied that 97% of people in Norfolk now had access to super-fast broadband, and the Council had been successful in getting £114m funding for Gigabit broadband access to non-commercially viable areas. This would leave around 1% of households in Norfolk unable to access broadband.
- The withdrawal of copper wire telephony was discussed, and that residents would need to use broadband for phone line access after this. The Committee discussed that broadband companies should be asked to provide discounts for people on lower incomes and older people; the Council had discussed this with companies. The safety implications of this change in phone line access were discussed, namely, the risk of phones connected via broadband losing power during a power cut. This would mean that people would need to have a mobile phone available in the event of a power cut to call emergency services; there were therefore safety implications for homes without a mobile phone or with poor phone signal.
- A Committee Member asked officers about Lorenzo; Officers replied that it contained good quality information. The shared care record now connected to the mental health trust information on Lorenzo. The shared care record allowed Social Workers to access information held by the Council, GPs and other organisations and now the mental health trust.
- A discussion was held about the withdrawal of 3G. The 3G network would be re-used for 4G. The Director of IMT & Chief Digital Officer would meet with network operators to see what would be done for areas which could not currently access 4G. It was also noted that some older people had mobile

phones which were not compatible with 4G. People with these phones would either need to upgrade to a new phone or discuss with their network.

- Withdrawal of 3G was industry led and the Council was challenging them to do as much as possible but the Council also had a duty of care, and the next Your Norfolk magazine would have information on this, as well as on Assistive Technology and removal of the PSTN (public switched telephone network) removal.
- The progress being made in AI (artificial intelligence) was noted, but the importance of human logic to override errors was pointed out.
- Officers challenged the comments made in the press about issues with Oracle by stating that the majority of Norfolk County Council staff were paid on time each month and that more people were paid correctly using Oracle than at any other time in the past.
- The positive aspects of face-to-face communication were noted as important, and that this strategy would enhance this.
- The Chair was pleased with the innovations set out in the report and that Norfolk was a system leader in many areas. He stressed the importance of ensuring that people understand the full implications of the copper wire switch off.

8.3 The Select Committee:

a) Considered the Adults Strategy and fed-back:

- The importance of ensuring people understand the full implications of the copper wire switch off, via mobile network providers and NCC communications team.

b) Reviewed the work under this programme, recognising that NCC is seen as a system leader for the innovative work being undertaken.

9. Norfolk's approach to vaping

9.1.1 The Select Committee received the report setting out a range of system-wide and targeted activities which would be delivered in partnership with Trading Standards, Children's Services, members of the Norfolk Tobacco Control and Vaping Alliance, and the Children and Young People Strategic Alliance, aligned to both the Flourish and the Norfolk Tobacco Control Strategy.

9.1.2 The Acting Consultant in Public Health and the Head of Trading Standards gave a presentation, set out in the appendix to the report:

- Legislation had been changed with an aim to introduce a smoke free generation. Selling tobacco to anyone aged 14 was now illegal and this would increase by one year of age each year.
- Data showed that 40,000 adults in Norfolk used e-cigarettes (vapes) daily. Vapes could be a good tool for people to give up smoking. 13.2% of adults in Norfolk smoked. There was a target to reduce this to 5%.
- The increase in incidence of vaping was highest in the 16-24 age group.
- Trading Standards work around vaping included ensuring that vapes sold in Norfolk were safe, and working with companies to ensure they were selling vapes from reputable suppliers. Underage sales test purchasing was carried out as well.
- A toolkit had been sent to school leaders and teachers in 2023 providing information on talking to children about vaping.

- An anonymous FLOURISH survey had been sent to children which included questions on vaping. The results were due at the end of 2024.

9.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- It was noted that some people believed vaping was safe, however it was the case that vaping was safer than smoking for those who already smoked.
- Concerns were raised about people buying vapes online and the safety of these, and what work was being done with online retailers. The Head of Trading Standards replied that there was a national e-crimes unit in place to support in this area. If people had concerns, they should report the website in question to Trading Standards.
- Cllr Ed Connolly left the meeting at 11:52
- There were hopes that in the future there would be a move towards vapes being sold in dull packaging in similar way to tobacco to make it less attractive to non-smokers.
- At this time the long-term health risks of vaping were unknown. A Committee Member asked when the risks would be known. The Acting Consultant in Public Health replied that there was no longitudinal research on this, but research had been carried out comparing smoking and vaping which showed vaping was safer. Work was being carried out looking at new evidence coming forward and the Council had tendered for a new stop smoking service provider which included provision for services to help people stop vaping.
- A query was raised around availability of traditional nicotine patches. The Acting Consultant in Public Health replied that nicotine was an addictive substance, and it was important to have choice for people; nicotine replacement therapy was still available but some types had been withdrawn from the market.
- A Committee Member felt that if vapes tasted like tobacco, they would be less likely to attract non-smokers. Officers replied that there had been a consultation on how vaping could be made less attractive to non-smokers such as by reducing flavours, ingredients and marketing.
- The Head of Trading Standards confirmed that legislation set out that it was illegal for retailers to sell vapes to under 18's but did not set out that it was illegal for under 18's to buy them.
- A Committee Member discussed that many people smoked, drank or took other substances to help them feel better in difficult times, and asked if this should be an area of higher focus. The Acting Consultant in Public Health replied that there was limited evidence of the reasons why young people vaped, and the Flourish survey would be important to find this out.
- Officers confirmed that it was cheaper to vape than smoke per amount of nicotine. Consultation discussion had been held about whether an increase in the cost of vaping would disincentivise young people from vaping.
- The Chair noted that a multi-agency approach was important in this area both in Norfolk and nationally to recognise what could be done. He suggested that the Committee recommend to cabinet that they put pressure on Government to bring forward the legislation changes needed.

9.3 The Select Committee:

1. Noted the contents of the report.
2. Endorsed the proposals made in the report by public health.

3. Recommended that Cabinet put pressure on Government to bring about the proposed legislation designed to prevent children and young people from starting vaping.

10. Forward Work Programme

- 10.1 The Select Committee received and reviewed the forward work programme.
- 10.2 Cllr Brenda Jones suggested a task and finish group be set up looking into the impact of poor oral health and setting up a programme encouraging good oral health. The Deputy Director of Public Health replied that there was work ongoing looking into oral health; she agreed to find out what campaigns were ongoing and **suggested** bringing a report to a future meeting on oral health across all age groups.
- 10.3 Cllr Chrissie Rumsby asked for a report on malnutrition and its implications on public health. The Chair **agreed** to see if this was most appropriate to bring to People and Communities Select Committee or Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 10.4 The Select Committee agreed the forward plan with the addition of:
 - A report to a future meeting on oral health across all age groups.
 - A possible report on malnutrition and its implications on public health following review on whether this report was best suited to People and Communities Select Committee or Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Meeting Closed at 12:17

**Cllr Fran Whymark, Chairman,
People and Communities Select Committee**



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