



Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on 19 August 2020
at 10:00 on Microsoft Teams (virtual meeting)**

Present:

Cllr Steve Morphew (Chair)
Cllr Alison Thomas (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Stefan Aquarone
Cllr Roy Brame
Chris Jones
Cllr Phillip Duigan
Cllr Ron Hanton

Cllr Judy Oliver
Cllr Richard Price
Cllr Dan Roper
Cllr Hayden Thirtle

Substitute Members present:

Cllr Brenda Jones for Cllr Emma Corlett
Cllr Penny Carpenter for Cllr Joe Mooney

Parent Governor Representative

Giles Hankinson

Also present:

Suzanne Baldwin
Debbie Bartlett
Harvey Bullen
James Bullion
Craig Chalmers
Caroline Clarke
Geoff Connell
James Dunne

Helen Edwards
Karen Haywood
Gary Heathcote
Andrew Jamieson
Sarah Jones

Tom McCabe
Fiona McDiarmid
Daniel Newbolt
Sara Tough
Tim Weller
James Wilson

Finance Business Partner (Adult Social Services)
Director of Strategy and Transformation, Adult Social Services
Director of Financial Management
Executive Director of Adult Social Services
Director of Community Social Work
Head of Governance and Regulatory Services
Director of IMT & Chief Digital Officer
Head of Communications - Assistant Director of Strategy & Governance
Director of Governance
Democratic Support and Scrutiny Manager
Director of Commissioning, Adult Social Services
Cabinet Member for Finance
Director of Commissioning, Partnerships and Resources, Children's Services
Head of Paid Service
Executive Director Strategy and Governance
Assistant Director, Children's Social Care
Executive Director of Children's Services
Head of Integrated Quality Assurance, Adult Social Services
Director of Quality and Transformation, Children's Services

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Emma Corlett (Cllr Brenda Jones substituting) and Cllr Joe Mooney (Cllr Penny Carpenter substituting)

2. Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 No Interests were declared.

4 Urgent Business

- 4.1 No urgent business was discussed.

5. Public Question Time

- 5.1.1 One public question was received from Mrs Marilyn Heath; the answer was circulated and published online before the meeting: [see appendix A](#).

- 5.1.2 Mrs Heath asked a supplementary question:

- Mrs Heath quoted Government advice on Coronavirus stating that Local Authorities were expected to adopt and enable the most flexible use of direct payments to manage issues arising from Covid-19. She noted that this could allow direct payment users to access equipment during lockdown, but that thousands of pounds of unspent funding was being clawed back by Norfolk County Council while reasonable requests for equipment by people in shielding, as low as £20, had been refused as they were not outlined in a care plan.
- Mrs Heath asked how care plans from before the Covid-19 outbreak were relevant in the current situation and how decisions taken in August 2020 could help people who applied in April and May 2020, taking into account the care plan easement guide.

- 5.1.3 The Executive Director of Adult Social Services responded that Norfolk had incorporated the additional Covid-19 guidance into its Care Act procedures once the guidance was published. The question raised by Mrs Heath was a matter of individual assessment, taking a case by case view of whether equipment requested was suitable to meet an individual's needs. The Executive Director of Adult Social Services expected staff to take a flexible approach towards previous care plans during the pandemic and was happy to follow up about individual cases with the Disability Network Norfolk Group (DNNG).

6. Local Member Issues/Questions

- 6.1 No local Member questions were received.

7. Call In

7.1 The Committee noted that there were no call-in items.

8. Covid-19 -Support for Shielded and Vulnerable People in Communities

8.1 The Committee received the report focussing outstanding issues relating to the response from Children's Services and Adult Social Care to support for children and vulnerable people in Norfolk communities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

8.2.1 The Committee received a presentation by the Executive Director of Adult Social Care; [see Appendix B](#):

- The Social care national position, such as testing in care homes, was arrived at in April 2020, a month after the NHS position was developed.
- Work was undertaken with care providers to ensure arrangements for paying providers and additional capacity available across the Norfolk system.
- The number of safeguarding reports had decreased, and it was now expected that they would increase again.
- Integration of software would be looked at moving forward

8.2.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- The Chair queried what effect the later response of the Social Care system than the NHS had on Norfolk. The Executive Director of Adult Social Services replied that although the impact of Covid-19 in Norfolk Care Homes was lower than nationally, the Norfolk care system was still impacted by the later response. As people discharged from hospital were not tested for Covid-19 until a month after the NHS started testing, this had an impact on care homes. The Executive Director of Adult Social Services felt the Council and the NHS worked together well to help the response during this time.
- The Chair asked for information on integrated working. The Director of Commissioning, Adult Social Services, replied that a tracker was in place to look at data across the local system, and through integrated working it had been possible to prevent care providers from running out of PPE or collapsing for financial reasons. Norfolk care providers and the Norfolk Care Home Association felt support given during the pandemic, such as weekly letters sent to providers, vlogs, and meetings held to hear the voice of providers, was good.
- Reflecting on lessons learned since the start of the pandemic, the Director of Commissioning, Adult Social Services, noted that a good infrastructure was in place across the system and the relationship with the care market had improved; Officers aimed to maintain this relationship after the pandemic by continuing the care provider meetings to hear the voice of providers.
- Officers were asked how quality of care was monitored during the pandemic; monitoring visits were not possible during the pandemic, however the care quality team now provided virtual support, virtual visits and virtual walks around care homes. Information continued to come in from visitors making window visits to care homes and was increasing as lockdown measures were relaxed. Ways to safely re-start monitoring and Care Quality Commission visits would be looked at.
- The main cause of Covid-19 outbreaks in Norfolk Care Homes was queried. The Executive Director of Adult Social Services reported that each outbreak in a care home was looked at individually but outbreaks early in the pandemic were mostly caused by hospital discharges without testing. Another cause was asymptomatic transmission by staff and family members, or outbreaks in communities where

staff worked. There had been an issue of staff moving between care homes; Norfolk County Council gave Care Grant funding to care homes to pay staff the wages they would receive working between different sites, to reduce movement of staff. The Executive Director of Adult Social Services agreed to provide Cllr Roper with detailed data on the causes of outbreaks in Norfolk Care homes.

- Further clarification given around the phrase “protective ring around staff”; officers clarified that guidance written on what to do in a pandemic, the care badge developed with input from staff, the national “clap for carers” and resources allocated to Adult Social Services by Government had all contributed to a protective “ring” of support around the care sector.
- Adult Social Care were preparing for a second wave of Covid-19 as well as the usual winter pressures; resources had been allocated to providers to pay “on-block”, in advance and to not charge service users; to continue this for a longer period resources would be needed from national Government.
- Officers had taken part in Clinical Commissioning Group research which included dedicated work around focus groups with experience in social care. Feedback from the care home staff, managers and residents focus group would be available by October 2020. The Your Norfolk panel were seeking feedback on impact, messaging, and how recovery and resilience was being handled and the Making It Real Group were giving feedback on the impact of the pandemic on people with learning disabilities.
- Officers were asked how staff self-isolating due to “track and tracing” would impact on workforce availability moving forward; Officers were planning for the “new normal”, incorporating steps to limit the transmission of Covid-19. Day care services were considering operating at 50% capacity and zoning and cohorting guidance was due to be released to support safe working in care settings which would likely reduce occupancy to 75%. Officers would work with the NHS to see what staff capacity would be needed to cope with the winter pressures and would look across the care sector to see where additional capacity would be needed if there was a second wave. Additional capacity could be provided by setting up Nightingale care home and ensuring enough reablement and home support was available.
- The Annual Winter Plan would be taken to People and Communities Select Committee before and then Cabinet in Autumn 2020; there was an 8% vacancy and 35% staff turnover rate, which was doubled for the impact of Covid-19. Early data for regular testing of care home staff and residents was not yet available
- The Executive Director of Adult Social Services reported that officers had worked with care sector employers and unions to ensure there were routes to raise concerns through a whistleblowing approach. The importance of the public knowing how to report concerns was also raised and the Chair **asked** for a briefing note on this to be circulated to Members of the Committee
- It was acknowledged that there were some scenarios where face to face working could not be avoided; routes were in place for staff to raise any concerns they had, and advice and guidance on PPE use was available and updated regularly. It was advised that social distancing must be carried out where possible, with face to face contacts being made only where necessary
- People were being assessed in the community, and assessments in care homes to help people move on to their next step of care could be carried out using technology; there was potential for some assessments to be delayed.
- Support for people being cared for by family members was queried and tribute was paid to unpaid carers. As services were reinstated, respite was one of the services being prioritised. Emergency respite had continued during the

pandemic and people for who care breakdown was a risk had been prioritised. A better advice and information service for carers was now available by phone than before the pandemic.

- The Head of Paid Service reported on analysis from the Royal Academy looking at the possibility of a second wave of Covid-19. It was thought this would most likely begin through September and October 2020 with a peak predicted in January-March 2021 but was still being debated. The second wave would predicted to be longer than the first but with a lower peak. Alongside this a mild winter flu could cause excess deaths in the single thousands and a bad winter flu season could cause more than 30,000 excess deaths.
- An update on lessons learned was due to be taken to Cabinet in November 2020

8.3.1 The Committee received a report from the Executive Director of Children's Services; [see Appendix C](#):

- At the height of lockdown, the number of referrals to Children's Service was half of expected. It was not believed that abuse and neglect decreased during lockdown, therefore that this was due to missed demand
- Children's Services were expecting a spike in demand when schools reopened for a wider cohort of pupils in September 2020, as were all Local Authorities. It was possible that there could be around 500 more referrals per month than usual. It was noted however that only around half of referrals led to ongoing casework, and the spike would be temporary, likely to reduce by spring 2021.
- If the spike in demand was significant, workers could be redeployed to increase capacity; modelling has been carried out to identify that in this case around 45 additional social care qualified workers would be needed. Support via community-based support and early help was also an important part of the response to a possible surge in demand
- A training programme would be developed for schools to help staff raise awareness and identify trauma; information advice and guidance would be improved so that families and professionals could access all information needed.

8.3.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- The challenges of completing quality assessments in timescale during the pandemic was queried; the Executive Director of Children's Services replied that work had to be carried out differently during lockdown, but in some cases, this had resulted in a greater level of family engagement. She noted that assessing some elements of risk was difficult without visiting a family home
- There had been less children coming into care during the pandemic; if the surge resulted in an increase in children needing to come into care then the demand and risks would be evaluated to identify how best to respond. The Director of Quality and Transformation, Children's Services, noted that one-year prior 125 more children were in care whose needs could be met; in-house care provision was strong and in-house fostering provision was being strengthened to improve the Council's resilience in this area
- Projections of the spike in demand were modelled on a worst-case scenario. Work had been carried out to understand the staff cohort so that if redeployment was needed, a small number of staff could be redeployed from each service.
- The Vice-Chair asked about staff members' response about possible redeployment in the case of a surge in demand; the Assistant Director, Children's Social Care, replied that in the case of a surge in demand staff would be chosen who were willing to be redeployed and who would provide a good service to children and families

- Officers were asked about the impact of the possible surge in demand on case-loads and management oversight; the Assistant Director, Children's Social Care, reported that a 4.88% increase had been calculated as the maximum increase in case load before redeployment of staff would be needed, impacted by the duration of the increase. Approximately 19 full-time staff may need to be redeployed across all teams and localities, which would have a low impact on managers supervisory requirements. In the event of a surge in demand, support staff could also provide more practical support to frontline staff in the short term.
- Officers were asked what had been learned from the first spike that would impact practice in the event of a second spike of Covid-19. The Executive Director of Children's Services replied that in order to create a protective system for children it was important for schools to remain open and only close as a last resort.
- The Chair asked how vulnerability of children could be assessed during a pandemic spike; the Executive Director of Children's Services reported that research which informed practice around determinants which increased levels of risk to children and families in normal times, and whether these would be increased by the pandemic had been looked at and used. Having no 'line of sight' to children and families could also increase the impact on the family.
- Children and young people had been asked how the pandemic had affected them through the Family Voice Group, SENSational Families, Young Carer Groups and others; packages of support had been put together for when children returned to school. Children's Services were working on a project with Research in Practice from September 2020; as many families as possible would be surveyed about the pandemic to see how to see how resilience had felt for them.
- A work stream was in place for young carers, with young carers feeding into it; young carers had fed back their fears around social distancing/peers not social distancing on the return to school and the potential impact of this
- It was noted that the pandemic's effect on the economy and employment could cause an increase in referrals to family support and social care
- The Executive Director of Children's Services reported that the county lines model had adapted during the pandemic and was now more online; nationally and internationally, gangs were going underground, and online exploitation was going up therefore the Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Constabulary responses to this were being looked at. The true impact would not be seen until children went back to school.

8.4 **RESOLVED**

- To **THANK** officers for their presentations and thank all staff for their work since the start of the pandemic
- To **NOTE** the report and presentations given during the meeting

9. **Covid-19 – Norfolk County Council - Internal processes**

- 9.1 The Committee received a report setting out internal processes that have supported Members and the democratic functions of the County Council during the Covid-19 crisis, including governance arrangements, ICT support and communications, both internal and external to the Council.
- 9.2.1 The Committee viewed a presentation by the Head of Governance and Regulatory Services; [see Appendix D](#):
- There was a requirement to deliver legal and accessible meetings; due to the dangers of returning to meetings in County Hall and inability to provide socially

distanced meetings there, it was decided to provide virtual meetings

- the publication of the Government Legislation, “Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020” enabled virtual Committee meetings to be carried out.
- The IMT (Information Management Technology) Team provided technological expertise to set up the virtual meetings and helped Members with connectivity.
- Democratic Services set up group and 1:1 training for Members, Member support and how-to guides to support individual Members with use of technology to participate in virtual Meetings
- Virtual Committee meetings were now streamed live via YouTube
- Information provided to Members was regular and consistent through weekly updates and a single point of contact was put in place for Members for queries on the pandemic; weekly updates would continue to be provided to Members

9.2.2 The Chair noted that the weekly group leaders’ meetings and weekly information provided by Norfolk County Council to Members during the pandemic had been beneficial

9.3.1 The Head of Communications, Assistant Director of Strategy & Governance, gave a presentation on the approach from communications; [see Appendix E](#):

- The Communications Strategy and Activity Plans were aligned with the Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) principles and County Council
- Communication cells and roles were set up working with the NRF
- 5 key principles were set out around trust, speed, accuracy, availability and responsiveness
- Each department was given a dedicated communications support staff member who attended their daily meetings
- An internal communications working group was established with HR
- Daily briefings were held during the pandemic
- The Norfolk County Council website was used as a one stop shop for all information as it had a dedicated information hub
- The Communications team worked with InTrans to translate information and guidance throughout the pandemic and shared this with colleagues across the system
- MyNet was launched for consistent messaging for County Council staff
- Use of animation would be looked at moving forward
- Clear and open media channels were set up at the start of the pandemic to ensure an open and transparent dialogue was maintained
- Information was shared digitally so it could be shared with all partners and to ensure consistency of information across all partners
- New tools such as sentiment analysis allowed the team to look at trends on social media and work with this information

9.3.2 The following point were discussed and noted:

- The use of British Sign Language in briefings was suggested and the Head of Communications - Assistant Director of Strategy & Governance **agreed** to take this back; translated messages included those in British Sign Language were being looked at for information and messages moving forward.
- Officers were asked what was being done to support the public to engage with virtual meetings; The Head of Governance and Regulatory Services **agreed** to

find out how many members of the public watched virtual meetings on YouTube. Meetings and the YouTube links to watch them were publicised, and there was good coverage in the Eastern Daily Press. There had been no increase in the number of members of the public asking questions to committees

9.4 RESOLVED

- To **THANK** officers for the presentations and information
- To **NOTE** the report and presentations

10. Briefing on Covid-19 and Strategic and financial planning

10.1.1 The Committee received the report from the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services setting out a briefing on the Council's current and future financial position to help the Committee better understand the Council's strategic financial planning process and undertake a more effective role in its scrutiny

10.1.2 Cllr Jamison, Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced the report:

- There had been a reduction in the level of overspend to £7.784m due to the receipt of 3 rounds of grant funding from Government, but Covid-19 costs were around £62.288m as at end period 3
- Each spending department was being looked at including the impact of Covid-19 on their spending to date
- Effects may be facilitated by further Government intervention and this continued to be sought from the Government
- No impact was anticipated of a second spike but the Treasury recognised that this may not be the case

10.2 The following points were discussed and noted

- There would likely be an increase in people seeking discounted council tax but the full impact of this was not yet known
- There had been an assumption of an increase in tax base based on new properties being built; due to the effects of the pandemic this would be lower
- There would be a roll-on effect on delivery of a balanced budget in the next financial year because of the impact of Covid-19
- Since early forecasts, the loss of savings was not as bad as expected; Adult Social Services had seen a reduction of £2m in their predicted overspend. It was likely however that the impact would be seen over a longer term
- The Cabinet Member for Finance confirmed that the overspend of £7.784m for the year 2020-21 was predicted outturn

10.3 RESOLVED

- To **NOTE** the report

11. Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel

11.1 The Committee received a report asking them to appoint 3 County Council members (2 Conservative and 1 Labour) to represent the County Council on the Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel.

11.2.1 The Chair proposed that the existing Labour representative on the Sub-Panel would continue

11.2.2 The Vice-Chair, seconded by Cllr Penny Carpenter, proposed Cllr Haydn Thirtle and Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris as the Conservative representatives.

11.3 **RESOLVED**

•To **APPOINT**

- Cllr Emma Corlett as the Labour Group representative on the Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel.
- Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris and Cllr Haydn Thirtle as the Conservative Group representatives on the Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel.

12. **Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme**

12.1 The Committee received a draft of the forward work programme.

12.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- Cllr Chris Jones asked if Members could see the forward work plan that was in place at the start of 2020 to ensure that any reports could be brought forward that had been previously planned
- Members discussed the possibility of pre-scrutiny. The Chair clarified that Cabinet were not open to pre-scrutiny at that time
- A discussion was held about the Children's Services scrutiny sub-panel; the Vice-Chair felt that more challenge should be provided to Children's Services. The Chair agreed that more work was needed on the sub-panel; the Committee needed to agree the size of the sub-panel as well as its remit and he hoped that progress on this could be reported to Committee members by the end of that week

10.2 **RESOLVED**

- That the Committee **AGREE** its forward work programme as set out in a report by the Executive Director of Strategy and Governance.

The meeting concluded at 13:39

Chair