

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Health & Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee** on Thursday, 6 December 2022 at 1.00 p.m. at County Hall, Morpeth.

#### PRESENT

Councillor V. Jones  
(Chair, in the Chair)

#### MEMBERS

Dodd, R.R.  
Humphrey, C.

Hill, G.  
Wilczek, R.

#### ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Angus, C.  
Liddell, J.  
Morgan, E.

Prudhoe, E.  
Todd, A.

Scrutiny Officer  
Senior Public Health Manager  
Interim Executive Director for Public Health  
and Community Services  
Healthwatch Northumberland  
Democratic Services Officer

1 member of the press was also in attendance

#### 46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E. Chicken, C. Hardy, L. Bowman and K. Nisbet.

#### 47. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of the Health & Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 2 November 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

#### 48. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions (a copy of the Forward Plan has been filed with the signed minutes).

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

#### **49. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Health & Wellbeing Board held on 8 September 2022 and 13 October 2022 be noted.

#### **50. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

##### **Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Service for Northumberland – Permission to Tender**

The purpose of the report was to outline the need to provide a drug and alcohol treatment and recovery service as part of the Council's statutory public health functions, and to seek permission to proceed with a formal tender exercise. It was noted that the report was to be considered at the Cabinet meeting of 10 January 2023.

J. Liddell, Senior Public Health Manager introduced the report (a copy of which has been filed with the signed minutes).

In response to member questions the following information was provided:

- The service had been successful in delivering safe and effective treatment for some of Northumberland's most vulnerable and marginalised residents. But people who used drugs and alcohol problematically were among those most likely to experience health and social inequality. They were also among the least likely to seek help from services.
- The service had seen fantastic results, which was evidenced by case studies, but patient needs were becoming more complex, there was higher demand for treatment services and there was a shortage of skilled staff in the sector.
- All substances had seen an increase since 2018/19. Crack cocaine and alcohol abuse were also on the increase.
- Alcohol was showing the most significant increase in recent years. Increased demand was linked to increased harmful use within communities.
- Drug and alcohol treatment was evidenced as being cost effective due to the savings created by the reduced health and social care burden and reduced criminal behaviour.
- The contract would be performance managed via formal quarterly contract meetings where the provider would be required to submit performance data, financial spend and a narrative report.
- The renewal of the contract was quite timely. This would create opportunities to update and develop service provision to ensure it could appropriately respond to new and emerging needs and demands within the local community. Work had taken place to ensure a more comprehensive service across the whole of Northumberland including the north of the county. More digital interventions, updated IT equipment and a newly funded vehicle would further enhance the service.
- Additional information could be provided to the committee on case studies to ensure members were content with the value for money aspect and could continue to monitor and scrutinise the service.

- Confirmation that all local authorities had to have a drug and alcohol treatment service.
- Local authorities had been allocated additional grant funding. The grant funding was provided on the conditions that local authorities consent to increased scrutiny and accountability via the creation of Local Combating Drugs Partnerships and that existing investment via the Public Health Grant was maintained to at least current levels.
- The cost of living crisis could potentially result in more people needing help from the treatment and recovery service. There was a financial uplift available to help those affected.
- To try and help those unwilling or unable, the drug and alcohol treatment and recovery service needed to be accessible to everyone. To try and meet the unmet need within the community there needed to be an understanding of what services were required and why some were unwilling to seek support.
- The service was part of a multi-agency response to ensure the full range of patient needs were met.
- Primary Care and GP's were well equipped to signpost those at an early stage of using drugs and alcohol problematically to light touch treatments.
- England did not have a minimum unit pricing of alcohol but the work and research being collated in Scotland about this was being closely monitored.

**RESOLVED** to recommend that Cabinet:

- Authorise the Interim Executive Director of Public Health and Community Services to proceed with the commissioning exercise for a value of £21,818,608 as outlined in Key Issues section below (the final paragraph).
- Request officers to bring back the outcome for Cabinet approval.
- The Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the service within 12 months. Information to be presented should include case studies, evidence based data and random samples taken to ensure the service is delivering across the whole county.

## 51. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

### Health and Wellbeing OSC Work Programme

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the 2022/23 council year. (A copy of the work programme has been filed with the signed minutes).

Members discussed possible topics to add to the Work Programme over the next twelve months, including:

- Ambulance Service including breakdown of data by area
- Ambulance Service Waiting Times
- Strike Action across services
- Winter Pressures
- Future of Social Care
- Domestic Abuse
- Maternity
- Social Isolation and Loneliness
- Dentistry

Regarding topics for future Task and Finish Groups Members felt that addictions particularly gambling could be a good issue to do an in-depth review of.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that he would bring a scoping report to the January meeting on the proposal for the Task and Finish Group. He also advised that any other issues to be considered for the Work Programme for 2023/2024 should be forwarded to him in the first instance.

**RESOLVED** that the work programme and comments made be noted.

**52. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that the next meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee be held on Tuesday, 10 January 2023 at 1.00 p.m.

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_