

North Somerset Council

Report to Council

Date of Meeting: 2 February 2022

Subject of Report: Policy and Scrutiny Panel Report

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Councillors Geoff Richardson, Ciaran Cronnelly, Wendy Griggs, Mark Crosby

Key Decision: NO

Reason: Report for consideration

Recommendations

That Councillors receive and consider the report from the Chairman of the Partnerships and Corporate Organisation Overview/Management Policy and Scrutiny Panel (PCOM), the Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel (HOSP), the Chairman of the Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel (CYPS) and the Chairman of the Adult Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel.

1. Summary of Report

This report provides comments from the Chairmen of 4 of the Policy and Scrutiny Panels, highlighting:

- a) key areas that the Panels have focused on for the current municipal year;
- b) on-going issues progressing on into the next municipal year.

2. Policy

The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's vision for: an open, fairer, greener North Somerset. Policy and Scrutiny Panels have an integral role in the delivery of the Council's aims and priorities by engaging with the development of policy, monitoring performance and holding decision makers to account.

3. Details

3.1 Partnerships and Corporate Organisation Policy & Scrutiny Panel

3.1.1 PCOM was formed in 2021 as part of a reorganisation of the scrutiny panels to better match the council organisation. PCOM covers Corporate Services and PCOM scope in brief is as follows:

- External Partnerships
- Crime and disorder
- Corporate Services and Finances
- Strategic Communications and Community Engagement
- Strategic Financial Planning

- Organisation performance management
- Strategic Approach to procurement and contracts
- Major Capital projects
- Council owned/controlled companies/organisations
- Local & Regional Governance
- Climate Emergency

PCOM's scope does **not** include Communities; this responsibility has passed to the Place Panel.

3.1.2 Due to COVID restrictions, the first two meetings of the panel have been held informally via Teams.

3.1.3 In the six months since its formation the panel chair has discussed the work of Corporate Services with the director's direct reports and highlighted items of interest for policy influence and scrutiny. These have been prioritised and included in the panels work programme. In addition, each Forward Plan is reviewed with the Chairs of the other scrutiny and policy panels to ensure all items are given the necessary scrutiny.

Items which have already been reviewed and commented on include:

- IT Strategy
- Information Strategy
- Digital Strategy
- Financial Planning
- Communications Strategy
- Accommodation Strategy

Reports have been received from:

- Winter Gardens Community Board
- Domestic Abuse and plans to comply with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Bid to levelling up Fund
- Climate Emergency Progress Report

3.1.4 The three Executive members whose portfolios overlap the panel's scope are invited to each meeting to discuss their work and upcoming decisions.

3.1.5 Three working groups have been formed:

1. ICT: To monitor changes, in particular options when the current contract ends and Modern Gov use.
2. Financial Planning: to review the process for budget development and budget engagement.
3. Accommodation Strategy; To monitor and comment on the Council's planned accommodation changes

An additional steering group is being established to align scrutiny with the various major capital projects currently in planning and delivery.

3.1.6 Two members of the panel 'called-in' the executive decision 21/22 DP 130 on the Appropriation of land at The Uplands, Nailsea, and a PCOM meeting was held on 5th August 2021. There was a unanimous vote to ask the Executive Member to rethink his decision taking Green Book evidence into account. The Executive

Member did not change his decision, and the Panel is unable to take further action under the law and Constitution.

- 3.1.7 The Chair used this opportunity to get feedback from the speakers at the meeting about their experience, and their views of interacting with the council. This led to a meeting to review the feedback, and a series of recommendations for improvements, which are being implemented.
- 3.1.8 The Panel will be ensuring continued engagement with Avon and Somerset Police from a corporate partnership perspective.
- 3.1.9 Items scheduled for upcoming informal meetings include:
- Customer Services Strategy
 - MetroWest Update
 - Castlewood Update (9th December)
 - Gas & Electricity Contract, with particular focus on the green energy agenda

I would like to thank the members of the panel and officers for their efforts in supporting the work of the panel. The next PCOM meeting will be a formal one including public access, COVID permitting.

3.2 Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel

- 3.2.1 The last year has continued to be an unprecedented challenge for our health service as they have continued to respond to COVID-19, whilst also continuing with business as usual. As the Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel I'm in the privileged position of meeting regularly with health leaders across North Somerset, as well as hearing about patients experiences and views. What is incredibly clear to me – and all councillors on the panel - is the exceptional professionalism, dedication, commitment, and heroic efforts that everyone in our health system has demonstrated during the pandemic.

The role of the panel is to robustly scrutinise our health system to ensure it's providing the best outcomes for local residents, but it's hard to not be in awe of everyone in our health system – no matter how big or small their role – who've continued relentlessly to care for our residents, often at significant personal cost to themselves (such as working exceptionally long hours during the height of the pandemic or cancelling personal commitments to fill in for staff sickness).

I don't for a minute believe anyone in our health system will read this report – why would you, it's a boring administrative report – but should you happen to stumble upon it I wanted to take this opportunity, on behalf of the panel, to say thank you for all you have done over the last year. You are quite clearly the best of us.

Since the last report to Council the panel has had a busy workload and has undertaken much of its work virtually – we've only actually met in-person once and this was under significant restrictions. The key areas of work have been:

- COVID-19 response (including vaccination roll out)
- North Somerset's developing Integrated Care System
- Weston General Hospital (particularly the challenges with Junior Doctors, lack of integration following merger, and Healthy Weston review)

- Central Weston Primary Care Estate Review (i.e. moving Graham road to the Rugby Club)
- Children’s Mental Health Services (undertaken via joint task and finish group with CYPS)
- Winter pressures
- Substance misuse and mental health
- Health and wellbeing strategy
- Integrated frailty model

This work has been undertaken through a range of formats such as formal & informal meetings, task and finish groups, and briefings.

You can see further details of the work we have undertaken in the section below.

The priorities of the panel over the next 12 months are likely to change with scrutiny moving towards Healthy Weston 2, Integrated Care System performance, back log of elective care, mental health framework and post-pandemic health service response.

Finally, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all the officers and Councillors that have supported the panel over the last year.

3.2.2 Panel Meetings

- **9th February 2021 (virtual informal meeting):** this meeting included the Panel’s initial consideration around the developing proposals for a medical centre on the grounds of Weston Rugby Club; the impacts facing hospitals as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic during the winter and how new strategies and approaches to treatment were helping to mitigate pressure on the system; and an update on the mass vaccination programme
- **18th March 2021 (virtual formal meeting):** included a review of the Council’s current position with respect to the Covid-19 pandemic response; further consideration of proposals for a medical centre on the Weston Rugby Club (with the outcome that a Panel working group be established to investigate potential accessibility impacts for patients); an item updating Members on progress with respect to the “Healthy Weston” review of health services in the wider Weston-super-Mare; and a review of North Somerset Specialist Adult Substance Misuse treatment services.
- **19th July 2021 (face-to-face formal meeting):** this meeting focussed on a review of the Healthy Weston health service changes after one year had elapsed since implementation had commenced. Members concluded that a Panel working group be established to consider the integration plan (to merge Bristol and Weston General hospitals to form a single integrated healthcare trust).

The meeting also included a review of the Council’s draft Health and Wellbeing strategy (which the panel endorsed) and the report of the Panel’s working group into the proposals for a health centre on the Weston Rugby Ground site. The conclusions of this latter report, that the plans did not sufficiently address transport accessibility challenges associated with the site, were agreed by the Panel (see below for further details).

- **18th October 2021 (Virtual informal meeting):** the agenda included consideration of the recruitment to, and development of, the integrated frailty and

care home model (planned as part of the Healthy Weston service changes); a review of the plans to address winter pressures in the health sector; and a further update briefing on the Council's substance misuse and mental health and wellbeing services.

3.2.3 Working Groups (since the last report to Council)

The three main task and finish workstreams comprised:

- **Central Weston Primary Care Estate working group.** This group last met on 16th July and agreed the report to the Panel (referred to above), concluding that it was unable to support the building of the health centre at Sunnyside Road (rugby club site), as was currently planned, due to the inability of the site to suitably provide access for public transport which they believed would be detrimental to some patients. The Clinical Commissioning Group was urged to work together with developers to look at reconfiguring the plans to incorporate suitable road access for public transport; or were this not practicable, to consider alternative plans for the relocation of the Graham Road surgery (such as an alternative location or branch surgery in the centre of Weston-super-Mare).
- **Children's Mental Health Services** working group– this joint working group with and led by the Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Panel (CYPS) was established to consider the parity of funding issues for children's mental health services (see relevant section in paragraph 3.3.3 below)
- **Quality Accounts:** due to time and covid constraints, arrangements were agreed whereby the Panel considered and agreed (by email exchange) formal feedback to the draft Quality Accounts (QAs) submitted for comment by healthcare providers in the district. QAs are statutory annual reports required of providers of NHS healthcare services - setting out performance against a series of "quality" indicators.

3.2.4 Workshops/briefings since the last report

- 17th November 2020 – Public Health Nursing service procurement
- 23rd March 2021 – briefing from Robert Wooley, Chief Executive of the University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust regarding developing senior clinician staffing issues at Weston General Hospital.
- 7th July 2021 – HOSP-led all Member briefing on contact tracing by the local Covid response team.
- 22nd October – HOSP-led all Member briefing on the planned implementation of an Integrated Care System (ICS), coterminous with the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Councils' footprint. In accordance with statutory proposals set out in the Health and Care Bill 2021, ICSs are "new partnerships between the organisations that meet health and care needs across an area, to coordinate services and to plan in a way that improves population health and reduces inequalities between different groups" (NHS England). ICSs will also replace, and take on the commissioning functions currently held by, Clinical Commissioning Groups.

3.3 Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel

3.3.1 CYPS Panel Meetings (Formal and Informal)

- **29 October 2020 – formal teams meeting** - Along with the standing items (Children's Services Budget Monitor, Performance Monitoring and Work Plan) Panel members received updates on the Children's Improvement Plan –

Scrutiny of the Children's Improvement Plan and Key Priorities in the Children's Improvement Plan; Expansion of Ravenswood School, Nailsea.

- Members were informed that a revised format for the work plan had been developed to be used by all Panels providing a uniform approach to facilitate forward planning of agendas for the year and a useful record of activity.
- **11 March 2021 – formal teams meeting** - SEND Action Plan, a SEND presentation Q&A session with NHS representatives; Corporate Parenting; and the Executive Member Report - the 2021/2022 Budget – What does it mean for our Children?
- Members were provided with a presentation 'Introduction to the Children's Community Health Partnership' and a Q&A session followed with representatives from Sirona, Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire CCG. It was agreed that a joint (CYPS/HOSP) CAMHS Working Group be established with the focus being to understand the parity of funding issues for children's mental health services across North Somerset (when compared with South Gloucestershire and Bristol); to understand CAMHS access issues and to engage with the plan to re-design the referral pathway.
- **30 June 2021 – informal teams meeting** - Annual Directorate Statement (ADS) – Children's Services the Multi-Agency Response to the SEND Re-visit; Winterstoke Hundred Academy Expansion Progress; the Executive Member report on key areas in her portfolio of interest to Members of the Panel and the North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together Annual Report.
- Members noted that many of the commitments in the ADS for Children's Services linked directly to the Children's Improvement Plan and the Action Plan that was compiled following the Local Joint Area Review (LJAR) of the special educational needs and disabilities services and it also encompassed the Education Commissioning Strategy which had been to CYPS and also agreed at the Executive. It also brought together some of the broader commitments particularly in relation to refugees, asylum seekers and families settling in North Somerset. In determining the future workplan of the CYPS Panel it was suggested that Members may wish to decide which particular commitments should form the basis for future performance reporting to the Panel.
- **21 October 2021 – informal teams meeting** - LJAR Response to the Department of Education with proposed Accelerated Progress Plan (APP); Children's Improvement Plan (Quality Assurance Update, Progress Update in relation to Corporate Parenting Care Leavers Performance for Education, Employment and Training); Presumption Competition for a new 630 place primary school in Haywood Village, Weston-super-Mare.
- Members were informed that following the outcome of our LJAR revisit in May 2021 the response had been provided to the DfE with the proposed Accelerated Progress Plan. A response was awaited from the DfE.
- In line with the Children's Improvement Plan the measures being implemented were to focus dedicated leadership capacity in areas identified for

improvement; streamline teams and work in a way which enabled and supported consistent high quality and effectiveness of practice; ensuring a focus on improving social work practice, with a single unified approach to recruitment, retention, learning and development; ensuring that all children and families received the right support at the right time to achieve good outcomes.

- Members were informed that the emphasis would be on developing a stronger, more strengths-based model of practice built around signs of safety/wellbeing of learning, confident practice and feedback and developing the quality assurance service and engaging the Principal Social Worker role to support learning and reflection.

3.3.2 **Briefings** – Improvement Plan - CYPS Panel members received a presentation by officers on the content of the Annual Conversation with the Regional Director of Ofsted and other Ofsted inspectors.

3.3.3 **Scrutiny Steering/Working/Focus Groups**

1. **School Organisation Scrutiny Steering Group**

- In-depth investigations of proposed school changes; pupil projections – methodology as applied generally and in particular in respect of new builds, including affordable housing; admissions arrangements.
- 26 November 2020 - Session open to all CYPS Members which included updates on the Education Commissioning Strategy 2021-2024; School updates, School Admission Arrangements, the Co-ordinated Admissions
- 19 January 2021 – Session open to all CYPS Members which included school updates, Term Date Consultation, and School Allocations 2021/22.
- 25 May 2021 – Session open to all CYPS Members. The agenda included Home to School Transport Updates (Covid and other updates, Database changes, school updates, the Education Commissioning Strategy 2021-2024 and School Place Allocations 2021/22.
- 10 September 2021 – Session open to all CYPS Members. The agenda included School Admission Policies for consultation (Co-ordinated Schemes both primary and secondary, community and VC schools, Fair Access Protocol); School updates.
- The next scheduled meetings are 15 December 2021 and 18 January 2022.

2. **Joint CAMHS (CYPS/HOSP) Working Group**

- The Working Group's area of focus being to understand the parity of funding issues for children's mental health services across North Somerset (when compared with South Gloucestershire and Bristol); to understand the CAMHS access issues and to engage with the plan to re-design the referral pathway. The aim being to work collaboratively with health and NSC partners through a joint meeting with the main method of enquiry being through the sharing of reports, data and verbal information).

- The inaugural meeting took place on 15 April 2021 (Parity of funding exploration (scope and remit, access to CAMHS); 8 July 2021 (draft terms of reference, examination of some of the documents that explained the current and historical situation regarding the level of funding/resources for children’s mental health services in North Somerset including the draft North Somerset CAMHS Gap Analysis); 1 December 2021 (current progress on the CAMHS gap analysis).

3. Children’s Improvement Focus Group

- The area of focus being to discuss and scrutinise a number of performance datasets in relation to the Children’s Improvement Plan- Children’s Improvement Performance Summary Key Performance indicators – How are they doing? Children’s Improvement Board Dataset – Highlights and Exceptions Report.
- At the CYPS Panel meeting on 29 October 2020 a report was presented on Scrutiny of the Children’s Improvement Plan. It was agreed that the original CYPS Task and Finish Group scrutinising the Ofsted Improvement Plan needed to progress from being a Task and Finish group to becoming a longer-term group focused at a strategic level on scrutinising the delivery of the Children’s Improvement Plan and renamed the Children’s Improvement Focus Group.
- There was also a recognition that in order to fulfil such a role Members needed some peer support, via the Local Government Association, from colleagues who had been on a similar journey. As such Cllr Ann Hartley, Shropshire Council, agreed to meet with Focus Group members to provide support and share her scrutiny knowledge and experience.
- Meetings of the Focus Group took place on 21 January 2021, (Scrutiny Brainstorming Session facilitated by Councillor Ann Hartley, Shropshire Council) 18 February 2021, 19 April 2021(Children’s Improvement Plan Quality Assurance): 24 June 2021 (feedback on members’ experience of undertaking individual case file audits), 23 November 2021 (focussing on the front door).

3.3.4 Future Task and Finish Groups

- The Chairman was keen to identify strands where the input of scrutiny would provide useful support and challenge and met with the Director of Children’s Services and scrutiny officers to discuss.
- The CYPS Panel already had a focus group looking at the front door (Children’s Improvement Focus Group) which linked to the Ofsted Improvement Plan. It was agreed that the **Children’s Improvement Focus Group would hear from partner representatives regarding their experiences on using the front door.** A meeting of the Children’s Improvement Focus Group took place on 23 November 2021 to progress these arrangements.
- **Accelerated Progress Plan.** It was confirmed that CYPS panel members would be provided with the monthly dashboard, as agreed at the informal CYPS Panel meeting on 21 October 2021, but that was an area where some

triangulation was needed, which would be valuable, would be around parent/carer views. It was agreed that parents who were not already involved should be invited to attend and who could contribute their experiences of what was working well, what they were worried about and what needed to happen – having that information could then lead the working group to investigate elements of the APP in a focussed way.

- **Care Leavers not in education, employment or training** – focusing on understanding the barriers along with the opportunities.

The Chairman would like to thank the members of the panel and officers for their efforts in supporting the work of the panel.

The first two Panel meetings of the municipal year were held as informal Teams meetings due to restrictions in place as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic. It is intended that the next CYPs meeting on 10 March 2022 will be a formal one including public access, COVID permitting.

3.4 Adult Services and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel

- 3.4.1 Perhaps the greatest challenge for the Adult Services and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel has been to maintain a steady focus on key matters of scrutiny and policy; whilst at the same time recognizing (and working with) the daily ‘coal-face’ demands that Covid has been placed on officer time and resources.

The need to compose future strategies and review and refine existing ones has been a constant feature throughout the year.

It has drawn the Panel’s attention across a broad spectrum of issues including:

- Composing planning policy for age/care-related accommodation in rural areas.
- A review of the private-rental sector.
- Future affordable housing provision.
- Understanding the new CCG and Social Care framework.
- Designing and hosting the Council’s Enquiry into the impact that Covid -19 has had on the ‘carer’ community throughout North Somerset.

It is also important to note that these actions and many others have taken place during a complete restructuring of the Council’s management infrastructure.

The Carer Enquiry Day was perhaps the most demanding (and gratifying) initiative to have been undertaken by the Panel. Members knew some 12 months ago that select-committee style Enquiry could provide a deeper and more-informed insight into future pandemic planning and the publication of its conclusions - and the proposals they lead to - will remain a key feature of the Panel’s work during the coming months.

3.4.2 Panel Meetings

- **25 February 2021 (virtual formal meeting)** – the panel agenda focussed on reviewing a range of Covid 19 interventions undertaken by Adult Social Care including: the wellness service, reducing hospital admissions, technology enabled care and social care brokerage, together with the Council’s approach to Care Act Easements under the Coronavirus Act 2020. It also included updates on the mental Health Support Pilot and Private Rented Housing Review progress.

- **8 July 2021 (virtual informal meeting)** – the panel considered the Directorate Statement, an update on Adult Care Commissioning and reports on delayed transfers of care and provisions for supporting Council staff carers.
- **4 November (virtual informal meeting)** – included a briefing on the Government’s recent Social Care reform announcement, a progress update on the Mental Health Support Pilot update, the annual report on Adult Safeguarding, a progress report on Private Sector Housing and consideration of the Service’s plans for addressing the “winter pressures” challenges over the forthcoming winter period.

3.4.3 Working Group activity (since the last report to Council)

The three task and finish workstreams comprised:

- **The Planning Policy review working group:** which, in liaison with adult social care and planning officers, considered opportunities in Local Plan policy development to better support the availability of suitable homes for older and vulnerable people, supporting the Council’s policies around promoting wellbeing by better supporting people’s independence for as long as possible. The working group’s recommendations were forwarded to planning officers and the Place Policy & Scrutiny Panel and will be considered during that Panel’s ongoing formal engagement on Local Plan development.
- **The Joint Cladding (and other related safety issues) Working group** (with Place Policy and Scrutiny Panel) was tasked by the Council to consider the local implications arising from the Grenfell Enquiry. It last met on 30th November and will report back to the Council in due course with its conclusions and recommendations.
- **Carer Enquiry Day steering group:** this has met periodically during 2021 to plan the Panel’s select-committee style (Enquiry Day) hearing, held on 19th October. The purpose of the Enquiry Day hearing was to consider the impacts of Covid-19 on carers and, in doing so, inform the development of the Council’s Carers’ Strategy. It took evidence from local carers, service providers and key stakeholders about their experience of receiving or delivering carer support services throughout the enduring pandemic. A report setting out the panels conclusions and recommendations will be produced in due course.

3.4.4 Briefings and standing groups activity (since the last report to Council)

- The Housing Issues Standing Group (which last met on 15th June) tracked and received officer briefings on emerging housing issues and developments.
- The Commissioning Standing Group (which last met on 14th October) tracked and received officer briefings on emerging commissioning issues and developments
- 9th September: ASH-led all Councillor briefing on the development of the Council’s Housing Strategy
- 1st October – ASH-led all Councillor briefing on “Co-production” principles for commissioning adult care services.

4. Consultation

The Panels undertake regular consultation with officers, Councillors, the Executive Members and relevant partners through working group and steering group monitoring and Panel reporting.

5. Financial Implications

None specific

Costs

None

Funding

None

6. Legal Powers and Implications

Policy and Scrutiny Panels operate within legislation and the Council's Constitution

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

Climate Emergency is included in the remit of the Partnerships and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel due to its council-wide responsibility

8. Risk Management

N/A

9. Equality Implications

N/A

10. Corporate Implications

None

11. Options Considered

None

Authors:

Geoff Richardson, Chairman of the Partnerships and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Ciaran Cronnelly, Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Wendy Griggs, Chairman of the Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Mark Crosby, Chairman of the Adult Services and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Contact Officer:

Philippa Penney, Electoral Services and Scrutiny Manager

Email: philippa.penney@n-somerset.gov.uk Telephone: 01275 884010

Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

Policy and Scrutiny Panel agenda, reports and minutes

<https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>