

North Somerset Council

Report to the Council

Date of Meeting: 21 February 2023

Subject of Report: Report from all Policy and Scrutiny Panels

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Councillors John Crockford-Hawley, Ciaran Cronnelly, Wendy Griggs, Geoffrey Richardson, Timothy Snaden

Key Decision: No

Reason:

No decision being taken

Recommendations

That Councillors receive and consider the report from the Chairs of all five Policy and Scrutiny Panels.

1. Summary of Report

This report provides comment from the Chairs of each of the Policy and Scrutiny Panels, highlighting:

- a) key areas and achievements that the Panels have focused on for the current municipal year; and
- b) on-going issues for consideration of the next administration for the new term following the scheduled North Somerset Council local elections taking place in May 2023.

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 Adult and Social Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel (ASH)

3.1.1 Panel Activities 2022 - 2023:

- 3.1.1.1 The Panel's Carers Inquiry Day and recommendations which included the appointment of the Council's Carers' Champion.
- 3.1.1.2 Working with the Adult Social Services directorate on the adult social care reforms, including the Fair Cost of Care exercise.
- 3.1.1.3 Oversight of the Technology Enabled Care (TEC) being piloted by the directorate.
- 3.1.1.4 Feeding into the update to the HomeChoice allocations policy

3.1.2 Plans for 2023-24:

- 3.1.2.1 **Care Quality Commission inspection:** ensuring that Adult Social Services are prepared and proactively working towards the key themes of the inspection.
- Working with people: assessing needs (including unpaid carers) supporting people to live healthier lives, prevention, wellbeing, information and advice.
 - Providing support: markets (including commissioning) and partnership working.
 - Ensuring safety: safeguarding, safe systems and continuity of care.
 - Leadership and workforce: capable and compassionate leaders, learning improvement, innovation, experience of equalities.
 - Infrastructure: programme management, communications.
- 3.1.2.2 **Carers:** agreeing the strategy for unpaid carers and developing the action plan to ensure that carers in NS have the information, guidance, advice and support required to support them in their caring responsibilities.
- 3.1.2.3 **Asylum seeker programme:** ensuring that the Council responds to the needs of people living in contingency asylum seeker hotels ensuring their dignity and human rights are maintained.
- 3.1.2.4 **Digital technology and telecare:** reablement, ensuring that our strategy is embedded in practice and residents are supported to maximise their independence and wellbeing.
- 3.1.2.5 **Housing solutions:** managing home choice applications, homelessness in the context of residents managing cost of living and inflationary pressures.
- 3.1.2.6 **BCF/Discharge grant/D2A programme:** having oversight of hospital discharge, the discharge grant and transformation plan in respect of discharge to assess.

3.2 **Children and Young People's Policy and Scrutiny Panel (CYPS)**

3.2.1 Panel Activities 2022 – 2023

Improved member participation in the scrutiny of Children and Young Person's scrutiny services by:

- 3.2.1.1 Task and Finish groups created so that Members can further engage in scrutiny of specific areas of children's services in -
- Provision of services and support for Care Leavers.
 - North Somerset's process and policies for provision of SEND services.
 - Progress in Areas of needed Improvement as identified by Ofsted.
- 3.2.1.2 Improved communication between Members and officers ensuring that all are fully engaged and supportive of the progress and policies, strategies and target supporting this progress.
- 3.2.1.3 Supported the needed expansion of staff in children's services and supported the new appointments in the directorate.
- 3.2.1.4 Contribution and support to the school Organisation Panel and total approval of the ambition to provide school places within North Somerset for all young people.

3.2.2 Plans for 2023 – 2024

- 3.2.2.1 Members to continue to contribute to the implementation of strategies to continue the improvement of children's services so to ensure a GOOD in the next Ofsted Inspection.

3.2.2.2 Members to continue to engage with our service users - families, schools, young people etc - to ensure the officers are further informed of the perceived successes and weaknesses of the services they receive.

3.3 Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel (HOSP)

3.3.1 I started last year's report talking about the unprecedented challenge our health service is facing and how I – and the Panel - were struck by the exceptional professionalism, dedication, commitment, and heroic efforts of everyone in the health service.

This year's report is no different – the environment remains relentlessly challenging and as a Panel we still remain in awe of everyone working in, and supporting, our health services.

The challenge and change this time however is different.

This year we've seen Integrated Care Systems become law - abolishing Clinical Commissioning Groups – with the aim of driving collaboration across a range of partners from statutory organisations to voluntary with the goal of improving health outcomes. This is very new with its strategy still in development so the changes it'll bring about are unknown.

Alongside this the next phase of Healthy Weston was agreed and is now being implemented and we saw the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy launch. All positive developments which have the ability to reduce inequalities and improve health outcomes.

The role of the Panel is to scrutinise and this means looking at the good things, and the bad. The Panel heard many great things during the year including the improved CQC report for Weston General Hospital and how services are responding to changes brought about by COVID, amongst many others. But the Panel was also left disappointed by issues such as the lack of access to dentists across North Somerset and the rise in ambulance wait times. These are issues which future Members of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel will need to monitor closely.

This will be my last report of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel so I wanted to record my immense gratitude to all the officers – from within and outside of the council and Integrated Care Board (ICB) that have supported the Panel. Their commitment, dedication and constructive engagement has allowed us councillors to carry out our roles effectively.

I'd also like to thank Healthwatch for their insights and research which as a Panel we've always found incredibly helpful.

Finally, I'd also like to thank all Panel Members for their contributions, enthusiasm, and willingness to ask the difficult questions – I think together we've helped make a positive difference to health services across North Somerset.

3.3.2 Since the last report to Council the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel has remained busy and has scrutinised a wide variety of issues. The key areas we've looked at are:

- Reviewed the annual priorities of the (then) Clinical Commission Group, Adult Services and Public Health directorates.
- Dental Provision across North Somerset.

- Eating disorders.
- Development and implementation of the Integrated Care Board.
- Primary care performance.
- Ambulance response times.
- Healthy Weston 2.
- Winter pressures.
- Mental health needs assessment.
- Weston General Hospital.
- Joint health and wellbeing strategy.

This work has been supported through a variety of formats including formal and informal meetings, briefings and working groups.

3.3.4 Over the last 12 months we've supported with the following briefings:

- Mental health needs assessment.
- Integrated Care Strategy.
- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Development.
- Healthy Weston 2.

3.3.5 Alongside our formal Panel meetings we've also had an ad-hoc working group between HOSP Members and the Senior Leadership team at Weston General Hospital, focussing on their integration work and the actions they are taking to make improvements following poor CQC reports. We've met 3 times and we've seen significant improvements such as all integration work being completed, improved CQC report, new leadership appointments based at Weston and improvements to practices supporting staff.

3.3.6 With the four-year term shortly coming to an end the make-up of the future Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel is likely to be different which may bring with it different approaches and priorities. The future Panel will take things in the direction they feel appropriate, but no-one leaves a handover document for out-going Chairs and Panel Members, so to be helpful my guidance to future Members of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be to focus on the following six priorities early into your term:

- **Priority 1:** Ensuring that North Somerset residents see the benefits of the new Integrated Care System and this is truly collaborative across all partners.
- **Priority 2:** Access to dentist across North Somerset needs to vastly improve and with the Integrated Care System taking on greater responsibility for this locally it offers an opportunity to influence. Working with Bristol and South Gloucestershire Councils via the Joint Health Overview Scrutiny Committee will be important.
- **Priority 3:** Weston General Hospital has made significant improvements in recent months following their latest CQC report. Continue to work closely with the Trust to ensure continued improvement in patient outcomes.
- **Priority 4:** Monitor the Healthy Weston 2 programme and whether this has delivered the benefits envisaged and influence the next stages of the strategy.
- **Priority 5:** Hospital discharge remains a challenge, so work closely with the Adult Services and Housing Policy Scrutiny Panel to provide assurance and scrutiny that steps are being taken to address this.
- **Priority 6:** The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy is relatively new across North Somerset and has the potential to reduce health inequalities across North Somerset, but it will only be effective if all partners fully embrace and commit to it. So engage with the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Board, and use the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel to support this.

3.4 Place Policy and Scrutiny Panel (Place)

3.4.1 The Place Panel workload has been exceptionally heavy and I thank colleagues and officers for their regular participation and contributions. Meetings have sometimes been purely informative but nevertheless important as a means of helping non-Executive Members understand, question and participate in collective council decision making. At other times the Panel has become more deeply engaged in analysing issues and creating the lead for decision making (the Local Plan being an example of many such conversations).

Though formal meetings have been open to public and press attendance most sessions have been informal and on-line. Informal meetings seem to facilitate easier conversation and greater understanding of nuance but, being 'private', have no public impact. (An accountability issue worth thinking about?).

3.4.2 The Panel formally considered:

Development Programme Updates.
Transport Decarbonisation Action Plan.
Placemaking Strategies: Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead.
Weston placemaking funding applications and investments.
Your Neighbourhood Update.
Bus Service and BSIP Update.
Budget monitor.

3.4.3 Additionally the Panel also considered the following matters informally:

The closure of Churchill Leisure Centre.
Housing Infrastructure Fund – Banwell bypass and Winterstoke Hundred Academy expansion.
Nominations to the Local List.
Waste strategy.
Winterstoke Road bridge replacement.
Castlewood redevelopment.
Flood risk management strategy.
Future Highways Service delivery model.
Rights of Way improvement plan.
Ash Dieback.

3.4.4 My personal thanks to colleagues for their participation, good humour and kindly toleration of the Chairman; and we are all indebted to Brent Cross and Leo Taylor for making recorded sense of the year's deliberations.

3.5 Partnerships and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel (PCOM)

3.5.1 Activities in 2022 inter alia

3.5.1.1 Agreed new and more rigorous timetable for member and scrutiny participation for review and challenge of budgets.

3.5.1.2 Reviewed Accommodation Strategy.

3.5.1.3 Reviewed Energy Commissioning and Procurement Plan.

3.5.1.4 Contributed to, and scrutinized plans for improvement in Customer Service.

3.5.1.5 Reviewed and contributed to new IT Strategy and reviewed Members' IT requirements.

3.5.1.6 Helped establish capital spending controls and improved major project governance and scrutiny.

3.5.1.7 Supported development of Climate Emergency action plan.

3.5.2 Plans for 2023

3.5.2.1 Contribute to policy discussions for the procurement of energy.

3.5.2.2 Arrange all member briefings/consultations on 2023-24 budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

3.5.2.3 Ensure Customer Services improvements happen as planned.

3.5.2.4 Ensure capital spending and major projects provide value for money.

3.5.2.5 Ensure Climate Emergency actions are met.

3.5.2.6 Support Community Safety initiatives.

3.5.3 I would like to thank the Members of the Panel, in particular vice chair Stuart McQuillan, for their hard work, and the officers for donating their valuable time to provide briefings and answer questions, and Leo Taylor and Philippa Penney for their valuable support and advice.

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

6. Legal Powers and Implications

Policy and Scrutiny Panels operate within relevant legislation and in accordance with 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:

John Crockford-Hawley – Chair of Place Panel

Ciaran Cronnelly – Chair of Health Panel

Wendy Griggs – Chair of CYPS Panel

Geoffrey Richardson – Chair of PCOM Panel

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Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

Policy and Scrutiny Panel agenda, reports and minutes
<https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>