

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT TEAM ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTIVITY

Scrutiny Management Team

Since the report to the last Council meeting the Scrutiny Management Team has met twice. The first meeting was held on 19th July where -

- We received a presentation from the Council's Lead for Community Safety on the work of the **Community Safety Partnership**. This included crime figures to June 2016 and details of the priorities for Pendle as detailed in the Partnership Plan 2016-19. It was interesting to hear of the different programmes and schemes in operation, which included a Burglary Reduction Programme; DNA Scheme; organised Crime Project; and use of new anti-social behaviour powers. However, we are concerned about the uncertain future of Domestic Violence Services. This has been identified as a future challenge by the Partnership and referred to in the annual update on progress of the Sustainable Communities Strategy Thematic Groups, which we also considered at the meeting.
- We welcomed our Financial Services Manager and Revenues Manager to assist with our review on the behaviour of **Debt Enforcement Officers**. We learnt that enforcement activity is governed by government legislation, regulation and a code of practice for members of the Civil Enforcement Association. However, to support this, we were told that Pendle Council was to adopt a local code of practice and a draft of this was presented to us for consideration and comment. We discussed various elements of the code and in particular what methods would be used to identify vulnerability. Whilst recognising that further work was required on the document, we recommended that the broad outline of the draft Enforcement Agent Code of Practice be approved. The Executive agreed with this at its August meeting and a local code of practice has been agreed.
- The Team discussed the Council's **annual emissions report** which included information on fuel used in boilers, furnaces or turbines; consumption of purchased electricity; and staff business travel. We noted that, overall the annual performance is encouraging, showing year on year reductions for the building stock and transport fleet. However, staff travel data has increased over the year, so further analysis is to be carried out.

At the meeting, Councillor Hartley offered the use of a Thermal Imaging Camera owned by Barnoldswick Town Council, to detect heat leaks from buildings. At his request we extended this invitation to all Parish and Town Councils of the Borough. Please let Councillor Hartley know if you are interested in making use of the camera.

- We received our six monthly update on the work of **Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee** from the Council's representative, Councillor Wayne Blackburn. The main topic of discussion had been the closure of the Chorley Accident and Emergency Department and the knock-on effect to other hospitals. This was going to be discussed further at their August meeting and we hope to receive an update on this at our meeting in January.

Our second meeting was held on the 13th September. At this meeting –

- We began a review on the impact of **disability cuts** on the people of Pendle, by gathering information on the welfare reforms that had taken place in 2013. Members will have heard of these as they became commonly known as the ‘Bedroom Tax’. We learnt that 585 households in Pendle had been affected by the tax at its introduction and that many of these had applied for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) to assist with the payment of their rent. Due to the significance of the changes, the Government has provided us with additional funding for DHPs. However, it is a requirement that all unspent funds be returned and this results in a reduced award the following year. The Team noted that, at the end of each year we had returned funds, despite work being carried out with Housing Pendle and Registered Social Landlords, and when dealing with debtors for council tax arrears, to promote DHPs.

We did have some questions over the size of the DHP application form and wondered if this was too long and over facing for applicants. We have therefore agreed to review this at our next meeting.

We also learnt that further changes, announced in 2015 mean that Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is ending for the majority of adults. Those affected have been, or will soon be, invited to apply for a new benefit called Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Unfortunately we have acknowledged that there is limited action that the Team can take with regard to the cuts, as many of the benefits referred to are issued by the Department for Work and Pensions.

- The Council’s Neighbourhood Services Manager reported on measures the Council has taken to reduce the likelihood and impact of **flooding** to properties in Pendle. Specific information was provided on works at Ghyll Meadows and Gillians Lane/Lane Bottoms, Barnoldswick and work carried out in Earby.

We welcomed a decision to keep the current sandbag policy, despite the fact that the Council has no legal liability to do so. However, we were concerned to hear of the decision of the Environment Agency to remove the ‘alert’ element of the Flood Warning Service.

As we are satisfied with the procedures we have put in place, we have concluded our review.

- Following on from a scrutiny review of promoting Pendle we looked at the new **Promoting Pendle Action Plan**. The Plan aims to promote schemes and projects for a strong economy and promote Pendle as a great place to do business in; to work in; to live in; and to visit.

We agreed to carry out an annual review of the Plan.

- We received our regular update from Councillor Whipp, the Council’s representative on the **Lancashire Police and Crime Panel**. We heard that this is a further forum in which domestic abuse services has been discussed. He told us that the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is taking a lead role with the commissioning of the services. In addition, we were pleased to hear that the County Council has agreed to continue to provide funding. Pendle Council may also be asked to provide funding as it has done in previous years.

Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel has met once, on 16th August, 2016.

At the meeting –

- We continued our review of **drug and alcohol rehabilitation provision in East Lancashire** by hearing from representatives of two local services.

The first was a presentation from the Service Manager of **Youngaddaction**, Lancashire who provide a young persons substance misuse service through the national charity Addaction.

She told us of the changing landscape as far as drug use is concerned with particular reference being made to the increase in cannabis use from 10 years ago; problems with Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDS); Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) (formerly known as legal highs); and nitrous oxide use.

It was very interesting to hear of their new service model which was made up of the following three strands –

- (i) intervention and prevention work involving one-to-one support and group work;
- (ii) one-to-one support and group work with the inclusion of therapeutic and medical provision provided by the charity's own doctor;
- (iii) participation and community engagement, including training and awareness sessions

This work included important information/teaching sessions in primary schools.

- Our second presentation was from the Treatment Manager at **Acorn Recovery Projects** (Acorn). Acorn is part of the Calico Group and is a charity that provides a range of recovery services for those breaking free from drug, alcohol and other addictions. Their recovery programmes include tier three community programmes and tier four residential rehabilitation.

We welcomed the opening of a new residential rehabilitation facility in Burnley where some of their programmes are delivered. The Panel had been invited to the launch of the residential addiction treatment centre, which had taken place the day before our meeting. Those who attended took the opportunity to view the facilities and speak to the staff, 80% of which had been through recovery themselves.

Acorn also provide supported housing which is available for up to two years. This is second stage housing and is a model of recovery that takes place in the service users own community with placement counsellors on call.

Our review is still ongoing and we are to receive information from Lancashire County Council at our next meeting.

- In my last report I stated that the Panel was waiting for a formal response on the outcome of a trial transfer of the **Fracture Clinic** from Burnley General Hospital to Royal Blackburn Hospital. We have now received the outcome, which was reported to us by the Executive Medical Director of East Lancashire Hospitals Trust and a Senior Orthopaedic Consultant, who attended the meeting at our invitation.

Sadly we have been told that, following an analysis of the trial, the Fracture Clinic is to remain at Royal Blackburn Hospital. In an attempt to reassure us we have been told that this is not the

beginning of a drift of services from Burnley to Blackburn as some fear. In fact current proposals for Burnley include an expansion to elective activity and improvements to chemotherapy and endoscopy care. An application for funding for a new eye service has also been made.

- We agreed the **Pendle Older Peoples Action Plan**. Pendle Seniors Group is to retain overall lead for the Plan, but we have asked that quarterly updates be circulated to the members of the Panel for information. We are also going to monitor progress on the Council's action by way of a six monthly report to the Panel meetings.
- We considered the health and social care elements of the **Local Strategic Partnership's thematic groups' annual report**. At the time of the meeting we were waiting for further information on the current status of the Lancashire and South Cumbria Change Programme and are currently following this up.
- Following concerns raised by a member of the public we have been asked to consider gathering information on the provision of **end of life nursing care**. On the day of our meeting, a national report on this issue had been released, so we therefore agreed to defer this to our next meeting to give us the opportunity to read the national report before making any decision.
- The Panel has also updated the **poster of councillor contact details** which was initially designed in response to a previous scrutiny review. The poster is for display in care homes and nursing homes and has been circulated to the homes in Pendle.

In the last few months, the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel has also been active in promoting the work of scrutiny. Back in June, Panel members hosted a stall at an Airedale Health Event which was held at Barnoldswick Civic Hall. Following this, we then took the opportunity to host a stall at Pendle Care Fair at Colne Municipal Hall. We believe that attendance at such events provides a valuable opportunity to promote the work of scrutiny.

Attendance at the events also gave us the chance to speak to other health/health supporting organisations. Following a conversation with representatives of North West Ambulance Service we are keen to take up an offer of emergency life support training for elected members. If this is something of interest to you, please get in touch with Committee Services.

Councillor Ken Turner,
Chairman, Scrutiny Management Team
10th October, 2016