

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

Scrutiny Management Team

Since my report to the last Council meeting, the Scrutiny Management Team has met once, on 23rd January. At the meeting –

- We received a presentation from Ian Clark, the Director of Strategy and Communications at **Together Housing Group** on the Group's work over the previous 12 months.

We were provided with information on the structure of the Group and details of its achievements since its Corporate Plan was adopted in 2015.

Ian explained that the Group has had a challenging year, as Brexit and the Economy are a higher priority for the Government at present. There has also been a frequent changeover of Housing Ministers since 2010, with the last one only being in post for seven months.

The Group also own a number of high rise flats that require recladding. None of the flats are located in the Pendle area and we have been assured that the funding of this work will not have an impact on the rest of the Group.

A number of new homes have been built in recent years, with 20 homes due to be built at Warehouse Lane in Foulridge in 2018. A new joint venture with the Council and Barnfield is also being considered.

Finally we were very interested to hear about the Newground Together charity, a member of Together Housing Group that works to improve health and wellbeing, improve neighbourhoods and supports people into training and employment.

- We began a review of **Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)** after receiving a request to review the level of funding available.

We learnt that the level of funding received by the Council for the provision of DFGs is set by Central Government annually. It is provided to Lancashire County Council (LCC) as part of the Better Care Fund and then distributed to local councils. Shockingly, this is in line with criteria set in 2005, based on the waiting list at that point in time and has not been reviewed since. This is despite waiting lists changing significantly and Council representations being made to Parliament.

As a result, in 2017/18 Pendle Council received a total of £911,387. By comparison, Burnley Council received £2.035 million!

At the time of our meeting, we had 106 referrals on the waiting list, dating back to October 2016. Lack of funding to facilitate the grants adds to the waiting time. By the end of this financial year the total funding available to Pendle is expected to be over committed. In contrast, other authorities will have an underspend.

This is clearly a concern for the people of Pendle and so we agreed to make further representations to the appropriate bodies for a review of the current criteria for distribution of the funding.

However, since our meeting, we have learnt that the Government is to carry out an independent review of the DFG. The review will include consideration of the current methodology for allocating the grant and the means test. Local authorities have been invited to suggest key areas which they would like the review to consider.

A submission has been made by Pendle Council. We have therefore agreed to delay the Team's representations pending the outcome of the Government review.

- We considered the recommendations of the **Communities and Local Government (CLG) Committee** following its inquiry into the effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees. Pendle had submitted a response to a survey of councils which had formed part of the evidence considered.

I am happy to report that, under the existing scrutiny function, Pendle has in very large part followed the recommendations as set out.

- We received our annual update on the implementation of the **Countryside Access Strategy 2014-18**. It is clear that the Countryside Access Officer is doing an excellent job despite the capacity to carry out work being severely reduced by staff cuts and a limited budget.
- We received our six monthly update on the work of the **LCC Health Scrutiny Committee** from the Council's representative Councillor Wayne Blackburn.
- We also received an update on the work of the **Lancashire Police and Crime Panel** from Councillors David Whipp and Brian Newman. This included details of the police funding settlement 2018/19.
- Our six monthly **equalities update** reminded us that the equality objectives had last been set in 2014. Therefore we were pleased to see that new objectives have been developed for 2018-2022.

A further meeting of the Team was due to take place at the end of February, but had to be cancelled due to heavy snowfall. The meeting has been rescheduled to Wednesday 21st March.

Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel has also met once, on 13th February.

- The first item on the agenda was a presentation on **Together a Healthier Future**, the Local Delivery Plan that has been set up to help improve the health and care system in Pennine Lancashire. This is clearly something that affects all of us and it was therefore disappointing to see so few Councillors able to accept our invitation to attend. If you would like to see a copy of the presentation please contact Lynne Rowland in Committee Services at scrutiny@pendle.gov.uk

Since the start of the process, public, workforce and stakeholder engagement has taken place and this has helped shape a draft Pennine Plan. This was published for comment in December

2017. The draft Plan can be found on the Together a Healthier Future website, via the following link - <http://togethераhealthierfuture.org.uk/pennine-plan/>

- We continue to receive updates on progress with the **recommissioning of homecare services** being carried out by LCC.

We were pleased to note that the new framework and contracts had commenced on 13th November 2017. We are told that the process has gone smoothly and the situation is being monitored on a daily basis.

The transfer of people who currently receive care from a non-framework provider to a framework provider, or to direct payment, is expected to be completed by December this year.

As this is still an ongoing issue, we feel it is important that the transfer continues to be monitored. As the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel will not operate in its current form following the Annual Council meeting, we hope that, going forward, this will be carried out by a similar appropriate body.

- We were invited to comment on **LCC's draft Dementia Strategy** – Dementia Friendly Lancashire 2018-2023. The strategy outlines the County Council's vision to make a positive difference to the lives of people with dementia in Lancashire and can be accessed via the following link - <http://www3.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/consultation/responses/response.asp?ID=338>

As you know we are already making great progress in developing a Dementia Friendly (DF) Pendle. As well as providing training and awareness, Pendle Dementia Action Alliance (DAA) is engaging with businesses that are keen to support a DF Pendle. In addition, all Pendle health centres and GP practices can now clearly demonstrate commitment to DF communities. A secondary school and primary school are also involved.

I am happy to remind you of the fact that last year Pendle DAA won the East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group Locality award in recognition of its work.

- We received a response to our concerns over the lack of **day care facilities** in East Lancashire. We raised the issue with our Member of Parliament and the Department of Health following concern over the issue of isolation and loneliness for many people in the area.

Positive steps nationally include the appointment of a Minister for Loneliness and a plan to tackle loneliness and combat social isolation. However, as we know local communities and health and wellbeing boards play a key role and we have been told that they are receiving help to improve the monitoring of this issue. In doing so, strategies can be developed to improve local services.

- We received our regular updates on the work of the **Pendle Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board** and the **Clinical Commissioning Group**.

Although the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel will no longer operate from 17th May 2018, it is clear that there will continue to be areas for review. It is therefore proposed that a Standing Panel continue to look at health issues.

Bearing this in mind we have suggested that the proposed Standing Health Panel take forward some of the Panel's work. This includes the regular monitoring of the recommissioning of homecare services being carried out by LCC and following progress with the proposed introduction of a local Community Care Navigator Project.

Councillor Ken Turner,
Chairman, Scrutiny Management Team
March, 2018