

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: The Executive
Date: 14 December 2020
Report for: Information and Decision
Report of: The Chair of the Pandemic Scrutiny Committee

Report Title

Summary and Conclusion Report of Pandemic Scrutiny Committee

Summary

The report provides a summary of the work and recommendations of the Pandemic Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation(s)

The Pandemic Scrutiny Committee recommend;

- 1) That Scrutiny is invited to comment on the development of recovery plans for the Borough, including updates on the Council's financial position and use of catch up funding.
- 2) That the Executive continue to identify long term solutions to the potential rise in homelessness due to the impact of COVID 19.
- 3) That the Executive review the process for 208 notices for when a person is to be placed within Trafford.
- 4) That the Executive continue to support active transport by expanding on street bike parking facilities across the borough and by making combating pavement parking a higher priority.
- 5) That the Executive provide regular updates to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress of further permanent development of safe cycle routes across Trafford.
- 6) That the Executive ensure there is appropriate communication, engagement, and consultation with residents and local businesses in regard to active transport proposals.
- 7) That the Executive identify the lessons learned from its work with Community Hubs to aid in modelling services going forward.
- 8) That the Executive provide details of the Council's plan to control the spread of COVID 19 in 2021.

- 9) That a Member of Health Scrutiny Committee be invited to sit on the COVID 19 Public Engagement Board.
- 10) That the Executive inform Members if Trafford Council uses any easements.
- 11) That the Executive Member for Adult Social Care provides a report to the Health Scrutiny Committee on the position of Trafford Care homes over winter.
- 12) That the Health Scrutiny Committee is provided with the transformation plans for mental health services in the Borough, when they are available, and plans to support residents directly affected by COVID 19.
- 13) That the Committee endorse the recommendations of Health Watch Trafford to be actioned by the Executive.
- 14) The Executive provide updates to Children and Young People's Scrutiny on how children who have further fallen behind in education through this Pandemic are progressing in schools.
- 15) That Scrutiny is presented with proposals to support children and young people in the Borough if exams are to go ahead or are cancelled in 2021.
- 16) That the Executive is to present a schedule for reporting progress on Ofsted recommendations to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.
- 17) That the Executive provide information on how the CAMHS service is coping with increase in demand, the effectiveness of surge planning, and any lessons learned.
- 18) That the Committee receive information on the use of the wellbeing and education grant and how schools have supported children and young people's mental health.

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1. Background

1.1 Since the 15th May 2020 the Trafford Pandemic Scrutiny Committee has been operating in place of the Council's standard scrutiny process with Members from all three Scrutiny Committees represented within its membership. During that time the Committee has received numerous reports and presentations at their meetings, which have been held on a monthly basis. Since May 2020 Members have made recommendations and this report brings together all of the work done by the Committee across those meetings. As the Pandemic Scrutiny Committee has now ended and the Council's three standard Scrutiny Committees set to restart in January 2021 the report has been broken down into sections according to the remit of each Committee. The recommendations have also been broken down by Committee in Section

1.2 The Pandemic Scrutiny Committee would like to thank the Executive and all the Officers who provided reports and attended meetings over the last six months. All Members of the Committee recognise the unique challenges and pressures that the Council has faced during this time. Despite those pressures the Executive and Council Officers have shown unwavering support and commitment to openness, transparency, and the scrutiny process throughout.

2. Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2.1 Council financial position

2.1.1 The pandemic has put financial pressures on the Council unlike at any other time in its history. The Committee recognises the efforts that have been made which have reduced the in year deficit from around £26.1M in July to around £6.2M in November. The financial pressures of COVID 19 will continue into the 2021/22 and the Committee request that regular updates be provided to Scrutiny over the course of the year. The Committee also recommend that the Executive utilise the knowledge and expertise of Scrutiny Members through pre-decision scrutiny for recovery proposals.

2.2 Homelessness

2.2.1 At the Committee meeting on the 19th August the Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration raised concerns regarding the end of the Government's suspension on evictions and asked the Committee to support the Council in lobbying for this to be extended. Since the meeting the Government announced an extension of four weeks to the suspension along with the introduction of a 6 month notice period for evictions to be in place until at least 31 March 2021. While this is greatly improved it is still a limited measure. The Committee recommend that the Executive continue to look at long term solutions to the potential rise in homelessness, due to the ongoing impact of COVID 19.

2.2.2 Due to the ongoing impact of COVID 19 and the increased risk of homelessness for Trafford residents this is an area that all Trafford Councillors should be aware of. It is recommended that regular updates on homelessness in Trafford be provided to the Committee and all Councillors.

2.2.3 While it is a requirement that Local Authorities receive a 208 notice when a person is to be placed within the area these are currently not being provided. This was discussed at the meeting where the Committee were informed that all Local

Authorities performed poorly in respect to the completion of 208 notices. The Committee feel that the completion of 208 notices, or other suitable forms of notification, needs to be prioritised to enable the Council to ensure that sufficient support is provided to all people who reside within the borough. The Committee recommend that the current process for 208 notices be reviewed to improve performance and to ensure that the Council is able to provide support from the commencement of a placement.

2.3 Active Transport

2.3.1 During the Pandemic the Council received funding and powers to enable them to encourage active transport within the area. The Committee received a report from the Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Climate Change on the 22nd September 2020. While the Committee recognise the work that has been done in the area it is felt that there is a lot more that could be achieved. In particular communication, engagement, and consultation with residents and local businesses was highlighted as an area where more could be done. There are also elements that support people in taking up active transport, which the Council has the power to address, such as; increasing the number of 20MPH zones, increasing the level of bicycle storage, and reducing the amount of pavement parking. By improving those areas it is felt that active transport would be a more attractive option for residents.

3. Health Scrutiny Committee

3.1 Community Hubs

3.1.1 The Committee have received two updates on the Community Hubs and it is clear that the Hubs represent a success during these difficult times. There is much to be taken and learned from the way that the Hubs were created, as an example of co-production, and the multiagency place based approach utilising memorandums of understanding to form partnerships to deliver services. The Committee recommend that a review of the creation and deployment of the Hubs be completed to identify the key elements of its success to enable the Council to replicate this success where possible.

3.2 Test, Trace and Isolate

3.2.1 The last update that the Committee received relating to test, trace, and isolate was on the 22nd October prior to the second national lockdown. The Director of Public Health stated at the meeting that due to the high level of cases track, trace, and isolate could not be effective in combating COVID 19. The Lockdown has since greatly reduced the number of cases and there has been announcements around the roll out of a vaccine. Due to these developments the Committee would like to request a report on how Trafford will be looking to control the spread of COVID 19 going forward including the role testing, tracing, and isolating are to play in the approach.

3.2.2 Across all of the meetings the Committee had questions and suggestions relating to public engagement around test, trace, and isolate. The Committee are aware that the COVID 19 Public Engagement Board leads in this area for the Council and the Committee recommend that Scrutiny be represented on the Board.

3.3 Adult Social Care, Care Homes, and Hospital Discharges

3.3.1 At their meeting in June the Committee were made aware of the changes to the Care Act 2016 which created a number of easements that Councils could put in place. Trafford have not yet utilised any of these easements but the Committee recommend that they be informed if any do start to be utilised or if the easements are cancelled.

3.3.2 At the meeting in October 2020 the Executive Member for Adult Services offered to come back to the Committee to update them on the position in Trafford Care Homes over winter and the Committee would like to accept that offer.

3.3.3 Delayed discharges from hospital have been an issue within Trafford for many years. During the pandemic the Council has worked closely with NHS partners and utilised new ways of working such as discharge to assess beds in order to tackle this issue. The Committee are aware that there are plans to expand discharge to assess provision further and would like for the Health Scrutiny Committee to be kept up to date with these developments going forward.

3.4 Mental Health Services

3.4.1 When the Committee met in June the Executive Member for Adult Social Care recognised that there was going to be a lot of work to be done after the pandemic as there would be issues around trauma, bereavement, and grief. The Committee were also informed that the Council's Mental Health transformation plans were continuing to develop throughout the pandemic. The Committee would like to receive information on plans for mental health support for those who suffered loss or trauma due to COVID 19 and transformation plans for mental health services.

3.4.2 A related issue due to the lockdown was the increased likelihood of incidents of domestic abuse. The Committee have not received any updates on this but would request that a report be brought to the Committee in January 2021.

3.5 HealthWatch Trafford Report

3.5.1 At the final meeting the Committee received the HealthWatch Trafford COVID 19 Report the report contained a list of recommendations which the Committee endorsed and would like to commend to the Executive for action. The recommendations are;

- **Service response** - Services have responded well in some areas and more unevenly in others. Naturally, the pandemic has necessitated dramatic changes in how clinics and face-to-face appointments are run, but alongside this people have struggled when in an emergency, or struggled to understand when closed services might re-open. The channels for emergency treatment, as well as ways to find out when a service will re-open, should be clear for people.
- **Ways to reach people** - From those we engaged, the GP, television, and social media were the most mentioned channels for information on health and care. Service organisers should reflect on this and how best to reach people, as well as consider those without access to the channels mentioned in this report. Some ways to reach people might be through local groups, or leaflets.
- **Clarity in communications** – COVID-19 has presented challenges for local health services due to the many unknowns about the virus in its early stages. The response to COVID-19 has also meant a number of changes to rules when in both private and public spaces. At a minimum local health services should commit to providing clear ways people can find out what the impact of changes are and accessible updates for patients when treatments are cancelled or delayed.
- **Community Hubs** - While we did not find everyone in our survey knew about or used Trafford's Covid hubs, our focus group work suggested their role is important for isolated residents. Due to the many unknowns about how the pandemic will progress, clarity on the purpose of hubs and who can access them on an ongoing basis is required.
- **Mental health and general experiences of COVID-19** - It is clear from the comments we received that strain was placed on residents from all backgrounds during the pandemic. Effort should be made to ensure that whatever the cause or difficulty due to COVID-19 residents can find support. In order to achieve this, local health services should take into account the work that local charities and other groups, as well as professionals, are doing.

4. Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

4.1 The setbacks of Children and Young People's education due to the shutdown of schools and colleges

4.1.1 The missed learning due to the national lockdown is of great concern to the Committee along with disruption to learning in the 2020/21 school year with support bubbles being sent home across the borough. Catch up funding has started to be received and schools are reporting some success in closing the gap in learning. The Committee request information on how that funding is being utilised across the borough.

4.1.2 There are concerns in relation to pupils who may be facing exams at the end of the school year with Wales already deciding that A-Level and GCSE exams will be cancelled for 2020/21. While this is to be a national decision but the Committee requests to be informed of support for children and young people if exams are to go ahead or are cancelled.

4.2 Return to school of Trafford Children and Young People

4.2.1 The Committee has received a number of updates on schools at their meetings with the most recent coming in November. Trafford has some of the highest levels of school attendance in the country but the figures are still lower than normal. At the meeting in November the Committee were informed of a task and finish group that was looking at those not attending due to COVID anxiety. The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee would like to receive information on the outcomes of the work of the task and finish group.

4.3 Council's response to Ofsted recommendations

4.3.1 In October the Executive Member for Children's Services and the Corporate Director of Children's services provided the Committee with a progress report. The report that the Committee received was very detailed and contained a large amount of information due to how much work had been done since the last update. The Corporate Director for Children's Services recommended that a schedule for updates be agreed and the Committee endorse this recommendation to the Executive.

4.4 Children's Mental Health including the work of Schools

4.4.1 The Committee are concerned about the impact of the pandemic on Children and Young People's Mental Health. The CAMHS service has seen a large increase in referrals in the last couple of months. Prior to the increase the Committee were informed that surge planning had been done to prepare for an increase in demand.

The Committee would like to receive information on how the service is coping with increase in demand, the effectiveness of surge planning, and any lessons learned.

4.4.2 At the meeting in November the Committee were informed the wellbeing and education grant was being used to help schools provide support to children and reduce demand on CAMHS. The Committee would like to receive information on the use of the grant and how schools have been working to help children and young people with mental health issues over the course of the pandemic.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The Pandemic Scrutiny Committee recommend;

5.2 All Committees

- 1) That Scrutiny is invited to comment on the development of recovery plans for the Borough, including updates on the Council's financial position and use of catch up funding.

5.3 Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2) That the Executive continue to identify long term solutions to the potential rise in homelessness due to the impact of COVID 19.
- 3) That the Executive review the process for 208 notices for when a person is to be placed within Trafford.
- 4) That the Executive continue to support active transport by expanding on street bike parking facilities across the borough and by making combating pavement parking a higher priority.
- 5) That the Executive provide regular updates to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress of further permanent development of safe cycle routes across Trafford.
- 6) That the Executive ensure there is appropriate communication, engagement, and consultation with residents and local businesses in regard to active transport proposals.

5.4 Health Scrutiny Committee

- 7) That the Executive identify the lessons learned from its work with Community Hubs to aid in modelling services going forward.
- 8) That the Executive provide details of the Council's plan to control the spread of COVID 19 in 2021.
- 9) That a Member of Health Scrutiny Committee be invited to sit on the COVID 19 Public Engagement Board.
- 10) That the Executive inform Members if Trafford Council uses any easements.
- 11) That the Executive Member for Adult Social Care provides a report to the Health Scrutiny Committee on the position of Trafford Care homes over winter.

- 12) That the Health Scrutiny Committee is provided with the transformation plans for mental health services in the Borough, when they are available, and plans to support residents directly affected by COVID 19.
- 13) That the Committee endorse the recommendations of Health Watch Trafford to be actioned by the Executive.

5.5 Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

- 14) The Executive provide updates to Children and Young People's Scrutiny on how children who have further fallen behind in education through this Pandemic are progressing in schools.
- 15) That Scrutiny is presented with proposals to support children and young people in the Borough if exams are to go ahead or are cancelled in 2021.
- 16) That the Executive is to present a schedule for reporting progress on Ofsted recommendations to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.
- 17) That the Executive provide information on how the CAMHS service is coping with increase in demand, the effectiveness of surge planning, and any lessons learned.
- 18) That the Committee receive information on the use of the wellbeing and education grant and how schools have supported children and young people's mental health.