

Minutes of a meeting of the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 4 November 2024.

PRESENT

Mr. T. J. Richardson CC (in the Chair)

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC
Mr. N. Chapman CC
Mr. J. Miah CC

Mr. L. Hadji-Nikolaou CC
Mr. P. King CC

In attendance

Mrs. C. Radford CC – Lead Member for Adults and Communities
Mr. T. Parton CC – Cabinet Support Member

27. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2024 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

28. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 34.

29. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

30. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

31. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

All Members who were Members of District Councils declared an Other Registrable Interest in relation to the exempt report at Agenda Item 15, Lightbulb Project.

32. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

33. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

34. Draft Adults and Communities Department Strategy 2025-2029.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities, the purpose of which was to invite Members of the Committee to comment on the draft Adults and Communities Strategy 2025 to 2029, the plans for consultation and timelines. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman reported that Fiona Barber from Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire, had submitted comments on this agenda item, copies of which had been circulated to all members of the Committee for consideration. A copy of the comments received are filed with these minutes.

Members noted that over time, the Strategy had become more succinct, clearer and easier to read, and welcomed the planned consultation on the updated draft. for 2025 - 2029.

RESOLVED:

That the report and draft Adults and Communities Strategy 2025 to 2029, and plans for consultation and timelines be noted and welcomed.

35. Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assessment of Local Authorities.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities, the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with a summary of the latest position and process for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment of the County Council's adult social care functions following receipt of the CQC assessment notification on 9 September 2024. The report also referred to the latest versions of the Department's Self-Assessment and Improvement Plan. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

In introducing the report the Director advised the Committee that the CQC took account of local factors, such as local elections. This would not halt the CQC in carrying out its inspection. If the timeline for assessment were to be delayed it might mean this overlapped the local election period. However, the outcome of the assessment would not be released until after this had been completed.

The Chair thanked the Director and Officers for keeping the Committee fully updated, and thanked the Cabinet Lead Member for the way they had worked collegiately across the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assessment of Local Authorities report, and latest versions of the Department's Self-Assessment and Improvement Plan be noted.

36. Adult Social Care Customer Service Centre.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities, the purpose of which was to provide an update on progress made with improving the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Adult Social Customer Service Centre (CSC). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion and questions, the following points were made:

- i. The draft corporate Customer Experience Strategy, which included the Adult Social Care Front Door project would be considered by the Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on 6 November 2024, prior to the end of the consultation on the new Corporate Strategy which came to an end on 10 November 2024.
- ii. A Member raised a concern that when using the portal, for example, to report someone in crisis, it was not clear how long the end user would have to wait to get a response. They questioned how the end user experience could be improved to keep them informed of expected timelines for resolution. The Director explained that as part of the new approach, next steps for service users would be more clearly set out so they were clear on the journey ahead and the timescales in which this would be delivered. As an organisation across all service areas, this was the approach to be adopted providing greater transparency on all customer pathways and experiences. It was acknowledged providing clearer information at the outset would free up capacity within the CSC as this would receive fewer contacts from those simply chasing for a progress update.
- iii. A Member commented on the call abandonment rate target of 20% and asked if a call-back service was offered to filter out people waiting. The Director explained that there was the functionality within the telephone system to do call backs, but testing of this system had raised some issues which IT services were currently addressing. It was noted that average call waiting times had reduced from 19 to 6 minutes which was below the target set at 10 minutes. Average call waiting times could be skewed by the number and type of calls being made, for example, the duration of calls by professionals referring a number of cases would affect call times. As part of the programme, to prioritise calls from residents, work was taking place to look at how calls from professional representatives could be redirected through a different contact route. The use of priority phone numbers for people with allocated social carers was also being considered.
- iv. A Member asked if the system had the functionality to recognise repeat callers with an allocated social worker and which would allow them to be redirected accordingly. The Director reported that there was a customer relationship management system (CRM) in place but that this was relatively low-level, and the front door systems within the Department did not interrelate with this. It was also difficult to track repeat call data, when 60% of calls were received from people ringing on behalf of someone else, for example, professionals and care providers.

RESOLVED:

That the report on the Adult Social Care Customer Service Centre be noted.

37. Update on Adult Safeguarding Activity.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities, the purpose of which was to provide an update on adult safeguarding activity. The report outlined the Care Act 2014 duties, safeguarding enquiry adults process overview, the performance data for Quarter 1 for the 2024/2025 financial year, and the Safeguarding Adults Reviews for the past 12 months. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion and questions, the following points were made:

- i. A Member queried the increased conversion rate (calculated by dividing the total number of enquiries by the number of alerts received) from 10% to 46%. The Director explained that this was largely due to work undertaken to better differentiate between what was a safeguarding alert, and what was essentially a concern for welfare alert and to therefore respond to these correctly in the first instance. Work had also been undertaken with partners and the public to promote reporting of concerns. National averages for conversion rates were in the high 30s%, with the County Council at 46% with a continuing trend upward.
- ii. A Member what checks were undertaken to ensure alerts were correctly assessed as either a safeguarding or concern for welfare alert. Furthermore, if neglect was one of the highest causes of concern in peoples' homes, what further analysis had been done to understand what the neglect had been caused by. The Director reported that all training emphasised that if there was any doubt, an enquiry would be put through as an alert through the safeguarding pathway. In terms of understanding causes, there were robust audit programmes that looked at themes or causes, which were fed into a governance subgroup under the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) around performance. Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) that identified certain issues were taken into the learning and development process.
- iii. A Member queried if the Concluded Episode by Location Setting of 80 cases in a care home and 86 cases in own home could be broken down further to identify family members or care workers in those situations. The Director confirmed alleged perpetrators for cases were recorded. For quarter 1, there were 139 completed enquiries, of which 62 attributed fell into the social care staff group. 16 identified as health care professionals and other. There were also 41 not known plus others, and 20 classed as family as alleged perpetrators.
- iv. A Member asked if there was concern in the rise in safeguarding alerts from 457 to 521. The Director reported that, it was positive that people were understanding their responsibilities and duties to report and that the increase was not considered excessive but manageable.

RESOLVED:

That the update report on adult safeguarding activity be noted.

38. Date of next meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 20 January 2025, at 2.00pm.

39. Exclusion of the Press and Public.

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the remaining item of business on the ground that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 10 of Part I of Schedule 12(A) of the Act and that, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

40. Lightbulb Service.

The Committee considered an exempt report of the Director of Adults and Communities, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the Lightbulb Service and to advise the Committee on potential options arising from the Business Case review undertaken by Blaby District Council (BDC). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 15' is filed with these minutes.

The report was not for publication as it contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- i. Members discussed the review phases, and the revised business case presented by BDC which sought to address strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management aspects of the project, and noting the options set out within the report.
- ii. Members raised concern that the existing agreement would finish at the end of March 2025, and the new arrangements needed to be in place before then, questioning if there was some way to continue the current agreement if this proved necessary. There was further concern that with increased overhead costs, and the Chancellors recent budget announcement of increased National Insurance, there would be an adverse impact on providers.
- iii. Whilst there was further work to be done, there was a willingness from partners to remain committed to the project partnership, which was to be welcomed.

RESOLVED:

That the update provided be noted.

2.00 to 3.36pm
04 November 2024

CHAIRMAN