

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD
19/01/2021 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor McLaren (Chair)
Councillors Taylor, Jacques, Curley, Price (Vice-Chair), Surjan
and Williamson

Also in Attendance:

Amanda Richardson	Principal Policy Officer
Jonathan Downs	Corporate Policy Lead
Caroline Lee	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Business Support
Kaidy McCann	Constitutional Services
Sian Walter-Browne	Principal Constitutional Services Officer
Cath Ball	Deputy Cabinet Member (Poverty)
Donna McLaughlin	Alliance Director, Oldham Cares

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Toor.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

3 URGENT BUSINESS

The Board was notified of two items of urgent business.

The Board gave consideration to a report by the Director of Social Value Creation at the Northern Care Alliance NHS Group on Employment Support and Local Recruitment.

The Board were informed that the Northern Care Alliance (NCA) was the largest employer in Oldham. Creating pathways to employment within the NHS would improve the economics of the area and the difference that could be made to neighbourhoods and communities. By 2025 the NCA had agreed the ambitions as followed:

- Create 1000 pre-employment opportunities across the NCA for those furthest away from employment from a baseline of 320. Approximately 210 would be created in Oldham from a baseline of 17 (2019-20).
- 85% of pre-employment learners supported into paid work from a baseline of 55% and 31% in Oldham.
- 50% of those employed by the NCA to be local residents of Oldham from 45% (based on NCA configuration of Oct 2019) which would approximately be 80 jobs each year in Oldham.
- Support 1000 staff to become NHS Career Ambassadors by 2025 of which 220 would be in Oldham.

The Board were informed on the work ongoing with Oldham college, the Kickstart Government initiative and the range of

apprenticeships on offer for numerous career paths, 105 of which were within Oldham. Members questioned if any other strategies had been considered in promoting the opportunities available. It was noted that the NCA were always looking for partnerships, along with Oldham College a partnership had formed with Positive Steps. The NCA were able to benefit from the opportunist grant from the GMCA and funding from the Council's Opportunity Area.

Members asked for indications of what the timelines might be in terms of introducing this proposal and how many other agencies were involved besides the Council. Members were informed that there were a number of different projects that had different lifelines: two big ones around the BAME community in Coldhurst and Young People were live now and would be staggered over the next 18 months. With that 20 apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships were live. The Support for Bridging the Gap annual event was an existing scheme run by the NCA.

Members asked how people were being made aware of the offer. Most people knew more about the NHS now due to Covid-19 and the NCA wanted support to go into schools. Passion and inspiration started from primary school age with one intervention making a difference. Young people were also the focus of nursing as there were a need for more in the profession.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. A future update be brought to the Board in May 2021.

The Board gave consideration to an update by the Head of Revenues, Benefits and Business Support on the Corporate Complaints Policy and the Unreasonable Behaviour Policy.

Members were informed that approval of the policies helped the Authority to engage and be open, fair and transparent with members of the public. The draft policies had been brought to the Board before final approval being sought from Cabinet. Members made reference to members of the public providing recordings to Members and queried where they stood when listening to those recordings. It was agreed to seek clarification.

RESOLVED that the policies be endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

4 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions received.

5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1st December 2020 be approved as a correct record.

6 MINUTES OF THE GMCA CORPORATE ISSUES AND

REFORM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that the minutes of the GMCA Corporate Issues and Reform Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10th November 2020 be noted.

7 MINUTES OF THE GMCA ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH AND SKILLS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that the minutes of the GMCA Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13th November 2020 be noted.

8 GENERAL EXCEPTIONS AND URGENT DECISIONS

The Board gave consideration to a report which advised of decisions related to Oldham Community Leisure Contract and the Winter Grant Funding Allocation.

RESOLVED that the report and authorisation granted under Rule 13 (General Exception) and Rule 14 (Special Urgency) be noted.

9 COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN

The Board gave consideration to an update by the Corporate Policy Lead on the development plan for Oldham's Covid-19 Recovery Strategy.

The Board were informed that the draft Team Oldham Plan which followed several consultation sessions, was due to be signed off at Council in March 2020. Due to the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic, priorities and efforts were put in to support residents, communities and businesses with the impact of Covid-19 along with the vulnerable who were still disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

To tackle the ongoing impact of Covid-19, it was proposed that a Recovery Plan would be developed based on the vision for Oldham outlined in the Oldham Model with a specific focus on Oldham's recovery from the pandemic. The Plan originally covered the period April 2020 to April 2021 and would be signed off in May 2021 however this had been cancelled. The Recovery Plan would cover the period May 2021 to May 2022 and would work as the Interim Corporate Plan until the refreshed Corporate Plan would be in place from March 2022.

Members sought and received information on the priorities and how Covid-19 had affected school readiness for the young people that should have started school. Members were informed that a lot of young people would not have the opportunity to attend nursery which would have an effect on school readiness. However, this had been flagged with the relevant services and would feed into the priorities.

Members queried the closure of Libraries in the Borough and how that affected the most disadvantaged who needed support with computer usage and getting online as those disadvantaged were less likely to travel around the Borough. Members were informed that further information would be sought from those managing the service however work was ongoing around digital inclusiveness and how support could be provided to the communities that rely on the services.

Members referred to Green Spaces and in particular Dovestones and the number of people using the area during lockdown. Members felt that it was important for mental health that an expansion included all the open spaces in and around the edge of the Borough to allow residents to know what was on offer on their doorsteps. Members were informed that it was an important priority and promoting what Green Spaces were available would be key.

Members queried the joint working arrangements of teams within the Council and noted that officers were working much more with much less. Finding efficiencies had become more difficult however joint working could provide a sharper focus on the areas that needed it most. It was noted that the Council could not achieve this on its own and that public bodies and private sectors could become potential partners in order to take some of the programmes forward. Members were informed that Covid-19 galvanised the Public Sector in a way that had not been experienced before. However, different sectors had come together to face the challenges and had gained new ways of working that would be embedded in future ways of working.

Members asked if there was any scope for officer/member input in each of the themes before the report returned to the Board to create a coherent approach with the interrelated themes. Members were informed that sessions had been planned in over the next month with Senior Officers and Portfolio Holders that would follow with the Overview and Scrutiny Board. It was noted that further feedback would be welcomed.

RESOLVED that:

1. The update and information provided on the Covid-19 Recovery Plan be noted.
2. A further update on the Recovery Plan be provided to Overview and Scrutiny in March 2021.

10

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2021

The Board were provided with an update on the progress of the Homelessness Strategy 2021 that was due to be published by April 2021.

The anticipated publication date had been moved back to September 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing need to focus the majority of resources on the frontline response to homelessness. This involved the implementation of the Government's rough sleeping directives, moving services online

and to ensure that temporary accommodation facilities complied with social distancing measures.



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Consultations had been undertaken with residents, stakeholders and elected Members. A full desktop review of homelessness had been drafted with early indications highlighting a particular need to focus on evictions and other issues in the private rented sector, together with domestic abuse and relationship breakdowns and providing support to promote tenancy sustainment such as mental health issues and debt management.

RESOLVED that:

1. The update and information provided on the Homelessness Strategy 2021 be noted.
2. Questions from Members to be sent to Constitutional Services on the strategy by the end of the week.
3. A further update on the strategy be provided to Overview and Scrutiny at a future meeting.

11

POVERTY

The Board gave consideration to a presentation on Poverty by Councillor Cath Ball, Deputy Cabinet Member (poverty) and the Policy Manager.

The Board established in March 2020 a task and finish group to ascertain the nature and extent of strategies and services designed to address poverty as well as inequality and disadvantage. Members were informed that since March 2020, the unemployment rate in the Borough had increased by more than 5,000. By October there were 13,680 claimants in Oldham, 5,355 of those were due to Covid-19. The £20 uplift for Universal Credit claimants was due to end on the 30th April however many people relied on the uplift.

Members were informed of the poverty governance and structures. The Poverty Agenda Group were made up of community groups, residents and partnership organisations including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Issues would be passed on to the Poverty Steering Group consisting of Officers, Action Together and the DWP, updates would then go back to the Poverty Agenda Group putting residents and community groups in the centre of the Poverty Framework.

Members were provided with the aims that the Greater Manchester Poverty Group which had asked all Councils to sign up and to work on. Officers were currently in the process of updating the Equality Strategy and the socio-economic aspect however the socio-economic duty was removed from the Equality Act by the Government in 2012. The Steering Group had agreed further actions which would be progressed with the use of two Officers working on the issues half a day a week.

Members were informed of the work ongoing with the Children's Society scrutinising Oldham's Local Welfare Provision, Get

Oldham Working's project to help residents with clothes for interviews and the Reel Group who helped with the food bank and had recently found a premises to run the Cloths Rack. The Warm Homes Scheme had liaised with energy companies to provide emergency packages to prevent families from being cut off. In 2018, 11.7% of the population in Oldham were in fuel poverty however due to the unprecedented pandemic the percentage would now be higher.

The Covid-19 pandemic had highlighted the UK's digital divide which amplified the impact of social isolation and loneliness particularly for those shielding such as older people and those with serious health conditions. Many young people fell outside of national programmes to aid remote learning. The Greater Manchester Mayor had called upon businesses to support young people through donations of unused digital devices or a £300 donation that would ensure the young person could continue their education through the purchase of a digital kit bundle.

A number of projects had been set up to help residents with food packages from groups such as the Bread and Butter thing, Family Pantry, Family Action, the European Islamic centre and many others. The Ancora Project was now back at the Foodbank and the Greater Manchester Poverty Group aimed to have financial support available at all Foodbanks. Oldham was in the process of preparing a Food Security Strategy as well as providing Holiday food through Government funding for half term and Easter. A separate fund would be provided for the summer half term and the summer holidays.

RESOLVED that:

1. The presentation be noted.
2. The report be referred to Cabinet.

12 **KEY DECISION DOCUMENT**

The Board gave consideration to the latest Key Decision Document published on 23rd December 2020.

RESOLVED that the Key Decision Document be noted.

13 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board gave Consideration to the latest Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme and were provided an update on items and actions outlined on the document.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme be noted.

14 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED that the date and time of the next meeting to be held on Tuesday 9th March 2021 at 6.00 pm be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.03 pm

