



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

# MINUTES

## Adults and Children's Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Adults and Children's Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 8th September, 2020**, Please note that this will be a virtual meeting..

**Members Present:** Councillors Iain Bott (Chairman), Margot Bright, Nafsika Butler-Thalassis, Maggie Carman, Angela Harvey, Eoghain Murphy and Tim Roca

**Co-opted Members:** Ryan Nicol

**Also Present:** Councillor Tim Mitchell (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health)

#### 1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Freeman and co-opted members Marina Coleman and Sam Green.

#### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### 3 MINUTES

##### RESOLVED:

- 3.1 That the Minutes of the Adults and Children's Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15 June 2020 be approved.

#### 4 CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH - PORTFOLIO UPDATE REPORT

- 4.1 Councillor Tim Mitchell (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health), provided a briefing on key issues within his portfolio. The Committee also heard from Russell Styles (Deputy Director of Public Health), Senel Arkut

(Director of Health Partnerships) and Dr Neville Pursell (Central London CCG – Chair).

4.2 The Committee received the update and held detailed discussions on the following topics:

- Covid-19 – The Committee was updated on the number of Westminster residents who had tested positive for Covid-19. The infection rate in Westminster was currently below the level requiring any further action to be taken however this would continue to be monitored closely.

Details on how the Council was supporting the national Test and Trace programme was provided which involved using local data and knowledge to profile the spread of Covid-19 in the borough and to help prevent and manage any outbreaks and clusters. The Committee noted that there were no particular areas within the borough which had seen any concentrations of the virus however this would be monitored. A mobile testing station was operating two days a week in Hyde Park in addition to the other testing sites available. Alternative sites had also been identified if the rate of infection increased in the future to ensure sufficient capacity would be available.

The groups experiencing the highest levels of infection were those in the 18-29 age bracket and people returning from holiday. Specific communication campaigns had been instigated targeting younger people using social media in order to disseminate information regarding following government guidelines. Ongoing work had also been undertaken with institutes of higher education to ensure returning students were provided with safe environments to study and encourage them to adhere to social distancing rules.

It was confirmed that the Police were responsible for enforcing the wearing of face masks on public transport. The Committee requested that an update be provided on the number of fines issued to people not wearing face masks on public transport.

The Committee provided its thanks to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health and those officers in Adult Social Care and Public Health for all their hard work in extremely challenging circumstances.

- Gordon Hospital Consultation – The Committee was provided with an update on Central North West London (CNWL) NHS Trust's decision in March 2020 to temporarily close the Gordon Hospital as a key part of their response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was explained that the proposal was part of the NHS Long Term Plan to support people at home and shift care from inpatient to community-based settings where clinically possible. It was anticipated that there would be further consultation on its potential permanent closure, but concern was raised the impact this would have on the local Mental Health inpatient provision. The Committee requested that a further update be provided

by CNWL providing a full background on why the closure had taken place. A breakdown was also requested detailing which facilities Westminster patients were now having to be admitted to, including if any of these were located in outer London. In response to a question it was confirmed that the Police would be liaised with on the closure of the hospital to ensure they were involved in the consultation process.

## **5 CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES - PORTFOLIO UPDATE REPORT**

- 5.1 Councillor Tim Barnes provided a written update on key issues within his portfolio including: the Covid-19 response and recovery activity, operational updates, libraries and registration services. The Committee was requested to submit any questions on the update in writing.

## **6 PROPOSED NORTH WEST LONDON CCG MERGER**

- 6.1 Jo Ohlson (North West London CCG – Accountable Officer) introduced the report outlining the proposal to merge the eight CCGs in the North West London Integrated Care System into one CCG. The Committee also invited Jules Martin (Central London CCG – Managing Director), Dr Neville Pursell (Central London CCG – Chair), Louise Proctor (North West London CCG – Managing Director) and Jenny Greenshields (North West London CCG – Chief Finance Officer) to join the discussion on this item.
- 6.1 The Committee was informed of the reasons for the proposed merger and how it was proposed to submit the application in 2021/22. If it was agreed to implement the proposals a number of commitments had been made, including:
- Retaining strong borough teams and relationships;
  - Retaining primary care funding at a local level; and
  - Increasing investment in primary care
- 6.2 In response to questions from the Committee it was acknowledged that potentially Westminster's financial allocation would reduce. However, across North West London the proportion of investment in out of hospital services would be increased, with a first step of levelling up investment in primary care services outside the core contracts. This would ensure consistent services were offered to patients. It was also explained that core primary care commissioned services would be assessed over the next few months in order to develop plans of levelling up primary care provision across NWL over time.
- 6.3 Concern was expressed that merging the eight CCGs in North West London into one CCG would lead to a loss of voice for local residents. The Committee was informed that it was envisaged that having one CCG taking strategic decisions across the whole area with smaller PCNs at a local level would result in an even closer local focus, whilst at the same time enabling more effective commissioning of services. Patients and GP member practices would

continue to be involved in the single CCG and at a local level. Decision making would be devolved on delivery and integration of services to the neighbourhood and borough level as the integrated care partnerships developed. Work was already being undertaken with Healthwatch and local stakeholders to develop proposals for how patient and public involvement would work in practice. The single CCG would also retain a strong local presence, including responsibility to work with local people and stakeholders, to listen to their feedback and to involve them in shaping services. The Committee was informed that the aim was to enhance patient and public involvement and engagement in the new system to ensure the patient and resident voice was consistently heard and listened to.

- 6.5 The Committee still expressed concerns over the proposals and how they impacted on the residents of Westminster. The Committee thanked the witnesses present for answering its questions but highlighted the importance of continued consultation on the proposals in order to receive reassurances that they would benefit local residents.

## **7 COVID-19 SUPPORT TO ADULT SOCIAL CARE PROVIDERS**

- 7.1 Gareth Wall, Director of Integrated Commissioning, provided the Committee with an update on Covid-19 support to Adult Social Care providers. It was explained that central to the response had been to ensure support was in place for Adult Social Care providers, both Residential Care Homes and Home Care (Domiciliary Care), to guarantee that they were able to provide safe effective care to residents. Support had included daily calls with providers from March 2020, the provision, guidance and training for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and a package of financial support measures designed to mitigate some of the financial impacts that they had experienced due to Covid-19.
- 7.2 The Committee was interested to learn about staffing levels at care homes during Covid-19. It was confirmed that some staff had to isolate during this period and as part of the programme of daily calls to care homes staffing levels were monitored. In the majority of cases care homes and home care providers were able to cover any staff isolating through their existing staffing quotas. In some instances, additional recruitment was required and an update on staffing levels would be provided to the Committee. In response to a query regarding agency workers working at multiple care homes it was explained that there was a type of funding made available to care homes titled the Infection Control Fund. One of the conditions of the fund was to limit the use of agency workers and ensure there was a consistency of staff. For the funding to be released assurances were required by the care homes confirming that consistent staffing was provided.
- 7.3 Concern was expressed over whether there were sufficient levels of PPE in care homes considering there were fears of a winter spike in Covid-19. The Committee noted that levels of PPE and the type of PPE each care home had was being monitored. Supply lines were now stable and currently there was at least three month's supply available. Stocks were available to supplement

levels when required and the Council had secured supply routes to access PPE through a national portal.

- 7.4 An update was provided on what provisions had been made to ensure residents of care homes were able to receive visitors. Work had been undertaken with care homes and the NHS to develop safe ways of conducting visits. This included meeting outdoors, using social distancing measures and through the use of technology. Care homes had been requested to develop plans on how visits would be undertaken but following the recent restrictions imposed by the Government on the number of people able to meet advice on visits may have to be amended.
- 7.5 The Committee expressed its thanks to all those involved in the early action undertaken to protect care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic and all the hard work that was continuing to be undertaken in this field.

## **8 MATCHING PROCESS FOR ADOLESCENTS IN CARE**

- 8.1 Nicky Crouch, Director of Family Services, presented a report outlining Westminster Children's Service's (WCC) matching process for adolescents in care. Following an outstanding OFSTED inspection in September 2019 the only action arising was to improve the formal matching and panel approval of adolescents in long term foster placements. The Committee was updated on what considerations were factored in when placing children and the actions taken to ensure the Council was formally matching older children to their carer's to ensure 'permanence' was being achieved in a timely way.
- 8.2 The Committee was informed that matches took place on several different levels with the mantra of "right placement, first time," being the priority. Wherever possible extended family or friendship networks would be assessed first, however if this was not viable, it would be endeavoured to match children to 'in house' foster carers before exploring spot purchased external resources. The Committee noted that when a child's care plan was confirmed and they were placed in a long term placement where they were expected to remain for the remainder of their time in care, efforts were made to formally match the child and placement, giving the child a sense of 'permanence' and security.
- 8.3 The Committee was interested to note that during the Covid-19 pandemic it was expected that there would be an increase in need of placements as a result of an increase in safeguarding issues, however this did not materialise. What was observed was a reduction in referrals whilst looked after numbers remained settled and stable. This small decrease was as a result of a reduction of unaccompanied minors arriving, although increases were being identified again.
- 8.4 A detailed discussion was held on the challenges of finding appropriate placements for unaccompanied minors which was often complicated by a lack of information about the child. Efforts were made to place the child to reflect ethnicity, language and religion and there was a diverse foster pool to help enable this. Members also discussed help available to foster carers and

requested an update be provided on this area including whether they were provided with council tax relief.

- 8.5 The Committee expressed its thanks for all the efforts and hard work undertaken in this particularly challenging area. Members supported the efforts made to enhance the matching process and ensure it was even more robust going forward.

## **9 2020/21 WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER**

- 9.1 Lizzie Barrett, Policy and Scrutiny Officer, presented the Committee's 2020/21 Work Programme and Action Tracker.
- 9.2 The Committee reviewed the draft list of items and suggested potential future topics including the future of the Gordon Hospital and school exclusions could be included on the work programme.

### **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Work Programme be noted; and
- 2) That the recommendation tracker be noted.

## **10 REPORTS OF ANY URGENCY SAFEGUARDING REPORTS**

- 10.1 The Chairman requested that an update be provided on the reported increase in serious youth violence following the easing Covid-19 lockdown measures.

The Meeting ended at 8.53 pm

**CHAIRMAN:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE** \_\_\_\_\_