

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

20 FEBRUARY 2013

CARE AND INDEPENDENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

1. Public Health

Public health has a rich tradition in local government. It has long been acknowledged as central to improving health and wellbeing. The transfer of public health responsibilities back to local government is particularly interesting to the Committee because it presents opportunities to support the independence of the most vulnerable members of our community.

The new Director for Public Health in North Yorkshire, Dr Lincoln Sergeant advised the Committee of the two major outcome measures that will guide public health work:

1. Activity where partners can work together to improve the health and life expectancy of the population, focussing especially on length and quality of life.
2. Tackling the variations in life expectancy and general health amongst communities in North Yorkshire by identifying where investment might help deprived areas catch up faster.

Lincoln's briefing resonated with Committee Members as some of his priorities relate directly to topics on our work programme, alcohol related harm being the most obvious example. Lincoln will therefore keep us briefed on progress in developing an alcohol misuse strategy, but I am sure there will be developments in other areas that are of mutual interest.

2. Budget Issues

Helen Taylor reported on the set of proposals her Directorate is offering up to help the Council meet additional savings requirements for 2013/14 and 2014/15. Of the seven areas identified within Health and Adult Services for savings, two in particular will feature in our work.

The first being changes to how domiciliary care is commissioned. The Directorate's contract commitments with the Independent Sector for personal care at home are financially significant. The proposal is to procure a greater proportion of support through block contracts, reduce the number purchased on a case by case basis and therefore benefit from economies of scale.

Helen reassured us that this would not result in a lowering of care standards, because getting contract specifications right will ensure quality is maintained. This will be monitored closely within the Directorate but it is an area in which the Committee will retain interest.

A second savings area which impacts upon our work concerns the approximately 50 people in the County who, at any one time, self-fund their care. When their initial capital reduces to the threshold figure of £23,250, if they remain in a residential setting, they can come to the County Council for financial support. The Committee supported the notion of assisting more people at an earlier stage with financial information and advice. That way, their financial assets may not deplete so quickly and they would remain self-funding for a longer period.

This proposed area of savings is directly relevant of course to the contentious issue of how people's assets are taken into account when paying for residential care. As soon as the government's intentions on this are announced, it will be at the top of our agenda.

3. Report of Older People's Champion

Through tireless work, dedication and a keen eye for detail, Shelagh Marshall has been an outstanding Older People's Champion for North Yorkshire. In her tenth report to the Committee, Shelagh documented the impressive activity she had championed and been involved with over the last year. On the campaigning front for example, her efforts in promoting the Warm Homes Funding Strategy are to be applauded.

The Committee will continue to work with Shelagh on older people's issues as we share a particular concern over the impact of isolation and loneliness.

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Chairman
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County Hall
NORTHALLERTON
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