

Report to Council

Date of meeting: 29 October 2020



Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Report to Council

Chairman: Cllr Mary Sartin

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That the Overview and Scrutiny progress report from July to October 2020 be noted.

Report:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 15 October 2020

1. At the meeting on Thursday 15 October 2020, the Committee undertook external scrutiny of local mental health services with Ms Stephanie Rea from the Essex Partnership University Trust. The topics covered included the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on mental health and the response of local mental health services, funding for local mental health services, services for older people and those with dementia, and how the collaboration between the Council and local mental health service providers could be improved.

2. The Committee was heartened to hear that plans were well advanced for dealing with the potential second wave of Covid-19 infections, and that no services were reduced or withdrawn during the first wave of infections. In addition, there was also a clear transfer process in place to deal with any patients who moved across local authority borders, including a 'Place of Safety' at the Derwent Centre in Harlow. The Trust was always delighted to work with other partners, including the Council, and was already engaged with the Portfolio Holder to improve the current level of collaboration.

3. The Committee noted that the Trust was not responsible for the provision of children's mental health services, and that this issue could not be discussed at the meeting. However, Ms Rea has provided a contact for these services, and the Committee agreed to extend an invitation to the CCG Commissioner for Young People's Mental Health Services to attend a future meeting.

4. The Committee then received a short update on the Accommodation Strategy, and welcomed the news that the refurbishment works were progressing well. It was noted that no agreements had yet been finalised with the community groups due to use the refurbished space within the Civic Offices but discussions were ongoing.

5. A further short update was then given on the progress with the People Strategy, which highlighted the work being developed to support the mental health and wellbeing of staff and the continued expansion of the Apprentices scheme.

6. The Committee then received monitoring reports on Qualis for the first three quarters of the year and it was noted that Qualis had made good progress during these three quarters. Issues raised during this part of the meeting included the provision of a Sports Hall at the proposed new Epping Sports Centre, the need to consult with residents in Pyrles Lane before the former Nursery Site was developed, and whether there would be negotiation with the recognised trades unions during the staff consultation exercise currently being undertaken.

7. A review of the Council's response to the first wave of Covid-19 infections was considered, with a view to learning any lessons for the expected second wave of infections in the Autumn. It was generally recognised that the Council responded quickly and well to the initial pandemic, for the benefit of residents and the vast majority of services were maintained throughout the summer. However, it was with some apprehension that the Committee noted a doubling of infections on the District over a week or two.

8. Other business considered by the Committee included: the Cabinet's Programme of Key Decisions, as well as the Overview & Scrutiny and Select Committee Work Programmes for 2020/21. Members were requested to inform Officers of potential lines of enquiry for the external scrutiny of the UK Innovation Corridor.