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Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2026

Councillors Present: Martha Vickers (Chairman), Alan Macro, Owen Jeffery, Paul Kander, Stephanie Steevenson, Joanne Stewart and Biyi Oloko (Substitute) (In place of Dennis Benneyworth)

Also Present: Councillor Patrick Clark (Executive Portfolio Holder: Adult Social Care and Public Health), Melanie O'Rourke (Service Director - Adult Social Care), Gordon Oliver (Clerk) and Stephen Chard (Zoom Host)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Dennis Benneyworth and Councillor Martin Colston

PART I

11 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

12 Adult Social Care Strategy and Delivery Plan

Councillor Patrick Clark (Executive Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Public Health) and Melanie O'Rourke (Service Director – Adult Social Care) presented the Adult Social Care Strategy and Delivery Plan (Agenda Item 3).

During the debate the following points were discussed:

- It was suggested that some service users may be concerned about the use of technology in adult social care (ASC) and concern was expressed that they may be disadvantaged if they did not accept it. Officers confirmed that those who were not confident with technology would not miss out on care.
- Members asked about the low response rate to the public consultation. While officers indicated that they would have liked to have had more responses, the survey had been promoted through a variety of channels and locations, with options for responses to be given online and over the phone.
- Officers were asked what action was being taken to ensure that younger people did not have to live in old people's care homes. It was explained that the aim was to have the right mix of supported living within the district to meet local needs and ASC was working with the Commissioning Team to provide this. Assurance was provided that any care home placements for young people would only be short-term.
- Clarification was sought around deprivation of liberty safeguards and the Attorney General for Northern Ireland (AGNI) Supreme Court ruling. Officers explained that deprivation of liberty was covered by the Mental Capacity Act and may apply to people who did not have the capacity to determine whether or not they should be in a care home. The AGNI Supreme Court ruling had found that deprivation of liberty had been used too widely in the past. As a result of the ruling, it would be used less in

future. National guidance was awaited, but until then officers were working on the basis of the ruling.

- It was noted that concern had been expressed at the Learning Disability Partnership Board (LDPB) about annual reviews. Officers confirmed that there was a commitment to involve all relevant parties in future reviews.
- Clarification was sought about step-down care. It was explained that this was for people coming out of hospital who needed additional support for a short period of time.
- Members challenged the claim that the strategy was coproduced given the low number of responses to the consultation. Various suggestions were made, including involvement of the Council's Communications Team, Carer Forums, and local churches. Officers confirmed that these had all been involved and efforts had been made to ensure that materials were accessible and easy to understand. It was noted that carers were busy and struggled to find time to respond. Members acknowledged that there was no obligation to complete the surveys.
- It was highlighted that most residents did not know much about adult social care and it was a complex area. Also, many people didn't recognise themselves as carers.
- The additional focus of the strategy on people with learning disabilities was welcomed, but it was recognised that getting feedback from them was difficult.
- Members indicated that they would have liked to have seen copies of consultation materials. It was confirmed that easy-read versions of the strategy and consultation had been produced and there had been good engagement through the LDPB. This engagement had helped to inform the Delivery Plan in addition to the survey responses. Officers indicated that they would continue to attend LDPB meetings.
- There was a query about the lifetime of the strategy. It was recognised that the strategy was being adopted mid-year, but it would apply from 2026 to 2030 - some elements were already being implemented.
- In relation to the technology proposals, it was suggested that further work was required to provide some additional context and allay concerns (e.g., roadshows).

  Action: Officers to consider how best how to address concerns about use of technology in ASC (e.g., through improved information).
- Members noted that there were no ADHD related actions in the delivery plan.
- It was noted that there were lots of uncertainties associated with local government review, elections, and budgetary pressures, which could impact on the strategy. However, Members felt that the Council had to carry on as normal. They felt that the strategy set realistic aspirations that had widespread support.
- Feedback from the survey suggested that residents would like to better understand what Adult Social Care did / did not do, and the role of partners (e.g., health). Also, it was suggested that more should be done to counter the view that self-funders received less help than others.

  Action: Review information related to Adult Socal Care on the website to see if this could be made clearer.
- Members suggested the following in relation to KPIs:

- The KPI for the number of people supported in Travellers' Friend supported living should have a wider remit, and it should measure the percentage of clients rather than an absolute number.
- All KPIs should have target / completion dates.

Action: Officers to review KPIs.

- There was a question about how coproduction should work in practice. Officers indicated that approaches were tailored to the circumstances - there were various mechanisms, such as using existing groups, or bringing people together with the same lived experience. This was a priority for all strategies and plans.
- Members asked about support for clients who had English as a second language. Officers confirmed that interpreters were used.
- It was suggested that the strategy should include statistics to support statements of areas where the Council was doing well.

  Action: Officers to include statistics to support statements on areas where the Council was doing well.
- Officers were asked about how they ensured care providers had appropriate skills and training. It was explained that providers were Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered and inspected and had to adhere to set standards, including levels of training for different staff. ASC staff would always work with providers to resolve issues where they had intelligence that care package wasn't working as planned. The Care Quality Team flagged training issues as part of this activity.
- It was noted that the ASC service was moving to a framework agreement, which would ensure consistency of standards across providers, including those around staff training. Senior ASC staff also attended provider forums where training ideas were discussed (e.g., responding to the AGNI ruling). Also, the planned ASC Workforce Strategy would consider how the service could support providers and work together on matters such as training.
- Issues around the status and pay for carers were highlighted by the Committee. Reference was made to the Carers Strategy - this set out the support provided for carers.
- There was discussion about demographics of ASC clients – officers confirmed that this data was already collected.
- Members asked if they could request minor amendments to the Strategy before it went to Executive for approval, e.g., correction of typographical errors and numbering of Delivery Plan actions for ease of reference. Officers confirmed that this would be possible.

  Actions:

  - **Councillor Jo Stewart to provide a list of typographical errors.**
  - **Officers to number the Delivery Plan actions.**
- The Committee requested that scrutiny committees should have sight of strategies at an earlier stage to ensure they had meaningful input.
- It was noted that the strategy still referred to the new Ridgeway Council, despite the recent announcement that local government reorganisation had been put on hold.

RESOLVED to:

- Endorse the Strategy subject to minor amendments.
- Request an update on implementation of the ASC Strategy and Delivery Plan after 12 months.

(The meeting commenced at 3.30 pm and closed at 4.38 pm)

CHAIRMAN …….

Date of Signature …….