

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2016/17



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Introduction

It has been another busy year for overview and scrutiny in North Tyneside, with the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and its sub-committees considering a variety of topics and issues.

This report highlights some of the work undertaken, the impact that scrutiny has had, and briefly outlines the process for the development of the 2016/17 work programme.

The role of Overview and Scrutiny

The role of overview and scrutiny is to provide a 'critical friend' challenge to the Cabinet (and other decision makers), whilst also assisting in the development of key policies and plans.

Over recent years there has been an increased emphasis on promoting and developing the policy development role of overview and scrutiny. Throughout 2016/17 this has continued; and a range of policy reviews have been undertaken, linked to the priorities within the Our North Tyneside Plan and the principles that drive the Creating a Brighter Future Programme.

We have been a 'critical friend'

Whilst the main focus of scrutiny work during 2016/17 has been the development of policy, the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and its sub-committees have still fulfilled the important role of being a critical friend to Cabinet, providing challenge, particularly on budget and performance issues.

The Finance Sub-committee has continued to examine the Council's budget monitoring position on a bi-monthly basis, including the forecast outturn positions for 2016/17 for the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account and the Investment Plan. Members have also undertaken review of the red risks associated with the Business and Technical Partnerships, the Council's fees and charges policy, the monitoring of business rate income, and the impact of government policies on the Council's financial position, including the academisation of schools.

A Budget and Council Plan Study Group was again established to consider the Cabinet's budget proposals in detail, and Members put forward a number of recommendations which were considered by Cabinet as part of the budget-setting process.

Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee has received bi-annual performance reports on the delivery of the Our North Tyneside Plan, allowing progress on delivery of the aims and objectives to be monitored and, where necessary, challenged. Some of the sub-committees have also monitored performance by receiving updates on the delivery of the various projects included in the Creating a Brighter Future programme. Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee has paid particular focus to central governments education policy developments this year and its potential impact on the borough.

But we have mainly focused on policy development

Some examples of the policy development work undertaken during 2016/17 are:

Parking Permits - Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

The Permit Parking Sub-group was established by the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee during 2015/16 and it reported to Cabinet in July 2016. The Study group put forward 18 recommendations aimed at simplifying the permit system and making it financially self-sustainable. These included recommendations to introduce new technology to improve the administration of the permit system, a reduction in the categories of permits available, and changes to permit charges. The Cabinet considered the report and agreed to accept the recommendations, subject to further work by Council officers to develop a revised parking and permit policy for the Council.

Bereavement Services – Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

The Bereavement Services Sub-group was established by Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee following concerns that had been raised in relation to the level of information and guidance available to the bereaved at an emotional and stressful time.

The sub-group met on 2 occasions and also carried out a visit to Preston Cemetery and Crematorium to see first hand the facilities available including the customer front door services and back office accommodation/working environment.

The sub-group made a total of 12 recommendations for Cabinet's consideration of which 11 were accepted, with a risk assessment review to be undertaken for the remaining recommendation before a decision being made to either accept/reject.

Future Construction Options – Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

As part of the Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee programme 2015/16, Members agreed to establish a sub-group to carry out a study to the

possible options available for the Future Construction Options for North Tyneside when the current 10 year partnership with Kier North Tyneside Limited (KNT) is due to end.

Members held a series of evidence gathering meetings with Council Officers, Kier North Tyneside Senior Management, Tenant Representatives and Union Officials between October 2015 and May 2016.

The findings of the study resulted in the selection of 3 options the sub-group believed should undergo full appraisal on their viability of possible future options for the Council.

Cabinet received a report on 13 July 2015 detailing the recommendations of the Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee in relation to the work undertaken by its sub-group on the Performance Priorities for the second half of the Kier North Tyneside Joint Venture with Cabinet accepting the 10 recommendations made within the report.

Those recommendations were incorporated into service planning with the Joint Venture for 2016/17 onward and are shaping activity in the second half of the contract term.

Since July 2015 the Sub-Group was focused on understanding the Long Term Construction requirements of North Tyneside Council and what delivery options should be considered post 2019. This culminated in Cabinet receiving a report on 11 July 2016 detailing recommendations.

Its report to Cabinet considered the future construction needs of the Authority, the likely changes in the market and the options open to the Authority as to the way forward. Alongside this, the Sub-Group outlined the issues that will be important in evaluating the construction options and took the time to consider a wide range of choices that will face Cabinet.

Those issues were seen to be

- Strong customer involvement
- Careful consideration of the impact on the workforce
- Visibility of the supply chain and its employment practices; and
- Value for money.

Following Cabinet approval, a working group was to be created of Cabinet Members and Officers to work through the options available to the authority, paying particular attention to the work of Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee.

That working group would then be required to consider in more detail the contractual position and process through to 2017 and then on to 2019. The legal, financial, HR and service delivery considerations would further explored, along with an understanding of the sensitivity and commercial aspects of the future delivery options.

As the work develops, further challenge and support from Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee would be sought.

Carers Support and Respite Provision - Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee

A sub-group was established to undertake an in-depth review of support and respite provision in North Tyneside for adult carers and parent carers of disabled children. This work linked to the 'Our people will be cared for and kept safe if they become vulnerable' objective of the Our North Tyneside Plan. The main aim was to ensure that the appropriate services and structures were in place to support carers, and that they had access to good quality respite care. During the review members of the sub-group held a series of evidence gathering meetings with expert witnesses, service users and service providers, and covered a wide range of issues including; access to information, advice and training, building based respite provision, direct payments and identification of carers. The sub-group put forward a total of 19 recommendations to the Local Authority and North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group, all of the recommendations were accepted and action plans have now been implemented.

Waste Collections Post 2017 – Environment Sub-committee

A sub-group of the Environment Sub Committee has carried out an in-depth study into the options available to the authority for the collection and disposal of household waste and recycling at the conclusion of the Weekly Collection Support Scheme in 2017. The sub-group has looked at a number of options which would assist the authority to reduce the amount of household waste which was sent to landfill and to encourage residents to increase rates of recycling which would tie in with government targets. Members have examined the waste collection arrangements in a number of neighbouring authorities and identified where savings could be made. The sub-group also examined ways in which residents could be helped to increase recycling levels including awareness campaigns. In addition the sub-group also addressed the issue of excess packaging which was a contributing factor in the increase in waste generated by households by suggesting that the government and retailers be lobbied to reduce the amounts of unnecessary packaging.

The sub-group's report containing 6 recommendations was presented to Cabinet in September 2016. Although the main recommendation in relation to consulting residents on the introduction of an alternative weekly collection service was not accepted it was noted that should there be any changes to the service in the future then residents would be consulted on the options. Cabinet also agreed to extend the waste awareness and recycling campaigns for a further two years and to introduce planning guidance for developers on the provision of onsite waste and recycling storage facilities in new developments.

ADHD – Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee

The sub-committee undertook a review of the support provided for children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and their families. To gain an understanding of the services available in the borough the sub group met with parents, teachers,

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators and health professionals as well as officers from the Authority.

The sub group scrutinised current services available for those diagnosed with ADHD, across both social care and health, and made ten recommendations to Cabinet in November 2016 from establishing working groups to share good practice and deliver training to providing support sessions for children and their parents. Areas of policy development included in the recommendations were changes to the referral process, the implementation of a universal SEN support form and suggestions for non-punitive behaviour policies at schools.

Cultural Development Plan – Culture and Leisure Sub-committee

The Culture and Leisure Sub-committee has undertaken a review of the Cultural Development Plan with a focus on how the Council is able to deliver an effective cultural offer in a shrinking financial environment. The review is ongoing and the sub-committee will be looking to provide a view to Cabinet on the priorities the Cabinet Member should consider in agreeing the future growth areas for the next five years. The review will also consider ways to improve facilities by maximizing external funding opportunities.

Older Person's Mental Health – Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee

The Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee has been undertaking a review of Older Person's Mental Health, the main focus of the review is to examine the support and services available for people with dementia, their families and carers, with a focus on those who are living at home. To date the sub-group have met with officers from Adult Social Care and North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group who helped to scope the review. The sub-group has also met with service users and service providers.

The sub-group has had the opportunity to put forward its views in relation to future support services for people with dementia and their carers to the Self Care and Prevention Board. The sub-group will be carrying out further work in relation to contributing to the development of the Older Persons Mental Health Strategy and reviewing the work around dementia friendly communities.

Elective Home Education – Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee

The Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee set up a sub-group to look at Elective Home Education, to review the policies in place and the support provided to families who choose to home educate. The sub-group met with relevant officers to discuss the authorities legal position and responsibilities in relation to elective home education and also consulted with some parents currently electively home educating

to gain some first hand experiences. The sub group has completed its work and it is anticipated that it's conclusions will be reported to Cabinet early in the next municipal year.

Ongoing Business Support – Economic Prosperity Sub-committee

The Economic Prosperity Sub-committee has been undertaking a review of ongoing business support with a focus on the range of support available to start-up businesses, the sustainability of new businesses in their 3rd and 4th years and whether providing extended and enhanced support would reduce the risk of businesses failing. The group has met with relevant officers and consulted with a range of external representatives, including the business factory and the North Shields Chamber of Trade to seek views on the experiences of local businesses on the support available and where any gaps may exist.

Apprenticeships - Economic Prosperity Sub-committee

During the autumn, members examined the impact of apprenticeships in North Tyneside, the Council's response to supporting apprenticeships and what more the Council could do to promote good practice. The sub-committee visited Chirton Engineering Ltd to learn about its apprenticeships and to speak directly with apprentices about their experiences. Members then discussed their findings with representatives from TyneMet College and the North Tyneside Learning Trust, the Young Cabinet Member for Ready for Work and Life and Council Officers. The scrutiny exercise identified a number of areas where the Council and its partners could develop and refine its approach and the sub-committee asked that officers take these into account in delivering future activity. This linked to the 'Our economy will have the right conditions to support investment and create new jobs, especially apprenticeships' objective of the Our North Tyneside Plan.

Monitoring reports

Whilst helping to develop new policies and assisting in the review of others, scrutiny has also invested time in monitoring the development and delivery of existing plans and policies to ensure that the best quality services are delivered to residents and visitors of North Tyneside.

Some examples of the plans and policies that have been monitored throughout the year include:

Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and its sub-committees have continued to receive monitoring reports on service delivery and performance across the Council. Scrutiny Members have also had the opportunity to comment on various policies and strategies prior to submission to Cabinet for approval.

Housing sub committee has this year continued to review performance reports relating to housing repairs and housing investment work delivered through Kier North

Tyneside. Members have particularly focused on customer satisfaction, void times and repair quality.

Flooding - Environment Sub-committee has considered reports from the Surface Water and Drainage Partnership on a quarterly basis, along with the Killingworth and Longbenton Surface Water Management Plan. Members examined the Plan to look at various solutions to alleviate flooding in the area.

In addition to the above the Environment Sub-committee has also continued to monitor the implementation of the recommendations in respect of the two recent street lighting reports and the action plan for the implementation of the Newcastle and North Tyneside Biodiversity Action Plan. Members have also monitored the implementation of the cycling strategy and the public rights of way reports.

Better Care Fund – The Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee has received regular reports showing progress against the national specified metrics and targets relating to the Better Care Fund (BCF). Members have also received detailed information relating to projects funded through the BCF, including Telecare and CARE Point.

Children, Young People and Learning Plan 2014-18 - following the outcome of a previous scrutiny study into child poverty, the Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee has received updates on the delivery of the Children, Young People and Learning Plan, to monitor the delivery of key services aimed at improving the lives of children and young people.

The Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee received the *North Tyneside Safeguarding Children Board's Annual* report in November 2016 and also received quarterly updates on work undertaken by the Authority and its partners to prevent and protect young people from sexual exploitation.

At the request of the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, the Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee receives an annual report on the attainment of free school meals (FSM) / pupil premium (PP) pupils to monitor the effectiveness of the support and challenge to ensure these pupils attainment is comparable to those pupils not in receipt of FSMs or PP.

The Chairs and Deputy Chairs have continued to meet on a quarterly basis throughout the year to share information on ideas and topics for review, to identify issues where services could be improved for residents, and to avoid any potential areas of duplication.

We have achieved

Recommendations

During 2016-17, seven in-depth reviews were completed and reported to cabinet. Altogether, 73 recommendations were put forward to Cabinet and 5 were submitted to the NHS North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Of the 73 recommendations put forward to Cabinet, Cabinet accepted and set out action to implement 66 of them, one partially. The CCG accepted all 5 of the recommendations submitted to them in relation to carers' support and respite provision. These figures demonstrate the positive and influential impact that scrutiny is having on the development of policy.

Members will continue to monitor the implementation of the recommendations that have been agreed and the subsequent outcomes on the delivery of services.

Engagement

A key role of overview and scrutiny is to promote issues of concern to the public and, where appropriate, consult with residents and service users to gather their insight into an issue under scrutiny investigation.

Various pieces of work this year have involved engagement with service users. The contribution of families of children with ADHD was vital to the work of the ADHD sub group and as part of the review of Elective Home Education the group consulted with parents who had chosen to home educate their children to gain an understanding of their experience and any support the Council can offer. In relation to the Older Person's Mental Health Review, Members consulted with people with dementia and their families and carers. In addition, the Economic Prosperity Sub-committee has consulted with a range of external representatives as part of the review of business support, including the Business Factory and the North Shields Chamber of Trade.

In relation to the work carried out by the Future Constructions Options Sub-group, there was a need to engage with not only Council Officers but with the Senior Management of one of the main Council Partners for service delivery Kier North Tyneside, and gained particular insight and views from Tenant Representatives and Union Officials.

Scrutiny has also continued to work closely with its partners, maintaining positive relationships and sharing key information, particularly in relation to health issues and policing issues. Representatives of the Clinical Commissioning Group, Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust, Healthwatch, and the Care Quality Commission have all been in attendance at various meetings to share information and maintain key links with Members. The Housing sub-committee is designated as the crime and disorder committee and has worked with Northumbria Police to explore issues of

concern to residents, such as noise and nuisance neighbour complaints. It has also held discussions with the Police and Crime Commissioner in relation to new initiatives brought in to deal with funding cuts and protect frontline services.

In the future

Preparation for the development of the 2017/18 overview and scrutiny work programme began in February 2017, with discussion with officers at the Scrutiny Support Network to identify forthcoming policy issues. The Chairs and Deputy Chairs have met to discuss policy areas and prioritise topics for scrutiny during 2017-18. An invitation was sent to all Elected Members and senior officers to suggest topics that scrutiny could usefully investigate. A press release has also been published asking the public to put forward any suggestions of service areas or issues that they would like scrutiny to review.

All suggestions received will be allocated to the relevant sub-committee, with the topics being discussed and prioritised at the first meetings of the 2017/18 municipal year. There will also be some reviews begun or assigned for 2016-17 that will carry forward to next year. When prioritising topics, consideration will be given to whether the issue is timely and if it will contribute to the development of policy.

The Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee has agreed the establishment of a sub-group to review the services and performance of one of the main partners Capita.