

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

2013-14



North Tyneside Council

1. Chair's Foreword

This has been a very exciting and busy year for overview and scrutiny in North Tyneside. A historic number of matters of interest and concern have been investigated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its five sub committees and these are laid out within this report.

Whilst maintaining the role of a critical friend, the committees have found ways to influence and shape policy within North Tyneside, reflecting 'Our North Tyneside', and assisting our Elected Mayor and Cabinet in their work as a truly listening and responsive Council. It is hoped that next year this can be further developed and that more studies can be investigated in depth. This will add value to working with our residents and communities about matters that impact and matter to them and their families.

The residents are at the heart of all we do and this is reflected in the work of scrutiny. In particular, scrutiny has been instrumental in the development of new community engagement processes, and the development of ward based Community Conversations and the Mayor's Listening Events.

I take great pleasure in presenting this report and take the time to thank all who have contributed to the overview and scrutiny work programme during the past year. The committees and scrutiny groups, with their elected members, church and parent governor representatives, and the involvement of health bodies, the police, and other external agencies are well placed to assist in the formidable task ahead, with less central government resources and increasing demands on our services. We have tried hard to encourage these scrutiny study groups to have cross party membership and it is hoped this can be further supported in the future.

I would also like to thank our talented Scrutiny Advisors and Democratic Support Officers who can pick the bones out of discussions and present reports and papers from sometimes convoluted discussions. They have been a great help to all with their support and guidance.

Councillor Sandra Graham
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2. Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has overall responsibility for the delivery of the overview and scrutiny function and for determining a work programme for itself and its sub-committees. The Committee's workload this year has involved a combination of monitoring and challenging the delivery of the Council's Change, Efficiency and Improvement Programme, contributing to plans and strategies via the Budget and Policy Framework, undertaking in-depth studies to actively contribute to the development of new policies and approving reports of its various sub-committees.

In accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework, the Committee contributed to the development of the Our North Tyneside Plan. Members were particularly keen to ensure that appropriate measures be put in place that will allow clear progress to be seen on the delivery of the key priorities identified. The Committee received all the measures to be used in order to provide input into whether they would be clear to the public and help demonstrate whether the target was being met. The Committee will continue to monitor the delivery of the Plan through a strategic overview of progress and detailed service level data.

Throughout the municipal year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has established 2 sub-groups, in relation to community engagement and the budget. The remit of the community engagement sub-group was to contribute to the development of a new engagement strategy that would replace area forums with a more ward-based approach to community engagement. The budget sub-group formed to review the initial budget proposals, providing challenge to some of the business cases and identifying potential changes to the budget setting process and the restructuring of staff. Following the information provided to the budget sub-group, the Committee undertook a piece of work in relation to the Wallsend Customer First Centre, which aimed to understand the value for money element of the project. Both sub-groups produced reports with relevant recommendations for Cabinet. The accepted recommendations will be monitored in the next municipal year to ensure that they have been implemented.



In addition, the Local Plan Sub-group was re-appointed in June 2013. The Sub-group met intensively during June and August to review the developing Local Plan and produced a report and recommendations on the initial proposals to be taken forward for public consultation. This was reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and full Council in September 2013. During the review the group met with a number of external organisations, including Northumberland County Council, utility companies and the North East Chamber of Commerce. The recommendations of the Sub-group were accepted by Council and incorporated into the draft local plan submitted for public consultation. The Sub-group was also tasked with reviewing the Council's processes in dealing with the planning application and appeal for the Scaffold Hill development. This work is ongoing.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been pleased to review and approve several in-depth review reports from its sub-committees, which demonstrate forward thinking policy development work. One of these areas was in relation to child poverty, a study that commenced in the previous municipal year and was completed in January 2014, identifying 22 recommendations for the Council, Jobcentre Plus and the Clinical Commissioning Group.

3. Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

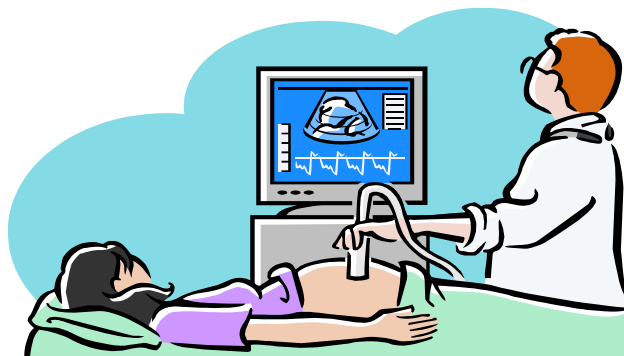
The Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee is responsible for scrutinising matters in relation to adult care, community services, health and wellbeing, mental health and emotional wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, welfare of vulnerable adults, older people, access to health services, benefits, independent living, personalisation, financial inclusion, public health and carers.

At the beginning of the year the sub-committee received Cabinet's response to the Transition of Public Health into the Local Authority review. The sub-committee were pleased to hear that all six recommendations had been accepted including the establishment of a Public Health Advisory Board. The sub-committee has since received a six monthly report from the Director of Public Health which outlined progress against the action plan.

The sub-committee were consulted on and examined the impact of a number of proposed changes to services managed by Northumberland, Tyne and Wear (NTW) Foundation Trust. This included changes to the learning disability inpatient service, dementia pathways, bed based female assessment and treatment services and the long term complex care inpatient service.

Following the national publication of MIND's report in relation to physical restraints in hospital settings, a representative of the trust attended the sub-committee meeting to answer member's questions on the use of physical restraints within the NTW settings. The sub-committee were also presented with a series of actions to be undertaken by NTW to continue to review the Trust's approach to the prevention and management of violence and aggression. The sub-committee plan to monitor these actions as part of their work programme 2014/15.

During the year representatives from North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group and North of England Commissioning Support have attended meetings to consult and seek the views of the sub-committee on the procurement of the Talking Therapies service and the GP Out of Hours service. The sub-committee has also been kept up to date on the borough-wide consultation exercise relating to new proposals for maternity services in North Tyneside.



As part of the monitoring of the action plan which arose from the Young Carers Study in 2011, a small group of Members met with some young carers to discuss their experiences and to find out whether things had improved as a result of the study. Members were encouraged to hear that improvements had been made, particularly in relation to the support, facilities and activities provided by the Carers Centre, and also the pastoral care for young carers at school.

The sub-committee's meeting in December was dedicated to the health and social care integration programme, hospital discharges and re-admissions. The sub-committee were pleased to note that Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust, North Tyneside Council and two local Clinical Commissioning Groups had been working closely over the last two years on a programme of greater integration, to enhance service user experience and ensure the most effective use of the partnership's joint resources. Members discussed issues with the electronic discharge system which was in place for GPs to be provided with patient's notes electronically and made some suggestions on how patients discharge or medication notes could be delivered to GPs in a timely way.

A number of other topics have been considered as part of the sub-committee's work programme including, the Psychiatric of Old Age Service, Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report, podiatry services, falls prevention, the Older Person's Integration Project and the Public Health Procurement Plan.

In January 2014 a separate workshop facilitated by senior managers from ASC in gave Members the opportunity to comment and make recommendations in relation to the Adult Social Care budget proposals for 2014/15.

The Chair has continued to represent the sub-committee on the North East Regional Health Scrutiny Committee who have considered a number of regional issues such as the Children's Paediatric Review, NHS 111 and the North East Ambulance Service Accident and Emergency review.

All in all this has been a demanding year for the sub-committee in terms of their challenging work programme.

4. Children, Education and Skills

The Children, Education and Skills sub-committee is responsible for scrutinising issues in relation to schools, youth services, higher education, child poverty, safeguarding, child protection, looked after children, vulnerable children, early years and childcare and playsites.

At the beginning of the municipal year the sub-committee continued to keep a close eye on the developments with Kings Priory, which was a proposal by the Woodward Academies Trust for a merger between Priory Primary School and The Kings School Tynemouth to create Kings Priory School as a sponsored academy. Following the opening of Kings Priory School in September 2013, the sub-committee were keen to follow developments and contribute to the review of school provision. This review was initiated by Cabinet in October 2013 to address the issues and pressures facing North Tyneside's maintained education provision in order to strengthen resilience within the system. The sub-committee has received updates on progress with the review and considered data in relation to expected surplus places. The sub-committee intends to continue this work in the next municipal year, looking specifically at detailed facts and figures related to individual schools, the potential impact that new house building would have on demand for future school places and an assessment of the impact that any increase in the primary school population could have in the future.



The topic of apprenticeships was identified and prioritised by the sub-committee at the beginning of the year and a sub-group was established to investigate this issue further. Initial information highlighted that collation of performance information in relation to apprenticeships is undertaken by the Skills Funding Agency and little information is then shared in relation to long-term success. The focus of the study was therefore on ensuring that the Council is delivering the best service possible to apprentices and encouraging employers to create apprentice positions.

The investigation covered a wide range of issues related to apprenticeships including current demand and provision, support offered by the Council to employers interested in creating apprenticeships and case studies of young people that have completed apprenticeships. The study resulted in 4 recommendations being submitted to Cabinet, aimed at increasing the number of apprenticeships available within North Tyneside and rewarding quality apprenticeships.

Throughout the municipal year the sub-committee has also received reports on specific projects within the Change, Efficiency and Improvement programme that had not reached the expected savings targeted, in order to ensure that plans were in place to meet the set objectives. The Adoption Action Plan and Special Education Needs and Disability Reforms were also amongst topics considered by the sub committee.

5. Economic Prosperity and Housing

The Sub-Committee has responsibility for scrutinising matters in relation to economic development, housing, planning, business and enterprise, the transport network, highways and road safety, town centres, inward investment and tourism.

The main focus of the Sub-committee's work this year has been to contribute to the Council's developing strategy to increase the number of affordable homes in the Borough. The Sub-committee established a sub-group of Members to look at this issue in detail. The sub-group has met on several occasions to consider aspects of the strategy, including potential finance and delivery options to deliver an accelerated number of affordable homes over the next 10 years. The Sub-group recently submitted an interim report to the Economic Prosperity and Housing Sub-committee on its work and provided a steer to the Cabinet Member on how the strategy should be progressed, including the delivery options that members consider most appropriate for further exploration.

The Sub-committee has continued to review progress in relation to the Quality Homes for Older People project; has contributed to the Council's response to the consultation by NEXUS on the proposal for a Quality Contracts Scheme for bus services; has considered key performance information in relation to the housing service; considered the interim findings from consultants at an early stage of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment; received an update on regeneration projects, including detailed information on the economic development proposals relating to the Swan Hunters site in Wallsend; and received a briefing on the work of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership. The Sub-committee has also considered budget proposals in relation to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), together with information on national policy developments that will impact on the HRA.

The Sub-committee has taken a particular interest in provision by the Council of local welfare services in place of the national crisis loan and community care grant system. The Sub-committee is continuing to monitor the implementation of this service and the implication of proposed government policy changes on this service.



6. Environment and Culture

The sub-committee has responsibility for scrutinising matters in relation to the environment, energy use, climate change, waste management, community safety, parks and open spaces, sports and leisure, libraries, arts development, heritage strategy, community centres and voluntary sector support.

In setting their work programme for 2013/14, the sub-committee prioritised and established a sub-group to carry out an in-depth review into street lighting. The main aim of the review was to explore the different options for street lighting with a view of reducing energy consumption and to achieve efficiency savings. In carrying out the review the sub-group met with senior officers of the Council, attended an on-site demonstration of the Mayflower Central Management System (CMS) to assess the different levels of street lighting dimming possible and following this initiated a trial of dimming and trimming in the Weetslade area of the borough and sought resident's views. On completion of the review the sub-committee made a total of four recommendations to Cabinet which included exploring the business models available to purchase and implement the Mayflower CMS across residential areas in the borough, to gradually phase in dimming and trimming of street lights across residential areas and for Cabinet to give further consideration to part-night switch off in non-residential areas. In relation to the latter, Cabinet asked if the sub-committee would re-established the sub-group to explore the options for part-night switch off, as a result the sub-group has now re-established and will be reporting their findings and recommendations in due course.



At the beginning of the year the sub-committee received a presentation from officers on the current library provision in North Tyneside and on the re-modelling of the library service in Gateshead and Sunderland. Subsequently the sub-committee received an update report where it was reported that the Customer First Centre (CFC) in Wallsend was opening in February 2014 where the library service would be provided in future, this was the final piece in the jigsaw of the CFC development in the borough, ensuring access for all residents. To allow more time for the CFCs to become established and produce meaningful data to assess the impact on smaller libraries, the sub-committee has prioritised an in-depth library review as part of their work programme 2014/15. In preparation for this the final meeting in the 2013/14

municipal year was held at Wallsend CFC where Members received a tour of the customer services and library facilities.

The sub-committee continued to receive updates on the works being undertaken as part of the Excellent Parks Programme and as part of this undertook a tour of Richardson Dees Park and Wallsend Hall Grounds to examine at first hand the work which had been completed and to receive an overview of the outstanding works.

Flooding continues to be a priority topic for the sub-committee and during the year they have received quarterly progress reports from the Surface Water and Drainage Partnership prior to the report being presented to Cabinet. This has given the sub-committee the opportunity to raise any concerns and make recommendations in a timely manner to Cabinet.

In relation to the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), the sub-committee invited the PPC for Northumbria to their final meeting of the municipal year to discuss the role of the PCC, what the key challenges and achievements had been over the year and what the priorities going forward were. The sub-committee also gave consideration to progress made towards achieving Safer North Tyneside's targets for 2011/14.

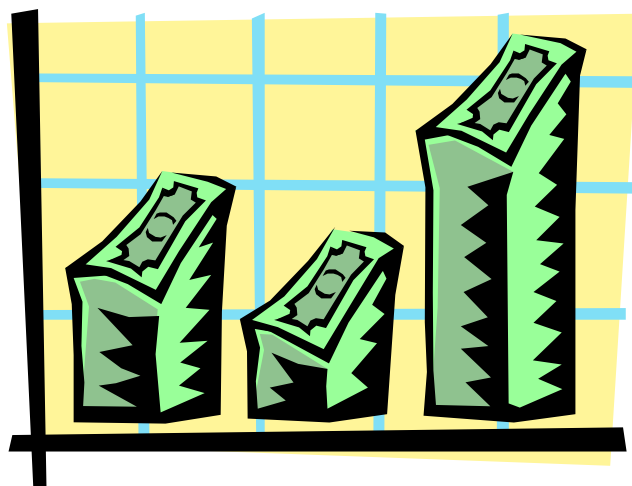
8. Finance

The Finance Sub-committee has continued to monitor financial management information on a bi-monthly basis. The Sub-committee has also received bi-monthly reports on the red risks contained within the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers of the Business and Technical Partnerships.

The sub-committee has undertaken a scrutiny exercise to examine the joint venture agreement with Kier North Tyneside. The Sub-committee paid particular reference to the joint venture company's governance arrangements and the responsibilities of its board of directors. As part of this, the directors of Kier North Tyneside were invited to attend a meeting of the sub-committee to examine the company's accounts and discuss its future development.

At the beginning of the year the sub-committee agreed to undertake a detailed review of the financial savings to be delivered as part of the Council's Change, Efficiency and Improvement Programme. The Sub-committee began this exercise by examining the current position in relation to those projects falling within the Children, Young People and Learning theme of the programme, and has since reviewed the CEI savings to be delivered as part of the Adult Social Care, Business and Environment themes.

The Sub-committee has also considered the financial position of North Tyneside's schools and provided an overview of the variations to the Council's Local Funding Formula for schools for the financial year 2014/15.



Getting Involved

One of the key roles of overview and scrutiny is to involve communities in the decision making process. Whatever your role, whether it be as a councillor, officer, partner, community representative or an individual who lives or works in the borough, you are encouraged to have your say, either by suggesting an issue for investigation, or by getting involved with an area of work already underway.

If there are any other themes relating to improving council services which you believe could benefit from a scrutiny review or if you have concerns or feel strongly about an issue or service where you think overview and scrutiny could make a difference by influencing decision-makers please let us know.

Any suggestions will be evaluated to assess whether an overview and scrutiny investigation is likely to have a positive impact and councillors will decide whether to proceed. Please bear in mind however that overview and scrutiny cannot investigate individual complaints. The Council has a separate complaints procedure to deal with these.

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