
Scrutiny Annual Report 2015-16

All together, **working**, **playing**, **learning**,
growing, **laughing**, **innovating**, **caring**,
sharing, **living**...
Sunderland!

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Foreword



Once again it gives me great pleasure to be able to introduce the Scrutiny Annual Report. The Annual Report provides an account of the work of scrutiny throughout 2015/16 and helps to illustrate the purpose and importance of scrutiny in the Sunderland.

In my role as the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee it has been, yet another, extremely busy and challenging year. This, at least in part, can be contributed to the commissioning of an independent review of scrutiny which was conducted by the Executive Director of the Centre for Public Scrutiny and engaged with all members and key stakeholders.

Also prior to and following the recent Ofsted inspection of Children's Services the Scrutiny Committee established a regular dialogue with Children's Services to monitor the progress on improvement and demonstrate scrutiny's accountability role. It is important that the Council has and maintains a scrutiny function which is current, fit for purpose and contributes to the delivery of City priorities.

Transition arrangements have been in place since early January 2016, with the new scrutiny model being fully implemented following the Annual Council meeting in May 2016. These are challenging times for local government and I feel sure that the new formal scrutiny arrangements are best placed to serve the Council, its communities and local people in providing clear, focused and outcome-driven scrutiny.

The Lead Scrutiny Members have again been very active and have continued, with the help of the former scrutiny panels and subsequent shadow committees, to complete a number of reviews and investigations. It is also reassuring to know that Elected Members have been very supportive of the changes made to the scrutiny model and that Members and Officers are looking forward to moving forward in Scrutiny.

I have also continued as Chair of the North East Combined Authority (NECA) Scrutiny Committee through 2015/16. With NECA and devolution continuing to develop and gather pace an effective scrutiny function remains an essential aspect not least to ensure that local councillors, on behalf of their communities, are able to scrutinise and challenge matters within the remit of the Combined Authority.

As part of this work the NECA Scrutiny Committee is undertaking a review to further understand the impact of transport in the combined authority area and, in particular, any problems people face preventing them from getting into employment, travelling to work, school or college.

I hope you find the Annual Report not only useful as a record of the work of scrutiny over the past year but also as an introduction to a new and exciting chapter in the development of scrutiny in Sunderland.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Norma Wright". The signature is cursive and fluid.

Councillor Norma Wright
Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Arrangements in Sunderland

The democratic governance arrangements in Sunderland consists of the Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Secretary, five portfolio holders and five project lead members. The decisions of the Cabinet are held to account by the Scrutiny Committee supported formerly by six Scrutiny Panels and latterly by three shadow scrutiny committees. In addition there are five local Area Committees and Place and People Boards in each area.

What is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny aims to ensure that public services and policies best meet the needs of the residents of the city. It does this through:

- Policy review and development;
- Holding the Council's Executive and its partners to account;
- Investigating issues of local concern; and
- Working with partners to improve services to the local area.

The Scrutiny Model

The Scrutiny Committee acts as the overarching Committee with responsibility for all matters in relation to the improvement, delivery and performance of public services. It considers all matters which impact on the economic, social and environmental well-being of those who live, work and visit the city and is the designated scrutiny committee for statutory purposes for health, flooding (when relevant) and crime and disorder scrutiny.

If the Scrutiny Committee requires more in-depth investigation of particular issues it will commission work to the six Scrutiny Panels chaired by a Lead Scrutiny Member. The Panels will contribute to and inform the scrutiny process significantly through focused policy review work and one-off policy reviews.

A Scrutiny Panel is a small group of councillors who carry out specific, time-limited work. Panels are informal and are commissioned by the Scrutiny Committee to investigate specific service areas and make suggestions on how they can be improved. This allows Panel members to gain a wider understanding of the issue and arrive at informed findings and recommendations.

Review of Scrutiny Arrangements

During 2015/16 the Chair of Scrutiny commissioned an independent review of the scrutiny function in Sunderland, which was subsequently, conducted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny with the full cooperation of elected members and key stakeholders. The outcome of this review has resulted in a comprehensive remodelling of the scrutiny structure and the formation of one formal, overarching co-ordinating committee and three themed scrutiny committees.

In January 2016 transitional arrangements were implemented with the themed committees operating in shadow format, as part

of a phased approach, with full implementation of the model taking place in May 2016.

How does scrutiny make a difference?

On a regular basis the Scrutiny Function will add value by investigative questioning of witnesses on the issues within the council's policy framework. The impact of the work of scrutiny will also be evidenced over time by the implementation of its recommendations.

The monitoring of delivery of scrutiny's recommendations over a period time builds up a portfolio of evidence of scrutiny's role in service improvement.

The Scrutiny Committee



**Chair: Councillor
Norma Wright**
**Vice-Chair: Councillor
Dianne Snowden**

Committee Members,

Councillors: Ronny Davison,
Darryl Dixon, Jill Fletcher,
George Howe, Lynda Scanlan and
David Snowden

The Scrutiny Committee has been active throughout 2015-16 delivering not only on a robust work programme, but also commissioning a review of scrutiny and implementing its recommendations.

This year the Scrutiny Committee has responded to a number of issues that have been very much in the public eye, including the Sunderland Breast Care Service which was temporarily suspended by City Hospitals. In re-commissioning this service City Hospitals and the Clinical Commissioning Group have actively engaged with the Scrutiny Committee on the development of a new breast care service in Sunderland. The Committee recognised the importance of having a balanced dialogue and therefore we also involved local interest group, Save Our Service, in

these discussions and have visited the intended site for the Breast Care Service.

The Scrutiny Committee also looked at the Housing & Care21 Extra Care Schemes and in particular the recent Care Quality Commission report into Dovecote Meadows, as well as Beckwith Mews, Bramble Hollow and Woodridge Gardens where residents had raised a number of concerns. The Locality Manager for Housing and Care21 attended the Scrutiny Committee to discuss some of these concerns and explain how they were being addressed. As scrutiny members we also asked that further updates were brought back to the committee to ensure that progress was being made.

The Scrutiny Committee has also responded to issues around Care Quality Commission inspections of GP Practices, the Clinical Commissioning Groups procurement of alternative provider medical services, the alcohol and substance misuse service and school performance. Extraordinary meetings of the Scrutiny Committee were also convened to consider the Care Quality Commission's inspection of Sunderland Royal Hospital and urology services in Sunderland respectively.

All the above examples illustrate just how proactive scrutiny has been in issues that are important to residents of the city, and how scrutiny can act to voice and champion the concerns of local people.

The Scrutiny Committee has continued to engage with senior Cabinet members as part of the Council's budget consultation

process for 2016/17. This is one of the fundamental roles of the Scrutiny Committee and it is, perhaps, even more important in light of the continued reductions in public spending, ensuring that remaining council resources are utilised to the maximum.

In my role as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee I have also, during this year, commissioned an independent review of the Scrutiny Function in Sunderland. This was conducted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and engaged with all political parties, key officers and partner organisations and ultimately led to a series of recommendations which will strengthen governance arrangements in relation to overview and scrutiny.

Sunderland City Council is in a very similar position to many local authorities across England and continues to assess the impact of reducing financial resources on service provision and the need to look differently at how, as a public sector organisation, we deliver services over the coming years. This only goes to underline the importance of a strong scrutiny function to carry on championing the concerns of local people, being that critical friend and delivering focused outcome-driven work programmes.

As always to finish my summary I would like to thank all Members, officers, partners and external organisations who have contributed to the work of scrutiny, it is with this level of commitment that we can continue to move forward and ensure that scrutiny remains both effective and robust.

Shadow Children, Education & Skills Scrutiny Committee



Lead Scrutiny Member: Councillor Darryl Dixon

Shadow Committee Members

Councillors: Debra Waller, Anthony Farr, Bob Francis, Karen Waters, Victoria O'Neil, Doris MacKnight, Jacqui Gallagher, Philip Tye

The Shadow Scrutiny Committee has been established as part of a review of scrutiny and following an Ofsted inspection of Sunderland's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked-after and care leavers carried out between 11 May and 4 June 2015.

The Scrutiny Committee will aim to demonstrate its impact on improving outcomes for children and young people through a focused work programme aligned to the Learning and Improvement Plan developed in response to the Ofsted inspection report.

This will include relevant training and development on safeguarding and corporate parenting for Elected Members as well as implementation of clear forward plan for scrutiny.

The Ofsted report requires the local authority to respond to a number of areas of improvement and these will also be reviewed as part of our scrutiny activity. The improvement plan is being overseen by an Improvement Board chaired by the Commissioner for Children's Services appointed by the Department for Education and the Committee will work with the interim team to support the future welfare of children in care.

In addition to this improvement work, the Shadow Committee inherited a detailed investigation of children's mental health services and we will conclude with a set of focused recommendations for this service.

Children are our future and it is vital that we care for all their needs. This includes providing the necessary support to them to help them deal with the complexities of mental health. We must do more to ensure that our children are encouraged to speak openly about the difficulties they are facing. Timely intervention is crucial for these children, and its absence will mean some of them will struggle far into their adult lives when they need not do so. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on addressing the stigma attached to those people who suffer with mental health issues.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the whole family can be affected by a child's behavioural and mental health problems. We have a duty to help these families and to provide timely and appropriate support to assist them through these potentially difficult times.

Our review has helped us to appreciate the difficulties faced by individuals suffering with mental health issues and those closest to them. We are pleased to note that services are more and more being tailored to meet the need of individual families.

The Shadow Committee has been set up in a short space of time and I would like to acknowledge the support of the officers in Children's Services, working with us to put this in place.

I would like to thank the members of the previous Panel and the new Shadow Committee for their contributions and also to thank all of the witnesses who gave up their time to attend and provide interesting insights into the services they provide and the challenges they face.

Shadow Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee



**Lead Scrutiny Members
Councillors: Jill Fletcher and
Cllr George Howe**

Shadow Committee Members

Councillors: Rebecca Atkinson, Richard Bell, Rosalind Copeland, John Cummings, Michael Dixon, Alan Emerson, Louise Farthing, Juliana Heron, Julia Jackson, Shirley Leadbitter, Barbara McClennan, Paul Middleton, Fiona Miller, Dorothy Trueman, Doris Turner and Geoff Walker

The Shadow Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee brings together the former Health, Housing and Adult Services and the Public Health, Wellness and Culture Scrutiny Panels, as part of the transitional arrangements following the review of scrutiny. Both panels have worked extremely well during the year and have looked at a number of issues relating to their remits.

The Health, Housing and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel have concentrated primarily on looking at the transition arrangements from child to adult care services. The Panel recognised that the transitional process from a child to an adult and beyond is a crucial period in anyone's life; this can be an exciting time, but, it can also prove to be potentially daunting and stressful.

The Panel took evidence from a wide range of people and organisations including schools, colleges, health practitioners, council officers and also from people who had experienced the transition process for themselves. The review provides an overview of the transition process and some of the difficulties faced by young people, parents, carers and professionals in ensuring the correct support from childhood into adulthood.

As well as looking at transition arrangements the Health, Housing and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel also looked at Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's) within the city visiting a variety of accommodation types including the Norfolk Hotel; a 44 bedroom hostel in the city, Dundas Street; student accommodation and Roker Avenue; self-contained flats. The panel was looking at the proliferation of HMO's across the city and, as well as the visits, also considered issues around mandatory licensing, penalties, the Sunderland HMO inspection regime and the planning regulations relating to HMO's.

The former Public Health, Wellness and Culture Scrutiny Panel have been busy too, with a review of sexual health services in Sunderland. The review looked at the issue of sexual health and sexually transmitted infections across the City, the provision of core sexual health services, and the impact this has on the residents of Sunderland. Members, as part of the review, visited the Genito Urinary Medicine (GUM) Clinic and the Contraceptive and Sexual Health (CASH) Services in Sunderland, as well as considering evidence from the North East Council on Addictions.

Through this review Members have highlighted the importance of sexual health services, and as well as recognising the excellent work carried out, have put forward a



number of recommendations that hopefully can help to improve these services in the City.

The Panel also looked the role of the city's employers in promoting a culture of wellness through supporting: physical activity; healthy eating; emotional and mental wellbeing and personal resilience; preventive healthcare. Through this work Members were satisfied to see that a number of activities were being used by employers across the city to promote a culture of wellness within their organisations. This included the Better Health at Work Award; the Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance and Workplace Health Charter; and Sunderland City Council's Employee Wellness programme.

Following the scrutiny review the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has carried on the work of the panels and has already been actively engaged in a number of issues. A dedicated health scrutiny committee will enable us to look at key health issues in greater detail, as well as developing our expertise in health related matters. Already we have looked to develop our relationships with key organisations including Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group, City Hospitals and Healthwatch.

We have also, at this early stage, looked at issues relating to school nursing services and suicide and self-harm in Sunderland.

On behalf of the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee it only remains for us to thank all the members, officers and partners who have contributed to our work over the year. It is with this cooperation and commitment that we are able to achieve as much as we do, and we feel sure that under the new arrangements this will continue to be the case.

Shadow Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee



**Lead Scrutiny Members
Councillors: Ronny Davison,
Lynda Scanlan and
David Snowdon**

Shadow Committee Members

Councillors: Margaret Beck, James Blackburn, Barry Curran, Michael Dixon, Miles Elliot, Colin English, Michael Essl, Margaret Forbes, Steve Foster, Gillian Galbraith, Ian Galbraith, Betty Gibson, Iain Kay, Len Lauchlan, Christine Marshall, Stuart Porthouse, Bob Price, Bernie Scaplehorn, Tony Taylor, Billy Turton, Mary Turton and Peter Wood

The Prosperity Scrutiny Committee was established in January 2016, bringing together the membership of the Skills Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel, the Responsive Services and Customer Care Scrutiny Panel and the City Services Scrutiny Panel.

Since its inception, the Committee has taken on the broad and varied remits of the three Panels and followed through their work programmes to completion. This has included a number of important pieces of work.

For example, during the year members have conducted a review into the approach being taken by the Council to the issue of environmental enforcement and the extent to which enforcement powers are being used.

Our report has highlighted the importance attached by residents to the quality of the local environment and the problems associated with litter, dog fouling and fly-tipping. It has also highlighted the increasing difficulties we face in maintaining the quality of service that our residents expect at a time of unprecedented reductions in available resources. Maintaining a clean and tidy environment will always be a balance between

education and persuasion and the use of more robust enforcement measures such as fixed penalty notices. We consider it important for the Council to focus and prioritise the use of available resources while at the same time being willing to take robust and well publicised enforcement action against the most serious and persistent offenders.

During the year, members have also examined the progress being made by the Council's customer services network, how the council makes use of customer satisfaction data and the way this information is used to improve services. We also heard about the way in which feedback from the Council's formal complaints procedure can be used to improve service delivery and highlight at an early stage any problems or emerging issues.

The report highlighted the important role of members in providing vital information and



intelligence regarding the delivery of services and any emerging trends at a local level.

Members of the Committee have also undertaken a comprehensive review into the work of the Key Cities Group of local authorities and how Sunderland can best utilise its involvement for the benefit of Sunderland residents, businesses and future economic growth. As part of this process, Members looked at the experiences of a number of the local authorities making up the group, culminating in a joint discussion with representatives from Coventry City Council. The review has highlighted the value of the Group for promoting the interest of mid-sized cities such as Sunderland and providing a forum for learning

among local authorities at different stages of the regeneration process.

As part of its work programme, the Committee has also addressed a number of other issues during the year, including the progress being made in implementing the new powers available contained within the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 and the current position with regard to the work of the Sunderland Business Improvement District.

Members have also been consulted on the contents of the draft Sunderland Local Flood Risk Management Strategy which provides an assessment of flood risk in the city, the objectives for managing flood risk and the measures proposed to address

these objectives. This provided members with the opportunity to contribute to the emerging strategy based on their unique local knowledge of the city.

All in all, it has therefore been very busy and productive year for the Committee and one that should help provide the foundations for the development of scrutiny in the years ahead.

The year ahead

The Annual Report is one way in which the scrutiny function can reflect on the previous year as well as providing a snapshot of the work and achievements of scrutiny. The collective work of Members, officers and partner agencies is a key principle of effective scrutiny and this report demonstrates how this continues to work in Sunderland.

Another aim of the Annual Report is to look ahead and focus on some of the key challenges that face scrutiny and the Council. Challenge is an often used word and in looking ahead we again face considerable challenges including further spending reductions which will have a major impact on the operation of the

Council. The Council continues to look at how to use resources to best effect, ensuring that frontline services are still delivered to the highest standard for the people of Sunderland.

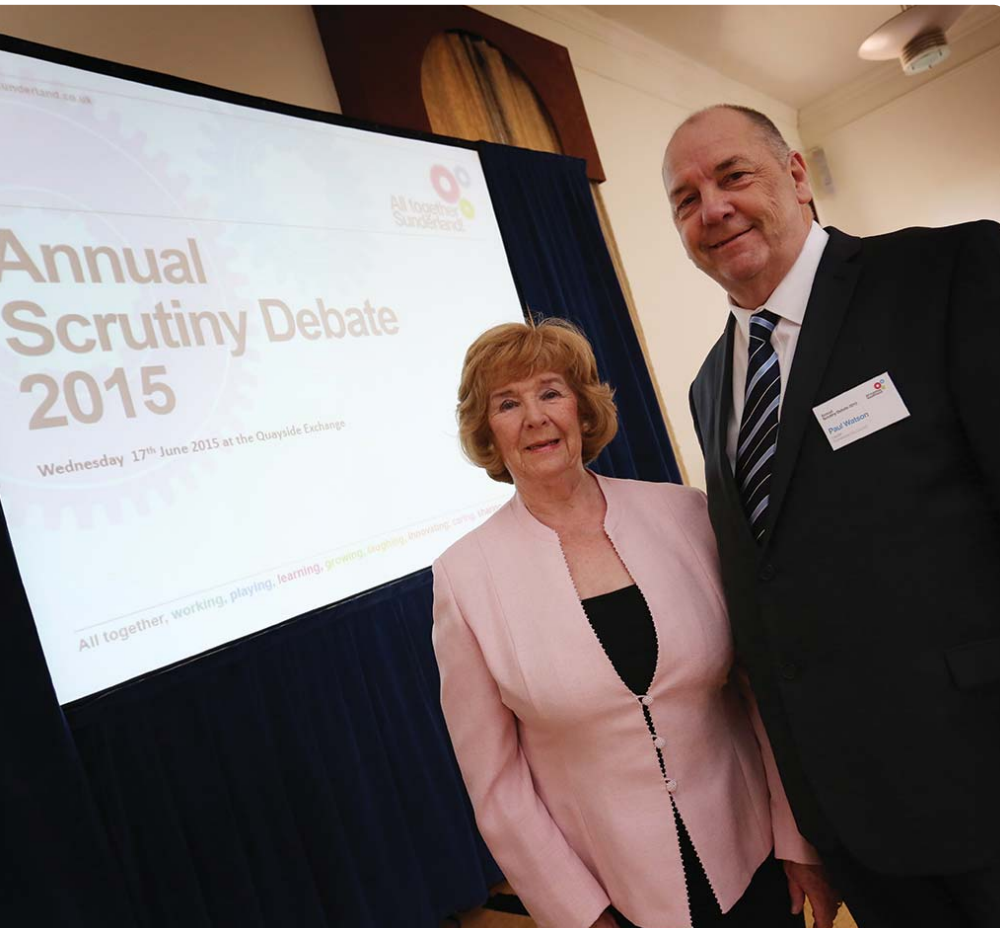
Scrutiny will continue to play an important role in helping the council to achieve this goal. However, with ever reducing resources there is always the need to look at how, as a function, we can operate more effectively and more efficiently while still ensuring that it is rigorous enough to hold the executive and partners to account, monitor performance and contribute to a strengthening of service delivery. With this in mind the Chair of Scrutiny commissioned

an independent review of scrutiny, which has seen a structural change to the way in which scrutiny operates.

During the year ahead we will look to build on the foundations of this new Scrutiny model ensuring that scrutiny strengthens its role, develops key relationships and continues to add value to the work being undertaken. Scrutiny members and officers working together will always ensure that the function provided is fit for purpose and provides the City Council and partner organisations with a robust scrutiny arrangement that as well as providing value continues to be valued.

The annual scrutiny debate has over the years been an extremely useful vehicle for developing the work programme and issues for scrutiny to investigate. However, in light of the changes that are taking place to the scrutiny model now is also an opportune time to revamp the annual debate. It will be crucial that the annual debate best serves the new model and ensures that scrutiny is able to focus its resource into the right issues for 2016/17.

In looking ahead scrutiny will be different in 2016, with a new operating model, but what will remain the same is Scrutiny Members continuing to build on the effective working relationships that have been developed over the years with cabinet colleagues, partner organisations and council officers to ensure that the new model works well, provides an effective challenge and ultimately results in contributing to the improvement of service delivery for the residents of Sunderland.



Scrutiny on a page

The Scrutiny Committee, the former supporting panels and the shadow committees tackle a large range of issues over a municipal year. In order to fully appreciate the variety and breadth of the subjects covered, below is an extensive summary of the work of scrutiny in Sunderland.

- Youth Justice Plan 2015/16
- Revenue Budget Reviews
- Capital Programme Reviews
- Extra Care Housing
- Corporate Parenting Annual Report
- CCG Operational Plan 2015/16
- Safeguarding
- CQC GP Practice Visits
- CYP Community Services
- Sunderland APMS Procurement
- Care and Support Annual Update
- Budget Consultation 2015/16
- Budget Planning Framework 2016/17
- Gambling Act 2005
- Licensing Act 2003
- Review of Scrutiny
- Safer Sunderland Partnership Annual Review
- Monitoring of Scrutiny Recommendations
- Annual Audit Letter
- Revenue Budget Proposals 2016/17
- SSGA Draft Supporting Planning Document and Delivery Plan
- Annual Complaints Report
- School Performance
- Sunderland Breast Care Services
- NECA Proposed Devolution Agreement
- Elected Regional Mayor
- The Prevent Duty
- Care Home Quality Improvement Framework
- Care Home Market Update
- Scrutiny Policy Reviews
- Alcohol and Substance Misuse Service
- School Nursing
- Suicide and Self-Harm
- Business Improvement District
- Key Cities
- SEND Implementation
- Child Poverty
- Urology Services in Sunderland
- CQC Inspection of Sunderland Royal Hospital



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