



Scrutiny: Community Leadership In Action

Scrutiny Annual Report

2013/14

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Foreword

In this my final year as the Chair of Scrutiny and an elected member of the Council it gives me great pleasure to introduce Sunderland City Council's Scrutiny Annual Report.



Scrutiny has come on a long journey from the pages of legislation in 2000 which created a separate Executive and Overview and Scrutiny function within the council, to the streamlined commissioning model we operate in 2014. I am proud of the achievements that Scrutiny in Sunderland has accomplished throughout this time. It has built upon its successes and evolved to meet the demands and requirements of the council, but fundamentally at its core has always been the desire of members, no matter the political affiliation, to bring about improvement to services for the people of Sunderland.

Once again the Lead Scrutiny Members and their Panels have undertaken a wide range of policy reviews and throughout this Annual Report you will see evidence of this work. This is one of the real strengths of scrutiny, being able to look exclusively at an issue and deliver an evidence based report with a number of recommendations all with the key aims of development, support and improvement.

As public sector spending is reduced it is more important than ever that local authorities look at how they currently deliver services and how alternative service delivery models can achieve savings whilst still providing a level of service expected by local people. There is a role for scrutiny in reflecting the concerns of the public, exploring innovation and supporting the work of council services. The commissioning of issues to Lead Scrutiny Members also provides that necessary flexibility of approach to ensure that scrutiny remains responsive to emerging topics or current issues allowing for quick and efficient investigations where appropriate.

In conclusion it has once again been an interesting and challenging year for scrutiny. Last year I commented on the significant changes to the scrutiny function's operating model and I am pleased to report that throughout this year scrutiny members and officers have continued to develop and hone these new arrangements. It is extremely positive to see that all the members involved with scrutiny have, under the new arrangements, continued to support the work of scrutiny with great enthusiasm and commitment.

On a personal note I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all the members, officers and partners who have contributed and supported scrutiny and Sunderland City Council over the years that I have been an elected member.

Councillor David Tate
Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Arrangements in Sunderland

The democratic governance arrangements in Sunderland consists of the Leader of the Council, a Deputy, a Cabinet Secretary, five portfolio holders and five cabinet policy members. The decisions of the Cabinet are held to account by a Scrutiny Committee supported by six Scrutiny Panels. 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.

Although the Panels are informal, they take a structured approach to the examination of a particular issue with the aim of identifying key issues and outcomes. Panels will carry out a scoping exercise to identify a detailed remit and terms of reference, resource implications, the need for additional expertise, existing research and supporting documentation. Shorter "spotlight" reviews may be appropriate for specific topics in a shorter space of time. The approach may include an evidence gathering day, via "interviews" and discussion groups with officers, members and other stakeholders.

When the Panel has finished its investigation, the Lead Scrutiny Member will present the findings to the Scrutiny Committee. If the Scrutiny Committee formally supports the document, it will be sent to the Cabinet for consideration.

How does scrutiny make a difference?

On a regular basis the Scrutiny Committee 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.

Scrutiny Committee

Chair of the Scrutiny Committee: Councillor David Tate

Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Norma Wright



Committee Members: Councillors Stephen Bonallie, George Howe, Iain Kay, Tom Martin, Christine Shattock and Debra Waller.

Co-opted Member: Ann Blakey, Rose Elliott

In its second year of operation, the Scrutiny Commissioning Model has proved once again to be a great success as we have fully embraced its potential. As a Scrutiny Committee we have commissioned seven policy reviews and a number of important consultations for various key issues for the city to the six Lead Scrutiny Members and their supporting Panels, monitoring progress and agreeing their findings and recommendations.

Along with Sunderland City Council, Sunderland Health and Wellbeing Board, Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Sunderland Healthwatch, the Scrutiny Committee signed up to the Health Protocol at the beginning of this municipal year, which is an informal agreement focusing on information sharing and collaboration within the health arena. I am very pleased with the results of this to date, particularly the relationships we have established with the CCG and Healthwatch, and an evaluation planned in the coming months should serve to show us where further improvements can be made.

Our relationship with Cabinet continues to be a constructive one; with individual Portfolio Holders regularly in attendance at the Scrutiny Committee and providing evidence to the Scrutiny Panels. As in previous years the Scrutiny Committee met with senior Cabinet members as part of the budget consultation process for 2014/15, where once again we were struck by the sheer scale of the challenge facing the council and the city.

As the organisation continues to develop as a Community Leadership Council and moves towards alternative service delivery models to improve quality and save money, it will be vital that the Scrutiny Committee supports this journey. To this end, we have monitored the transition of adult social care services from the council to Care and Support Ltd, a local authority trading company. Our work in this will continue; and later this year we will meet with service users and carers to talk to them about their experiences of the new company.

We continue to attend meetings of the Scrutiny Panels whenever possible and have been impressed by the quality of evidence gathering for the various policy reviews. The Panels have been innovative in their approaches to considering the issues we have asked them to look at and this is to be commended.

Finally, we would like to give a heartfelt thanks to our colleagues sitting on the Scrutiny Committee for their contribution to another productive year, along with council officers and our partners who have supported us in our role as scrutineers.

Councillor David Tate

Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

Lead Scrutiny Member: Councillor Debra Waller

Panel Members: Councillors Florence Anderson, Anthony Farr, Robert Francis, Doris MacKnight, Robert Oliver, Phillip Tye and Linda Williams.



Co-opted Member: Rose Elliott

As Scrutiny Lead Member for Children's Services I am pleased to be able to report on the work of the Panel over the last 12 months. The Panel has predominantly focused on child obesity, but has also had a number of issues commissioned for investigation by the Scrutiny Committee. The benefits of commissioning mean that the Panel has engaged in a varied work programme providing valuable assistance to the Scrutiny Committee around matters related specifically to children and young people.

The Panel looked extensively at the issue of child obesity, an issue that is not only locally relevant but is seen as a global concern with world health chiefs considering the implications of an increasing population of overweight children and young people in many countries. The Panel looked at many aspects of the issue and visited schools where packed lunches had been prohibited, community projects that encouraged families to develop their cooking skills and talked with families who had been actively involved in council weight management programmes.

The Panel also looked at a number of factors within the local environment that contributed to the obesity issue and the influence the local authority and partners have on such elements. The review highlights the importance of encouraging active travel through providing an environment that fosters walking, cycling and the use of public transport to access vibrant high streets and green and blue spaces.

Our Panel also continued with the monitoring of the waiting times for accessing the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) which had commenced in the previous year. I am pleased to report that Northumberland Tyne and Wear Trust, working with partners, have ensured that the newly designed service for child and adolescent mental health is not only fit for purpose but will ensure a consistent level of performance.

Consultation on the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) refresh was also commissioned to the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel and we made a number of comments which were adopted and submitted to the council as a formal scrutiny response to the CYPP refresh.

It has been an interesting, challenging and hopefully Panel Members will agree a rewarding year. I would like to thank the Children's Services Panel Members, officers, partners and external witnesses who kindly gave their time and cooperation to the panel, providing invaluable information and evidence that ultimately contributed to the work of scrutiny in Sunderland.

Councillor Debra Waller
Lead Scrutiny Member Children's Services

City Services Scrutiny Panel

Lead Scrutiny Member: Cllr Stephen Bonallie

Panel Members: Cllrs Michael Essl, Steven Foster, Neville Padgett, Stuart Porthouse, Lynda Scanlan, Dianne Snowdon and Amy Wilson



It has again been a busy year for the Panel.

In terms of our policy reviews, the Panel was asked to look into two major issues; alcohol and licensing in the city and the approach being taken by the council and its partners to tackle the risk of flooding.

For its review into alcohol and licensing, the Panel spoke to a wide range of interested bodies including the council's Licensing Team, the Police, City Hospital, Public Health and Balance.

In presenting our findings, the Panel considered that it was important to recognise that the majority of drinkers consume alcohol in a responsible manner and that it would be wrong and counter-productive for the council to approach licensing policy in a high handed and draconian manner.

We also felt that it is important to recognise the role of well-run pubs and clubs in contributing to the fabric of our social life and the health and vibrancy of the city economy.

That being said, the Panel did have a number of concerns. The growth in binge drinking and "preloading" can have a serious detrimental effect not only on the health of our population but also impact on anti-social behaviour and crime and disorder. We were particularly concerned at the low unit price of alcohol in some of our supermarkets and off licences together with the way in which alcohol is often advertised and marketed.

Clearly, the misuse of alcohol and its associated problems is a complex issue involving a wide range of social and cultural factors which are largely outside of local authority control. However, licensing policy is one of the tools that can have a direct impact and we have therefore made a number of recommendations in relation to the licensing policy of the council.

For our review into flood risk management, the Panel looked at the approach being taken by the council and its partners in preparing and dealing with the threat of flooding. In doing so, the Panel met with representatives from the council, Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency in order to look in detail at the respective powers and responsibilities and also discuss the work currently taking place and planned in the future. The Panel also took the opportunity to visit and view at first hand some of the remedial work being undertaken in the city.

In terms of recommendations, the Panel has stressed the importance of partners working closely together to ensure a joint and coordinated approach to flood risk management. The Panel has also made a number of suggestions with regard to the forthcoming Flood Risk Management currently being prepared by the Council.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my colleagues on the Panel for all their support and assistance during the year and also to thank those officers and partners who have assisted and made such an important contribution to our work.

Councillor Stephen Bonallie
Lead Scrutiny Member City Services

Health, Housing and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel

Lead Scrutiny Member: Councillor Christine Shattock

Panel Members: Councillors Rosalind Copeland, Ronny Davison, Darryl Dixon, Alan Emerson, Jill Fletcher, Barbara McClennan, Dorothy Trueman, Mary Turton and Gemma Taylor



The Health, Housing and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel have completed another busy and productive year. The Panel have looked predominately at the role and support of carers in Sunderland. The panel visited Sunderland Carers' Centre, met with carers of all ages and key stakeholders from across the city as part of the evidence gathering process. One of the fundamental issues to arise from this piece of work was around the importance to the identification and recognition of carers across Sunderland. Many carers do not see themselves in a caring role and are often coping or struggling on their own when there are support mechanisms and expert advice available to them from a number of organisations including the Sunderland Carers' Centre.

The review recognised the importance of the Multi-Agency Sunderland Carers Strategy as a key document to bring together support, advice and guidance for carers from across a range of organisations. The review assessed the importance of multi-agency approaches, particularly in times of welfare reforms and public spending reductions, to assist carers and provide the support they require in order to fulfil their caring responsibilities. The Panel have acknowledged the huge asset that the carer group is to the city with an estimated £706 million saved by the care they provide, and also hopes that the review further promotes the identification, recognition and value of carers to Sunderland.

The Panel were also commissioned, by the Scrutiny Committee, to look at the draft Housing Financial Assistance Policy. I feel that the commissioning role of the Scrutiny Committee is of considerable importance and allows the individual Panels and its Members to contribute to the work of the Committee through each Panel's specific remit and expertise. Following in-depth discussion around the revised Housing Financial Assistance Policy the Panel's comments were endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee for consideration and inclusion in the final policy.

I am happy to conclude by reporting that the Health, Housing and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel continues to deliver on the work commissioned to it by the Scrutiny Committee. As the Lead Scrutiny Member it only leaves me to thank all the panel members for their enthusiasm, support and dedication to the work we as a panel have undertaken during 2013/14, and the officers and key stakeholders who provided evidence and information to the panel. Scrutiny remains an important aspect of the council's governance arrangements and through the hard work of scrutiny members will continue to offer challenge and support to the work of the council and its partner organisations providing services to people in Sunderland.

Cllr Christine Shattock
Lead Scrutiny Member Health, Housing and Adult Services

Public Health, Wellness and Culture Scrutiny Panel

Lead Scrutiny Member: Councillor George Howe

Panel Members: Councillors Rebecca Atkinson, David Errington, Louise Farthing, Julia Jackson, Fiona Miller, Paul Maddison and Debra Waller



The Panel was commissioned to review patient and public engagement in the health sector.

The Members considered if it was possible to adopt an approach to patient and public engagement which would support the development of a co-ordinated framework for patient and public engagement. This would be for the whole local health economy so as to make best use of available resources.

The Francis Report highlighted what can go wrong when patients, their families and the public struggle to have their voices heard. The participation of patients and the public in health service provision is crucial to quality services, but this requires co-ordination with others and effective resources and the right culture to make an impact.

The Panel heard that public and patient engagement should be a strand of quality in its own right but this requires a culture of patient and public engagement to be embedded into an organisation.

We have attempted to review opportunities amongst existing networks and resources across the city. This approach was developed in such a way as to ensure the potential to share the approach, structures and methodologies with the wider health economy.

It is hoped that our final report will contribute towards the debate about what effective patient engagement looks like.

The Panel was commissioned to review two other items this year. The proposals for Integrating Wellness Services and proposals for Building Participation in Physical Activity, Leisure and Sport. We assessed the level of engagement and public consultation for the proposals and made comments to the Scrutiny Committee.

I would like to take the opportunity to give my thanks to colleagues, officers and partners for their contribution to our work

Cllr George Howe
Lead Scrutiny Member Public Health, Wellness and Culture

Responsive Services and Customer Care Scrutiny Panel

Lead Scrutiny Member: Councillor Iain Kay

Panel Members: Councillors Barry Curran, Elizabeth Gibson, Bob Heron, Anne Lawson, George Thompson, John Scott and John Wiper



The Panel reviewed the role of the council to support local volunteering. We chose volunteering as a broad inquiry topic in response to views that cuts to voluntary sector resources will worsen, in relative terms, over the coming years while demand for volunteering activity will increase.

As councils' cannot continue to carry on doing things the same way, it is anticipated that more services will be provided by the voluntary and community sector. This is in line with the council's community leadership role whereby work is on-going with communities to understand the needs, aspirations and opportunities at a local level.

For example, we heard in our evidence gathering that VCS organisations delivering front-line advice services are facing an increased demand for their services, particularly as a result of welfare reforms. The reforms have placed a great strain on welfare rights services and money management support services, many of which rely on a volunteer workforce. We are also aware of those groups who have responded to a community need by establishing food and clothing banks across the city – many of these groups were not involved at all in this type of service two years ago and the volunteer workforce involved in these groups is inevitably required to link in to many other support services.

It is estimated that the return on investment from volunteering is likely to be at least 11 to 1 in terms of the value that volunteers contribute compared to the costs incurred in volunteer training and development. So the business case for volunteering is self-evident, but our review showed that there needs to be clear motivations and intentions for investing more in volunteering.

We were impressed by the range of volunteering activity taking place in the city. For example the Student's Union at the University actively coordinates a pool of student volunteers and works hard to promote new opportunities.

The emphasis for the Panel was on the importance of the 'organisation' of volunteers. The overwhelming message we received was that volunteering is not a free resource. The key challenge will be about how transformative our approach will be in creating a new relationship to create capacity within communities.

As a secondary, but no less important issue, the Panel considered improvements to the way that hate crime is reported. Members visited the new Contact Centre, met with staff and saw the developments for a new reporting database. The new system became operational on 1st April and is providing greater support to victims of hate crime in the city.

I would like to thank Panel members for their support, contributions, and most of all for their active participation in our evidence gathering sessions. I would also like to thank officers and partners for their contribution to our work.

Cllr Iain Kay

Lead Scrutiny Member Responsive Services and Customer Care

Skills, Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel

Lead Scrutiny Member: Councillor Tom Martin

Panel Members: Councillors Len Lauchlan, Christine Marshall, Bob Price, David Snowdon, Denny Wilson, Tom Wright and Peter Wood



During the year, the Panel has focused on the measures being taken to promote the development of a more diverse local economy in the city. This resulted from a concern that the local economy could become too dependent on a narrow range of industries and also to ensure that the city takes full advantage of newer emerging sectors such as software, renewables and the creative industries.

To this end, the Panel has met with a range of interested parties, including representatives from the local software, telecommunications, media and creative sectors in order to discuss the challenges and obstacles facing newly emerging industries. The Panel also met with representatives from Nissan to discuss their contribution to the local economy and the way in which they too promote economic diversification and innovation. We also heard about the work of the promotional campaign “Make It Sunderland” and the measures being taken to promote the economic opportunities of the city at a national and international level.

In presenting our findings, the Panel recognise that newer emerging sectors of the economy will be increasingly important in the future. All are fast expanding sectors with significant long term growth and employment potential. We were also impressed by development of infrastructure to support these sectors as exemplified by the Evolve and Sunderland Software Centres.

However, the Panel does feel that there is a balance to be struck and it would be wrong to underestimate the continuing importance of longer standing sectors such as manufacturing and the automotive industry. It is therefore important to both protect and build on existing manufacturing jobs and where possible attract and develop higher skilled jobs. The city needs to make the most of the sectors of the economy where it has a competitive advantage such as automotive and ensure that it has the necessary support and infrastructure to safeguard its future development.

This will require the continued development of a high skill economy – with high quality schools, good career opportunities and careers advice and a successful apprenticeship scheme. The Panel would also highlight the important contribution of the University of Sunderland to the continued economic health of the city.

As part of its work, the Panel has also looked at the work going on to regenerate the city centre and the contribution this can make to promoting and broadening the local economy. The regeneration of the Vaux site and other planned work should create considerable employment opportunities in the construction industry in the years ahead. Our discussions with officers of the council, representatives from the BID and local businesses operating in

the city centre has also highlighted the potential of developing employment in the financial and services sectors as well building on existing employment in retail.

All in all, it has been a busy and productive year for the Panel. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking my colleagues for all their hard work and enthusiasm and I feel sure that the progress we have made can be built upon in the year ahead

Cllr Tom Martin

Lead Scrutiny Member Skills, Economy and Regeneration

The Year Ahead

The Scrutiny Annual Report allows for reflection on the year that has passed and creates a record of the achievements and highlights of the work of the Scrutiny Function. It also provides an opportunity to look ahead to see where scrutiny can further develop its role and contribute to the governance and improvement of the council and partners.

There has been substantial reform over recent years to health provision, with the abolition of Primary Care Trusts and Local Involvement Networks and the creation of Clinical Commissioning Groups, Local Health and Wellbeing Boards and HealthWatch. The Health Protocol, developed by the Scrutiny Committee, has provided a framework for engagement between the various groups. Over the coming months it will be important to continue to develop and strengthen scrutiny's relationships with these groups ensuring a mutual association where all partners see the benefits of sharing information and working together.

The Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry (known as the Francis Inquiry) highlighted the appalling care and serious failings at Stafford Hospital between 2005 and 2008 as well as the systematic failure of national and local organisations. There are clear implications for local scrutiny arising from the Francis Inquiry and the experience and knowledge of Sunderland's Scrutiny Function provides a solid basis for future developments of the Committee's statutory role for health related matters. The year ahead provides an opportunity to learn from the failings reported in the Francis Inquiry to improve clarity of responsibility locally both in terms of how health scrutiny operates in and outside of the council, and in conjunction with new partners in the health system.

Sunderland City Council continues to face ongoing spending reductions necessitating the need to explore alternative service delivery models in a drive to improve service delivery whilst maximising available resources. The commissioning of services traditionally delivered by the council to external providers will increase over the coming years. Scrutiny will have a vital role to play in monitoring the transition of services as well as ensuring that quality and standards are maintained for service users.

It is often stated that the only constant is change and this is certainly true of local government. What will however remain consistent throughout the next year is Scrutiny Members continued commitment to fostering effective working relationships with Cabinet colleagues, partner organisations and council officers. This will ensure

that scrutiny remains able to provide effective support and challenge and ultimately contribute to the improvement of services for the residents of Sunderland.

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