

ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

**REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY, MAYORAL AND MEMBERS' SUPPORT
COORDINATOR**

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To approve the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee report as part of the overall scrutiny annual report 2021/22 that is to be presented to Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 As in the previous 2020/21 municipal year the annual report will be a single combined report of all seven scrutiny committees. The annual report will outline the development in the scrutiny function and provide snapshots of the outcomes achieved during the last 12 months.

3. Current position

- 3.1 The proposed Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee report is attached at **appendix 1** for member's consideration. The report provides a very brief snapshot of some of the main work undertaken by the committee during 2021/22. It should be noted that the report is written from the perspective of the Chair of the Committee reflecting over the year.
- 3.2 Some of the main themes covered in the annual report revolve around the following issues:
- Covid-19 Pandemic
 - Winter and Hospital Pressures
 - Integrated Care Systems
 - Sunderland Eye Infirmary
 - Monument Surgery Pennywell
 - Sunderland Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation and Support Services Strategy.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The Committee has continued to operate in difficult circumstances to deliver on a work programme that has had the Covid-19 pandemic as a central theme throughout 2021/22. The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has approached its work programme adapting to the challenges that the pandemic has presented. The Committee has

continued to work well with Council Directorates, stakeholders and partner organisations to deliver the work programme. The impacts and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic on the city will form a key part of the Committee's work programme in the next municipal year.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 That Members approve the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee report for inclusion in the Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22.

6. Glossary

n/a

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APPENDIX 1: ANNUAL REPORT

Chair: Cllr Neil MacKnight

Vice-Chair: Cllr Michael Butler

Committee Members: Councillors Chris Burnicle, Michael Essl, Martin Haswell, Juliana Heron, Shirley Leadbitter, Barbara McClennan, Dominic McDonough, Julia Potts, Mel Speding and Michael Walker.

I am pleased to present this year's annual report for the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee as we continue to operate against a backdrop of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the herculean efforts of health and voluntary sector organisations, as well as the local authority, in dealing with it. The committee has continued to monitor this situation very closely throughout the year as well as looking at several other important health-related issues.

The Covid-19 pandemic has once again dominated the committee's work programme. The Director of Public Health has continued to keep Members updated on Sunderland's handling of the pandemic in terms of our position, changes to legislation, social restrictions and covid variants, as well as the key public health advice and messages. Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has also provided regular updates on performance, winter pressures and the vaccine programme for the city. These updates have provided valuable information to the committee and afforded opportunities for Members and Officers to share knowledge, highlight concerns and provide assurances to the public over vaccine rollouts, initiatives employed to drive up vaccination rates and create a shared understanding on the evidence related to vaccination.

The committee has also continued to monitor the winter planning measures and protocols. The All Together Better Alliance has continued to support the out of hospital care and promote partnership working across health and social care services particularly during these times of significant pressures on all aspects of service delivery.

The pandemic has also had a major impact on the routine running of hospitals across the country and to the services they provide. As a committee we were interested to understand what pressures had been put on services and how backlogs were to be addressed. The committee received a report from the Divisional Director of Surgery for South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust on the hospital situation and were informed that, at the height of the pandemic, elective care had been suspended with key staff transferred to critical care. Members were also informed of the work being done to address a number of issues resulting from the impacts of the pandemic and the significant effort that had been made in collaboration with partners to reduce the waiting times for patients. As the Trust has started to resume its normal services Members continue, through CCG and Trust updates, to monitor the performance and pressures on such areas as referrals to treatment, diagnostic testing, and cancer services.

The Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board annual report is a regular item received by the committee. Members were pleased to welcome the independent chair of the board to the committee who discussed a number of the strategic priorities that underpinned the Board's local actions to safeguard adults in Sunderland. Members made a number of observations around the report, seeking assurances and further information around issues including incidents of abuse, vaccinations in care homes and safeguarding training.

The health landscape is also set to change significantly later this year when we see the abolition of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) to be replaced by Integrated Care Boards who will be directly accountable for NHS spending and performance, subject to changes in legislation. Sunderland will be part of the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS). Members provided comments back to Cabinet on the proposals and highlighted a number of points. These included the importance of clear and defined roles and responsibilities between the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), Integrated Care Board and Health and Wellbeing Boards to avoid becoming another layer of bureaucracy within the health system.

The committee also raised the importance of ensuring that local overview and scrutiny committees still had the same cooperation and contribution from the ICS and ICP that currently exists with CCG's so there remains that important accountability and transparency in decision making at the local level.

Members were also concerned that with the North East and North Cumbria ICS being the biggest in the country there was the potential for the consolidation of treatment services and looked for reassurances that services currently provided in Sunderland would not be moved further away, disadvantaging Sunderland residents. This highlighted the importance of establishing place-based arrangements to identify and address the needs of Sunderland's communities. Finally, Members were also interested in the make-up of the Integrated Care Board and what considerations would be given to local representations in terms of elected members.

As a committee we have also continued to receive updates on the development of a new eye hospital for Sunderland. The Sunderland Eye Infirmary is a renowned centre for excellence in ophthalmics and eye surgery both regionally and nationally, with the current facility being built during the Second World War and before the creation of the NHS. Representatives from the NHS Trust provided Members with a detailed breakdown of the engagement work that had been undertaken including public engagement events (including an additional event requested by the committee), targeted focus groups, online surveys and widespread media activity to encourage involvement.

Members were pleased to note the in-depth engagement that had taken place and more importantly that comments from service users and groups, including the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), had been considered and included in the new development proposals. Members also sought further assurances over the reduction in overnight beds in the new development and the NHS Foundation Trust provided further data to support the move as well as providing assurances that treatments would not be cancelled in the new hospital due to a lack of bed space. The committee looks forward to further updates and discussions on the development of the new eye hospital that will provide a modern patient friendly facility.

The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee were also provided with information relating to the future of Monument Surgeries in Pennywell and the concerns about its ongoing viability. A public consultation took place from October 2021 through November 2021 to gather the views of patients on a number of issues and options including closure. A decision to close the practice was taken by Sunderland CCG in February 2022. Members raised their concerns over transport and travel issues for patients who would need to travel further to access GP services following the closure of Monument Surgery in Pennywell and would look to work with the CCG and GP Alliance to lobby transport groups. Members of the committee also wanted to see the mobilisation plans, following the decision to close the practice, and provide input as well as offering support in ensuring that all patients move to another practice and that no one was left behind.

Members also received the draft Sunderland Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation and Support Services Strategy for comment. Members provided some useful comments including around ensuring there was an engagement strategy with LGBTQ+ organisations and also how engagement with BAME groups would be undertaken to provide an inclusive and approachable service. The Committee highlighted the importance that as a Council there was a clear public health message to continue addressing the issues through a joined up working approach and that this strategy supported this approach.

The importance of a healthy workplace and the promotion of the health and wellbeing of staff has never been more important as we continue to deal with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the Committee were pleased to receive a report on the work of the Sunderland Workplace Health Alliance and Members recognised the value of the initiatives that had been undertaken.

Looking back over the year provides an opportunity to not only reflect on the work of the committee but also on the sheer breadth of activity that is taking place across Sunderland to improve and develop services. Members have also received information and reports on accessibility across the city, proposed improvements to Monkwearmouth Hospital, North East Ambulance Service performance, the rise in the use of assistive technology and sexual health provision in Sunderland. The Committee continues to witness the innovation of health services and the dedication of health providers across the area. We do not always agree with the decisions that are taken, but we do value the importance of understanding the rationale behind those decisions and seeking assurances for the people in our communities.

Finally, I would like, on behalf of the committee, to thank everyone who has contributed to the work of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee over another very challenging year. The committee is committed to supporting, wherever possible, the work of health and social care providers as we look forward to further improvement and innovation across Sunderland's Healthy City landscape.

Councillor Neil MacKnight
Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee