

SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Chair: Cllr Dianne Snowdon

Vice-Chair: Cllr Susan Watson

Committee Members: Malcolm Bond, Michael Butler, Allen Curtis, James Doyle, Paul Edgeworth, Michael Hartnack, Katherine Mason-Gage, Antony Mullen, Pat Smith, David Snowdon, Melanie Thornton and Harry Trueman.

Once again it gives me great pleasure to present the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee's annual report. As is usual the summary provides a brief overview of the work of the Committee during the previous 12 months, and it is good to see that Members have remained fully engaged in activities and the following summary identifies some of these issues that the committee has undertaken.

One of the fundamental remits of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee is to scrutinise and provide comment on a range of financial and budgetary reports including the Council's budget proposals. A number of detailed reports are presented to the Committee over the municipal year including around the Capital Programme, Treasury Management, Revenue Budget and the Budget Planning Framework. As always there continues to be insightful discussions and Members did comment on the importance of limiting any rises in Council Tax given the current financial pressures facing residents of the City. The Committee was pleased to note that the proposed rise in Council Tax will be one of the lowest in the Country.

Performance management also remains an integral part of the Committee's workload through monitoring of the Council's performance, achievements and progress against the key themes of Dynamic City, Healthy City and Vibrant City. Members of the Committee remain committed to challenging performance, and consideration of these reports has led to further updates on a number of issues including the delivery of affordable housing, environmental enforcement, social prescribing, fly tipping and events in the City. The Committee also continues to look at ways to improve the report by the inclusion of additional information or suggestions on the way information is presented.

The City Plan has also been updated and refreshed this year and the Committee has again been involved in the process. Members held a workshop in December to look at the proposals for the refresh of the plan and provided some useful feedback around the wording and layout of the draft plan. The Committee also received a further update on the City Plan and its indicative timeline at its January meeting where Members again provided some useful comments around the plan and its contents. This included highlighting that the plan was truly city wide, conveyed a sense of pride in the city, developing thriving businesses in the city and the importance of good integration with the university. The Plan was also presented back to Committee for a final time in February as part of the budget papers with a new design and layout. The Committee's suggestions from the previous meeting had been taken on board and incorporated into this final version of the plan.

The Safer Sunderland Partnership Annual Report remains an important update for the Committee, and we were pleased this year to also have a senior officer from Northumbria Police in attendance to answer and provide context to Member queries. As always there was a good level of discussion around a number of key issues

including anti-social behaviour, the community trigger policy and policing resources. The Committee continues to look to enhance the data provided and requested if future reports could provide more detail of the extent to which children and young people were being employed and/or exploited in relation to the drugs trade in the city.

An overview of the Residents Survey 2021 was also submitted to the Committee and as well as the Council's Communications Manager the Committee welcomed one of the Ipsos Research Managers to the meeting. Members were provided with a summary analysis of the outcome of the survey highlighting where satisfaction had both increased and decreased in a number of areas relating to the Council, its services and the locality. The Committee highlighted a number of key points for improvement including looking at how sometimes ward names in the survey were not always how residents identified their local areas, if the survey could be also accessible online and if there was a similar survey for young people.

The Committee also established a task and finish working group during the year to develop and draft a Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol. During the development of the protocol Members looked at a number of examples from other local authorities, as well as considering what would be important to include from our Scrutiny Members perspective and experience. The Committee also held a session with the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Secretary to discuss their draft proposals for the protocol. The final Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee and then approved by Cabinet and we look to use and fully implement this protocol in the coming year.

Members of the Committee held a productive workshop session to look at the Council's Report It tool and Member Portal. The session provided an opportunity for Members to share their experiences and suggestions for the tool and portal in terms of function and useability. Members and officers had a productive session, and the Committee would hope to see developments to both the Report it tool and Member Portal based on some these discussions.

Finally, and as scrutiny remains a member-led function, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Members of the Committee for their support, involvement and cooperation throughout this year. I would also like to put on record the Committee's gratitude to council officers and partners for their continued contribution to the work of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.

Councillor Dianne Snowdon
Chair of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee