

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Chair: Cllr Michael Butler

Vice-Chair: Cllr Alison Chisnall

Committee Members: Councillors Simon Ayre, Malcolm Bond, Juliana Heron, Pam Mann, Dominic McDonough, Julia Potts, Mel Speding, Dorothy Trueman, John Usher and Michael Walker.

I am pleased to be able to present my first annual report as Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. It has been another challenging year as the Council and its partners continue to deal with the impacts of the pandemic as well as the cost-of-living crisis and the continued pressures on health and social care services across the city. The annual report provides a brief summary of some of the issues looked at by the committee through its wide and varied work programme.

Adult social care is an issue that the committee has concentrated on during this year in a number of ways. The Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board annual report is a regular item received by the committee. Members made a number of observations around the report, discussing the levels of safeguarding referrals and recommending that future reports provide greater detail around the multi-agency approaches used in safeguarding.

The Committee also commenced a task and finish group looking at the challenges facing adult social care in Sunderland. The group looked at a variety of issues around adult social care including the impact of Covid-19, sustainability and resilience and the implication of forthcoming legislation on the sector. The sub-group held a number of sessions with key stakeholders as well as visiting social care providers in their settings to gain a better understanding of the challenges. The final report, including the group's recommendations, will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee before being submitted to a future Cabinet meeting for final approval. It is hoped that the work that has been carried out can shine a light on the adult social care sector, the challenges it faces and look to support the sector in Sunderland.

This year has seen significant change within the NHS as Clinical Commissioning Groups were replaced with Integrated Care Schemes (ICS) across England. Sunderland is part of the North East and North Cumbria ICS and as part of the ICS, Sunderland Integrated Care Board (ICB) manages the budget and provision of health services in Sunderland. Members have received a number of updates from Sunderland ICB looking at the development and continuity of place-based arrangements, developing integrated care partnerships and the strategic aims of the ICB, ensuring the Committee was fully engaged.

The Committee have also continued to look at key ICB performance measures related to NHS services around urgent care, planned care, cancer treatment and mental health. Further reports are also expected on the mental health strategy and the outcomes of the recent GP access review. Members have highlighted a number of issues around GP appointments, hospital waiting lists and GP and nursing vacancies in the City, all of which were being addressed or further information provided. The Committee acknowledges the integral role that Sunderland ICB has in the delivery of health services across the area and will continue to monitor and challenge, where appropriate, around performance.

Another change to the health landscape and a consequence of the pandemic has been the replacement of Public Health England in April 2021 with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), for health protection responsibilities, which provides expertise, information and intelligence to local authority public health teams. The Committee were interested in how the health protection arrangements would be better equipped to tackle major outbreaks or

serious public health incidents. Members were assured that a lot of valuable experience had been gained during the Covid-19 pandemic around situation reporting and communications with the public, businesses and workplaces providing guidance and support.

The Committee was also pleased to receive the Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for 2021/22. The report focused on the pandemic and its impact on the wider determinants of health and health inequalities in Sunderland. The report provided a detailed overview of the key challenges as well as the work and initiatives taking place across the city to improve health outcomes for residents including around the key themes of the healthy city plan in starting, living and ageing well in Sunderland. The report also highlighted the partnership working that was being undertaken to develop a new alcohol strategy for the city, something Members requested for the Committee's work programme.

The draft alcohol strategy was also presented to the Committee and this provided an opportunity for Members to look at the detail of the strategy. Members were reassured that service users were consulted, and their views considered when drafting the strategy. The Committee were interested to monitor the progress of actions within the strategy and have asked that an update report is submitted to the Committee and this will be considered in work programming for next year.

The operational recovery of South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust remains an important issue for the Committee. Having received an overview of the recovery plan in 2021 the Committee were provided with an update on the current situation covering national guidance, key operational deliverables, cancer care and performance and major pressures. Members were particularly interested in the recruitment and retention of staff as well as the health and wellbeing support being provided for staff. The Committee will continue to monitor the situation and following the most recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection which rated the trust as 'requires improvement' we will look to monitor and seek assurances from the Trust on how it intends to respond to the findings from the CQC inspection.

In recognising the increasing importance of housing to health in light of urban growth, ageing populations and climate change as well as the causal relationships between poor housing and health outcomes, the Committee received a presentation on some of the work being undertaken in Sunderland to improve housing conditions. This included work around cold and poor air quality in the home environment and fuel poverty as part of a Testbed programme with the findings being shared with other local authorities, housing providers and government ministers. The Committee also arranged a point of contact with the housing provider Gentoo for Members issues, to complement the existing relationships that many members have with Gentoo local area teams.

The North East Ambulance Service also provided the Committee with a detailed performance update including on response times, hospital performance and trust capacity. Members of the Committee raised a number of points around the performance in relation to response times and reference was also made to the recently published CQC inspection of the Trust. The Committee have requested that in future updates the ambulance trust keep members updated on improvements and progress made against the CQC inspection findings.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the committee, to thank Members, officers, partners and stakeholders who have contributed to the work of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee over the year. The health of our City and its communities is a key objective within Sunderland's City Plan and this Committee will continue to challenge and champion health providers and services across Sunderland.

Councillor Michael Butler
Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

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