

Item 2

At a meeting of the HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at the LEECHMERE INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on TUESDAY, 4 FEBRUARY, 2025 at 5:30pm.

Present:-

Councillor Usher in the Chair

Councillors Ayre, Dagg, Donkin, Feeley, Heron, Hunter, Miller, D.E. Snowdon, Tobin and Walton

Also in attendance:-

Nigel Cummings – Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council

Andrea Hetherington - Director of Corporate Affairs and Legal, South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust

Graham King – Director of Adult Services / Chief Operating Officer of Sunderland Care and Support

Joanne Stewart - Principal Democratic Services Officer, Sunderland City Council

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence submitted.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 7 January, 2025

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on 7 January, 2025 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

Councillor Miller made an open declaration in Item 4 – The State of Ageing in Sunderland as an Ageing Well Ambassador and as an employee of Age Concern, Sunderland.

The State of Ageing in Sunderland

The Director of Adult Services / Chief Operating Officer of Sunderland Care and Support (copy circulated) which shared the findings of The State of Ageing in Sunderland (2024) report which had been produced on behalf of the Ageing Well Delivery Board.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Graeme King, Director of Adult Services / Chief Operating Officer of Sunderland Care and Support took Members through the report which set out data and stories about what it is like to grow old in Sunderland and which was intended as a tool for individuals and organisations across the city to spark conversation around what the priorities for change should be for older people in Sunderland.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for his fantastic report and referred to page 23 of the report, asking if the paragraph referring to the youngest adults to be long-term employed should read unemployed? Mr. King advised he would check this and report back to Members through the Scrutiny Officer.

Councillor Walton referred to there being a lot within the report about the benefits of activity and asked if it could be more overt and Mr. King commented that people had commented that they were keen to have activities that involved both the mind and fitness and exercise to stay in good mental and physical health. They offered a wide range of activities, more than they ever used to, and this had seen many benefits, including a significant reduction in falls which had been a large outlier previously.

Councillor Snowdon highlighted that the report stated that 67+ was post normal retirement age, but that this year, 66 was still the retirement age, and Mr. King noted the typo.

In response to a query from the Chairman, regarding the Dementia Diagnosis Rate (DDR) and how prevalence was calculated, the Committee were advised that this was a nationally collected measure and Sunderland were slightly below average, which suggested they may be under diagnosing.

Councillor Tobin asked what was being put in place to help people get online and avoid any barriers, including ensuring that things were widely advertised in other places than just online and if the digital hubs that were being offered were well attended and Mr. King explained that there was not a single response to those issues. He advised that the hubs were reasonably well attended by all ages and when they were undertaking social care assessments now, they always had a technology element to it, with a dedicated tech team that would work with families around the different technologies that were available, installing them and getting them comfortable.

In the main, the Committee were advised that they were using technology that already existed, such as Alexa, and creating bespoke routines and after a while people would find them as normal ways of working and get used to it. They had found that people were generally using technology more in their day to day lives, keeping in touch with people through facetime, or using Facebook, etc. so they were trying to let them know it was technology they already used, only amplified.

Councillor Heron advised that she was the Chairman of the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) Network and that they had received a talk on digital inclusion, which organisations had found extremely useful, and they could then offer that information through their own groups so the message was definitely being shared.

The Chairman asked how important integrated care and collaborative working was to the ageing Sunderland agenda and Members were informed that it was one of the most important areas that partners and agencies worked together. Collectively they had the ability and skills to meet the needs of residents in the city and it had to be a joined-up experience, which the front door service for Adult Social Care was a good example of, having a number of services available at one focal point, and how services continued to collaborate was the future way of working.

Councillor Miller advised they used the report in Age UK as a predictor for some of the things they did and the VCS groups and partners they worked with were really important to what was being included in the document but commented that one of her concerns was around people dropping off the system until the police or social workers became involved.

In response to a question from Councillor Snowdon regarding next steps, and actions being followed up on, etc. Mr. King advised that the report would go round various forums which would feed into the review of the Healthy City Plan. The Ageing Well Board would then recommend that the outcomes were lifted into that Plan and form the Ageing Well dimension of the refreshment. The intention would be that agencies were then held accountable to those outcomes in the usual ways.

Ms. Hetherington commended the Council for the activities that were made available to residents, through the active families, as she had personal experience with her own family member accessing a range of activities around the city on a daily basis, if they wished.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked the Officer for his report, and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the information within the report be received and noted.

Draft Annual Report 2024/2025

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Coordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which asked the Committee to consider and approve the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee report as part of the overall scrutiny annual report 2024/25 that was to be presented to Council.

(for copy report – see original minute)

Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer took Members through the report advising that it provided a very brief snapshot of some of the main work undertaken by the Committee during 2024/25, which was written from the perspective of the Chairman of the Committee reflecting over the year.

Councillor Walton asked if the presentations from Northumbria Water could be included under the work undertaken into child dentistry, which the Officer advised he could include and circulate for Members' agreement.

There being no further questions or comments, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee report for inclusion in the Scrutiny Annual Report be approved; subject to any further comments from Members having been included.

Work Programme 2024/25

The Scrutiny, Members and Mayoral Support Coordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which briefed members on the development of the Committee's work programme for the municipal year 2024/25 and appended a copy of the programme for Members' consideration.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer presented the report and briefed the Committee on the current position regarding those items already scheduled on the work programme and those waiting to be programmed in on a suitable date.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Scrutiny, Members and Mayoral Support Coordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28-day period from the 8 January, 2025.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

The Committee was advised that if Members had any issues to raise or required further detail on any of the items included in the notice, (that were within the purview of the Committee), they should contact Mr Cummings, Scrutiny Officer for initial assistance.

5. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

There being no further items of business, the Chairman closed the meeting having thanked members and officers for their attendance and contributions.

(Signed) J. USHER,
Chairman.