

## Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Scrutiny Annual Report. The report provides an overview of the work of scrutiny during 2021/22 and sets out the contribution it has made to the good governance of the Council and the challenges we face moving into the year ahead.

The year has again been one dominated by the Covid 19 pandemic and this has been reflected in the work programmes of our Committees; both its immediate impact but also the longer term implications for the people of the city.

We have therefore looked at the action being taken by the Council and its partners to maintain vital services, as well as the range of measures designed to help our residents. This includes measures to maintain children's and social care services and educate our young people and ensuring that our care homes are safe and that we protect our most vulnerable residents. We have also heard about the wide range of support being provided to local businesses, many of which are administered by the Council, including vital support available to the voluntary service through the Local Support Scheme (LSS).

Throughout the pandemic we have received regular updates on Covid 19 infection rates in the city, the action being taken by our colleagues in health to combat its spread and more recently the roll out of the vaccination programme. However, it is clear that the aftermath of the pandemic will leave us with a legacy for the future; not least the long term health of our residents, the effect on the local economy and the impact on child poverty, educational attainment and equalities. All major issues that will need to be addressed in the years ahead.

Nevertheless, we have had some positives during the year. We have heard repeatedly of how the Covid pandemic has helped to forge greater joint working between partner organisations. We have also heard numerous examples of the hard work and commitment shown by staff across all sectors, the resilience and spirit shown by our young people and their families and the considerable progress being made on a range of regeneration projects in the city; including the development of Sunderland Riverside and the former Vaux site, the International Advanced Manufacturing Park and the Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor.

In the years ahead, the Council will need to operate within an ever-tighter regime of financial constraint, while demand for our services continues to grow. With the Council and our partners required to deliver ever greater financial savings, the need for robust, evidence-based scrutiny becomes ever more pressing. To help meet these demands we will look to adapt and improve the scrutiny function through the review that has taken place during the year.

Sunderland continues to be involved in a number of joint scrutiny arrangements for health provision across the area. Members are also actively involved in the joint arrangements that cover the North East and North Cumbria, looking at the Integrated Care Systems and Integrated Care Boards that will replace Clinical Commissioning Groups later in the year. These joint arrangements will remain of key importance over the coming year as both are concerned with service reconfiguration and development and how services are delivered across Sunderland and the North East.

Scrutiny in Sunderland has also made a significant contribution to regional scrutiny arrangements. Throughout the year, we have represented the Council on the NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee which looks at matters of significant importance to residents across the region, focusing particularly on economic development and transport issues.

Finally and most importantly, the Committee would like to place on record its thanks to all those staff within in the Council and in our partner organisations who have worked tirelessly in support of our local communities.

No doubt, the next twelve months will bring further challenges. However, I do believe that with the cooperation of fellow members, partners and the support of our officers we will rise to meet these challenges in the year ahead.

.

<PHOTO & SIGNATURE>

**Councillor Doris MacKnight**  
**Chair of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee**

## **SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

**Chair: Cllr Doris MacKnight**

**Vice-Chair: Cllr Dianne Snowdon**

**Committee Members: Michael Butler, James Doyle, Michael Hartnack, Juliana Heron, Niall Hodson, Neil MacKnight, Pam Mann, Anthony Mullen, Stephen O'Brien, Pat Smith, David Snowdon, and Melanie Thornton.**

The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee has continued to operate through the challenging situation the pandemic has presented to normal life. This summary provides a brief overview of the work of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee during the past 12 months. Certainly, things have moved on since the last annual report and we have now been able to resume face-to-face meetings which, I am sure, has helped to spark more healthy debate between Members. We have also held our first meetings in our new home, City Hall, that will serve the Council and the City for many years to come.

As with previous years a key focus of the Committee's work programme is around the financial and budgetary position and proposals for the Council. Members continue to scrutinise a variety of budgetary information including the capital programme, budget planning framework, revenue budget and proposed Council Tax for 2022/2023. There remains a good level of discussion and debate around the various financial reports provided to the Committee and comments continue to be provided back to Cabinet from the Committee on a regular basis.

A key remit for the Committee continues to be the monitoring of the Council's performance, achievements and progress against key priorities and performance indicators. The pandemic has impacted a number of aspects of performance but as we have moved out of restrictions the Committee has focused on the recovery in relation to the three key themes of the City Plan. One such aspect was around the rise in mental health issues as a result of the pandemic and the suicide rates in the City, The Committee invited public health officers to attend and provide further information around these issues. Members raised a number of issues including the importance of training and highlighted the 'A Life Worth Living' as an excellent resource in mental health training, and if it would be worthwhile providing this training to our CCTV operatives. The Committee also provides critical feedback on the way information is presented, looking at ways to improve, clarify and simplify the performance report.

Alongside the quarterly performance reports the Committee also receives a compliments, complaints and feedback report, providing analysis into how Council services are performing from the customers perspective. Members have throughout the year been interested in how feedback, both positive and negative, is used to improve services and standards in service delivery. A key area for discussion throughout the year has revolved around Environmental Services complaints, especially missed bin collections, and while the number of complaints in comparison to the volume of activity in the service area represents only approximately 0.03%, Members were still interested in receiving ward by ward data and to analyse if there were any trends or patterns to the complaints. The Economic Prosperity Committee also received an update during the year on Environmental Services and Members from this Committee were invited to attend.

The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee also acts as the designated Scrutiny Committee for crime and disorder matters and was updated on the work of the Safer Sunderland Partnership (SSP) during 2020-21 through the Partnership's annual report. The report provided an overview of a number of key issues across Sunderland including on neighbourhood enforcement, domestic abuse, road traffic accidents, motorcycle disorder and city centre youth violence.

Members discussed a wide range of issues related to the annual report including how the police and Council share data on road traffic accidents, the excellent work of the SARA Project and the importance of detached youth work in tackling youth disorder. Members also raised concerns over the 101 non-emergency number and the poor service it provided, this would be reported back to Northumbria Police along with a number of other queries and responses circulated to Members. There was also the potential for further work into road traffic issues and this would be considered in work programming for the next municipal year.

Members received for consideration details of the proposed updating of the City Plan and indicative timeline including the assurance process. The Committee had previously held a workshop to look at the City Plan and this had helped to refine the final content and indicative timeline. Members acknowledged the move to be a carbon neutral city by 2030 but suggested that activities be scheduled into the timeline to highlight, and evidence progress to this goal. This was noted by officers as a useful way for residents to understand the difference they could make leading up to 2030. The City Plan remains a key Council document and any updates and amendments of interest to this Committee.

An update on the European Union (EU) exit was also received by the Committee during the year. This was an issue that had been discussed in the previous municipal year and a follow up progress report was agreed at the Members work programming session. Members were informed of import border control processes and issues around haulage and the demand for more drivers. Members raised issues around the contingency plans for food supplies with particular relevance to schools and care homes. Members were also assured that Sunderland was sharing information and experiences with Central Government, on the impact of the EU exit on Sunderland, as part of the Key Cities network.

During this year the Council has moved from its familiar Civic Centre site across the city into the new purpose-built City Hall. Prior to this move Members requested information be supplied to the Committee on the meeting spaces that would be available in City Hall. A presentation was provided looking at meeting room resources, collaborative meeting spaces, new technologies and the booking system. Members raised a number of queries around capacity, demand for desks and policies for visitors in the building. Following discussions visits were to be arranged for Members to look around City Hall and see the facilities that had been discussed at the meeting.

The Committee were also, during the year, updated on the Smart Cities delivery programme and the opportunities afforded by the recent BAI Communications joint venture in the City as well as opportunities around culture, sports, city experience and social value. The roll of 5G in innovative technology was highlighted as well as concerns around the proliferation of 5G masts and Members were informed of the intention to reduce the number of masts by working with operators and providing a digital platform ensuring all providers could use the same masts.

The work around assistive technologies in the healthcare field were also highlighted as a benefit and Members were informed that a detailed report had been submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on this issue. The Committee also raised the potential opportunities to be had from the greater utilisation of street lighting as part of the Smart City agenda. Members were informed that a strategy was being developed, that as part of it would include street lighting columns, to develop and harness such opportunities and this would come back to this committee or the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.

Members have also been involved in the review of scrutiny and the final report and recommendations have been received from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. There will be further discussions around the development of scrutiny based on these recommendations and Members will be involved in agreeing and overseeing the implementation of changes in the next municipal year.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my scrutiny colleagues for their cooperation, diligence and fairness throughout the year. I would also like to put on record the Committee's gratitude to council officers and partners for their continued support and contribution to our work programme.

**Councillor Doris MacKnight**

**Chair of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee**

## **Children, Education & Skills Scrutiny Committee**

**Chair: Cllr Pat Smith**

**Vice Chair: Cllr Joshua McKeith**

**Committee Members: Councillors Margaret Crosby, Tracey Dodds, Richard Dunn, Paul Gibson, Sam Johnston, Katherine Mason-Gage, Karen Noble, Alex Samuels, Lynda Scanlan, Philip Tye.**

**Co-opted Members: Ann Blakey (Roman Catholic Diocese) and Jackie Graham (Church of England Diocese)**

Once again, the year has been dominated by the Covid pandemic and a good deal of our work has been directed at the long-term implications for the children and young people of the city.

In order to monitor the effect of the pandemic, the Committee has received regular reports across a broad spectrum of children's services. Of particular concern has been the consequences on child mental health. We heard from Sunderland CCG that children and young people's mental health providers have continued to deliver services through a mix of online and face to face interventions. Additional funding has been secured for extra staff resources and a service redesign project is underway to develop an improved service delivery model. However, there remains uncertainty over the potential long term impact of the pandemic on child mental health and the future demand for services. This is clearly an issue that will need to be closely monitored in the years ahead.

A further concern has been the effect of the pandemic on our schools and the use being made of Government funding to help children and young people catch up on missed learning. We heard from a local head teacher about the support being provided, including that made available through the National Tutoring Programme. We also heard about the measures being taken to improve primary and secondary school transitions, particularly for children with SEND. This has included the establishment of a transition working party of headteachers to help facilitate discussions and share best practice. While the impact of the pandemic will be with us for many years, it is felt that one of the positives has been to encourage a greater level of joint working between schools and it is hoped that this can be built upon in the years ahead.

The Committee paid tribute to the hard work of teachers and the school's sector generally for keeping schools open and continuing to provide an education for our children and young people during the intense challenges of the Covid pandemic.

Of continuing concern for the Committee has been the increase in elective home education. While parents have the right to home educate, we are concerned at the potentially detrimental effect on some children. At present, local authorities have only limited powers in this area and we feel that more powers should be made available. We also feel that more detailed, up to date information needs to be kept on elective home education and children missing from education.

The Committee places great importance of listening to the views of young people. At the start of the year, the Committee heard from a range of young people's representative bodies to discuss their priorities for the future. As a result of this session, a Members Working Group was established to allow for continued but more informal discussions. These meetings should

play an important part in helping to shape the Committees work programme in the future and addressing any issues raised.

The Committee also received a report on the outcome of a survey into the health related behaviour of young people which contained a particular focus on the effect of the Covid pandemic on their lives. The survey sought the views of young people on a wide range of topics and highlighted their main concerns, including having enough money in the family, having enough food to eat, being lonely and struggling with schoolwork. The Committee was pleased to hear that the information derived from this survey will be shared with key stakeholders and will help inform the planning and delivery of future services. The information will also be useful to the Committee in planning its work programme for the years ahead.

The Committee heard more about two new engagement programmes that took place during the year. During the summer holidays, the Holiday Activity and Food Programme offered the opportunity for children from disadvantaged families to access nutritious food and a range of organised out of school activities. The Wear Here 4 You Mobile Prevention Bus project brought together staff from Together for Children and other partners to give advice and support to young people and their families. Feedback from both programmes has been very positive and the Committee thanked all involved for their efforts. It was felt that such activities are a highly effective way engaging with young people and their families across the city.

In setting its work programme for the year, the Committee was keen to consider the effect of Covid pandemic on incidences of anti-social behaviour. To this end, the Committee received an update report on the work of the Youth Offending Service. We heard that during the pandemic the YOS has continued to deliver services and remained in contact with all young people. This has often been through face-to-face visits, though a range of virtual methods of working directly with young people have been developed.

In response to concerns over the impact of Covid on levels of domestic violence, the Committee received a report on the delivery of domestic abuse service, together with planned improvements for the service. The Committee was provided with several individual case studies which graphically demonstrated the effect of domestic violence on children and families. The report highlighted the importance of this service for the city and again it was felt important that the long term effect of the pandemic is closely monitored.

Last year, the Council established a Regional Adoption Agency with Durham County Council and Cumbria County Council based on a host authority model comprising the areas of Sunderland, County Durham and Cumbria and working in partnership with five Voluntary Adoption Agencies. The Committee received a report on the progress made to date.

A further area of concern arising out of the Covid pandemic has been its long-term effect on apprenticeships and employment opportunities for young people. To discuss these issues, the Committee met with Principal of Sunderland College, the main provider of apprenticeships in the city. Clearly, the College is committed to working with the business sector and helping to provide our young people with the skills to meet the job opportunities that will be needed in the future. We were interested to hear about the work going on in schools to provide career advice for young people and raise the profile of apprenticeships. An on-going problem for the city has been the relatively high numbers of young people not in education, employment or work (NEET). It is important as a city that we are able to equip our young people in what will be a very challenging employment market. It was also important to raise the take-up of apprenticeships among employers within the city.

However, it would be wrong not to recognise some of the positives we have seen during the year. We have heard repeatedly of how the Covid pandemic has helped to forge greater joint

working between partner organisations in the city. We have also heard numerous examples of the hard work and commitment shown by staff across all sectors. But perhaps most importantly we should also recognise the achievements of our young people who have lived through a year of considerable challenge and adversity.

At the start of the year, the Committee received the feedback on the Ofsted Inspection of Children Services. We were delighted to hear that the service had received an outstanding rating; made all the more remarkable by being achieved during the Covid pandemic. The Committee would like to place on record its thanks and appreciation to all the staff involved. We look forward to the level of improvement being maintained and will continue to monitor the progress through our overview of performance monitoring information.

During the year, the Committee also received the findings of the Joint Ofsted report into SEND services in the city. Several areas for improvement were highlighted in the report. The Committee heard that an Action Plan for improvement had been developed and it was agreed that we should receive regular updates. The initial reports show good progress being made and we look forward to this continuing in the year ahead.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the members of the Committee for their contributions and to thank all the officers and witnesses who gave up their time to attend and provide insights into the services they provide and the challenges they face.

**Councillor Pat Smith**

**Chair of the Children Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee**



## **Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee**

**Chair: Cllr David Snowdon**

**Vice Chair: Cllr Melanie Thornton**

**Committee Members: Councillors Usman Ali, Michael Dixon, Paul Edgeworth, Heather Fagan, Helen Greener, Stephen Foster, Sean Lawes, John Price, Tony Taylor and James Warne.**

During the year, the Committee's work programme has focused on a range of issues including the effect of the Covid pandemic on the local economy and the action being taken to help alleviate the situation. We have also continued to monitor progress on a range of regeneration initiatives going on in the city, many of which have continued to make good progress despite the effects of the pandemic.

In terms of the impact of Covid on the local economy, we received an update on the support provided to local businesses, many of which are administered by the Council, including the Small Business Grant Fund, the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund and the local authority Discretionary Fund. The Committee would like to place on record its thanks to all those staff within the Council who have worked tirelessly to support of the business and voluntary sectors in the city.

We also heard from the Sunderland Improvement District (BID) on their work to support local business. It was hoped that following the Covid pandemic, footfall and retail spending in the city centre should begin the process of recovery and that the proposed development of Sunderland Riverside should provide an impetus for the growth of independent retail sector.

Jonathan Walker from the North East Chamber of Commerce outlined for us the considerable long term economic challenges facing the city arising from the pandemic, as well as the UK's exit from the European Union and the nationwide downturn in the high street retail sector. However, he noted that moving forward, the Sunderland economy retained strong foundations and that many opportunities existed, particularly in the engineering, manufacturing and the software sectors.

The promotion of new business start-ups will play a significant part in securing the city's long-term prosperity. We heard about the role of the city's three business centres – the Evolve Business Centre, Sunderland Software Centre and the Washington Business Centre – in encouraging growth in expanding areas of the economy, such as IT and software and in helping to diversify the local economy. We also heard about the measures being taken to improve their operation and efficiency.

In relation to the regeneration of the city, the Committee once again received an update on the progress being made by Siglion. It is pleasing that the regeneration of the Riverside is progressing well and should deliver high quality office accommodation, together with residential, retail and leisure use.

The delivery of the Future High Street Fund Programme and the Levelling Up Fund will play a key part of the ongoing regeneration of the city centre. We heard that the Council would take a targeted approach, using the funding where it makes most difference, in order to act as a catalyst for change. We also received an update on the upgrade to Sunderland Rail Station which should help to deliver wider connectivity for the city to national and international infrastructure and ultimately lead to an increase in passenger numbers.

An ongoing piece of work has been a Working Group set up to look at the challenges and opportunities for the regeneration of the Sunnyside area. This is an ongoing piece of work which should report back early in the next municipal year.

In terms of the development of housing in the city, we heard about the progress being made on the Council's housing strategy, including the measures to increase housing growth and maximise choice of housing, make the best use of existing housing stock and support vulnerable people to access housing. We also heard from gentoo about the challenges they face as the main provider of social housing in the city and discussed a wide range of operational issues.

The Committee received an update on environmental services and environmental enforcement. This included the effect of Covid pandemic on refuse collection, preparations for response to winter weather, fly tipping, maintenance of trees and plans for future improvements. The Committee's views were also sought on the proposed revision of the Replacement Bin policy. The Committee supported proposals to end the replacement charge in particular circumstances.

Everyone Active provided a presentation on the impact of the Covid pandemic on the delivery of leisure services in the city and future initiatives to improve access to sport and physical activity. We heard that the aim was to enable children and young people to have the best start in life and form good habits; support families and communities that are benefiting from being active and deliver a range of events and activities. Moving forward, the Committee looked forward to the growing take up leisure services in the city particularly in those areas of the city where take up was relatively lower.

The Committee received an update on the current position about the Review of Cumulative Impact Assessment; a tool for licensing authorities to limit the growth of licensed premises, both on and off trade, in problem areas. We heard that this issue would be readdressed following the impact of the Covid pandemic. Our views were also sought on the Council's Draft Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005 and we referred to the limited powers available to local authorities to control problem gambling which was increasingly moving on-line.

At the start of the year, the Committee asked for an update on public transport in the city. The Committee heard about the main challenges facing public transport during the Covid pandemic and the continued challenges moving forward. This included the implications of the North East Enhanced Bus Partnership which provides a detailed partnership plan for future improvements.

The Committee also received feedback on the E Scooter pilot operated by Neuron Mobility, in partnership with the Council, which has been operating in the city for the past year. The trial is about providing the city with an environmentally friendly transport option.

The Committee was also consulted on the Draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which represents long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks. The aim is to enable the City Council to develop a city-wide plan for cycling and walking and a programme of infrastructure improvements.

In March 2019, Sunderland City Council declared a climate emergency. In response, a city-wide 2030 Shadow Board was established, bringing together partners from across the city, with the ambition of the city becoming carbon neutral by 2040 and the Council carbon neutral by 2030. The Committee received a report on the progress being made on the Low Carbon Framework and Action Plan that reflected the importance of fully involving partners from throughout the city if the goals are to be achieved.

As an example of the progress being made, we also received a report on proposals for a City Heat Network for the city. The scheme involves a distribution system of insulated pipes taking heat from a mine source at the former Wearmouth Colliery and delivering heat to local buildings. The scheme should reduce the city's carbon footprint, promote energy security and deliver employment and economic growth.

All in all, it has been a very busy and productive year for the Committee. I would just like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Committee and everyone else involved for their hard work and commitment.

**Councillor David Snowdon**  
**Chair of the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee**

## **HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**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 raised concerns around the reduction in overnight beds and sought further assurances over this reduction in the new development, the NHS Foundation Trust provided further data to support the move. The Trust also provided 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. The Committee remains concerned around the general issue of the recruitment and retention of GP's and its effects on practice provision across Sunderland.

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.

The Committee also received a report around accessibility in Sunderland and the approaches being taken to ensure that the city and surrounding areas are accessible by those who have mobility issues be that through disability, old age or temporary mobility issues. The Committee recognised that planning sustainable communities with high quality infrastructure has long-term positive impacts on the wider determinants of health, and further exploration of this issue was proposed in conjunction with the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.

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 diagnostic centre in South Tyneside, 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**

## The Year Ahead

Overview and scrutiny is an integral part of the Council's governance and decision making structure contributing to the Council's budgetary and policy making function as well as holding the executive to account for its actions. This report provides an opportunity to reflect on the experiences of the last year and recognise the challenges we face in the year ahead.

Clearly, the next few years will continue to be challenging for the Council; operating as it does in an environment of diminishing resources and increasing demand for services. This represents a major challenge for us all. For scrutiny it is important that we help the Council to make the best use of the resources available and ensure that frontline services are delivered to the highest possible standards.

We have heard throughout this year's report about the effect of the Covid 19 pandemic on the city. Moving forward we will need to address its longer term implications and challenges. These include the impact on adult and child mental health, the effect on educational attainment and its consequences for health and economic inequalities. There will also be the long term effect of the pandemic on the economy of the city; including its effect on economic growth, employment prospects, household incomes and the decline of the high street retail sector. We feel that these challenges can only be faced if the city develops a clear plan for building back after the pandemic and one that takes full account of the particular issues facing our young people.

Other key issues facing scrutiny in the year ahead will be the effect on the local economy of leaving the EU, the future reform of the NHS and its implications for health and social care in the city and the effect of Covid on the way our services are delivered, with greater use of on line delivery offering the prospect of greater flexibility for the future.

Scrutiny will also continue to play an active role in the changing delivery of health services across Sunderland and the region. It is certainly an area that will continue to be determined by financial, social and environmental factors that will continue to drive change in the sector. We will continue to monitor and challenge health partners through our own Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee with South Tyneside and also regionally through the North East Joint Health Scrutiny Committee. Through these joint arrangements we are able to represent the concerns and needs of the Sunderland population and ensure that Sunderland residents views are represented and considered in looking at service reconfigurations.

During the year we have, with the help of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, conducted a review of the Scrutiny process in Sunderland. The proposals and action plan deriving from this review should better equip scrutiny for the challenges it faces in the years ahead. This will include the development of more robust scrutiny work programmes that are directed at the key issues facing the city and its residents. We will also look to monitor the progress being made in implementing the Council's new City Plan for 2019-2030 and the measures being taken to make Sunderland a more dynamic, healthy and vibrant city. A key to this will be our ability to work closely and collaboratively with our partners and make the most of the resources available in the city.

Once again, I would like place on record our thanks to everyone who contributed to the work of scrutiny over the last twelve months and look forward to having another productive year ahead.

## **SCRUTINY ON A PAGE**

The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee, the three thematic scrutiny committees, North East Combined Authority Scrutiny Committee (NECA) and the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) tackle a large range of issues over a municipal year. In order to fully appreciate the variety and breadth of the subjects covered. Below is an extensive, though not exhaustive, summary of the work of scrutiny in Sunderland.

Accessibility Across the City  
Assistive Technology  
Better Health at Work  
Budget Reports  
Change Council - Consultation  
Child Health Update  
Children at Risk  
Children Services Customer Feedback  
City Plan Refresh  
Compliments, Complaints and Feedback  
Corporate Parenting Review  
Covid-19 Updates  
Covid Business Support Grants  
Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan  
Domestic Violence Update  
Diagnostic Centre  
Economic Challenges  
Engagement and Participation with Young People  
Environmental Enforcement  
Environmental Services Update  
Future High Street Fund Programme  
Future of Monument Surgeries  
Gambling Act 2005  
Holiday Fund – Operation  
Housing Strategy Update  
ICS-CCG Transition  
Impact of Covid-19 on Child Mental Health  
Impact of EU Exit  
Internal Communications  
Licensing Policy Review  
Leisure Centres  
Low Carbon Framework  
NHS Dentists in Sunderland  
North East Ambulance Service Update  
Ofsted Feedback  
Performance Management  
  
Safe Accommodation Strategy (Draft)



Safer Sunderland Partnership Annual Report

SEND Monitoring

Sexual Health Provision in Sunderland

Schools Update

Smart City Progress

Sunderland BID

Sunderland Eye Infirmary

Sunderland Rail Station Update

Tyne and Wear Archaeology Service

Waiting Lists, Times and Access

Winter Planning