

**ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

**REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY 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 2020/21 that is to be presented to Council.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 As in the previous 2019/20 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 2020/21. 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
  - North East Ambulance Service Performance
  - NHS White Paper
  - Sunderland CCG Adult Mental Health Strategy
  - Flu Vaccination Programme.

**4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 The Committee has operated in difficult and unique circumstances to deliver on a work programme that has had the Covid-19 pandemic as a central theme throughout 2020/21. 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 2020/21.

## **6. Glossary**

n/a

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## **APPENDIX 1: ANNUAL REPORT**

### **HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Chair: Cllr Darryl Dixon**

**Vice-Chair: Cllr Neil MacKnight**

**Committee Members: Councillors Michael Butler, Ronny Davison, Michael Essl, Helen Greener, Martin Haswell, Juliana Heron, Shirley Leadbitter, Pam Mann and Barbara McClennan.**

Once again, I am pleased to be able to present the work of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee as part of the annual report. However, unlike in other years the report is set against a backdrop of the biggest public health crisis in our lifetimes. As a result, the Committee has adapted its work programme to concentrate on the Coronavirus Pandemic, which has swept across the globe over the last 12 months and impacted on the lives of everyone in the UK.

Since the re-commencement of meetings in early July the Committee has received regular updates on the Covid-19 situation in Sunderland at each of its scheduled meetings during 2020-21. The updates have been led by the Council's Public Health Team and Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group who have provided detailed updates on a number of issues related to the pandemic.

The Director of Public Health has kept the Committee updated on Sunderland's experience of the pandemic from the very early stages of the lockdown measures, through the easing of restrictions and then back into tighter restrictions and further lockdowns. The Committee has been able to monitor the daily infection rates, local mortality rates from Covid-19 and the impact of the pandemic on Sunderland through these regular updates. Committee members have also been able to monitor the effectiveness of the restrictions, act as a voice for some of the concerns and issues of local people and disseminate key messages within their local communities.

The Health and Wellbeing Committee has, over the years, developed a good relationship with key health partners and this has been extremely useful during this crisis. Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group and South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust have been extremely cooperative with the Committee and provided detailed updates on a number of key issues. One of those issues has been around admissions to hospital, occupancy levels for critical care beds and the overall performance levels of the hospital. The Committee are also very aware of the impact that this is having on staff and have looked to ensure that there is adequate support for their own health and wellbeing.

As we have continued to monitor the pandemic one of the key issues for the committee has been the commencement and rollout of the vaccination programme across Sunderland. The Committee recognises how important the success of vaccination will be in tackling the pandemic. Sunderland CCG have been able to update the Committee on progress with the vaccination programme, which has been extremely successful to date, provide assurances and dispel many of the myths and misinformation around vaccination.

Care homes have been a critical aspect of the Covid-19 pandemic and as a Committee we have ensured that this has remained a priority for our work programme. Again, the Committee has received extensive support and cooperation

from council officers and health partners providing updates and assurances on the situation within care homes and the plans and actions to keep residents safe.

Also, as part of this the Committee requested information on the measures being taken to prepare for the winter period against the concerns of a second wave of the Covid-19 virus. Members were provided with a comprehensive overview of the winter planning for Sunderland including learning from Covid-19, system winter schemes and the role of the surge group its protocols and processes. The All Together Better Alliance has also played a key role in the out of hospital care and highlighted the partnership working across health and social care that has exemplified the city's handling of the pandemic.

The North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) are a fundamental part of the health service and they continue to provide annual service performance updates to the Committee. Members remain cognisant of the response times for all four national standard categories and in particular that NEAS continues to be one of the fastest responding ambulance trusts in the country to category one incidents. Sunderland call volumes for 999 and NHS 111 calls were also reported as well as the impacts of Covid-19 on the service including the additional measures for crew and patient safety and the challenging issue of hospital handovers. Members were also concerned to learn of increased violent assaults on staff following the easing of the first lockdown in July/August. The Committee will continue to receive performance updates from NEAS as this allows Members to gauge the performance of the ambulance service in Sunderland and also complements other performance data received by the Committee.

During discussions on the Covid-19 pandemic Members requested that information be brought to the Committee advising of the national, regional and local approaches for the flu vaccination programme for 2020/2021. Members recognised the importance, due to the pandemic, of ensuring that there was an increase in the flu vaccine uptake in the city's most clinically at risk and vulnerable groups. The Committee acknowledged that work was ongoing to achieve the national targets, with ongoing monthly performance and activity being monitored by the Sunderland Flu Prevention Board.

The Committee have also considered the development of Sunderland CCG's Adult Mental Health Strategy which was at the second stage of the process; reviewing the intelligence that had been gathered at stage one and commencing the formal engagement stage. Members raised a number of issues including around the engagement of services users, transition arrangements from youth to adult services and the role of the voluntary and community sectors and GP's in the strategy. The Committee have also requested further updates on progress, and we will look to keep this on our work programme going forward.

Covid-19 will have far reaching impacts and implications for all facets of modern life and one of the first of these will see major reforms to the NHS. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care presented legislative proposals for a Health and Care Bill to Parliament on 11 February 2021. The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee received an overview of the major reforms at its meeting in March 2021. It is clear that this will be an issue that the Committee will monitor as it progresses through the various bill stages to statute and the its implications for health and social care in Sunderland.

Perhaps more importantly we have also been able to see and understand the incredible work that has been undertaken to respond to this situation including test and trace, locally enhanced contact tracing and the vaccine rollout programme.

This has been an extraordinary year for the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee as we have faced the challenges of a generation in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Committee has evidenced first-hand the amazing dedication and cooperation of health workers across Sunderland. I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to everyone across the Council and our health partners for their work, commitment and sacrifice in these most difficult times. The Committee will continue to support where it can and over the coming year will look at the impacts of the pandemic and our road to recovery. I think it will be another challenging year ahead.

**Councillor Darryl Dixon**  
**Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**

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