



Scrutiny Annual Report

2020–21

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Foreword



It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Scrutiny Annual Report. The report provides an overview of the work of scrutiny during 2020/21 and sets out the contribution it has made to the good governance of the Council. It also looks at how the scrutiny function will remain fit for purpose for the year ahead and the challenges we face moving into the future.

The year has been one dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and this has been reflected in the work programmes of each of our Committees; both in its immediate impact but also in beginning the process of looking at 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 introduced to help cushion its effect on local residents.

This includes measures to maintain children's and social care services and educate our young people through home and virtual schooling, 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 sector 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 which provides some optimism and we look forward to feeling its impact in the coming months.

However, it is clear that the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic will leave us with a range of future challenges; 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 also witnessed some positives during the year. We have heard repeatedly of how the Covid-19 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 to whom we offer our thanks. As well as the resilience and spirit shown by our young people and their families during a period of great adversity.

Also, good progress continues to be made on a range of regeneration projects in the city including the development of Sunderland Riverside on the former Vaux site, the International Advanced Manufacturing Park and the Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor.

However, it is clear that local authorities across the country continue to operate within an environment of austerity and financial constraint, while demand for their services continues to grow. These problems are likely to be more acute in the years to come.

With the Council and our partners required to deliver ever greater efficiencies and financial savings, the need for robust, evidence-based scrutiny becomes ever more pressing. To help meet these demands we have continued to adapt and improve the scrutiny process and we will look to hold an event to develop the work programmes and review the function in the coming year.

Sunderland continues to be involved in a number of joint scrutiny arrangements in relation to health provision across the area. Sunderland and South Tyneside Councils, and now Durham County Council, continue to meet on a regular basis in relation to the Path to Excellence programme, which is now progressing through phase two.

This will consider the best way to arrange future surgical services with a clear ambition to separate emergency operations from planned operations. Members are also actively involved in the joint arrangements that cover the North East and North Cumbria looking at the Integrated Care Partnerships and Integrated Care Systems.

These joint arrangements remain of key importance over the coming year as both are concerned with service reconfiguration and development, particularly of how services are provided and 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 including zero emission buses and restoring passenger confidence in public transport as lockdown restrictions are lifted.

The Committee would like to place on record its thanks to all those staff within in the Council 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.

On a personal note I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all the members, officers and partners who have contributed and supported scrutiny during the year.

Councillor Doris MacKnight
Chair of the Scrutiny
Coordinating Committee



Scrutiny arrangements in Sunderland

The democratic governance arrangements in Sunderland consists of the Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Secretary, four Executive Portfolio holders and four Deputy Cabinet members. The decisions of the Cabinet are held to account by the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee and three thematic Scrutiny Committees.

What is scrutiny?

Scrutiny aims to ensure that public services and policies best meet the needs of the residents of the city. It does this through:

- Policy review and development;
- Holding the Council's Executive and its partners to account;

- Investigating issues of local concern; and
- Working with partners to improve services to the local area.

The scrutiny model

The current scrutiny structure consists of an overarching Scrutiny Coordinating Committee and three themed scrutiny committees; namely the Children Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee, the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

How does scrutiny make a difference?

Scrutiny ensures that decision-making processes are clear and accessible to

the public and that the people taking decisions are held accountable for those decisions.

On a regular basis the scrutiny function will add value by investigative questioning of witnesses on the issues within the council's policy framework. The impact of the work of scrutiny will also be evidenced over time by the implementation of its recommendations.

The monitoring of delivery of scrutiny's recommendations over a period time builds up a portfolio of evidence of scrutiny's role in service improvement.



Scrutiny Coordinating Committee



Chair: Cllr Doris MacKnight
Vice-Chair: Cllr Paula Hunt

Committee Members: Councillors Darryl Dixon, James Doyle, Juliana Heron, Keith Jenkins, Fiona Miller, Antony Mullen, Stephen O'Brien, Pat Smith, Mel Speding, Dorothy Trueman, Doris Turner and Susan Watson.

I am pleased to be able to present the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee's summary of the work it has undertaken during the year. The Committee has worked against a backdrop of a global pandemic that has seen unprecedented restrictions placed on our daily lives. Meetings have been held virtually throughout the year and while it is not the ideal it has allowed the Committee to continue and has also allowed the Council to continue to function and exercise its duties.

A key focus of the work of the Committee is on the Council's financial and budgetary information and proposals. The Committee recognises the importance of scrutiny of the Council budget, capital programme and medium-term financial strategy. The Committee acknowledged the

ambitious capital programme for the City, as well as the importance of an updated capital strategy to oversee and manage the risks associated with these projects. Scrutiny of the Budget and financial reports remain an important part of the Committee's remit to provide clarity, information and assurance around proposals that are to be recommended to Council.

Brexit negotiations were still ongoing when the Committee was updated on the Council's European Union (EU) Exit Planning arrangements. This provided information on the provision of an EU Exit Risk Register identifying and managing potential key risks to the Council.

The Committee were interested in the preparations that businesses were making and received assurances that the Business Investment Team was in regular liaison with businesses, supporting them with preparations. This is an issue that the Committee will continue to monitor, particularly, in relation to the impact on the Council and the City.

The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee acts as the designated Scrutiny Committee for crime and disorder matters and was updated on the work of the Safer Sunderland Partnership (SSP) during 2019-20 through the Partnership's annual report. The Leader of the Council updated the Committee highlighting significant progress in reducing recorded crime and maintaining residents' feelings of safety.

Members were also updated on the Council's continued partnerships against coercion, Prevent and serious

and organised crime with partners; and on the joint delivery of the newly established Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit.

The Committee discussed a wide-ranging number of issues including anti-social behaviour, cyber-crime, domestic abuse and enforcement activity across Sunderland. There was also an update on the Northumbria and Citywide resilience response on a range of issues related to Covid-19.

This provided the Committee with an overview of the Covid-19 situation in terms of policing and the demands on services, which were identified as higher than normal due to the ongoing restrictions. The Committee will receive a further review of the partnership in 2021/22 and this will provide a greater analysis of the impact of the pandemic on services.

As a result of the Safer Sunderland Partnership Annual Report the Committee requested that further information be presented to the Committee on the issue of hate crime. A report was provided on the current trends and statistics on hate crime in the Sunderland area, which outlined the action being undertaken to raise awareness of hate crime, encourage reporting by the public, and the support mechanisms in place for victims of hate crime.

Members of the Committee were also offered the opportunity to become Hate Crime Champions as part of an initiative between Northumbria Police and Sunderland Partnership. The initiative raises awareness of what constitutes a hate crime, the impact on victims and their families and/or

community, and how hate crimes can be reported.

Corporate performance, aligned to the Sunderland City Plan and to the three key themes, continues to provide an overview of Council performance for the Committee. The monitoring of progress and achievement of key priorities and indicators remains a primary focus of the Scrutiny Committee.

The impact of the pandemic and the effect of restrictions on a number of aspects of performance were acknowledged by Members and this would continue to be a focus for the Committee as the City looks at recovering from the impacts on businesses, hospitality, health services and education.

Alongside the quarterly performance reports the Committee also receives a quarterly compliments, complaints and feedback report. This remains an important monitoring mechanism in respect of services provided by the Council to residents.

The Committee are always interested in the trends and themes of complaints and recognise their importance in service improvement and development. Members continue to request modifications to the report which have been adopted and allowed for a continual improvement on the information and how it is presented.

The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee has operated in challenging circumstances as the country has tackled the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, the Committee has continued to perform its role in scrutinising council performance, budgets and complaints. The coming year will see new challenges as we deal with the impacts of Covid-19 and how as a Council along with our partners we look at recovery for the City and its residents.

Finally, I would like to thank all my scrutiny colleagues, council officers and partners for their support, hard work and dedication during this unprecedented year.

Councillor Doris MacKnight

Chair of the Scrutiny
Coordinating Committee



Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee



Chair: Cllr Pat Smith

Vice Chair: Cllr Joshua McKeith

Committee Members: Councillors Margaret Crosby, Paula Hunt, Dominic McDonough, Pam Mann, Fiona Miller, Michael Mordey, Alex Samuels, Lynda Scanlan, Philip Tye, Karen Noble

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

The year has been one dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore much of the work of the Committee has been focused on its immediate effects and the longer-term implications on the children and young people of the city.

In order to monitor its immediate impact, the Committee has received regular updates across a range of children's services including social care, early help, cared for children, children with special educational needs and the impact on the school's sector generally. During these updates we have heard about the action being taken to ensure that support has continued to be provided to the most vulnerable sections of our community.

Operational staff have been provided with agile technology so that they can work from home and urgent child protection discussions have taken place virtually. All early help services, including the Youth Offending Service (YOS) and targeted youth services, have continued to support children and families.

For children with disabilities, all cases in review have been offered a higher level of support. There has been significant collaborative working with partners in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and virtual/indirect family time has been secured for cared for children. Support has continued to be offered to those experiencing or who have experienced domestic abuse.

To facilitate the initial full opening of schools, Together for Children, working in close partnership with other Council services, have offered a wide range of guidance and support in a number of areas including health and safety, home to school transport and school catering. From the outset of the pandemic, schools in Sunderland have remained open to key worker and vulnerable children.

We heard from Ann Blakey and Jackie Graham, our headteacher representatives about the considerable efforts being made by teaching staff to keep schools open and continue teaching the children of key workers, while also providing online teaching for those learning from home.

The Committee would like to place on record its appreciation for the hard work and commitment of all staff working in children's services and the

education sectors who have gone over and above what could be expected of them during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In January 2021, we received the Annual Report of the Sunderland Safeguarding Partnership. For Sir Paul Ennals, the Independent Chair of the Partnership, the Covid-19 pandemic had provided the city's safeguarding arrangements with its ultimate stress test; being a once in a generation crisis that had hit Sunderland particularly hard, given its higher than average levels of deprivation and above average proportion of elderly people.

Nevertheless, he reported that partnership working within Sunderland had proved itself to be extremely strong, with services adapting rapidly and successfully to the new challenges and that this should provide a firm foundation for the city moving forward. However, the report did highlight a number of areas of future concern, most notably the long-term effect of disrupted schooling and the impact on child mental health.

To hear more about the issues facing child mental health, the Committee received a report from the Sunderland CCG. We heard that all children and young people's mental health providers continue to deliver services through a mix of online and face to face interventions; the latter being undertaken according to clinical need. Indeed, online services had proved popular and helped to increase efficiency and reduce waiting times.

Moving forward, it was planned to develop this aspect of the service further, while retaining the option of

face to face contact for those who prefer it. Additional funding had been secured for extra staff resources which should, when fully implemented, cover approximately 20 schools and around 8,000 pupils. A children and young people's mental health service redesign project was underway to develop an improved service delivery model.

The Committee also heard about planned improvements to the assessment services for young people with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). These changes should allow for services to be better targeted, with greater use made of early help services and more intensive work focused on those with the most complex needs.

It was recognised however that there remained major concerns over the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on child mental health and that there were likely to be major long-term implications for the city in the years ahead.

Another area of concern for the Committee was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and young people with SEND and the challenges faced by young carers.

We met with representatives from the Sunderland Carers Centre and the Sunderland Parent Carer Forum to hear more about the difficulties they faced, in particular the heightened anxieties and isolation experienced during lockdown and the need for access to support and signposting to services.

While the situation does seem to have improved after the initial lockdown, there clearly remains major challenges moving forward, and the situation needs to be monitored.

In setting its work programme for the year, the Committee was also keen to consider the effect of Covid pandemic on incidences of anti-social behaviour within the city. 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.

The YOS also resumed Community Payback as soon as contact outdoor was allowed but adjusted this to be delivered on a one-to-one basis and with a risk assessment as close to the young person's home as possible to minimise travel.

The Council is currently in the process of developing a youth strategy. In order to provide input into the document, several members of the Committee sat on a working group involved in its development. Emerging from its discussions is the importance of the document being concise, transparent and user friendly which can help identify any gaps in service provision and signpost users to sources of support. The Committee looks forward to seeing the final document once it is completed.

A further area of concern arising out of the pandemic has been its long-term

effect on apprenticeships and employment opportunities for young people in the city. In order to discuss these issues, the Committee met with the Principal and Vice 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.

We have heard during the year of numerous instances where the Covid-19 pandemic has adversely affected young people and their families and where we are likely to see significant long-term implications. These include the impact on child poverty, child mental health, children with special educational needs and the growth of educational, health and economic inequalities. We feel that these challenges can only be faced if the city has a clear plan for building back after the pandemic and one that takes full account of the issues facing young people.

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 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.

Also, while the effect of the pandemic has occupied much of its work, the

Committee has continued to monitor the progress being made in improving the general delivery of children's services in the city. Despite very difficult circumstances, it is pleasing to see the performance has continued to improve across a suite of key performance indicators and we look forward to this continuing.

Good progress is also being made on the Ofsted Improvement Plan and there has been a reduction in the number of complaints being received.

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 Doris Turner

Vice Chair: Cllr Melanie Thornton

Committee Members: Councillors James Blackburn, William Blackett, Michael Dixon, Heather Fagan, Stephen Foster, Julia Jackson, Keith Jenkins, Christine Marshall, Dianne Snowdon and Tony Taylor.

During the year, the Committee's work programme has focused on the effect of the Covid-19 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 local economy, the Committee has received regular updates 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. We have also heard about the support and advice provided by the Council to encourage the take-up of the grants and the

loans and the support available to the voluntary sector through the Local Support Scheme (LSS). The Committee would like to place on record its thanks to all those staff within in the Council who have worked tirelessly in support of the business and voluntary sectors in the city.

We also heard from Sharon Appleby, Head of Business Operations at the BID on the work they are doing to support local business. It was hoped that following the Covid-19 pandemic, footfall and retail spending in the city centre should begin the process of recovery and that the proposed development of Sunderland Riverside in particular should provide an impetus for the growth of the independent retail sector.

Jonathan Walker and Natasha McDonagh from the North East Chamber of Commerce outlined for us the considerable long term economic challenges facing the city arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the UK's exit from the European Union and the nationwide downturn in the high street retail sector.

However, they both 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 city's International Strategy also has an important role in generating growth in the local economy and we heard about the wide range of activities taking place to establish economic links with existing and new overseas markets and promote inward investment into the city.

The cultural sector is another area that has been hard hit by the pandemic. Victoria French, Head of Events highlighted to us the economic impact of the cancellation of events such as the Sunderland Airshow and the Sunderland Illuminations and Festival of Light, as well as the loss to the local economy from the closure of art and theatre venues.

Again, however she was hopeful that the city's cultural and arts sector would show the resilience to bounce back following the ending of the pandemic.

During the year, the Committee's views have been fed into a number of planning documents which will help to facilitate the future regeneration of the city. In particular, the Riverside Sunderland and East Washington developments will provide much needed growth and expansion to two key sites in the city.

The Committee stressed the importance of ensuring that sufficient infrastructure is in place to accommodate the new housing planned for these sites, including road links, public transport, schools, health and leisure facilities.

The Committee was also consulted on the contents of two important planning documents. Firstly, the Allocations and Designations Plan which will allocate sufficient land to deliver at least 13,410 net new homes, 7,200 new jobs and the development of at least 45,400m² of new comparison retail development.

Secondly, the Development Management SPD which provides planning and design guidance for those wishing to extend or alter a

dwelling house and assists developers in preparing proposals for residential developments.

Following on from last year, we heard from Graham Scanlon, Housing Manager on the progress being made on the Council's housing strategy. This included 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 about the action being taken to improve the quality of the private rented sector, reduce the number of empty properties and tackle the issue of homelessness in the city.

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

We also heard that good progress was being made on the new Civic Hall which should be open later in the year and within the Sunderland Heritage Action Zone area which should contribute to the preservation of Sunderland's historic core and improve the appearance of the city centre.

Another major project being undertaken in the city is the development of the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP). Comprising 260,000 sq. metres of business space on a 100-hectare site, the IAMP will have a massive impact on the city and region, creating around

5,200 jobs and bringing in around £300m of private investment over the next ten years. Again, the Committee heard about the very encouraging progress being made and agreed to visit the site once Covid-19 restrictions had been lifted.

The importance of transport links will be vitally important to the city's long-term development. The Committee therefore received an update on the Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor which should provide a catalyst of economic growth, improve transport links and reduce congestion.

We also received an update on road safety in the city; highlighting the road safety work undertaken during the year and an analysis of accident and casualty statistics. These figures show a slight rise in number, albeit from a steady ten-year downward trend. Nevertheless, we feel it is important that these figures are closely monitored to ensure that there is no long-term reversal of the downward trend.

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.

A draft of the Low Carbon Framework and Action Plan were submitted to this Committee for its views. The Committee stressed the importance of fully involving partners from throughout the city if the goals are to be achieved and we were pleased to see that this has been reflected in the Plan.

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 Doris Turner

Chair of the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee



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 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.

The Committee also had a meaningful discussion on the development of the Council's Healthy City Plan. A variety of views were expressed along with a range of opinions both for and against aspects of the plan. It is important that the Committee is able to discuss key documents providing not only a critical friend challenge but also further issues for consideration.

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 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

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 for 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 still delivered to the highest possible standards. This will not be easy. However, I feel it is our duty as elected representatives of the city to continue to do everything in our power to help protect our residents from the difficulties that face us.

We have heard throughout this year's report about the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the city and the measures being taken to deal with its immediate impact. 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-19 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.

As part of the ongoing development of scrutiny we will look to conduct a review of the scrutiny process to ensure its effectiveness and impact in moving forward. Members will also focus on developing robust scrutiny work programmes that are directed at the key issues facing the city and its residents.

We will therefore be looking 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 in looking forward to having another productive year.



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.

- Adult Safeguarding Board Annual Report
- All Together Better Alliance
- Allocations and Designations Plan
- Annual Road Safety Report
- Apprenticeships
- Budget Planning Framework
- Business Centres - Update
- Capital Programme Review
- Capital Strategy
- Children Services Complaints
- City Hall Update
- Compliments, Complaints and Feedback
- Covid-19 Business Support Grants
- Covid-19 Updates
- Draft Health Inequalities
- Derwent Hill
- Development Management SPD
- European Union – Exit Planning
- Financial Strategy
- Flu Immunisation Programme
- Hate Crime and Tension Monitoring
- Healthy City Plan
- Heritage Update
- Homes of Multiple Occupation SPD Scoping Report
- Housing Strategy Update
- Impact of Covid-19 on Child Mental Health
- Impact of Covid-19 on Young Carers and SEND
- Impact of Covid-19 on Children and Young Families
- International Advanced Manufacturing Park
- International Strategy
- Licensing Policy Update
- Low Carbon Framework
- Managing the Market
- Sunderland CCG - Mental Health Strategy
- North East Ambulance Service Annual Update
- Ofsted Improvement Plan – Update
- Operation of Assessment Services for CYP with ASC and ADHD
- Ophthalmology
- Path to Excellence Phase 2
- Performance Management
- Preparations of Schools in Response to Covid-19
- Regional Adoption Agency
- Revenue Budget
- Riverside SPD
- Safeguarding Children Partnership Update
- Safer Sunderland Partnership Annual Report
- Schools Reopening Update
- Sunderland Business Improvement District
- Sunderland Chamber of Commerce — Update
- Sunderland Cultural Sector
- Sunderland Eye Infirmary
- Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor - Update
- Together for Children - Performance Monitoring Report
- Washington Meadows SPD Scoping Report
- Winter Preparedness
- Youth Offending

