

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 9th July, 2020 at 5.30 p.m.

This meeting will be held remotely. Joining details will be emailed to all participants.

The meeting will be livestreamed for the public to view on the Council's YouTube channel, 'sunderlandgov' at :- https://youtu.be/41FX0uUDfkA

Membership

Contact:

Cllr Crosby, Hunt, Mann, McDonough (Vice-Chairman), Mc Keith, F. Miller, Rowntree, Samuels, Scanlan, P. Smith (Chairman), Tye and K. Wood

Coopted Members - Mrs. A. Blakey and Ms. J. Graham

ITEM PAGE 1. **Apologies for Absence** 2. Minutes of the last meeting of the Children, 1 Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 5th March, 2020 (copy attached) 3. **Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations**) Part A – Cabinet Referrals and Responses No Items Part B – Scrutiny Business 4. Update from Together for Children – Covid 19 6 Report of the Chief Executive, Together for Children (copy attached)

David Noon, Principal Governance Services Officer Tel: 561 1008

Email: david.noon@sunderland.gov.uk

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E. WAUGH, Assistant Director of Law and Governance, Civic Centre, SUNDERLAND.

1st July, 2020

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM 1 of the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on THURSDAY 5th MARCH, 2020 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor P. Smith in the Chair

Councillors Crosby, Francis, Hunt, Mann, McKeith, F. Miller, Samuels, Scanlan, Tye and K. Wood.

Also in attendance:-

Mr Chris Binding, Local Democracy Reporter, Sunderland Echo Mr Martin Birch, Director of Children's Social Care, Together for Children Ms Jill Colbert, Chief Executive Together for Children and Director of Children's Services

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

Ms Lorraine Hughes, Public Health Specialist, Public Health

Mr David Noon, Principal Governance Services Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

Ms Gillian Robinson, Scrutiny and Members' Support Coordinator, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

Ms Jane Wheeler, Service Manager Early Help – Prevention and Innovation, Together for Children.

The Chairman opened the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Rowntree and on behalf of Ms Graham, Ms Blakey and Mr Luke Hall

Minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 6th February, 2020

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 6th February, 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

No declarations of interest were made.

Voice of the Child – Participation and Outcomes for Children.

The Chief Executive, Together for Children, submitted a report (copy circulated) which introduced a presentation which demonstrated TfC's commitment to ensuring that all children, young people and their families had the opportunity to actively participate in decisions that affected their lives, in the delivery of the services they received and in the development of the policies that impacted upon them.

(For copy report and presentation – see original minutes.)

Ms Jane Wheeler, Service Manager Early Help – Prevention and Innovation, Together for Children provided the Committee with a detailed powerpoint presentation showcasing the various participation and engagement activities undertaken during the period April 2019 – September 2019 and addressed questions and comments from Members thereon.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Tye as to how TfC engaged with looked after children, Ms Wheeler explained that the door was very much open however TfC would always focus its engagement with the young people in its care in the first instance. Councillor Tye noted that as part of the Let's Talk exercises lot of young people had commented on their wish to help in shaping and delivering the embedded services provided for them and other residents of the city.

Councillor Samuels referred to the reference in the presentation that 324 individual children and young people aged 10-25 had been involved in participation activity and asked if this cohort referred to children in the city as a whole or just LACs. Ms Wheeler confirmed that the figures related to the wider population being over and above TfC's statutory responsibility which was specifically confined to LACs.

Council Mann commended the Service in respect of the work it was undertaking in relation to SEND.

Councillor K. Wood referred to the apprenticeships that been provided for care leavers and expressed regret that these had been advertised only on the North East Jobs site. She had hoped that the positions would have been given to the voluntary sector to promote and asked that consideration was given to this in the future.

Councillor Francis congratulated the Service on everything that it did however he stated it would have assisted the Committee members understanding of the issues involved if there had been detailed in a report circulated in advance with the agenda papers.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Francis regarding Makaton, Councillor Mann explained that it was a simplified version of British Sign Language for young people with learning difficulties. It was an effective tool and was the preferred means of communication for children who had limited verbal communication and was used widely in SEND schools.

Councillor Francis welcomed the renaming of the Contact Centre to the far less remote and impersonal Bramble Centre.

In response to a further enquiry from Councillor Francis, Ms Wheeler detailed the types of engagement undertaken but stated that ultimately you could only engage with someone if they wanted to engage.

In response to an enquiry from the Chair regarding whether the optimum use was being made of technology, Ms Wheeler advised that TfC's efforts in this direction centred on the Mind of My Own App however there was an increasing rejection of the use of Apps among young people who just wanted to be able to talk.

There being no further questions or comments for Ms Wheeler, the Chairman thanked her for her presentation and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the contents of the report and presentation be received and noted.

Public Health Outcomes for Children and Young People

The Director of Public Health submitted a report (copy circulated) which introduced a powerpoint presentation to update the Committee on the ongoing work being undertaken to improve the health outcomes for children and young people in the city.

(For copy report and presentation – see original minutes.)

Ms Lorraine Hughes took members through a comprehensive presentation which briefed Members on:-

The Marmot Review 10 Years On An Overview of the key public health outcomes Areas of progress made and challenges to be faced Local action being undertaken

Councillor K. Wood noted that in terms of the key public health outcomes, it appeared that those areas traditionally viewed as being deprived seemed to be out performing some of areas that were viewed as more affluent. Cllr Hunt asked if this could be down to the fact that those areas in which a Children's Centre was located appeared to be faring better? Ms Hughes replied that she couldn't say for certain that there was a correlation however there was evidence to show that the provision of early help assisted in improving the health outcomes for children and young people.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Tye regarding what was being done to deliver an improvement in respect of teenage pregnancy outcomes, Ms Hughes briefed the Committee on the positive effect of the Teenage Pregnancy Early Intervention Pathway.

The Chair welcomed the work being undertaken in respect of speech therapy as it was something the Committee had championed for many years.

Councillor Crosby advised that at the start of her teaching career, foetal alcohol syndrome was only just being recognised as a rising problem and asked if it was still the case today. Ms Hughes replied that it was still a problem however national

figures were not available. It was a priority area however for maternity specialists in the region.

Council Tye speculated whether the comparative figures for hospital admissions for mental health conditions in respect of the city and England as a whole could be taken as evidence that mental health services for young people in Sunderland were failing. He referred to the category in the Child Health Profiles named 'Hospital Admissions Caused by Unintentional and Deliberate Injuries and asked for clarification. Ms Hughes replied that it did not relate purely to self-harm and the majority of incidents were trips, falls, burns etc.

Councillor Tye stated that Sunderland had long had a problem with child alcohol admissions and that the current figures were still a huge concern. Ms Hughes replied that it remained an issue and whist the figures for admissions in Sunderland were declining this was also the picture nationally and the city was therefore unable to close the gap. Work was continuing to address this issue both from the Public Health perspective and via Licensing with the greater use of enforcement powers. Councillor Mann asked if details were available regarding the numbers involved and where the cases originated in the City. Ms Hughes advised that the incidences were mapped across the City and that she could share these with members if necessary. The numbers involved were relatively small with only 47 admissions over the previous year.

Councillor Hunt stated that as with the previous presentation it would have been useful to have had the information in advance. The information was so comprehensive it was difficult to give it due consideration hearing it for the first time and given the time constraints of the meeting. The Committee members concurred with this point of view.

There being no further questions or comments for Ms Hughes, the Chairman thanked her for her presentation and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the contents of the presentation be received and noted.

Annual Work Programme 2019/20

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided members with details of the Committee's work programme for the municipal year 2019/20

(for copy report – see original minutes)

There being no questions or comments, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the work programme be received and noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the

Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from the 24th February, 2020.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

There being no questions or comments, it was:-

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

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked members and officers for their attendance and contributions.

(Signed) P. SMITH, Chairman.

N.B. Following the closure of the formal business the Committee received a short briefing from Ms Colbert and Mr Birch on the positive nature of the most recent Ofsted monitoring letter.

Item 4

CHILDREN EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 JULY 2020

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN

UPDATE FROM TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN – COVID 19

1. Purpose of the Report

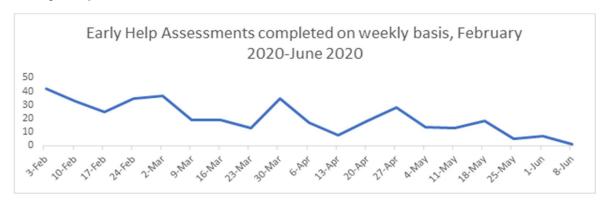
1.1 This update provides a summary of current issues and actions during the Covid pandemic and enforced restrictions. It also provides a summary of our performance through the associated period of time.

2. Summary of Current Performance Data

- 2.1 From the outset of COVID19, TfC has reported demand data to a range of audiences (and in addition to the ordinary reporting that takes place routinely) including the Department of Education (fortnightly), regional and national Association of Directors of Children's Services (weekly), the Council (weekly) and the TfC Board (monthly). This has provided clear oversight to all relevant stakeholders of the level of service provided, and the overall demand for children's services.
- 2.2 The following information presents overall demand and TfC performance in meeting need since the month before the lockdown which demonstrates that the service has maintained strong stability.

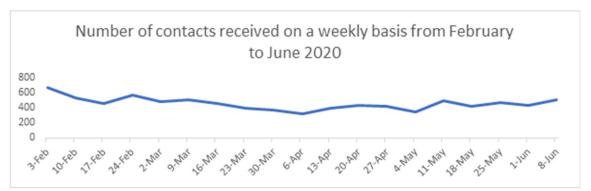
This section summarises in more detail:

Early Help

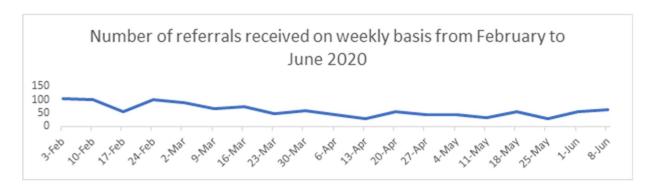


- This indicates 100 fewer cases now, compared to the start of lockdown.
- Case numbers remained stable in April (between 489-490 cases). They have started to rise slowly since then, and there were 521 on 22-June.

ICRT (Contacts and Referrals)

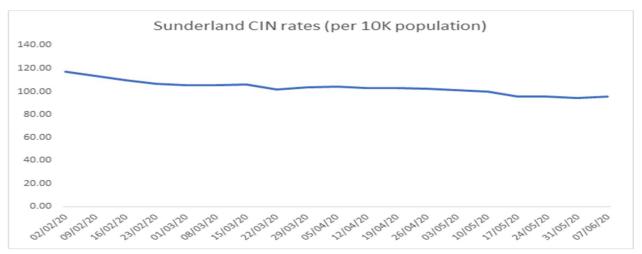


- From February there has been an average of 460 contacts per week, this is a reduction from our usual levels.
- Total contacts from 3-Feb: 8,732
- Using data from September 2019-February 2020, there was an average of 506 contacts per week
- During Feb-June 2020: 53% of contacts came from police, 13% from health and 11% from other legal agency
 - Police and health are in broadly similar proportions to those from Sep19-Feb 2020: police 58% and health 14% of totals
 - Schools are usually in the top 3 of contact sources, but during this time were 2nd lowest source of contacts- accounting for 1% of the total over this period
 - In Sept 19 to Feb 2020 schools accounted for 6% of all contacts



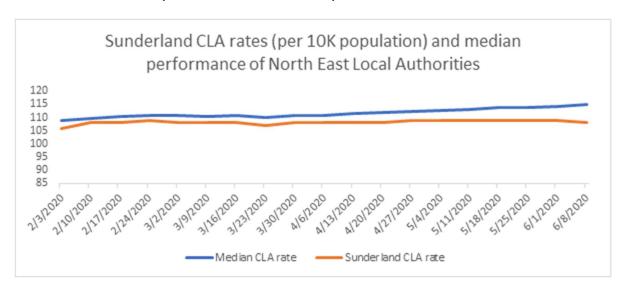
 Referrals remained broadly similar to previous months, with an average of 61 referrals per week since February 2020.

Child in Need



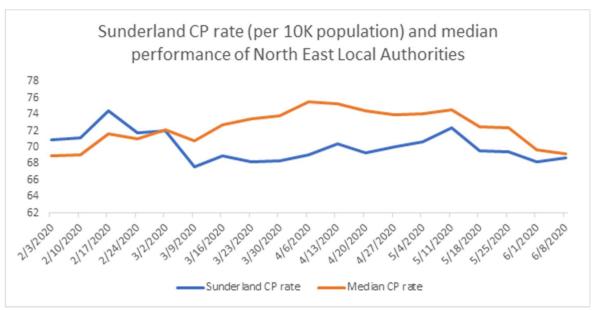
 82 fewer children are on a CIN plan since the last monitoring visit, a reduction of 13%. There is no regional data on this measure on a weekly basis so comparison to regional neighbours is only possible on a quarterly basis.

Cared for Children ('children looked after')



- Regionally LA's have been benchmarking CLA data from 3-Feb on a weekly basis
- The chart below shows Sunderland's CLA rates are consistently below the median level for the region
- For the last week of this data (8-June) there are the same number of CLA as 16-March (the week of lockdown)

Child Protection



- CP rates have been below the median position for the region since early March
- There was one less child subject to CP on 8-June compared to the week before lockdown
 - Sunderland CP rate is generally lower than the median position of the region
 - Latest week (8-June) shows that Sunderland had 1 fewer CP cases compared to 16-March

3. Actions taken to safeguard children during the Covid pandemic – by service area

3.1 ICRT & EDT

In the week prior to the lockdown operational staff were provided with agile technology so that they could work from home effectively. This included the ICRT (Front door) staff and Assessment Team. The teams have worked off site in the main, with the safeguarding front door operating in a virtual environment. Urgent child protections discussions have taken place as usual virtually and all processes have operated as normal. As the data above shows however, the volume of work reduced significantly over the first 2 weeks of lockdown (as it did nationally) and then gradually increased from that point on.

Monthly MASH audits are undertaken of selected contacts within an operational group (held fortnightly) to ensure that appropriate investigation and outcomes are being achieved and identify learning for partner agencies. Processes and procedures have been updated and are readily available for staff to access in the HUB and there are much clearer processes developed in respect of Early Permanence, Pre-birth, Police Powers of Protection and Homeless for 16/17 year olds.

A re-referral process has been developed which includes the introduction of 'Amber Meetings' to ensure a multi-agency approach. Whilst the number of re-referrals remains an area of focus for TfC, the process allows greater analysis and better understanding around the areas requiring support, resulting in the development of more robust step down and closure procedures. It is hoped that with a continued consistent approach embedded this will in turn reduce re-referral rates across the service. The percentage of referrals that are re-referrals within 12 months was 22.1% at the end of 2019-20. This is an improvement on the year end position in 18-19 (when it was 24.6%).

In October 2019, the process changed in respect of the management of CIN cases, as assessment teams now hold short term CIN cases following the completion of assessment. This process has reduced the number of CIN cases held within TfC significantly with 119 fewer children on an open CIN plan compared to February 2020. This means families have consistency of the allocated social worker and single intervention pathways. There is a full cohort of permanent staff across ICRT and the assessment teams which has enabled this approach. CIN cases are reviewed within fortnightly CIN clinics which include Early Help input ensuring less drift and delay and more robust step-down procedures.

Sitting within the assessment teams is a domestic abuse team consisting of three Child and Family Workers who are supervised by an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA). This team has been further developed to provide an immediate response to domestic abuse concerns. The process includes joint initial visits with social workers to develop safety plans and develop DASH/RIC assessments and identify further targeted work to be undertaken with the children and parents. Families have welcomed this and the approach has ensured proportionate intervention within the assessment stage, often preventing concerns escalating to ICPC. The role of the IDVA has supported the information sharing and training around domestic abuse across the service.

Performance date demonstrates that despite Covid19, ICRT & Assessment have remained relatively busy. Teams were sent to work from home the week before the lockdown (to reduce the risk of infection) and teams have operated virtually. Joint working was agreed with service leads from partner agencies. A joint risk assessment tool was developed for school aged children to consider how their attendance could be promoted to provide stability and safety and consider what monitoring measures would be in place to enable regular communication with families. Joint working with housing services has been undertaken to ensure that victims of domestic abuse have been provided with alternative housing where appropriate and there has been short-term provisions created to place greater focus on alternative accommodation for perpetrators of abuse. This has strengthened safety planning and achieved better outcomes for children.

Visits to children and families continued in line with government guidance and assessments and multi-agency meetings progressed as usual but mainly virtually. Joint work has been undertaken with Schools Improvement Officers to increase parent's awareness of key issues such as increased risk of online radicalisation and an increase in the sharing of sexual imagery. As restrictions ease more physical meetings will be resumed gradually but in the main staff remain home based.

3.2 Neighbourhood Teams

Immediately prior to COVID19 restrictions being introduced a risk assessment was developed and completed on every case, with a RAG rating determined. This was kept under review by Team Managers, so the most concerning cases were easily identified. The assessment was further developed to look at the most appropriate way to work with each individual family based on the risks related to COVID19 and the family situation. This was completed on every case and regularly reviewed as circumstances changed. Virtual visiting was introduced for families where this was needed. A virtual visit option was created in Liquid Logic so that non-physical visits could be tracked and reported twice weekly to the SLT and DCS. As the transition out of lockdown continues face to face visits have resumed except where a family are symptomatic or self-isolating.

A revised audit tool was quickly devised to respond to the changes in social work practice. The COVID audits focus on ensuring the monitoring of the needs of the children and how well this has been balanced against restrictions and safety concerns in light of COVID. The COVID audits consider, for example, if visits are virtual or face to face, how family time is managed, how children's voices are captured, safety planning in light of COVID (include use of PPE) and any relevant risk assessments completed to understand the impact for the child. 60% of the audits were graded as good or outstanding.

Supervision, team meetings and group supervision had all been conducted virtually but are gradually resuming face to face as teams return to the office base on a rotational basis.

3.3 Early Help

All Early Help services, including the YOS and all Targeted Youth Services, have continued to support children and families from the outset of restrictions. Cases were RAG rated for risk and direct work continued with those at greatest risk of escalation into statutory services. Children and families whose plans were RAG rated green (lowest risk) were supported via video or telephone contact. The Service picked up the ongoing support for all families whose Early Help Plan had previously been co-ordinated by a school, health visitor or other universal service provider. These families were appreciative of the service and welcomed the contact:

"TfC have been brilliant and very helpful. Phone calls have been really helpful. A very good service." (Mum, May 2020)

'TfC have been doing really well as a service. Phone calls have definitely been helpful and knowing where to go for help'. (Mum, June 2020)

Staff who had a reduced workload during lockdown, such as Attendance Officers, were redeployed into the Council's Community Hub Teams and provided telephone contact and a door-knocking services for vulnerable residents. This community support was also very much appreciated.

"It's wonderful to talk through my worries with someone instead of pacing the house getting more and more anxious" (Resident 18.06.20) during a welfare call

Under normal circumstances over 65% of cases opened by the Early Help Service step down to Level 2 from CIN plans, CIN assessments and from contacts into ICRT. This slowed considerably during the pandemic, principally due to the much-reduced number of contacts from schools over this period. We anticipate a increase in contacts from September, or from the point at which schools resume business as usual.

The Youth Offending Service and Targeted Youth Services (ASB support, drug and alcohol support, restorative justice) also continued to support young people as appropriate on a case by case basis. Activity remained stable until the end of June when there was a noticeable rise in reported alcohol-related youth antisocial behaviour. This is likely to have been related to the easing of restrictions, a certain amount of lockdown 'cabin fever' and family tension, and the seasonal increase associated with the end of the school year (despite schools being closed for the most part).

From 1 July 2020 all parts of the Early Help Services ceased to RAG rated cases and direct work with children and families resumed as required for each Plan on a case-by-case basis.

Community work, such as Children's Centre activities, will re-start in September. A virtual offer has been available via social media during lockdown and will be over the Summer. Engagement has been good:

'Miller is really enjoying the videos we watch them everyday we're so thankful that you're all working hard to put the videos together xx' (15th May 17:36pm from Miller's mum via Facebook)

Young people's participation groups (Young People's Council, Change Council, Rainbow Spektrum) also continued virtually via a range of social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Zoom and Teams. The Young Parents' Project (B2b) supported its service users remotely and with home visits and the Girls' groups set up to support and mentor vulnerable young women continued

virtually. Overall, feedback from families has been exceptionally positive during these constrained times:

"Thank you for your help anyway, no ones (sic) ever been as helpful as you with Ben and I really appreciate it "(Ben's Mum, via WhatsApp, following support to find him a school place in June 2020)

3.4 Children with Disabilities

During Covid all cases in review have been offered a higher level of support. Physical and virtual visits increased to fortnightly and regular telephone contact has been maintained. As restrictions are reducing, the timescales for visits are being reviewed with families and are being tailored to meet individual needs. The teams have responded to different types of need; support staff have offered to collect shopping, for example, for those families shielding due to a child's complex health needs.

There has been significant collaborative working with partners in SEND particularly around children and young people with EHCP's returning to education. Early agreement was reached with the respite provider (adult services) to continue to provide overnight respite on a risk assessed basis, and families have continued to access it. As restrictions reduce more children and young people are resuming their care packages of overnight respite, where it is safe to do so.

3.5 Cared for Children & Protection

Direct Family Time (contact as was) ceased at the point of lockdown as per the government guidance. Plans were progressed quickly so that virtual/indirect family time was quickly put into place for all cases to ensure that children did still maintain a level of family time; including for newborns. The service ensured all carers and parents had access to some form of virtual communication method, or this was facilitated by staff. As lockdown restrictions have reduced Family Time will be delivered directly subject to each risk assessment.

Staff have continued to undertake direct work with children through a range of means and an increased number of children have registered with Mind of My Own. An urgent safeguarding alert system was set up with Mind of my Own so that any concerns raised by children would go directly to ICRT for immediate action. Staff have seen children in school if they have been attending making sure social distancing rules have been followed.

There have been examples of exceptional practice by Social Workers taking significant personal risk during Covid, for example removing children in high risk circumstances, acting as temporary connected carers (in line with the agreed temporary flexibilities), visiting infants admitted to hospitals and even delivering breast milk from a separated Mother to her baby (twice a day, every day).

Support has continued to be offered to victims, perpetrators and children who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse. Due to COVID19 restrictions there has been changes to how external services have been delivered and this has had an obvious impact on work being completed however, service have offered support virtually where possible. The DCS has chaired weekly partnership meetings with housing, the Police etc. to ensure oversight of demand. The Sunderland area for Northumbria Police has shown consistently higher rates of adult notifications for reported domestic abuse with some very high risk cases presenting to ICRT. Incidents spiked further the week of 22nd June with a 30% increase in reported cases across the Force area.

3.6 Legal Service

The difficulties of conducting hearings remotely has had an impact on the timeliness of care proceedings, specifically contested hearings, Initial Review Hearings and Final Hearings. Hearing outcomes reviewed from 23rd March to 1st June 2020 identify that 16 of 112 hearings held were impacted upon due to Covid19 which will necessarily lead to a delay in concluding these cases. However, whilst the court initially identified at the start of Covid19 that non-urgent case listings would not be made (i.e. discharges, revocations) the court are now accepting such applications, so there is minimal impact on this area of work. Despite the difficulties the legal team have maintained their performance against the issuing of cases. TfC are providing relevant information relating to delayed cases so that the issues can be reported regionally and nationally.

3.7 Children Looked After, Fostering & Residential, Adoption & Leaving Care

Children's homes have maintained 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted judgements this year.

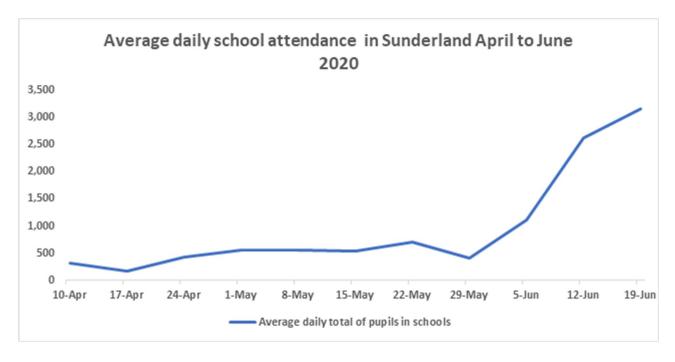
During the pandemic the residential units have had some very challenging circumstances to manage. Whilst overall staffing capacity has been sufficient, the shielding advice did impact on staff capacity. Additionally, the initial delays in accessing PPE, PPE guidance and testing, created fragility across the workforce. Staff from within TfC were re-deployed (albeit in small number) to support the rota's and greater stability was secured once PPE and systematic testing were in place.

Care leavers have received additional support, whether living in supported accommodation or fully independent. Most young people agreed quickly to be moved onto payment cards for their allowances and have also been provided with food parcels, emotional well-being packs and continued direct support.

There has been no young people who have experienced drift or delay in their plans to progress to supported accommodation as a result of Covid19. Transitions have been managed safely and in the best interests of young people.

3.8 Education

A very significant issue presented by Covid was the loss of universal school attendance. Sunderland schools remained open to key worker and vulnerable children from the outset (special schools presented with some particular difficulties early on which were quickly resolved) and of school attendance prior to early June, 25% of children attending were vulnerable and 75% keyworker children.



- The period covers the Easter hols and the May half term, and some weeks where the DfE had not released the information (the DfE collect the data directly from schools)
- The dip on data point for 29-May is an example of this: the DfE had an issue which meant that schools could not provide the data to DfE
- Figures from 5-June incorporate the numbers of pupils attending based on the priority year groups who started to return from early June
- Between 96-100% of Sunderland schools are open or offering places via hub arrangements which appears to be the highest for the region

A full range of support has been offered to all schools, who have had access to TfC and Council services throughout the pandemic. The Outbreak Control Plan which is now in place to manage ongoing management of the virus, has a clear focus on supporting schools with infection control and outbreak management.

3.9 Virtual School

Since Covid19 lockdown The Virtual School staff have all worked remotely. Together with social care and schools the service identified, using RAG methodology, which children needed to be prioritised. All children out of area

and in residential children's homes were identified as top priority as were several children who had complex needs. The role of the Virtual School was to maintain twice weekly safe and well calls, to offer support with education alongside the home school's input, speaking with both carer and child. All cared for children received at least one call from the Virtual School a week. This was in addition to calls from schools and Social Worker. Some carers were overwhelmed (positively) by the response from all professionals and it has been stated that:

"I'd rather have 5 calls a week than feel isolated and unsupported"

The service has maintained contact with schools to confirm which children were attending throughout this period and this was maintained during the return to school for Reception, Year 1 and 6.

Working with Welfare Call the EPEP format was adapted to ensure it reflected the remote and online teaching that schools and children were involved with. EPEPs have been maintained at 94% during this period. The Virtual School team have maintained links with Social Workers and school Designated Teachers throughout this period and have attended virtual LAC reviews and Strategy meetings accordingly. The service also maintained contact with schools to advocate for children's attendance if it was appropriate to do so.

TfC purchased laptops for all children in children's homes and worked with schools on the use of Pupil Premium to buy laptops where this was necessary.

Prior to Covid the newly created NEET coordinator for cared for children and SEND young people role, had evidenced early impact on outcomes for that cohort of young people. The programme has developed a partnership approach to supporting the targeted groups and in the first year helped to start the development of a new post 16 pathway, improved mentoring opportunities and created a range of specific training opportunities for young people at risk of becoming NEET. It is clear that Covid has impacted on current apprenticeships, and given that the impact on future apprenticeships is not yet understood, the skills and employment agenda will need to remain a top priority for the city.

3.10 Children's Independent Reviewing Service

During lockdown, all services delivered by Children's Independent Reviewing Team (CIRT) (including Regulation 44 Visits, Foster Carer Reviews & Designated Officer) have been held via the use of conference calls, video calls, or a series of phone calls with children, families and professionals fully engaging. This change in practice has worked well with strong performance maintained. For example, Initial Child Protection Conference timeliness for April was 92% and 100% in May. Review Child Protection Conference timeliness for

April was 100% and 98% for May. 99% of cared for children reviews were completed in timescale for both April and May. Over 75% of children participated in their reviews in April and May. 100% of Designated Officer referrals, foster carer reviews and Regulation 44 Visits were completed in timescale in April and May.

CIRT is now adopting a hybrid approach to offer choice to families whilst at the same time adhering to government guidance. Families will be offered the opportunity to attend conferences in person with the Conference Chair whilst professionals attend via a conference call or video call to minimise risk. The use of Microsoft Teams is allowing the sharing of documents in meetings which is particularly helpful.

In November 2019, CIRT arranged an external Peer Review to complement internal quality assurance work. In response to the findings, the service identified three key areas of focus; consistency of recording, ensuring the child's voice is fully captured in all case recordings and refreshing the challenge process. This improvement work has continued during COVID19 and from the work undertaken so far, the service has already seen positive outcomes such as the child's voice being more dominant in case notes for mid-way reviews.

4. Recommendations

4.1 The Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider and comment on the report.

Item 5

CHILDREN EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 JULY 2020

ANNUAL REPORT

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS' SUPPORT COORDINATOR

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To approve the Children Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee report as part of the overall scrutiny annual report 2019/20 that is to be presented to Council.

2. Background

2.1 As previous municipal year's the annual report will be a single combined report of all four scrutiny committees. The annual report will outline the development in the scrutiny function and provide a snapshot of its work during the last 12 months.

3. Current position

3.1 The draft Children Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee report is attached at appendix 1 for member's consideration. The report provides a summary of some of the main work undertaken by the Committee during 2019/20. It should be noted that the report is written from the perspective of the Chair of the Committee reflecting over the year.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The Committee has delivered another ambitious work programme in 2019/20, which is reflected in the annual report. The Committee has worked with Council Directorates, stakeholders and partner organisations to deliver the work programme and has tackled a number of key issues throughout the year.

5 Recommendation

5.1 That Members approve the Children Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee report for inclusion in the Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20.

6. Glossary

n/a

Contact Officer: Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer

(0191) 561 1396

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Children, Education & Skills Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Cllr Pat Smith

Vice Chair: Cllr Bob Francis

Committee Members: Councillors Margaret Crosby, Paula Hunt, Pam Mann, Joseph McKeith, Fiona Miller, Claire Rowntree, Alex Samuels, Lynda Scanlan, Philip Tye, Karen Wood.

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

During the year the Committee has focused much of its work on monitoring the progress being made in improving the delivery of children's services in the city following the outcome of a re-inspection of services by Ofsted in July 2018.

This has been achieved by a variety of means. The Committee has received regular monitoring reports on the performance of Together for Children and reviewed progress across a suite of key performance indicators. Central to the success of this process has been the quality of the information and data provided and the Committee has sought to ensure that performance reports are focused, timely and in a form that allows an informed judgement to be made.

Another means of overseeing improvement has been to monitor the progress being made in implementing the TfC Learning and Development Plan which has recently been refreshed. It is hoped that this should help provide a clear framework for improving the delivery of children's services into the future.

Based on this information provided in these reports, the Committee has focused on a number of key areas including the improvements being made to the operation of the "front door" of children's services. Members of the Committee received a detailed presentation on the operation of the new MASH system as well as a demonstration of the Liquid Logic IT system.

There is no doubt as to the challenging environment within which children's services operates in the city given the increasing demand for services and the financial constraints on the resources available. Nevertheless, backed by the actions being taken by Together for Children and the Council, the Committee looks forward to seeing demonstrable improvements in children's services in the year ahead.

Last year the Committee raised a number of concerns relating to the increase in exclusions at a number of schools in the city and the significant variations that exists from school to school. This year, members have taken the opportunity to visit a local school in order to see at first hand the kinds of measures that can be taken to reduce school exclusions and improve education al attainment.

Following an update last year, the Committee agreed to receive updates on the action being taken in the city to reduce the risk of child sexual exploitation and develop the services available to the victims of domestic abuse. The Committee heard about the progress being made and the range of initiatives being developed.

An on-going problem for the city has been the relatively high numbers of young people not in education, employment or work (NEET). To this end we received a report on the measures being taken to combat this problem. Clearly this is a difficult issue to address

particularly in the current economic climate. We feel that it will only be through effective joint working by partner agencies that concrete and lasting progress can be made.

The Committee also received a report on the parenting offer in the city and met with the partners involved in the delivery of the service in the city. We heard about the range of improvements that are planned for the future to make more effective use of the resources available and we look forward to these improvements making a significant impact on the quality and timeliness of service delivery.

The Committee has met with a range of partner organisations in order to review the progress being made on the safeguarding of children. The Independent Chair of the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board took us through the progress being made by the Safeguarding Board and the challenges they face in the year ahead.

A major priority of the Committee has been to make sure that we, and indeed the Council as a whole, listen to the voice of young people and take into account their views on the delivery of the services impacting upon them. During the year representatives from the Sunderland Youth Parliament have again attended meetings of the Committee and I feel that they have made a very positive and significant contribution to our meetings.

Clearly, the year has been an extremely challenging and demanding one for the Committee, though I hope positive and productive for those involved. I would like to thank all the members of the Committee for their contributions and also to thank all of 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

CHILDREN EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 JULY 2020

ANNUAL SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS' SUPPORT COORDINATOR

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide options, provide support and advise Members on the development of the scrutiny work programmes for 2020/21.

2. DETERMINING SCRUTINY ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMMES

- 2.1 Members are required to determine the work programmes for their respective scrutiny committees to give focus and structure to the scrutiny activity to ensure that it effectively and efficiently supports and challenges the decision-making processes of the Council, and partner organisations, for the benefit of the people and communities of Sunderland City Council.
- Principles Guiding the Development of Scrutiny Work Programmes
 2.2 The following key principles should be taken into consideration when determining scrutiny work programmes:

Selectivity – Given the limited number of scheduled meetings and time constraints on Members and officers it is important that priority is given to key issues. Members should consider what can realistically and properly be reviewed at each meeting, taking into account the time needed to scrutinise each item and what each session is intended to achieve.

Value – Items should have the potential to 'add value' to the work of the council and its partners. If it is not clear what the intended outcomes or impact of a review will be then Members should consider if there are issues of a higher priority that could be scrutinised instead.

Ambition – Scrutiny Committees should not shy away from carrying out scrutiny of issues that are of real concern, whether or not they are the primary responsibility of the Council. The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities the power to promote economic, social and environmental well being of local communities. Subsequent Acts have conferred specific powers to scrutinise health services, crime and disorder issues and to hold partner organisations to account.

Flexibility – Members are reminded that there needs to be a degree of flexibility built into each work programme to respond to unforeseen issues/items for consideration/comment during the year and

accommodate any developmental or additional work the falls within the specific committee remit.

Timing – Scrutiny activity should be timely and, where appropriate, the findings and recommendations inform the wider corporate developments at a time when they can achieve the most impact. All Members should look to avoid duplication of work carried out and the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee can assist in preventing this from happening.

Models for Carrying out the Work of Scrutiny Committees

- 2.3 Topics for inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Programme will vary from single issue items for consideration such as policy and performance reports through regular updates on issues that the committee have adopted a more focused monitoring role to in-depth policy reviews.
- 2.4 There are a number of ways that Scrutiny Committees can deliver these topics through their work programmes. Members should consider the appropriate option to undertake each of the items selected for inclusion in the work programme. This may take the form of regular, on-going task such as the scrutiny of Cabinet business, performance reports or the annual budget, or alternatively, specific one-off issues, task and finish groups or in-depth policy reviews.

Support available for Scrutiny Activity

- 2.5 The Overview and Scrutiny function has dedicated scrutiny support from the Scrutiny Team to:
 - Work with the Scrutiny Chairs to manage the work programme and coordinate the agenda, including advising officers and partner organisations on information required and guidance for witnesses submitting evidence to a scrutiny committee;
 - Provide support to scrutiny members through briefing papers, background material, training and development seminars etc.;
 - Facilitate and manage the work of any task and finish groups or policy reviews, including research, arranging site visits, inviting and briefing witnesses and drafting review reports for discussion and approval by the Committee; and
 - Promote the scrutiny function across both the organisation and externally.

3. OPTIONS FOR SETTING THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMMES

3.1 Each Scrutiny Committee sets its own agenda within the scope of its terms of reference. There are a number of potential methods that can be utilised to assist members in debating key issues to develop and populate the respective scrutiny work programmes.

- 3.2 Scrutiny is a member-led function of the council and however work programmes are developed there is an important role for Members to highlight issues of concern within their local communities. Elected Members are best placed to provide local knowledge and raise key community issues that could be added to the appropriate work programme either at the development stage or at any time during the committee cycle.
- 3.3 It is important to recognise the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the considerable implications for all facets of service delivery for the Council, its partners and the wider community.
- 3.4 There are also a number of potential scrutiny issues arising from the pandemic which would benefit from scrutiny involvement, including some of the legislative changes brought about as part of the Covid-19 response.
- 3.5 There will also be the issue of Member, Officer and partner involvement in any scrutiny activities that will, most likely, be difficult to organise in the initial aftermath of the lifting of current government restrictions, but this will allow time to plan and develop a suitable approach to work programme planning for the future.

4. **CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 Scrutiny is a Member led process and the work programme of each committee is owned, populated and monitored by Members of that committee. The work programme remains an important document as the schedule for each committee's work throughout the year. Therefore, work programme planning is an important aspect of the committee role and function and having as much contribution and input as possible will provide an ambitious and relevant work programme for the coming year.
- 4.2 The Covid-19 crisis has obviously impacted the work programme planning which would normally have taken place in May/June 2020, and with social distancing still in place a large-scale event would not be recommended currently. However, there is still the opportunity to develop work programmes during July/August through individual workshops which are more manageable through the processes that will be in place at this time to address the Covid-19 crisis.
- 4.3 The Committee cycle allows for the continued monitoring and development of the work programme through a regular agenda item and the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee, in its coordinating role, allows for a complete overview of the scrutiny work programmes throughout the year.

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 That consideration is given to developing the scrutiny work programmes through individual workshops organised and developed through the scrutiny function. The workshops will take place during July/August and will aim to provide a number of relevant issues and topics for consideration and approval by the respective scrutiny committees.

Contact Officer: Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer

0191 561 1396

James.diamond@sunderland.gov.uk

Item 7 9th JULY, 2020

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF KEY DECISIONS

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS' SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Holding the Executive to account is one of the main functions of Scrutiny. One of the ways that this can be achieved is by considering the forthcoming decisions of the Executive (as outlined in the Notice of Key Decisions) and deciding whether Scrutiny can add value in advance of the decision being made. This does not negate Non-Executive Members ability to call-in a decision after it has been made.
- 2.2 To this end, the most recent version of the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions is included on the agenda of this Committee. The Notice of Key Decisions is attached marked **Appendix 1**.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 In considering the Notice of Key Decisions, Members are asked to consider only those issues where the Scrutiny Committee or relevant Scrutiny Panel could make a contribution which would add value prior to the decision being taken.
- 3.2 In the event of Members having any queries that cannot be dealt with directly in the meeting, a response will be sought from the relevant Directorate.

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 To consider the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions at the Scrutiny Committee meeting.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet Agenda

28 day notice Notice issued 15 June 2020

The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Notice is given of the following proposed Key Decisions (whether proposed to be taken in public or in private) and of Executive Decisions including key decisions) intended to be considered in a private meeting:-

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision- maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision- maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
170927/212	To approve in principle the establishment of a new police led Road Safety Partnership (Northumbria Road Safety Partnership) embracing the Northumbria Force Area.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 1 June to 30 September 2020.	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk
181024/312	To receive an update report on the Regional Adoption Agency proposals and to agree the next steps	Cabinet	Y	During the period from 1 June to 30 September 2020.	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision- maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision- maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
190906/402	To consider expansion proposals by an existing Council tenant in respect of a strategic property and the associated capital funding and revised lease term proposals.	Cabinet	Y	During the period from 30 June to 30 September 2020.	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk
200507/474	To consider the procurement a contractor to undertake works at Jacky Whites Market.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 1 June to 31 July 2020.	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision- maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision- maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
200527/483	To consider the proposed acquisition of 2.54 acres of land at Pallion Industrial Estate, Sunderland.	Cabinet	Y	14 July 2020	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk
200604/484	To approve the proposed Better Care Fund arrangements with Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group for the period 2020-2021.	Cabinet	Y	14 July 2020	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk
200604/485	To approve the First Capital Review 2020- 2021 (including Treasury Management).	Cabinet	Y	14 July 2020	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision- maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision- maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
200604/486	To approve the First Revenue Review 2020-2021.	Cabinet	Y	14 July 2020	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk
200605/487	To consider the endorsement of a Health Inequalities Strategy for Sunderland.	Cabinet	Y	14 July 2020	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk
200608/488	To consider approval of a proposal to commence school organisation processes related expansion of premises and revocation of previous proposals To consider approval of a proposal to procure capital works associated with School Organisation proposals.	Cabinet	Y	14 July 2020	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision- maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision-maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
200609/489	Proposed extension of the Services Agreement between the Council and Sunderland Care and Support Ltd (SCAS) for the provision of care and support services	Cabinet	Y	14 July 2020	N	Not applicable	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk
200515/482	To consider a proposal to procure capital works required to refurbish the former Harraton Skill Centre to facilitate the delivery of Special Educational Needs school provision from the site To consider a proposal to issue a lease to Prosper Learning Trust for the Harraton Skill Centre, Washington.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 14 July to 30 September 2020.	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision- maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision- maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
200501/471	To consider the appropriation of land at Newbottle Street, Houghton-le-Spring.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 14 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.	Y & N	This report will be in two parts with one to be considered in public meeting and the other containing commercially sensitive or confidential financial information which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision- maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision- maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
190823/385	To approve the proposed Governance Arrangements for the Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing (CESAM) and related matters.	Cabinet	Y	During the period from 1 September to 31 October 2020.	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov. uk

Note; Some of the documents listed may not be available if they are subject to an exemption, prohibition or restriction on disclosure.

Further documents relevant to the matters to be decided can be submitted to the decision-maker. If you wish to request details of those documents (if any) as they become available, or to submit representations about a proposal to hold a meeting in private, you should contact Governance Services at the address below.

Subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure, copies of documents submitted to the decision-maker can also be obtained from the Governance Services team PO Box 100, Civic Centre, Sunderland, or by email to committees@sunderland.gov.uk

*Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker and requests for details of these documents should be submitted to Governance Services at the address given above.

Who will decide:

Councillor Graeme Miller – Leader; Councillor Michael Mordey – Deputy Leader; Councillor Paul Stewart – Cabinet Secretary; Councillor Louise Farthing – Children, Learning and Skills: Councillor Geoffrey Walker – Healthy City; Councillor John Kelly – Vibrant City; Councillor Rebecca Atkinson – Dynamic City.

This is the membership of Cabinet as at the date of this notice. Any changes will be specified on a supplementary notice.

Elaine Waugh, Assistant Director of Law and Governance

15 June 2020