



Scrutiny Annual Report

2022–23

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Foreword



I am pleased to once again be able to introduce the Council's Scrutiny Annual Report. The report provides an overview of the work of scrutiny during 2022–23 and provides a snapshot of the varied issues and topics that our scrutiny committees have looked at during the year. The work programmes for the various committees have once again covered a vast array of subjects and involved a wide range of services and organisations.

The year has been both challenging and rewarding as we deal with a number of issues that impact on the residents of the city. It has also been a rewarding year as we look at some of the many positive projects and initiatives that are happening in the city. The aftermath of the pandemic continues to be a challenge; not least in the long-term health of our residents, the cost-of-living crisis as well as international issues like the war in Ukraine are major issues which are impacting on the lives of everyone.

Council finances and budgets remain one of the most important issues for any local authority and ensuring that our resources and services are utilised in the most effective way for the city and its residents. With budgets tightening for Councils, businesses and households the importance of an

effective and robust scrutiny function is evident and we will continue to adapt and improve the scrutiny process to address these challenges.

The recent review of the scrutiny function in Sunderland continues to underpin these improvements to the service. The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee has recently developed a Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol which will help to develop and strengthen the relationships between Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.

Once again, the report illustrates the breadth and variety of issues considered by the various scrutiny committees in Sunderland. Each committee has, through its work programmes, looked to consider and challenge a number of key issues that are important to the Council, the city and its residents.

It is also good to acknowledge that committees are once again undertaking task and finish working groups, as recommended in the review of scrutiny, to look at specific issues in much greater detail. This includes work around a Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol, Members Portal, Adult Social Care and Sunnyside Regeneration. As future work programmes are developed, I would expect to see a greater emphasis on this way of working which can only benefit both Scrutiny and the Council in general.

Sunderland remains committed to joint working across the health service and scrutiny members are active in participating in the joint arrangements that cover the North East and North Cumbria, looking at the Integrated Care System and Integrated Care Boards. These joint arrangements are providing an opportunity to challenge regional service reconfiguration and development

and how services are delivered across the North East and Sunderland.

Sunderland also continues to contribute to regional scrutiny arrangements through representation on the North East Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee which looks at matters of significant importance to residents across the region, focusing particularly on economic development and transport issues.

Finally, I would like to place on record my thanks and that of all scrutiny members to all those staff within in the Council and in our partner organisations who have cooperated and contributed to the work of scrutiny in Sunderland.

Councillor Dianne Snowdon
Chair of the Scrutiny
Coordinating Committee



Scrutiny Coordinating Committee



Chair: Cllr Dianne Snowdon
Vice-Chair: Cllr Susan Watson

Committee Members: Councillors Malcolm Bond, Michael Butler, Allen Curtis, James Doyle, Paul Edgeworth, Michael Hartnack, Katherine Mason-Gage, Antony Mullen, Pat Smith, David Snowdon, Melanie Thornton and Harry Trueman.

Once again it gives me great pleasure to present the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee's annual report. As is usual the summary provides a brief overview of the work of the Committee during the previous 12 months, and it is good to see that Members have remained fully engaged in activities and the following summary identifies some of the issues that the committee has undertaken.

One of the fundamental remits of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee is to scrutinise and provide comment on a range of financial and budgetary reports including the Council's budget proposals. A number of detailed reports are presented to the Committee over the municipal year including around the Capital Programme, Treasury Management, Revenue Budget and the Budget

Planning Framework. As always there continues to be insightful discussions and Members did comment on the importance of limiting any rises in Council Tax given the current financial pressures facing residents of the city. The Committee did note that the proposed rise in Council Tax will be one of the lowest in the country.

Performance management also remains an integral part of the Committee's workload through monitoring of the Council's performance, achievements and progress against the key themes of Dynamic City, Healthy City and Vibrant City.

Members of the Committee remain committed to challenging performance, and consideration of these reports has led to further updates on a number of issues including the delivery of affordable housing, environmental enforcement, social prescribing, fly tipping and events in the city. The Committee also continues to look at ways to improve the report by the inclusion of additional information or suggestions on the way information is presented.

The City Plan has also been updated and refreshed this year and the Committee has again been involved in the process. Members held a workshop in December to look at the proposals for the refresh of the plan and provided some useful feedback around the wording and layout of the draft plan.

The Committee also received a further update on the City Plan and its indicative timeline at its January meeting where Members again provided some useful comments

around the plan and its contents. This included highlighting that the plan was truly city wide, conveyed a sense of pride in the city, developing thriving businesses in the city and the importance of good integration with the university. The Plan was also presented back to Committee for a final time in February as part of the budget papers with a new design and layout. The Committee's suggestions from the previous meeting had been taken on board and incorporated into this final version of the plan.

The Safer Sunderland Partnership Annual Report remains an important update for the Committee, and Members were pleased this year to also have a senior officer from Northumbria Police in attendance to answer and provide context to Member queries. As always there was a good level of discussion around a number of the key issues including anti-social behaviour, the community trigger policy and policing resources.

The Committee continues to look to enhance the data provided and requested if future reports could provide more detail of the extent to which children and young people were being employed and/or exploited in relation to the drugs trade in the city.

An overview of the Residents Survey 2021 was also submitted to the Committee and as well as the Council's Communications Manager, the Committee welcomed one of the Ipsos Research Managers to the meeting. Members were provided with a summary analysis of the outcome of the survey highlighting where satisfaction had both increased and decreased in a number of areas

relating to the Council, its services and the locality. The Committee highlighted a number of key areas for improvement including looking at how sometimes ward names in the survey were not always how residents identified their local areas and ensuring there was representation from all areas. Members also queried whether the survey could be made accessible online and if there was a similar survey for young people.

The Committee established a task and finish working group during the year to develop and draft a Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol. During the development of the protocol Members looked at a number of examples from other local authorities, as well as considering what would be important to include from

our Scrutiny Members perspective and experience.

The Committee also held a session with the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Secretary to discuss their draft proposals for the protocol. The final Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee and then approved by Cabinet and we look to use and fully implement this protocol in the coming year.

Members of the Committee held a productive workshop session to look at the Council's Report It tool and Member Portal. The session provided an opportunity for Members to share their experiences and suggestions for the tool and portal in terms of function and useability. Members and officers

had a productive session, and the Committee would hope to see developments to both the Report It tool and Member Portal based on some these discussions.

Finally, and as scrutiny remains a member-led function, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Members of the Committee for their support, involvement and cooperation throughout this year. I would also like to put on record the Committee's gratitude to council officers and partners for their continued contribution to the work of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.

Councillor Dianne Snowdon
Chair of the Scrutiny
Coordinating Committee



Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee



Chair: Cllr Katherine Mason-Gage
Vice Chair: Cllr Joshua McKeith

Committee Members: Councillors Mark Burrell, Margaret Crosby, Richard Dunn, Paul Gibson, Logan Guy, Sam Johnston, Alex Samuels, Pat Smith, Melanie Thornton and Philip Tye.

Co-opted Members: Ann Blakey (Roman Catholic Diocese)

At the start of the year, the Committee received a report on the TfC Self Evaluation, a document setting out the performance, quality and impact of children's services in Sunderland. This document played an important part in highlighting our priorities for the year and establishing our annual work programme. Issues raised included early help, prevention and innovation, safeguarding, children in need and child protection, cared for children, fostering and participation and engagement.

The Committee received a highly positive report about the progress being made by the Early Help service. Members heard that there had been a return to the pre-pandemic level of families being supported by an Early Help Plan, together with an 8%

decrease in the numbers of children stepping up to statutory services. Three quarters of families supported through Family Group Conferencing stepped down to the universal services and required no further support and a further 8% required a lower level of support. The Youth Drug and Alcohol project (YDAP) recorded a positive outcome rate of 92%. Of the young people engaged as part of the Wear Kids (Anti-Social Behaviour) programme, 80% remained out of the youth justice system.

Members also heard more about the progress of the Holiday Activity and Food Programme which provides the opportunity for children from disadvantaged families to access nutritious food and a range of organised out of school activities. Feedback from the programme had been very positive and the Committee thanked all involved for their efforts.

The Committee heard from Louise Farthing, the Portfolioholder for Children, Learning and Skills on the renewal of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. This has involved working with the Change Council to focus on the priorities identified by young people, including health and care, stigma, employment, education, leisure, housing and transport.

The Committee also received a report on current training and apprenticeship access for care experienced young people, including Virtual School's support to reduce the number of NEET cared for young people. Members heard that Sunderland Virtual School has been selected to participate in a one-year DfE pilot of Pupil Premium Plus Grant funding (PP+) for post 16

cared for young people, with a focus on improving retention in Education, Employment and Training and raising attainment in Maths and English.

Members also heard how Virtual School works with employers and local training providers to identify suitable opportunities and apprenticeships for young people and ensure that the needs of the apprentices are met.

In October 2022, the Committee considered the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection of Together for Children Fostering. The service was rated as Good in each of the three Inspection categories; overall experiences and progress of children and young people, how well children and young people are helped and protected and the effectiveness of leaders and managers. It was noted that the service was developing an action plan arising from the issues raised. The Committee commended the service on the outcome of the Inspection.

Building on our work last year, the Committee received an update on SEND provision in Sunderland following an Inspection undertaken in June 2021. Members heard that the process of joint commissioning had been improved through the use of more comprehensive information and working more closely with children, young people and families. Improvements also included the establishment of a new SEND Governance structure, a shared data platform to enable data to be shared across education, social care and health and the development of a range of co-production tools such as Mind of My Own.

Members of the Committee heard from Catherine Barnett, Headteacher Hylton Red House Nursery School/Chair of Thriving and Coping Group about the introduction of the Mental Health Charter Mark Award and the work going on amongst a network of schools to develop school-based approaches to support resilience, mental health and emotional wellbeing. The Committee heard that funding had been secured by Sunderland CCG to employ mental health workers who were trained teachers to work with a multi-disciplinary team in the delivery of low-level interventions. This should help to reduce the pressure on the CAMHS and CYPS services by preventing issues escalating to a point requiring that level of intervention.

In setting our work programme, the Committee asked for an update on the demands facing the Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service focusing on the impact of the Covid pandemic and its future implications. Members heard that while the period had seen an increase in numbers, the most striking factor had been the increase in the complexity of cases. The Committee commended the work and commitment of the team in providing a service which not only supported the child but families as a whole.

The Committee received an update on the level of childhood obesity and the approaches being taken nationally and locally. This issue falls hardest on children from low-income backgrounds, as obesity rates are highest in the most deprived areas and have been exacerbated further as a result of Covid. Living with obesity can

significantly affect health outcomes for children, both in the short term and into their adult life.

Members heard that tackling obesity was a complex issue which required joint working across national government, local authorities, and a wide range of partners. On the positive side, Members heard that recent data indicates that healthy weight prevalence has improved following the increase in obesity during the 2020–21 and it was hoped this trend would continue.

The Committee received a report on the work going on to support children and young people who were unaccompanied and seeking asylum. Members heard that TFC had developed staffing expertise and pathways to help meet the needs of these young people. However, the challenges and resource implications were considerable and continued to place very significant demands on the service.

Toward the end of the year, an update was provided on the verified overall school performance data for the academic year 2021–22 and the key priorities for the school improvement service. Details were provided around Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, together with GCSE results. It was noted that the DfE had stressed that performance data for 2022 should not be directly compared with 2019 and earlier or comparisons made between schools, as different schools may have been affected differently by the Covid pandemic.

An on-going problem for the city has been the relatively high numbers of

young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). The Committee received an update on measures being taken to tackle this issue and ensure that as a city that we are able to equip our young people in what will be a very challenging employment market.

In December 2022, HM Inspectorate of Probation published the outcome of its inspection of Youth Offending Services in Sunderland. Overall, the service was rated as Good. The Inspection found a skilled service, with strengths evident in the partnership's strategic approach to prioritising prevention and diversion. It was considered a well-led and well-managed partnership. The case management of out-of-court disposals was of a high standard, underpinned by clear policy and provision arrangements. YOS staff and senior leaders were found to have a shared commitment to ensuring that children receive the most appropriate services and interventions at the earliest stage. An improvement plan has been prepared in response to the recommendations detailed in the inspection report. The Committee commended the service on the outcome of the Inspection.

The Committee places great importance on listening to the views of young people. At the start of the year, members of the Committee met with young people from Cozmic 3piphany; a group for young people who identify as LGBTQ+ or are questioning their sexuality and/or gender identity. The meeting provided an opportunity to hear their views and priorities for the future.

Last year, the Committee received the feedback on the Ofsted Inspection of Children Services and were delighted to hear that the service had received an outstanding rating. The Committee has continued to receive periodic performance report in order to demonstrate that the level of improvement was being maintained and we will continue to monitor the

progress into the future. The Committee has also received regular update reports on Children Services Customer feedback reports. I am pleased to see that these show a continuing reduction in the number of complaints.

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 Katherine Mason-Gage
Chair of the Children Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee



Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee



Chair: Cllr David Snowdon
Vice Chair: Cllr Harry Trueman

Committee Members: Councillors Usman Ali, Michael Dixon, Paul Edgeworth, Heather Fagan, Stephen Foster, Sean Laws, Michael Mordey, Lyall Reed, Lynda Scanlan and James Warne.

During the year, the Committee's work programme has focused on a range of issues affecting the economic prosperity of the city and the opportunities and challenges we face in the future.

In relation to regeneration, the Committee received an update on the progress being made by Siglion on a number of sites within the city. Members heard that the main priorities for Siglion were to improve the concentration of new economic activity in the city centre, create a city centre that supports higher value job creation, bring back into use dormant areas such as the former Vaux site, offer a wider choice of housing to the market and position Sunderland as a place to invest.

The Committee also heard about two major sources of funding available for

the regeneration of the city; the Future High Street Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is intended to replace the previous European Structural and Investment Funds. The total amount of funding allocated to Sunderland is £16.57m over three years from 2022–23 to 2024–25. The funding will support projects across three investment priorities: communities and place, supporting local business and people and skills. As the lead designated authority, the Council is responsible for the development, management, and monitoring of the Fund. Members heard in detail about the development of the programme in Sunderland which will reflect the priorities set out in the City Plan and the processes by which funds will be allocated.

The Future High Street Fund is a Government initiative intended to renew and reshape high streets in order to drive growth, improve user experience and ensure sustainability. In 2021, the Council was awarded £25m through the Fund; one of only three cities to be granted the maximum award. Members heard that the Council has taken a targeted approach, using the funding where it will make most difference and act as a catalyst for change for the rest of the city. This includes flagship projects such as the Culture House and Crowtree Place and contributing to other key projects including St Mary's Boulevard, Elephant Tea Rooms and Keel Square hotel fit out.

In 2021, the Committee set up a Working Group to consider the regeneration of the Sunnyside area. The Group considered that the

challenges facing Sunnyside were highly complex and deep rooted and that there was no single solution to the issues faced. Any long-term sustainable improvement would depend on progress across a range of issues; including tackling antisocial behaviour, improving the quality and mix of housing, repopulating the area and increasing footfall and economic activity.

However, the report did highlight a number of positives and opportunities. The area has the potential for improvement. It is an attractive area close to the city centre. It possesses an attractive historic core. It is a small area in which resources can be targeted. It is proving attractive to social enterprise, early-stage businesses and an emerging cultural and creative services sector. The Group considered that recent work to develop a Masterplan for the area will be central to its improvement and we look forward to reviewing progress in the years ahead.

Rebecca Ball, Chief Executive of Sunderland Culture outlined the important contribution of the cultural sector and its major venues to the economic prosperity of the city. For the future, the Committee heard that the opening of the Culture House and the Museum redevelopment should substantially improve the cultural offer in the city, though it could be several years before we see attendance figures back up to pre covid levels.

At the start of the year the Committee asked for a report on development of screen industries in Sunderland. Members heard that early in 2021, the BBC had announced that it would

invest up to £25m in the region, with regional partners seeking to commit £11.4m over a five-year period. A new North East Screen Industries Partnership (NESIP) has been developed and with the support of North East Screen (formerly Northern Film and Media) a number of new productions have been developed or filmed in Sunderland. The Committee also heard about exciting plans for the potential development of Crown Works Studios at Pallion. Though still at an early stage, the further development of a screen industry in Sunderland clearly has considerable potential for future growth and we look forward to hearing more in the future.

In November 2022, Sharon Appleby of the Sunderland Improvement District (BID) updated us on their work in supporting local businesses in the city. This included events such as the Summer Food and Drink Festival and the March Restaurant Week, together with a summer and seasonal programme of family activities. It was hoped that following the Covid pandemic, footfall and retail spending in the city centre would begin the process of recovery and that the proposed development of Sunderland Riverside would provide an impetus for the growth of the independent retail sector. Ms Appleby commented that 2024 would be a key year with major developments such as the Culture House coming to fruition.

The Committee received an update on major events in the city; an area that had been adversely affected by the Covid pandemic during the last few years and also heard from Councillor Linda Williams, Portfolioholder Vibrant City about the cancellation of the

Sunderland Airshow. It was noted that in future greater emphasis would be placed on smaller community-based events with a wider geographical spread, that were less at risk at cancellation and were often more cost effective. The Council would also look to work closely with the BID in making the most of the resources available.

In December 2022, members visited the Port of Sunderland to meet with the Port Director, Matthew Hunt and discuss plans for the future. These included the major development of the East Shore and a number of new businesses attracted over the past 12 months, including Quantafuel Sunderland Ltd which will build a plastics processing plant taking mixed plastic waste from across the north of England that would otherwise have been incinerated or disposed of in landfill. It was hoped that this latest expansion, together with the development of the Hendon Sidings site will help make the Port an even more attractive proposition for investors.

On our visit Members also took the opportunity to visit Sister Mary Scholastica at the Stella Maris Seaman's Centre to see the tremendous support provided to the seaman on the ships visiting our port and hear about its valuable work.

The promotion of new business start-ups plays a significant part in securing the city's long-term prosperity and diversifying the local economy. Members heard about the progress being made by city's three business centres in encouraging growth in areas of the economy, such as IT and software. It was recognised that the

pandemic period had seen a fall in occupancy levels across the three centres. Whilst the business centres operated at an overall loss during 2021–22, the current projection for 2022–23 was for a significantly reduced deficit. Members also heard about the measures being taken to promote the centres and improve their marketing, operation, and efficiency.

In terms of the development of housing in the city, the views of the Committee were sought on a refresh of the Council's Housing Strategy. The new strategy sets out three priorities for housing in the city; maximising housing growth and increasing the choice of housing; making the best use of existing homes and supporting vulnerable people to access and maintain housing. The Committee was also consulted on the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which has been developed across four strategic pillars – the prevention of homelessness, intervention when homeless, recovery to reduce repeat homelessness and partnership working across the city.

The Committee met with representatives of Gentoo, Thirteen Group and Bernicia to consider the challenges facing the city and discuss any operational issues relating to housing management. The key issues raised included the treatment of and responsiveness to complaints, the effect on residents of the cost of living crises, anti-social behaviour, stock condition and damp and mould. The Committee heard that increases in building costs had also had an impact; it was now considerably more expensive to build houses and it was becoming increasingly difficult to

attract and retain skilled workers. Substantial investment was being made in the sustainability agenda, with there being a drive for greater energy efficiency and reduced carbon emissions.

Members stressed the importance of ensuring clear lines of communication between housing associations and their tenants and also between housing associations and local councillors. It was noted that partnership working between housing associations was good and that the Council's housing team was now holding formal group meetings in order to discuss housing issues in the city.

The Committee received a report on the refugee provision available in the city. Members heard that this provision presented a challenge for the Council in terms of resourcing and staffing. Considerable effort was made to support the people involved and help them to settle into the local community. The Committee commended staff on their hard work in what was a very challenging situation.

In setting its work programme for the year, the Committee asked for an update on operation of Environmental Services within the city and its plans for the future. Members heard that the Covid pandemic had proved a major challenge but that the situation was now beginning to return to normal. The Pallion Household Waste & Recycling Centre had now opened and was proving a great success. The Refuse Electric RCV had begun operations and the fleet service had introduced 24 new refuse collection

vehicles during the year. Cemetery regulations have been improved and remedial works to cemetery lawn sections were ongoing.

The Committee was consulted on proposed changes to the Council's Statement of Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licence policy, including the introduction of a new code of conduct for licensed drivers, a driver improvement programme, a revised convictions policy and changes to the current arrangements regarding vehicle age limits and emissions standards. Members heard that there had been a significant fall in the number of drivers operating in the sector and noted the measures that were being taken to try to encourage the entry of new drivers.

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

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

Councillor David Snowdon
Chair of the Economic Prosperity
Scrutiny Committee

Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee



Chair: Cllr Michael Butler

Vice-Chair: Cllr Alison Chisnall

Committee Members: Councillors Simon Ayre, Malcolm Bond, Juliana Heron, Pam Mann, Dominic McDonough, Julia Potts, Mel Speding, Dorothy Trueman, John Usher and Michael Walker.

I am pleased to be able to present my first annual report as Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. It has been another challenging year as the Council and its partners continue to deal with the impacts of the pandemic as well as the cost-of-living crisis and the continued pressures on health and social care services across the city. The annual report provides a summary of some of the issues looked at by the committee through its wide and varied work programme.

Adult social care is an issue that the committee has concentrated on during this year in a number of ways. The Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board annual report is a regular item received by the committee. Members made a number of observations around the report, discussing the levels of safeguarding

referrals and recommending that future reports provide greater detail around the multi-agency approaches used in safeguarding.

The Committee also commenced a task and finish group looking at the challenges facing adult social care in Sunderland. The group looked at a variety of issues around adult social care including the impact of Covid-19, sustainability and resilience and the implication of forthcoming legislation on the sector. The sub-group held a number of sessions with key stakeholders as well as visiting social care providers in their settings to gain a better understanding of the challenges. The final report, including the group's recommendations, will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee before being submitted to a future Cabinet meeting for final approval. It is hoped that the work that has been carried out can shine a light on the adult social care sector, the challenges it faces and look to support the sector in Sunderland.

This year has seen significant change within the NHS as Clinical Commissioning Groups were replaced with Integrated Care Boards (ICB) across England. Sunderland is part of the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS) and as part of the ICS, Sunderland Integrated Care Board manages the budget and provision of health services in Sunderland. Members have received a number of updates from Sunderland ICB looking at the development and continuity of place-based arrangements, developing integrated care partnerships and the strategic aims of the ICB, ensuring the Committee was fully engaged.

The Committee have also continued to look at key ICB performance measures related to NHS services around urgent care, planned care, cancer treatment and mental health. Further reports are also expected on the mental health strategy and the outcomes of the recent GP access review. Members have highlighted a number of issues around GP appointments, hospital waiting lists and GP and nursing vacancies in the city, all of which were being addressed or further information provided. The Committee acknowledges the integral role that Sunderland ICB has in the delivery of health services across the area and will continue to monitor and challenge, where appropriate, around performance.

Another change to the health landscape and a consequence of the pandemic has been the replacement of Public Health England in April 2021 with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), for health protection responsibilities, which provides expertise, information, and intelligence to local authority public health teams. The Committee were interested in how the health protection arrangements would be better equipped to tackle major outbreaks or serious public health incidents. Members were assured that a lot of valuable experience had been gained during the Covid-19 pandemic around situation reporting and communications with the public, businesses and workplaces providing guidance and support.

The Committee was also pleased to receive the Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for 2021–22. The report focused on the pandemic

and its impact on the wider deterrents of health and health inequalities in Sunderland. The report provided a detailed overview of the key challenges as well as the work and initiatives taking place across the city to improve health outcomes for residents including around the key themes of the healthy city plan in starting, living and ageing well in Sunderland. The report also highlighted the partnership working that was being undertaken to develop a new alcohol strategy for the city, something Members requested for the Committee's work programme.

The draft alcohol strategy was also presented to the Committee, and this provided an opportunity for Members to look at the detail of the strategy. Members were reassured that service users were consulted, and their views considered when drafting the strategy. The Committee were interested to monitor the progress of actions within the strategy and have asked that an update report is submitted to the Committee, and this will be considered in work programming for next year.

The operational recovery of South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust remains an important issue for the Committee. Having received an overview of the recovery plan in 2021 the Committee were provided with an update on the current situation covering national guidance, key operational deliverables, cancer care and performance and major pressures. Members were particularly interested in the recruitment and retention of staff as well as the health and wellbeing support being provided for staff. The Committee will continue to monitor

the situation and following the most recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection which rated the trust as 'requires improvement' we will look to monitor and seek assurances from the Trust on how it intends to respond to the findings from the CQC inspection.

In recognising the increasing importance of housing to health in light of urban growth, ageing populations, and climate change as well as the causal relationships between poor housing and health outcomes, the Committee received a presentation on some of the work being undertaken in Sunderland to improve housing conditions. This included work around cold and poor air quality in the home environment and fuel poverty as part of a Testbed programme with the findings being shared with other local authorities, housing providers and government ministers. The Committee also arranged a point of contact with the housing provider Gentoo for Members issues, to complement the existing relationships that many members have with Gentoo local area teams.

The North East Ambulance Service also provided the Committee with a detailed performance update including on response times, hospital performance and trust capacity. Members of the Committee raised a number of points around the performance in relation to response times and reference was also made to the recently published CQC inspection of the Trust. The Committee have requested that in future updates the ambulance trust keep members updated on improvements and progress made against the CQC inspection findings.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the committee, to thank Members, officers, partners and stakeholders who have contributed to the work of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee over the year. The health of our city and its communities is a key objective within Sunderland's City Plan and this Committee will continue to challenge and champion health providers and services across Sunderland.

Councillor Michael Butler
Chair of the Health and Wellbeing
Scrutiny Committee

The year ahead

While the majority of this report takes a reflective look back at the work of the various scrutiny committees, it also provides an opportunity to take a brief look forward at some of the key issues that could influence Scrutiny Committees in the 2023–24 Municipal Year.

Scrutiny continues to strengthen and develop relationships with our partners and outside bodies so that we are able to hold commissioned services both accountable and ensure a high standard of service.

Over the last few years we have seen these continued developments which allow Members to provide challenge and work collaboratively with key stakeholders. This will continue through the next Municipal Year and will remain paramount in looking at improvements in health, social and economic issues.

The North East devolution deal between County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland which has been agreed in principle will see significant investment for the region.

This will also see additional powers being transferred from Whitehall to the local population, as well as additional jobs and private sector investment. It will be important to see how the various local accountability mechanisms, including scrutiny, can complement and work with the new combined authority.

Scrutiny will also continue to play an active role in the changing delivery of health services across Sunderland and the region, we have seen Clinical Commissioning Groups replaced by

Integrated Care Boards. The emphasis is to place based commissioning which we will continue to monitor and challenge through our own Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, and also regionally through the North East Joint Health Scrutiny Committee.

Through these joint arrangements we can represent the concerns and needs of the Sunderland population and ensure that Sunderland residents views are represented and considered in looking at service reconfigurations that affect the region.

Work programming for the year ahead will take place in May-June 2023 and will, as always, be extremely important in identifying key issues for the year ahead, focusing on the delivery of the key priorities in the City Plan and the continued delivery of the recommendations arising from the review of the scrutiny function in Sunderland.

The cost of living crisis may well feature as a key driver in a number of issues, and new and emerging legislation will influence policy and service delivery at the local level. The ongoing development within the Smart City and Carbon Reduction agendas will also remain a focus for scrutiny activity.

Also, the recent inspections of the North East Ambulance Service and South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundations Trusts will feature in work programmes as we look to seek assurances from both organisations on their plans for improvement.

Once again, I would like place on record our thanks to everyone who contributed to the work of scrutiny

over the last twelve months and look forward to having another productive year ahead.



Scrutiny on a page

The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee, the three thematic scrutiny committees, North East Combined Authority Scrutiny Committee (NECA) and the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) tackle a large range of issues over a municipal year. 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.

- Alcohol Strategy
- Annual Low Carbon Progress Report
- Asylum Seekers Support for Children and their Families
- Budget Planning Framework and Financial Strategy
- Business Centres
- Capital Programme Review
- Child Obesity
- Children Services Customer Feedback
- City Plan Refresh
- Corporate Parenting
- Council's Risk Register
- Culture Sector and the Local Economy
- Dental Services Update
- Elective Surgery Update
- Environmental Services Update
- Events
- Future High Street Fund Programme
- GP Access Review Update
- Holiday and Activities Food Programme
- Housing Conditions and Standards and the Impact on Health and Wellbeing
- Housing Provider Consultation
- Housing Strategy
- Maternity Services Assurance Update
- Mental Health Charter Mark Award
- Mental Health Strategy Update
- North East Ambulance Service Annual Update
- Ofsted Fostering Inspection
- Performance Management
- Port Visit
- Public Health Annual Report
- Public Transport Update
- Prevention Bus
- Refugee Provision
- Residents Survey
- Revenue Budget and proposed Council Tax 23–24
- Review of Scrutiny
- Safer Sunderland Partnership Annual Report
- SEND – Areas for Deep Dive#
- Smart Cities
- Social Care Health Check
- Sunderland BID
- Sunderland Integrated Care Board
- Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report
- TfC Self Evaluation
- Youth Offending Service Review Outcome
- Winter Planning

