



Overview and Scrutiny

End-of-Term Report
2015–2019

Foreword

As current Chair of Executive Scrutiny Committee, and on behalf of all Members currently and previously involved in the Scrutiny process, I am pleased to introduce this End of Term Report. The report highlights the work undertaken by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny function between 2015 and 2019.

Over this period the Council, as well as its many partners, has continued to encounter numerous challenges, not least the ongoing financial pressures and the requirement to provide good quality services against a backdrop of diminishing resources. To this end, the role of scrutiny has been crucial in holding organisations to account in the pursuit of maintaining and improving public services, and also in helping to identify efficiency savings.

As you will see, the Council's Select Committees have undertaken a vast array of in-depth reviews over this four-year period covering complex, and at times sensitive, issues that have and continue to impact upon the residents of the Borough. Committee Members have worked conscientiously in addition to their other duties as elected representatives. Officers from across the Council have supported the scrutiny function in tackling the many and varied topics shown in this report, and Members thank them for their role in addressing such a range national, regional and local challenges.

Scrutiny Members would also like to express our gratitude to all those who provided evidence to the Select Committees during this time, information which is critical in establishing key issues or concerns, and which enables the formulation of relevant recommendations. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Looking beyond the forthcoming 2019 local elections, the role of scrutiny will continue to provide a vital means of identifying and investigating issues of importance to the local population. With this in mind, we wish all those involved in the scrutiny process well in their future endeavours in making things better for the people of Stockton-on-Tees.



Councillor Sylvia Walmsley
Chair
Executive Scrutiny Committee

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Scrutiny helps to ensure that local people receive high quality services through the Council's scrutiny committees checking that services and policies meet the needs of local people. It involves Councillors working with local people, the community, Council services and other organisations. The Council's Select Committees meet on a regular basis and also gather information through site visits and a range of engagement activities.

The scrutiny work programme 2015-2019 has comprised a range of in-depth reviews, including strategic issues linked to corporate priorities, as well as topical issues of public concern.

Recognising the increasing pressure on the Council's finances, it is imperative that in-depth scrutiny reviews promote the Council's policy priorities and, where possible, seek to identify efficiencies and reduce demand for services. This has become an embedded part of the Select Committees work.

Members have also maintained a focus on the quality and safety of local services, particularly in relation to adult social care, services for children and young people, and NHS provision accessed by local residents.

This balanced programme of work has met the four principles of effective public scrutiny. These state that good scrutiny work:

- Provides a constructive 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers
- Amplifies the voice and concerns of the public
- Drives improvement in public services
- Is led by independent people who take responsibility for their role

Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Scrutiny Committees at Stockton are organised in the following way, with an Executive Scrutiny Committee that agrees the overall work programme, and five themed Select Committees:



Executive Scrutiny Committee has 17 Members, and each Select Committee has nine Councillors.

Executive Scrutiny Committee and Children and Young People Select Committee also benefit from the inclusion of co-opted representatives amongst their membership. These are Diocesan and Parent Governor Representatives, who have the ability to vote on matters related to education.

Key Achievements – 2015-2019

The following describes some of the highlights of our work reflecting the four principles of effective public scrutiny (full details on each year's work programme can be found at Appendix 1-4).

Provides constructive challenge

The importance of Select Committees constructively challenging executive policy-makers and decision-makers is crucial in holding organisations and individuals to account, which can ultimately play a significant role in service development and improvement. Scrutiny work over the last four years has enabled Committee Members to consider evidence from both internal Council and external sources, discussing and questioning numerous difficult, sometimes sensitive, issues across a diverse range of topics.

2017-2018: Children and Young People Select Committee

Inclusion in Schools

In 2017-2018, the Children and Young People Committee became increasingly concerned at the significant increase in fixed term and permanent exclusions of pupils from local schools. This rise affected not only the pupils and their schools, but the wider school system as well as the Local Authority's ability to support the full range of pupils with needs provided for through High Needs Funding. This prompted a review of Inclusion in Schools.

This was a high profile piece of work and benefitted from input from Ofsted and the Department for Education, Members of Parliament, and local primary and secondary schools. The Committee both visited and hosted representatives of the relevant Academy Trusts to hear their views. This work also included a look at elective home education.

School accountability arrangements limit the role of local authorities however the Committee was able to use its position to recommend that the Council should, using its strategic leadership role, set out what it wanted to see in an inclusive family of schools, and where appropriate challenge the use of policies it disagreed with.

The review culminated in a number of recommendations aimed lobbying for change at local and national level, challenging and developing local school behaviour policies, supporting parents and carers, and developing alternative provision.

Reported to Cabinet: July 2018

The **Place Select Committee** undertook a review of **Billingham Event Infrastructure** in **2017-2018** following a request from organisers of the Billingham International Folklore Festival (BIFF) for funding from the Council to cover additional costs for temporary infrastructure. Whilst this was approved by the Council's Cabinet (in addition to its annual grant), a proposal for further work to be undertaken to explore and define costs for longer-term solutions to the infrastructure challenges faced by BIFF, and similar events in Billingham, was also endorsed.

BIFF Directors appeared before the Committee to discuss the current infrastructure arrangements, funding streams and future accommodation and performance site requirements. Billingham Town

Council representatives also gave evidence in relation to their past and present involvement with the festival – a contribution which the Committee felt they may want to consider enhancing in order to support the festival's future sustainability.

From BIFFs perspective, the Committee found that to continue to stage the festival on International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts terms (the framework within which BIFF presents performers from around the world), an alternative accommodation site would be required that meets the size, access and safety requirements of the event. Potential future site solutions needed to fully consider the wellbeing of the performers, as well as health and safety, security and safeguarding factors. To this end, it was recommended that BIFF should consider all elements within the summary of estimated infrastructure costs for various accommodation options devised as part of this review (including the sums of money emerging as part of that analysis). In addition, as a key contributor to the festival, the Council should satisfy itself that these requirements were being met.
[Reported to Cabinet: February 2018](#)

2018-2019: People Select Committee

Under-representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities in the Council's Workforce

The independent McGregor-Smith Review *Race in the workplace* (2017), commissioned by the Government in 2016, sets out recommendations for employers in the public and private sectors to improve diversity within their organisations. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has been working for a number of years to increase the representation of the BME community in its workforce, and it is a stated aim of the Council's People Strategy that it wants to 'recruit and retain a diverse and talented workforce'.

The main focus for this review was to assess the Council's performance against the 'Roadmap to Success', recommended to organisations in the McGregor-Smith Review to assist leaders to move positively towards a more diverse workforce.

Evidence was provided by representatives of the Council's Human Resources department, as well as Community Engagement Officers and the Chair of the Council's BME Staff Forum. To gain a wider perspective on issues around workforce diversity, the Committee received contributions from the Catalyst Multicultural Forum (reflecting on responses to questions circulated to BME groups represented on the Forum), the Big Committee (formerly Stockton Youth Assembly) and the North East Ambulance Service. There was also Committee presence at the latest BME Staff Forum quarterly meeting.

A number of recommendations were put forward by the Committee which aimed to address the issue of undeclared ethnicity of Council staff, variances of BME representation across Council directorates, and senior management responsibility in promoting diversity. Further key recommendations included the need for the Council to increase awareness of what it does and its potential employment opportunities, a campaign promoting the diversity of the Council's staff and the roles they undertake, and an endorsement of the draft BME Staff Forum Action Plan.



McGregor-Smith
Review (2017)

[Reported to Cabinet: February 2019](#)

The Flood and Water Management Act in 2010 provided new statutory duties and powers to risk management authorities (Local Authorities, the Environment Agency, and water and sewerage undertakers). Local Authorities became Lead Local Flood Authorities, and as such, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has a statutory duty for managing local flood risk. In **2016-2017**, a **Flooding Resilience** review was conducted by the **Place Select Committee** to ascertain the Council's resilience in terms of resources to deal with highway drainage / gully cleansing in comparison with recent years, as well as its emergency response and capacity to deal with flooding incidents.



To better understand the scale of work being undertaken for the provision of flood defences, a site visit was arranged to Lustrum Beck so the Committee could see the works that were ongoing, including Londonderry Bridge, trash screen replacement works and flood defence improvements. It emerged that a number of computerised software systems were available, which assist with future cleansing and maintenance programmes.

Through liaison with representatives from the Environment Agency, Northumbrian Water and relevant Council Officers, the Committee recommended that the expertise of the operatives currently engaged in dealing with flooding issues is further developed, and the Council produces a formal programme of replacement for older style gullies within the Borough, in line with the principles of good asset management and routine maintenance. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2017](#)



With Stockton-on-Tees continuing to act as a major dispersal area for asylum seekers, the **Place Select Committee** carried out a review of **Asylum Seeker Services** in **2017-2018**. The main focus was to identify and assess the effectiveness of national, regional and local services that provide support to asylum seekers in Stockton-on-Tees – this involved a range of organisations covering nationally commissioned providers through to voluntary and community sector groups across the Borough, and examined interaction and information-sharing between the key stakeholders.

G4S is the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside housing provider supporting approximately 18,200 asylum seekers in over 5,000 properties. They were challenged on the issue of room-sharing for asylum seekers who are not related, a specific concern which was raised on a number of occasions by other contributors to this review. Information was also sought on the documentation provided to asylum seekers once they are moved to dispersed accommodation, details of complaints received, and how they performance manage Jomast (the sub-contractor).



As part of its evidence-gathering, the Committee visited the Arrival Medical Practice and the Stockton Baptist Tabernacle to speak direct to staff, volunteers and asylum seekers about the key issues they face when coming to the Borough. Seven recommendations emerged, including a need for a clear pathway and information about what asylum seeker services are on offer in Stockton-on-Tees, and encouraging the Government to consider the position on room-sharing of unrelated adults when forming the post-2019 asylum contracts. [Reported to Cabinet: November 2017](#)

2015-2016: Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

Access to Services for People with Learning Disabilities and / or Autism

The Committee wanted to see how accessible services were for people in society that have traditionally faced a number of barriers when accessing key services. This review did not focus on the provision of adult care, but in the type of services that may be accessed by any member of the community, as well as a specific issue around the uptake of GP-led health checks.

There was recognition that people with learning disabilities have significantly poorer health and shorter life expectancies than their non-disabled peers. Annual health checks for people with learning disabilities are intended to help address this issue but, although there was local variation, overall Stockton's GP Practices did not perform well in ensuring take up of the checks.

Members found that there needed to be greater ownership of the task of both delivering and monitoring health checks for people with learning disabilities.

In relation to universal and community services, the Committee found that although it was not possible to accurately measure the take up of services by this client group, Members considered a number of good practice examples of service delivery. Further work was identified in order to improve consistency.

A common issue was the need to provide reassurance for people when using community services; this includes increased promotion of the Safe Place Scheme and support to be able to use public transport safely.

Many improvements that could be made for this client group would also benefit others for example level access for wheelchairs for those that use them, and clearer information and signage when navigating a reception and other public areas. It came across in evidence many times that getting services right for people with learning disabilities and autism meant that we would get it right for all client groups.

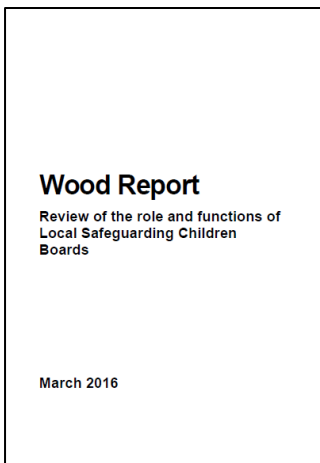
An easy read summary of the final report was produced.

Reported to Cabinet: April 2016

During **2016-2017**, a review of the **Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board (SLSCB)** was carried out by the **Children and Young People Select Committee**. As the key statutory body responsible for overseeing and monitoring the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding children in the Borough, it is important that the Council, as the lead agency, takes steps to evaluate the effectiveness of SLSCB against the Ofsted inspection criteria.



Evidence was received from several Board members including both the outgoing and incoming Chair, the Council's Chief Executive, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, and the Probation representative. A round table discussion with other Board members considered the effectiveness and efficiency of the Board, and further contributions were gathered from schools and the Durham LSCB.



During the course of the review, Ofsted undertook an inspection of children's services and rated the effectiveness of the SLSCB as "requiring improvement". The Committee reviewed the relevant section of the report and recommendations.

The Committee's own recommendations included the need for the Board to assure itself that it has responded to the Ofsted recommendations, and to provide training for SLSCB members to ensure that they have the skills to fulfil their roles, especially around assurance roles. Crucially, the Board should participate and initiate discussion where necessary with other Tees Boards about the response to the Wood review and the opportunities to collaborate further and ensure a streamlined and efficient approach with partners. [Reported to Cabinet: February 2017](#)

2018-2019: Place Select Committee

Consolidation of Thirteen Housing Group

The main focus for this review was to explore the impact of the consolidation of Thirteen Housing Group (completed in July 2017) on the delivery of services to tenants within the Borough, and ongoing liaison and contact with the Council at both an operational level (including appropriate Ward Members) and at strategic level. Thirteen's commitment post-consolidation to continue to be the Council's '*partner of choice*' would also be examined i.e. how their significant forward investment programme aligns and supports the Council's broader economic and regeneration priorities.



Senior Thirteen representatives gave detailed evidence to the Committee in relation to the rationale for consolidation, key issues / challenges post-consolidation, and engagement mechanisms with tenants and the Council. The Committee were particularly keen to understand the impact of Thirteen's new Neighbourhood Co-ordinator operating model, and encouraged Thirteen to ensure the provision of new housing, where possible, is provided at a 'social rent' level.

During the final stages of this review, the Committee were made aware of a significant decision by Thirteen to withdraw from the Tees Valley-wide Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme, a single point of contact for those seeking affordable / socially rented housing across the Tees Valley. Senior Thirteen staff again addressed the Committee to explain the rationale for this development and their future proposals in place of CBL, and the impact of this decision was discussed and debated with relevant Council Officers and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing. A number of recommendations in relation to Thirteen's withdrawal from CBL were therefore made to ensure that individuals and families who require social housing have their needs adequately met.

[Reported to Cabinet: February 2019](#)

Quality Assurance

Over the last decade there have been several national serious failures of care in health, adult social care, and children's services. It is really important that Councils respond to this and ensure that there are local mechanisms for effective oversight of the **quality and safety** of services provided to their residents.

As part of a wider 'web of accountability', scrutiny committees have a role to play in highlighting concerns, monitoring high level performance, and being assured that commissioners, providers and inspectors are performing their roles. This relates to external providers as well as contributing towards the increased expectation that Councils ensure rigorous internal review and challenge.

Children and Young People Select Committee receive regular performance reports in respect of children's services. **Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee** receive a range of other reports and updates are provided as part of the enhanced performance management arrangements. These include Annual Reports from the Safeguarding Board, Care Quality Commission (CQC), NHS Trusts, quarterly round-ups of published CQC Inspection Reports, and Healthwatch Enter and View Reports.

Each year we have taken the opportunity to consider draft Quality Account of North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust. This enables Members to review key data on the safety and quality of local hospital and community health services, and influence what the Trust's quality priorities should be in the upcoming year. As part of this process, each Year the Committee has provided a formal statement of assurance for the published version of the Account.

To complement this work and improve their understanding of the issues, Members on Adults and Health, and Children and Young People Committees undertake **site visits to frontline services** on a rolling programme. Previous Ofsted Inspection reports have recognised the work of Children and Young People Select Committee and, in particular, the work to scrutinise frontline practice.

Health Scrutiny

Local Authorities with social care responsibilities including Stockton-on-Tees have a statutory responsibility to undertake **scrutiny of proposed changes to NHS services**. This is a statutory role and where the services in question are provided over more than one local authority area, those Councils that regard the proposals as a 'significant variation' are obliged to form a joint Committee to consider the matter.

The majority of this work is undertaken by Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee. Over the period of this report there have been a number of changes particularly in relation to primary care. These included:

- the redesign of Urgent Care Services
- Tithebarn Registered Patient GP Service
- the cessation and subsequent re-procurement of significant NHS dental services in Billingham, and a separate merger in Stockton/Thornaby
- cessation of dedicated primary care services for those with substance misuse needs

Members also engaged with proposals regarding assisted reproduction services and the transfer neonatal intensive care services from North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, in order to understand the reasons behind these decisions and ensure the interests of local residents were represented.

The Committee seeks to undertake a collaborative approach, working in partnership with the local NHS on the health scrutiny programme. In order to underpin this work, a Communications

Agreement was jointly developed with local Trusts and the Clinical Commissioning Group setting out the statutory duties of each partner but also locally agreed ways of working.

In 2017, all four Tees Local Authorities regarded proposals to change Respite and Short Breaks for people with complex needs including learning disabilities and/or autism as potentially 'significant'. Stockton-on-Tees chaired and supported the necessary statutory Committee, and led Members through this high profile and sensitive issue.

Councils across the Tees Valley, County Durham, and North Yorkshire have worked in partnership since 2016 by forming a Joint Committee to maintain an overview of proposals to reconfigure sub-regional hospital services under the Better Health Programme. This subsequently merged into wider consideration of the development of the region's Sustainability and Transformation Plan, and then Integrated Care System, led by the NHS. Stockton-on-Tees holds the Vice Chair position for this Committee.

The Tees Valley Joint Health Committee is also monitoring the recommissioning of Direct Access to Age Related Hearing Loss services, and Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services across the sub-region.

The Tees Valley Joint Health Committee and North East Regional Health Committee are the two standing Committees which have Stockton-on-Tees Council representation. As well as responding to proposals for change, the standing Joint Committees have also undertaken pro-active work where appropriate.

Stockton-on-Tees chaired and supported the Tees Valley Joint Committee during 2018-2019 as part of the rotational arrangements. During this year, Members of Tees Valley Joint Committee were concerned to see the scale of remedial works required at Roseberry Park hospital following its construction under the Private Finance Initiative. The hospital provides care for people with mental health needs and learning disabilities. The works meant that some services needed to be decanted to other hospitals while a major programme of building repair work took place. The Task and Finish Group was pleased to see that this work was being well managed by Tees Esk and Wear Valleys (TEWV) NHS Foundation Trust, and the wellbeing of patients and families was a priority.

Both the standing Regional Committees regularly monitor aspects of the work of the North East Ambulance Service, and the Tees Valley Committee reviews the quality of services at TEWV NHS Foundation Trust on an annual basis.

Consideration of health service issues frequently means that local Councillors are reflecting the concern of their residents which is an important aspect of scrutiny's role.

Amplifies the voice and concerns of the public

Ensuring that the voice of the public is sought, and indeed heard, is a key function of the scrutiny process, and reviews over the last four years have significantly benefitted from such consultation. Getting the perspectives of local residents and organisations has enabled Select Committees to gain real insight into how people feel about a specific topic (as well as related issues), how it impacts them in their community, and what ideas can be pursued to improve a situation.

An important feature of scrutiny work is the gathering of a range of views that allows Select Committees to fully understand a particular problem or concern. This is achieved by engaging with the public, be they residents, businesses or external partners of the Council, and can involve a variety of methods such as surveys, Committee visits to sites across the Borough and beyond, and by using social media platforms.

2017-2018: Place Select Committee

Disabled Parking (Task & Finish)

The aim of this review was to examine the extent of abuse of parking bays and the Blue Badge scheme in Stockton-on-Tees, and the location of disabled car parking bays in car parks, taking into account safe access routes from car parks to facilities. The review would feed into a revised policy.

The Committee pursued a number of lines of enquiry which included establishing the statutory requirements for disabled bays, the process for applying for a Blue Badge, the cost of administering the scheme, and the number of offences being committed. The Council's approach to enforcement was examined, as was the approach of other Local Authorities. In addition to evidence presented from Transport Strategy and Road Safety, the Committee asked for feedback from Disability Advisory Group (DAG) members, all Councillors, the Chief Executive of Disabled Motoring UK, and private car park operators.



The review recommended that the Council introduce prosecution for fraudulent use of blue badges, on the basis of the Council recouping the costs incurred and that appropriate training for Civic Enforcement Officers be carried out in order to facilitate this. An audit of the location and suitability of disabled bays (for both wheelchair and non-wheelchair users) was also recommended, as was consultation with Disabled Motoring UK and/or other Disability Advisory Groups prior to any new car parks being developed by the Council.

Reported to Cabinet: April 2018

Following concerns about the safety of pedestrians, road users, and train staff and passengers, as well as associated anti-social behaviour, the **Crime and Disorder Select Committee** reviewed **Safety at Railway Crossing Points** in 2016-2017.

The Committee found that there was scope to improve communication and intelligence-sharing between the various agencies, improve communication with the public, including greater use of social media channels, and further raise awareness in schools in conjunction with initiatives such as Crucial Crew and the Junior Road Safety Officer. Three recommendations were made relating to a communication strategy being developed, and a road-rail liaison group being established to improve partnership-working. [Reported to Cabinet: May 2017](#)



2017-2018: Place Select Committee

Fire Safety of High Rise Residential Buildings (Task & Finish)

Following the tragic Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017, this urgent review was initiated to identify any areas of concern in terms of fire risk in relation to high rise social residential properties within Stockton-on-Tees.

As well as receiving evidence from key Local Authority Officers, Thirteen Housing Group representatives and senior Cleveland Fire Brigade personnel, the Committee also visited Kennedy Gardens (Billingham), the three tower blocks which were found to have been partially covered with combustible cladding. This gave the opportunity for Members to view the blocks' fire safety measures, and hear from residents directly on the response of local partner agencies following the Grenfell Tower fire, and the discovery of combustible cladding. During the visit, Members witnessed the ongoing removal of the partial cladding.

Members were reassured with the responses provided by all key local partner agencies, and it was clearly evident that a high degree of co-ordinated effort had been put into addressing the understandable concerns of residents of high rise buildings across Stockton-on-Tees. More importantly, residents themselves had expressed positive views regarding agency responses, in particular those of Thirteen Housing Group. Partners were commended for their approach in such challenging circumstances.

Recommendations included the lobbying of Government for improved and strengthened building control mechanisms, and for landlords to ensure the maintenance and upkeep of fire risk assessments. The Committee also recommended the installation of sprinkler / misting systems in all high rise residential buildings across Stockton-on-Tees, and called for all key partner agencies to consider the outcomes from the Government's public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower, or any related, fire once available.



Cladding removal at Kennedy Gardens, Billingham

[Reported to Cabinet: July 2017](#)

2017-2018: Crime and Disorder Select Committee

Security at Preston Park



Preston Park

Investment in recent years has led to Preston Park and Museum becoming increasingly popular, and there is a recognised growing need to manage the public's use of the space. The park has also suffered from incidents of vandalism and anti-social behaviour in recent months, and these threaten the viability of the attraction and the satisfaction of visitors. The overall aim of this review was therefore to identify the contributory factors of anti-social behaviour within the park and possible mitigating measures to address this.

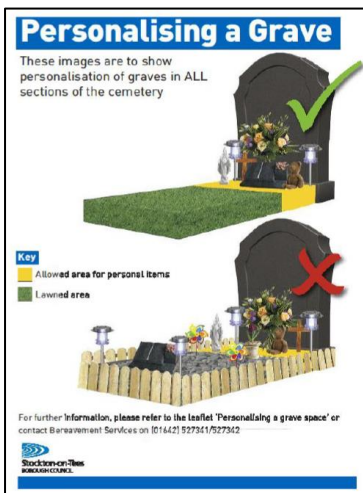
A number of issues were explored including night-time activity, inappropriate use of cars, vandalism to buildings and threat to safety of staff, drug and alcohol misuse, swimming in the river and dog control. Evidence was received from Council Officers, Park partners (RiverShack, Butterfly World, Small Gauge Railway) and Preston Parish Council. Site visits to Riverside Park, Chester le Street, and Hardwick Park, Sedgefield, were undertaken to understand the effectiveness of improvements at other parks.

The Committee felt that the identified anti-social behaviour problems can be alleviated through further investment in security measures and better management of access points, vehicle controls and greater staff presence. The Committee acknowledged that whilst the improvements may require some initial 'invest to save' funding, there would be savings in ongoing repairs and maintenance which can be offset against these initial, up-front costs. Improvements to the security of the park would also make it a safer environment for park users and prevent further damage.



Visit to Riverside Park, Chester-le-Street

Reported to Cabinet: March 2018



In 2018-2019, a review of **Management of Memorials** was carried out by the **Place Select Committee**. Following criticism of maintenance and access (particularly for the excavation of graves), as well as the Council's approach to the 'light touch' enforcement of non-compliance cases to the Grave Personalisation Policy (GPP), this scrutiny work aimed to ascertain how the Council communicates with bereaved families in terms of current policy, before seeking to establish how effective the current policy is and determine if any amendments are required.

The Committee found that the management of memorials is a particularly sensitive issue for Local Authorities to contend with. Families who are going through the grieving process following the loss of a loved one have a diverse and sometimes conflicting range of memorial and grave personalisation needs, and this can result in

considerable challenges when trying to adopt and enforce an agreed policy, whilst at the same time respecting the wishes of the bereaved.

However, the Committee also discovered that the GPP compliance rate was extremely high (98%), so recommended a continuation of the 'soft' enforcement approach. It also supported the proposals for the new Durham Road cemetery extension, which would offer three distinct grave types, each permitting a difference level of personalisation – this would be implemented in 2019. [Reported to Cabinet: July 2018](#)



2018-2019: Place Select Committee

Parking on Grass Verges (Task & Finish)

As an issue regularly raised by residents across the Borough, this review aimed to identify the measures that could be put in place to deter inappropriate parking, and clarify the actions that could be taken against those who inappropriately park on grass verges. The review would also examine the cost of repairs, the extent to which preventative measures could reduce these costs, and whether there was scope for generating income from fines.



In order to understand the scale and nature of the problem of verge parking, all Councillors were asked to provide photographic evidence of verge parking / damage within their wards. The photographs supplied revealed that this was a Borough-wide problem, and verge parking occurred in various different locations and was a result of various factors (including proximity to schools). The problems occurred in established residential areas and also on new developments where there was inadequate visitor parking.

Using evidence and best practice from other Local Authorities, it was revealed that targeted enforcement activity, in certain circumstances, and physical improvements / deterrents can have a significant impact. The Task and Finish Group also found that new powers and approaches have been adopted by other Councils which could also be introduced as part of the range of measures to tackle the problem in Stockton. As part of the review, a flowchart was developed to clarify the process to be followed when a service request in respect of verge parking is received.

[Reported to Cabinet: December 2018](#)

In recognition of an escalating national, regional and local concern, the issue of **Hate Crime** was explored by the **Crime and Disorder Select Committee** in **2018-2019**. The overall aim was to increase awareness and understanding for hate crime issues, seek to build confidence within communities and increase reporting. The review also explored restorative justice programmes and partnership working arrangements.





The Committee received evidence from a large range of organisations, including Council Officers, Cleveland Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Catalyst, Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS), and the Diocese of Durham. Several voluntary and community groups were consulted and took part in a round-table discussion, including REACH Project, SNAPS, the Over 50s Forum, One Community Link, Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind, and Transaware. Contributions were also received from Show Racism the Red Card, Hart Gables and A Way Out.

In conclusion, the Committee recognised the valuable work that is taking place in the Borough and across Cleveland. However, the review reinforced the significant barriers to, and levels of, under reporting of Hate Crime incidents despite a rise nationally and locally. Case studies provided a human face to accompany the stark statistics and reveal the lasting physical and emotional damage experienced by victims. The review's recommendations sought to build on the foundations that are in place to tackle this serious issue and engage proactively with communities. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2019](#)

In **2016-2017**, the **Crime and Disorder Select Committee** examined the thorny issue of **School Parking**. The Committee discussed this with a wide variety of people including Headteachers, teachers, governors, parents, petitioners, police, enforcement officers, and other Local Authority Officers to gather as much evidence as possible. Committee Members also visited a number of primary schools in the Borough, including those that were particularly affected by inconsiderate parking of adults transporting children to and from school, to see for themselves the issue being scrutinised.



Eleven recommendations were put forward as a way of tackling the problem of inconsiderate drivers and parking around the schools in the Borough, ranging from the development of a resource pack to help schools address this issue, to the consideration of site specific improvements or changes to assist with enforcement or education of drivers. [Reported to Cabinet: September 2016](#)

Drives improvement in public services

The driving force behind effective scrutiny work is the desire to ensure that local services are good or better. All work is conducted on the basis of being a 'critical friend' in order to secure continual improvements in services to residents whether these are delivered directly by the Council or in partnership with other local organisations.

2017-2018: People Select Committee

Sickness Absence

Sickness absence is an issue that can affect all sections of the workforce, and continues to be a challenge for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council – the target for 2016-2017 (7.6 days average per Full Time Equivalent) was not met, with the confirmed absence level being 8.8 days per FTE. The increase in sickness absence, areas and reasons for sickness absence reflect similar trends in the other Tees Valley Local Authorities.

The main focus for this review was to contribute towards a reduction in sickness absence by analysing current performance, understanding underlying reasons for such absence, reviewing the measures taken to reduce sickness absence and their effectiveness, and considering suggestions for improvement. In addition, a new Attendance Management Policy was being drafted which this review had an opportunity to shape.

Evidence was provided by the Council's HR and Health & Safety teams, as well as employee support services such as the in-house Occupational Health Advisor, Insight Healthcare and Body 2 Fit. Consultation also took place with Tees Active, Trade Unions and via a HIVE micro-survey question to all Council staff regarding factors within the workplace environment that may be increasing the risk of staff becoming absent due to sickness.

Work/Life Balance
& Attendance Policy



The Committee proposed ten recommendations incorporating awareness-raising of the wide range of support that the Council makes available for staff to access, the Council signing-up to the TUCs Dying to Work campaign, and the provision of management training in mental health awareness to aid early intervention. A new Work / Life Balance and Attendance policy, with emphasis on promoting the health and wellbeing of the workforce, was also endorsed – this was subsequently launched in January 2018.

Reported to Cabinet: December 2017



The **Place Select Committee** carried out two reviews during the four-year period in relation to recycling. Members considered the number and role of Bring Sites during 2018. In **2015-2016**, the focus was on **Kerbside Waste Collection**, which aimed to investigate whether the systems for the kerbside collection of household waste materials provides a good quality, cost-effective service that meets the expectations of residents.

Analysing a significant amount of local and national data, and undertaking site visits to J&B Recycling, Hartlepool, and SITA Energy from Waste, Stockton, the Committee found that of all waste disposed of in the wheeled bin, around 30% contains recyclable material that could be placed in the kerbside recycling containers. Should residents put all recyclable materials into the recycling container as opposed to their wheeled bin, the Council's maximum waste diversion (recycling) rate would be 44.9%, matching the national target for England (45%).

The review concluded that recycling rates for household waste needed to increase, and that evidence provided and research into best practice shows that reducing the capacity for residual waste disposal increases recycling participation and increases tonnages. Six recommendations, allowing flexibility and further consultation to determine the views and support of residents, were put forward to aid improvement in recycling rates. [Reported to Cabinet: April 2016](#)



2017-2018: Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

Gambling

This review assessed for the first time how gambling affect the residents of Stockton-on-Tees. A wide range of national and local organisations provided evidence and guidance to inform the Committee's work.

Members found that gambling is a significant leisure activity that approximately half the population undertakes in some form, and increasingly online. The Council is responsible for regulating some forms of gambling in partnership with the Gambling Commission.

For most people gambling remains at a relatively low level, but for a number of people 'at-risk' and 'problem gambling' is causing serious harm to them, their family and community relationships. The issue of gambling-related harm is a relatively hidden issue, and certain groups are more vulnerable to harm.

For Stockton it is estimated there are a likely to be a minimum of c. 1000-1200 people aged 16+ who are problem gamblers, with a further 5600-6100 classed as being at-risk. There is mounting national concern in relation to gambling prevalence, the links to gaming, advertising, and the impact on young people.

There are treatment options available but the probability is that they do not provide for everyone affected by harm. A number of local authorities have begun to develop preventative approaches in their local areas, and a similar approach was proposed for Stockton-on-Tees. There were gaps in awareness and referral pathways in the local area, and a number of actions are proposed to address this. The Committee's recommendations were aimed at developing an effective but proportionate response to an issue of growing national concern.

[Reported to Cabinet: November 2018](#)

Recognising the increasing reliance on and expectation of good quality online services, the **People Select Committee** undertook a review of [Digital Optimisation](#) in 2018-2019. This aimed to assess

how well the Council was progressing in its provision of digital services, how these services were being communicated, and how residents were being engaged to use them.



The Committee found that Local Authorities across the country have for some time now recognised the benefits in providing more of their services online, with improved customer experiences and a reduction in Council costs key drivers in the increasing implementation of digital options. However, residents across the Stockton-on-Tees continue to predominantly use telephone and face-to-face channels (totalling nearly 87% of the contacts in 2017-2018) when dealing with the Council, therefore there is significant potential for benefits if the right approach to digitalisation is adopted, which puts the customer at the heart of future development.

This review also considered the extent to which the Council helps those who need access to digital services, mitigating digital exclusion through the provision of technology in libraries and assisted customer self-serve. The Committee were pleased to hear and see the Council's approach to providing support within the Customer Service Centres and Libraries, and noted the positive comments received by members of the public. Frequent acknowledgement from all contributors that digital was not the only way, and that other means of communication with the Council needed to be preserved for those unable or unwilling to utilise online options, was also welcomed. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2019](#)

2015-2016: Children and Young People Select Committee

School Organisation and Admission Arrangements (Phase 2)

'School Organisation' is the means by which a Local Authority ensures it has sufficient quality places in schools and academies in every year group. Access to schools can be organised in a number of ways including using an open system where distance is part of the admissions criteria or operating a zone system; a secondary school feeder system can also be used. This review sought to understand the demand for reception places across the Borough and examined the wider aspects of the approach to school organisation in Stockton-on-Tees (phase 1 took place between September 2014 and March 2015).

The Committee listened to the views of parents, governors and school leaders in considering options/alternatives in school organisation, and also scrutinised the approach that is taken to predict demand. It found that, for admissions into primary in 2015, there was an unprecedented shift in the demand for places from the south of the Borough to north/central Stockton and Thornaby than was previously forecasted. Whilst at a Borough-level there were sufficient primary places, they were not necessarily in the right area.

The Council therefore agreed to make some temporary expansions across a number of schools in order to meet the Council's policy for ensuring that wherever possible and if requested, a primary aged child is educated within two miles of their home address. A plan to create an additional 840 places from 2017 also resulted following the completion of a feasibility study to identify suitable schools for capital investment.



[Reported to Cabinet: March 2016](#)

During **2015-2016**, the **Crime and Disorder Select Committee** carried out a short review focusing on the **River Tees Crossing Infrastructure**. This followed an October 2014 report providing the Council with information of the Newport Bridge repainting scheme, where it was agreed that a Task and Finish scrutiny exercise should take place to examine arrangements for the maintenance of the Boroughs' main bridges, and to provide reassurances / recommendations on those arrangements.



There are 539 structures across the Borough with a gross replacement cost for Stockton-on-Tees stock of £393million. Common problems affecting the structures include water and salt penetration, corrosion, loose bricks, cracks and flooding which led the Committee to consider protective treatments. The inspection programme, previously delivered in-house, was now, in part, carried out by external consultants.

As a result of the evidence received, the Committee recommended that a robust asset management plan was developed for the bridges and structures in the Borough, a five-year investment strategy was developed for the bridges and structures based upon the asset management plan, and a review of bridges and structures was undertaken with a view to disposing of, or demolishing, those redundant assets if feasible and cost effective.

[Reported to Cabinet: December 2015](#)



A particularly challenging and sensitive review was carried out by the **People Select Committee** during **2017-2018 / 2018-2019** on **Mental Health and Wellbeing including Suicide and Self-Harm**. This focussed on how well mental health is being promoted and ill-health prevented in relation to the age group 14-25.



Due to the wide-ranging nature of this topic, an extensive list of contributors were invited to provide evidence to the Committee. Information was considered from Council Officers, Health and Wellbeing Board representatives, Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Clinical Commissioning Group, (HaST CCG), North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT), Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), secondary schools within the Borough, Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind, Samaritans, Eastern Ravens Trust, Men Tell Health, Tees Suicide Prevention Taskforce, and both the Children's and Adults Safeguarding Boards.

Key findings included the importance of prevention and early intervention, difficulties with regards funding for services, and people not knowing where to go for help. Continuing efforts to reduce stigma associated with mental health was also crucial, as was the provision of different types of support and space for people

to talk. The Committee subsequently made twelve recommendations aimed at the Council, Health and Wellbeing, and Education. [Reported to Cabinet: July 2018](#)

2017-2018: Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

Defibrillators

Automated external defibrillators (AEDs) are available in many public places around the country, and are designed to be used by people with no medical training. They can play a key role in improving survival rates for cardiac arrest. Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest is a serious incident and even with the best treatment outcomes can be poor. However, effective and more consistent application of the steps in the 'chain of survival' have been demonstrated to improve survival rates.



Defibrillators are a key link in this chain. A number of publicly accessible AEDs (or cPADs) were in place across the Borough however there were some gaps, for example Stockton Town Centre, and Committee considered that the Council would be in a position to help address these. Although widespread placement of cPADs may not be a case for a targeted approach to build on the assets already in place, in order to provide a lifesaving benefit to a small number of individuals over time.

In conjunction with encouraging the expansion of AED provision, the Committee also emphasised the need to improve levels of first aid training in the Borough, and tackle myths surrounding the use of defibrillators and overcome any reluctance to provide first aid.

The review recognised that wider health improvement initiatives are required to improve the rates of cardiovascular disease and to prevent cardiac arrest from occurring wherever possible in the first place.

Reported to Cabinet: November 2017

Is led by independent people who take responsibility for their role

The Executive Scrutiny Committee co-ordinates the overall scrutiny work programme at Stockton-on-Tees. Topics for the in-depth review programme are sought from all Members and Directors, in addition to the Council's major partners. Following a prioritisation process that considers all suggestions, the Committee agrees the in-depth topic review programme on an annual basis.

This Committee also has oversight of both performance on the Council Plan, and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), and receives six-monthly updates on both. All completed scrutiny review final reports are considered for information and shared learning.

Overview Reports

Recognising the overview role of the scrutiny function, annual **Overview Meetings** were established to provide Members with an overview of all the services related to the theme of each Select Committee.

- Adults and Health
- Administration, Democratic and Electoral Services
- Children's Services
- Community Services
- Culture, Leisure and Events
- Economic Growth and Development Services
- Finance and Business Services
- HR, Legal and Communications
- Xentrall Shared Services

This provides the opportunity to question Cabinet Members and Senior Officers on their performance, and understand the challenges and issues arising ahead of the next year's programme.

Monitoring

It is crucial to ensure that once recommendations have been accepted by the relevant organisation (most often the Council's Cabinet), Select Committees have the opportunity to monitor their implementation. At Stockton-on-Tees, this happens through the development of an **Action Plan** that is agreed by the Select Committee.

This is followed by six-monthly **Progress Updates** on outstanding recommendations.

Training and Development

Following the 2015 elections, the Member Induction Programme included a dedicated Questioning and Challenge training session for each Select Committee, which included bespoke information relevant to their individual themes.

Overview Report

Place Select Committee
Overview Meeting 2018
Monday 12th February 2018
Administration, Democratic and Electoral Services

Context

Members are well aware that as a Council we have had to adapt to funding reductions of £52 million over the last five years and that we are still confronted with having to find further savings.

Whilst we acknowledge that we have a strong track record of sound financial management and we have been dealing with these problems successfully for many years, it will not be easy to address the additional loss of government funding of over £20 million by 2019/20. Moving forward, expectations will need to be realistic as many more difficult decisions will need to be made.

The challenge for all Members is to ensure that decisions about the basis on which services will be delivered are within the resources available, taking account of a number of factors such as reduced budget allocation, changing demographics, increasing demand, new national legislation and policy direction. Members are reminded of the four policy principles that support our decision-making:

- > **Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention**, particularly those people in our communities who are subject to, or at risk of harm, people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and those who are financially excluded or whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- > **Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention**, specifically in relation to tackling health inequalities, meeting the skills gap and improving access to job opportunities, tackling fuel poverty, improving education and training opportunities, access to affordable housing and financial and digital inclusion.
- > **Developing strong and healthy communities** through the provision of mainstream and preventive services that are available to all those who choose to access them.
- > **Creating economic prosperity** across the Borough

It is within this context that the Select Committee is invited to undertake their overview duties.

A programme is being designed for all Members after the 2019 elections, and this will include the foundations of a scrutiny review for each Committee, in addition to dedicated Questioning and Challenge training, and guidance for Committee Chairs.

Members also have the opportunity to attend the Regional Scrutiny Networks, regional and national conferences, and events hosted by external organisations such as Quality Account Stakeholder events hosted by NHS Trusts.

Our approach to scrutiny enables us to take a collaborative approach within the Council. This is extended to close working with colleagues across the Tees Valley and the North East as a whole.

We have taken part in the **North East Joint Member / Officer Scrutiny Network** which allows Councillors from across the region to share their work and learn from guest speakers on important topics. Councillor Derrick Brown from Stockton-on-Tees chaired the Network in 2015-2016.

A range of speakers have attended in recent years, including from:

- the House of Commons on the Local Government Select Committee's enquiry into overview and scrutiny;
- the Centre for Public Scrutiny;
- Care Quality Commission;
- Department of Health;
- lead Officers from NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plans.

Profile of the Scrutiny Function

In recent months, the scrutiny function has received increased profile, with more regular attendance at Committee from the local media. This has generated substantial interest in the topics under consideration and the role of Councillors in representing their residents.

Social media continues to facilitate involvement in the Council's work and we will seek to improve our engagement through social media over the new Council term.

As previously noted, to improve their understanding of issues and reinforce the scrutiny profile, **Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee** and **Children and Young People Select Committee** Members undertake site visits to frontline services on a rolling programme. Previous Ofsted inspection reports have recognised the work of the Children and Young People Select Committee, particularly the work to scrutinise frontline practice.

In the previous Council term, the **Children and Young People Select Committee** undertook a review of the transition from primary to secondary school. This work was nationally recognised at the 2016 Municipal Journal Awards, with the review featuring as a finalist in the 'Excellence in Governance and Scrutiny' category.

Police and Crime Panel

We support the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel on behalf of the four Boroughs covered by Cleveland Police. The Panel's role is to:

- Scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Review the Police precept
- Contribute to the development of the Police and Crime Plan
- Considering proposed appointments by the PCC
- Carry out investigations

In addition to the standing items which form the Panel's core programme, the Panel also undertakes proactive **task and finish scrutiny work** which expands the scope of the Panel beyond its formal statutory role. This approach strengthens the delivery of the Panel's statutory responsibilities and also contributes to their statutory function in supporting the PCC in the effective exercise of their functions.

Since its inception, the Panel has established a **Budget Task and Finish Group**. This ensures that each year the Panel's consideration of the PCC Precept Proposal is informed by more in-depth consideration of the wider budget situation in advance of the formal meeting to agree the Precept.

Ahead of the 2019-2020 budget setting process, the Task and Finish Group met to receive information about the Police and Crime Commissioner's overall budget strategy for 2019-2020. Discussion took place about funding and planning assumptions, total funding projections and funding pressures.

The Task and Finish Group concluded that, given future uncertainties, there was a strong argument for taking advantage of the opportunity afforded by the current flexibilities in precept setting. The Group felt that the proposed increase would allow much needed investment in the Force. The Group were also mindful that if the Force did not take advantage of the current flexibilities, it would be difficult to argue for additional funding in the future.

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel, together with Officers from the Scrutiny Team, were invited to host a session on our approach to scrutiny of the Commissioner's budget at the National PCP Conference in November 2017 to showcase an example of good practice.

During 2018-2019, the Panel also appointed a Group to consider the perennial issue of **Off Road Motorcycling**. The overall aim of the review was to feed into the development of a Cleveland-wide strategy to tackle off road vehicle anti-social nuisance and seek to secure partnership buy-in.

The Task and Finish Group recognise the valuable work carried out by Cleveland Police, including work carried out as part of Operation Endurance, and recommend that this issue is monitored on an annual basis by the Police and Crime Panel. The Group supported the new approach taken by the Police, and in particular the partnership working, improved intelligence, and a strong media campaign.

Overview and Scrutiny Team

The Scrutiny Team is based at Municipal Buildings in Stockton, and is part of the Council's Administration, Democratic and Electoral Services directorate.



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Supports:

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- Place Select Committee

For general enquiries, please contact the Scrutiny Team on 01642 528158 or at scrutiny@stockton.gov.uk. Further information can be found by visiting our website www.stockton.gov.uk/scrutiny.

Appendix 1: SBC Scrutiny 2015-2016

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Scrutiny Challenge for a better Borough 2015-16

What is overview and scrutiny?

Scrutiny helps to ensure that local people receive high quality services through the Council's Scrutiny Committees checking that the services and policies meet the needs of local people. It involves councillors working with local people, the community, council services and other organisations.

Checks and Balances

The Council's Cabinet make decisions and decide on priorities and the Scrutiny Committees ensure that they are held to account for delivering them and that any public concerns are represented.



We have **56** Councillors **7** are on cabinet and **49** can take part in overview and scrutiny.

5 Committees



What they do

- Service Reviews
- Performance Reviews
- Frontline Service Visits
- Emerging Trends and Issues
- Scrutinise External Organisations

7 Service Reviews

- **Access to Services for People with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism** – examined the uptake of GP-led annual health checks and the general accessibility of universal, community services.
- **School Organisation and Admission Arrangements (Phase 2)** – sought to understand the demand for reception places across the Borough and examined the wider aspects of the approach to school organisation in Stockton-on-Tees.
- **River Tees Crossing Infrastructure** – assessed arrangements for the maintenance of the Boroughs' main bridges, and raised concern about the Teesside Park access which underwent remedial work during the period of the review.
- **Choice Based Lettings (CBL)** – focused on the operation of the bidding system and marketing aspects of CBL.
- **Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** – determined the levels of awareness of FASD, preventative actions that are currently taken, what support is in place, and whether improvements can be made.
- **Boundary Signs** – ascertained the current condition and location of place signs, and considered possible changes to national legislation.
- **Kerbside Waste Collection** – investigated the Borough's recycling rates and whether the systems for the kerbside collection of household waste materials provides a good quality, cost-effective service that meets the expectations of residents.

Focus on Health

- Performance and quality of local hospital Trusts
- Regional health service changes and reconfiguration of acute services
- Changes to local GP and Dental services

Focus on Police and Crime

We support the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel:

- Scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Review the Police precept
- Comment on the Police and Crime Plan
- Carry out investigations



Appendix 2: SBC Scrutiny 2016-2017

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Scrutiny Challenge for a better Borough 2016-17

What is overview and scrutiny?

Scrutiny helps to ensure that local people receive high quality services through the Council's Scrutiny Committees checking that the services and policies meet the needs of local people. It involves councillors working with local people, the community, council services and other organisations.



Checks and Balances

The Council's Cabinet make decisions and decide on priorities and the Scrutiny Committees ensure that they are held to account for delivering them and that any public concerns are represented.



5 Committees



Adult Social Care and Health



Crime and Disorder



Children and Young People



People



Place

What they do

- Service Reviews
- Performance Reviews
- Frontline Service Visits
- Emerging Trends and Issues
- Scrutinise External Organisations

9 Service Reviews

- **Youth Services** - re-designed services to focus on early help and prevention and placing the child at the centre of service provision
- **Stockton Local Safeguarding Children Board** - evaluated the effectiveness of the Board against the Ofsted inspection criteria
- **Educational Psychology** - explored service delivery models and proposed new ways of working
- **School Parking** - examined safety concerns caused by irresponsible parking
- **Dog Fouling Enforcement** - reviewed legislation and dog fouling initiatives
- **Safety at Railway Crossings** - examined safety concerns by bringing the various agencies responsible together
- **Disadvantage in Early Years and School** - reviewed local action with a particular focus on the early years
- **Flooding Resilience** - examined the Council's resource and emergency response to deal with the problem
- **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards** - ensuring human rights are respected in care settings

Focus on Health

- Changes to Urgent Care
- Performance and quality of local hospital Trusts
- Regional health service changes and reconfiguration of acute services
- North East Ambulance Service performance



Focus on Police and Crime

We support the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel:

- Scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Review the Police precept
- Comment on the Police and Crime Plan
- Carry out investigations

MJ Awards 2016 - Finalists



The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee was one of six national finalists in the Excellence in Governance and Scrutiny category for its review of transition from primary to secondary school.

* All reports from these reviews can be found at: www.stockton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Appendix 3: SBC Scrutiny 2017-2018

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Scrutiny Challenge for a better Borough 2017-18

What is overview and scrutiny?

Scrutiny helps to ensure that local people receive high quality services through the Council's Scrutiny Committees checking that the services and policies meet the needs of local people. It involves councillors working with local people, the community, council services and other organisations.

Checks and Balances

The Council's Cabinet make decisions and decide on priorities and the Scrutiny Committees ensure that they are held to account for delivering them and that any public concerns are represented.



We have **56** Councillors **7** are on cabinet and **49** can take part in overview and scrutiny.

5

Committees



9

Service Reviews

- Defibrillators** - proposed a community-wide approach including a number of steps that can be taken with the aim of improving survival rates and long term outcomes.
- Special Educational Needs and Disability** - revealed a wide range of good practice/existing work which needed to be more consistently implemented and formalised to improve preparation for adulthood.
- Membership of Local Government Bodies** - examined the overall spend and benefit derived from membership of various bodies to determine value for money.
- Security in Preston Park** - identified the contributory factors of anti-social behaviour within the park and possible mitigating measures to address this.
- Sickness Absence** - proposed measures to promote the health and wellbeing of the workforce and further reduce the current levels of sickness absence.
- Asylum Seeker Services** - examined demand and support services, and the effectiveness of information sharing to ensure that asylum seekers are welcomed and assimilated as effectively as possible.
- Fire Safety of High Rise Residential Buildings** - following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, considered the safety of high rise social residential properties within the Borough
- Billingham Event Infrastructure** - examined the infrastructure and accommodation requirements for Billingham International Folklore Festival (BIFF) and future option
- Disabled Parking** - introduced prosecution for fraudulent use of blue badges and called for an audit of the location and suitability of disabled bays (for both wheelchair and non-wheelchair users) within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council owned car parks
- Work began on reviews of Gambling, Inclusion in Schools, Mental Wellbeing in 14-25 year olds and Managements of Memorials.

What they do

- Service Reviews
- Performance Reviews
- Frontline Service Visits
- Emerging Trends and Issues
- Scrutinise External Organisations

Focus on Health

- Performance and quality of local hospital Trusts
- Regional health service changes and reconfiguration of acute services
- Changes to local GP and Dental services
- Proposals to reconfigure Tees Respite and Short Break services

Focus on Police and Crime

We support the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel:

- Scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Review the Police precept
- Comment on the Police and Crime Plan
- Carry out investigations



Appendix 4: SBC Scrutiny 2018-2019

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Scrutiny Challenge for a better Borough 2018-19

What is overview and scrutiny?

Scrutiny helps to ensure that local people receive high quality services through the Council's Scrutiny Committees checking that the services and policies meet the needs of local people. It involves councillors working with local people, the community, council services and other organisations.

Checks and Balances

The Council's Cabinet make decisions and decide on priorities and the Scrutiny Committees ensure that they are held to account for delivering them and that any public concerns are represented.



We have **56** Councillors **7** are on cabinet and **49** can take part in overview and scrutiny.

5 Committees



Adult Social Care and Health **Crime and Disorder** **Children and Young People** **People** **Place**

What they do

- Service Reviews
- Performance Reviews
- Frontline Service Visits
- Emerging Trends and Issues
- Scrutinise External Organisations

Focus on Health

- Performance and quality of local hospital Trusts
- Regional health service changes and reconfiguration of acute services
- Changes to local GP and Dental services
- Impact of remedial works on services at Roseberry Park Hospital

Focus on Police and Crime

We support the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel:

- Scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Review the Police precept
- Comment on the Police and Crime Plan
- Carry out investigations

12 Service Reviews

- **Inclusion in schools** – examined the approach in local schools to promoting inclusion in response to significant increase in Fixed Term and Permanent Exclusions
- **Gambling** – assessed the scope of gambling activity in Stockton-on-Tees and the potential impact of gambling-related harm
- **Child's Journey** – tested whether the Council's Children's Services were informed by the lived experience and views of local children and young people
- **Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Households** – proposed new ways of delivering temporary accommodation and services for those with the most complex needs and are 'hardest to house'
- **Hate Crime** – revealed the extent of reported hate crime in the Borough and highlighted how this issue is being tackled by local agencies
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing including Suicide and Self-Harm** – focused on how well mental health is being promoted and ill-health prevented in relation to the age group 14-25.
- **Management of Memorials** – looked at how the Council communicates with bereaved families in terms of the current Grave Personalisation Policy, how effective the current policy is, and what, if any, amendments are required.
- **Digital Optimisation** – examined how well the Council is progressing in its provision of digital services, how these services are being communicated, and how residents are being engaged to use them.
- **Parking on Grass Verges** – identified the measures that could be put in place to deter inappropriate parking, and clarified actions that could be taken against those who inappropriately park on grass verges.
- **Bring Sites (Recycling)** – understand the current bring site offer, how sites are being used, and whether the Council should change its future provision.
- **Under-representation of BME Communities in the SBC Workforce** – assessed the Council's performance against the Roadmap to Success, recommended to assist leaders to move positively towards a more diverse workforce.
- **Consolidation of Thirteen Housing Group** – explored the impact (if any) of the consolidation of Thirteen on the delivery of services to tenants within the Borough, and ongoing operational and strategic engagement with the Council.