

AGENDA ITEM

**REPORT TO
EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

28 SEPTEMBER 2021

**REPORT OF THE
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
– ADMINISTRATION,
DEMOCRATIC AND
ELECTORAL SERVICES**

SCRUTINY UPDATE AND ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

SUMMARY

This report presents the Scrutiny Annual Report (infographic) for 2020/21 and feedback from regional scrutiny network meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the report be noted.

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

1. The Scrutiny Annual Report Infographic summarising work in 2020/21 is attached at Appendix 1.
2. The infographic will form an appendix to the more comprehensive four-year end-of-term report which will include outcomes for the reviews completed over the term. Some initial outcomes from last year's reviews are also highlighted in Appendix 1.

UPDATE FROM REGIONAL SCRUTINY NETWORKS

North East Scrutiny Officer Network

3. Scrutiny Officers attended the first remote meeting of the North East Regional Scrutiny Officer Network on the 11 March 2021. Agenda items included a review of the North East Joint Member / Officer Scrutiny Network's Terms of Reference, its future work programme and plans for its next meeting on the 26 March 2021, as well as an update from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS, formerly Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS)) on health scrutiny and remote meetings.

North East Joint Member / Officer Scrutiny Network

4. The North East Joint Member / Officer Scrutiny Network subsequently met on the 26 March 2021, with seven Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council scrutiny committee Chairs / Vice-Chairs in attendance along with Scrutiny Officers. For the first time, the Network had convened virtually, with agenda items including a Housing Solutions presentation, the Network's Terms of Reference, and an update from CfGS on health scrutiny and remote meetings.

5. Led by Durham County Council Officers, the Housing Solutions presentation raised the following key points:
 - Having robust systems in place to identify rough sleepers is crucial – without this, any support packages are pointless.
 - There are a number of people who do not want to be housed – being homeless, for some, is very much a lifestyle choice.
 - Concerns expressed over the ‘snapshot’ approach so often used to ascertain numbers of rough sleepers at one particular time in a year – general agreement that having a year-round understanding of numbers and whereabouts is needed.
6. The CfGS health scrutiny update reflected on the recent publication of the White Paper *Integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all*, which sets out legislative proposals for a health and care Bill. Essentially abolishing the 2012 Act, the CfGS expressed concern around the lack of content around health scrutiny powers and, crucially, the proposed removal of the existing power of referral to the Secretary of State regarding matters involving ‘substantial variations’ to services. The proposed abolition of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and the concern that future health scrutiny would take place at ‘system’ (Integrated Care System) level rather than ‘place’ level was also noted. All present agreed that ‘place’ level scrutiny must be maintained.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7. None directly arising from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

8. The scrutiny function meets legislative requirements and is an important internal mechanism to ensure the safety and quality of key services.

Name of Contact Officer: Margaret Waggott
Telephone No: 01642 527064
Email Address: margaret.waggott@stockton.gov.uk

Background Papers: None
Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: Not Ward Specific
Property Implications: None

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT (INFOGRAPHIC) 2020/21

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Scrutiny Challenge for a better Borough 2020-21

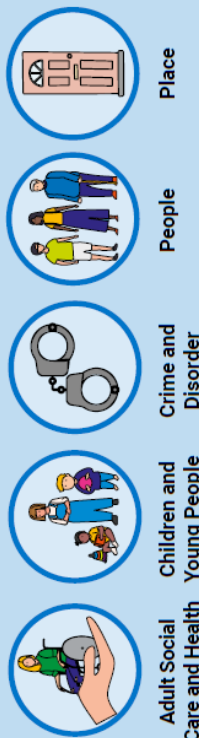
What is overview and scrutiny?

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 Select Committees



We have **56** Councillors **7** are on Cabinet **49** can take part in overview and scrutiny and the remaining

Focus on Health

- Performance and quality of local hospital Trusts
- Regional health service changes and reconfiguration of acute services
- Monitoring of CQC care home ratings
- Overview of Adult and Public Health 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

Executive Scrutiny Committee

- Co-ordinates the overall scrutiny work programme
- Oversight of Council Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)
- Considered the Council's response to and recovery from COVID-19

What they do • Service Reviews • Performance Reviews • Frontline Service Visits • Emerging Trends and Issues • Scrutinise External Organisations

7 Scrutiny Reviews

- **Hospital Discharge (Phase 1)**: examined the impact of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic on hospital discharge to local care homes, with a focus on the national guidance, the process around discharge to care homes, and any potential learning ahead of an anticipated second COVID-19 surge. <http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att39360.pdf>
- **Cost of School Uniforms**: investigated whether school uniform policies in Stockton-on-Tees were accessible and affordable, and examined the support available for families struggling to meet uniform costs. <http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att39602.pdf>
- **Fly-Grazed Horses**: probed the Council's and other relevant organisations' roles and responsibilities for fly-grazed horses on both Council and non-Council land, and identified the extent of concerns across the Borough regarding this practice in order to inform the creation of a formal fly-grazed horses policy. <http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att39790.pdf>
- **Local Council Tax Support Scheme**: explored the revision of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and considered the risks of forecasting, developing and consulting on changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. <http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att39593.pdf>
- **Public Consultation**: evaluated, with a view to improving, the performance of the consultation activity itself and of all Council activities that use the results of the consultations. <http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att39595.pdf>
- **Business Support and Engagement**: assessed the Council's overall business support / engagement role, how this was utilised and viewed externally, and whether the necessary resources were in place to satisfy existing and future demand. <http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att39604.pdf>
- **Planters in Residential Streets (Task & Finish)**: investigated the options for retaining, maintaining or removing planters in residential streets, and whether planters could be given a new lease of life by seeking third-party or community involvement. <http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att39786.pdf>
- Several other reviews began during 2020-21 and will be completed in 2021-22 – these involve **Hospital Discharge (Phase 2 – discharge to an individual's own home)**, **Care Leavers EET**, **Fraud Awareness (Personal)**, **Carbon Monoxide Awareness** and **Burial Provision**.

INITIAL ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES – REVIEWS 2020/21

Although progress updates in respect of many of the reviews from 2020/21 are yet to be submitted to Select Committees, some initial actions and outcomes arising from the reviews are set out below:

Hospital Discharge (Phase 1 – discharge to care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic)

- Regular engagement between system key partners was established and continued throughout the last 12 months. Community health and Social Care services have continued to deliver face-to-face support into care homes
- North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust developments included a single contact phone number in place to support care home managers, introduction of NHS mail accounts to care homes, integration of care home representatives in weekly MDT forum, and development of virtual resource for care providers (working in partnership with SBC)
- Reported delays for care home outbreak testing results being returned to care home providers in December / January resolved within the Care Home Protection Group (CHPG)
- Weekly newsletter to care home providers commenced on the 25 August 2020 – includes resources, guidance updates, best practice and shared learning across care providers

Cost of School Uniform

- A copy of the report was sent with an accompanying letter to all Head Teachers, Chairs of Governors and Academy Trusts with awareness also being raised at Governors Briefings, Primary and Secondary Heads meetings and “Closing the Gap” Sessions
- Letters have also been sent to the Secretary of State for Education and the local MPs and a response has been received from Alex Cunningham MP giving his full support to the recommendations and lobbying in Parliament to put the DfE Guidance on a statutory footing
- Discussions surrounding a potential second-hand uniform shop based in central Stockton have taken place and options are being explored

Fly-Grazed Horses

- Monthly Officer network group established to encourage regular collaboration (including the sharing of best practice) between the Council and relevant partners regarding fly-grazed horses

Local Council Tax Support Scheme

- A public consultation on proposed changes to the scheme was open until 22 August 2021.

Public Consultation

- The recent COVID Employee Survey included a print version for all employees without regular access to a work computer. Coronavirus restrictions meant that this was posted to employees to ensure that they had the opportunity to contribute their views
- Full page article included in the March 2021 edition of Stockton News with a focus on all consultation activity
- Recent social media posts included the promotion of ‘Your Views Matter’, Safer Stockton Partnership consultation, and Local Council Tax Support Scheme consultation

Business Support and Engagement

- A ‘Made in Stockton’ article continues to feature in every edition of the Stockton News

- Stockton Enterprise Arcade was praised in a national report – The Against All Odds review, led by Bill Grimsey
- The Council continue to welcome start-ups and try to ensure that access to funding is as flexible as possible

Planters in Residential Streets (Task & Finish)

- Officers across directorates, along with voluntary sector organisations, are working together to coordinate the community development of planters

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT FROM EARLIER REVIEWS COMPLETED BEFORE 2020/21

Over the past year, Select Committees have also received progress updates in respect of earlier reviews completed prior to 2020/21.

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

Gambling

- Regional Directors of Public Health commissioned sector-led improvement research around what is happening regionally around debt management. This work is held in high regard, recognising gambling-related harm and good practice in Stockton-on-Tees.
- Promotional activity to promote safe gambling and reduce harm undertaken using existing mechanisms including press release (subsequently covered by the Northern Echo), Facebook post and Stockton News article.
- New gambling referral pathway document produced in relation to local and national problem gambling treatment providers.

Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Households

- Bespoke roles established within the Homelessness and Housing Options team to work, support and engage those who are 'hardest to house' (Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker, Rough Sleeper Navigator, Floating Support Officer).
- Additional funding secured to provide immediate access accommodation (4 units) for those who are 'hardest to house'.
- 104 households successfully moved-on from commissioned temporary accommodation.

Care Homes for Older People

- Despite the impact of COVID, third cohort went through the Well-Led Programme remotely resulting in outstanding feedback from participants. Programme continues to be acknowledged nationally.
- HenPower Project started at Mandale House Care Home in 2019 and achieved positive outcomes. It was featured in BBC News and the Alzheimer's Society website.
- Significant increase in observations of residents using Whzan NEWS solution system which has helped staff identify a deteriorating person and liaise with health colleagues as required to deliver the best possible care and prevent avoidable hospital admissions.
- Through the weekly COVID support calls to care homes, the Council was able to ensure safe staffing levels were maintained.

Children and Young People Select Committee

Careers Provision

- Significant increases in the percentage of Stockton Schools achieving Gatsby Benchmarks 1 – 4 and 7 – 8
- All but one school now delivers independent and impartial Careers Guidance; increased contracts gained by SBC Youth Direction
- Tees Valley Careers Hub is in the top three nationally for compass returns by schools

Inclusion in Schools

- Exclusion rates shared through publication of the behaviour document on a termly basis
- Fixed term rate for exclusions decreased in secondary
- Improved SEND offer, as well as information and support for parents

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

School Parking

- Stockton-on-Tees school parking video produced and communications plan devised for its circulation – video now available on school and Council media platforms.

Hate Crime

- Prejudice Driven Behaviour and Trans-inclusion Policy and Guidance has been updated and promoted to school leaders via Education Matters, Personal Development Networks / Briefings and is posted on Stockton's Information Directory.
- Training designed and delivered to senior leaders and to school governors. Bespoke support provided to school leaders by the Education Improvement Service as needed. School leaders report that this guidance has supported them in ensuring more inclusivity across policies / procedures, curriculum, resources, etc.
- Full review of the Stockton Hate Crime Group completed in July 2019 following the appointment of a new Chair (Cleveland Police). Terms of Reference refreshed, and suggested changes made to the meeting structure, frequency and key membership to allow for consistency of approach. The Group continues to involve additional third and voluntary sectors as well as community representation on an ad-hoc basis when agenda items are relevant to issues identified.

Protection of Vulnerable Older Residents Living at Home

- Catalyst published the VCSE Directory online in March 2021 – this includes organisations offering befriending services in the VCSE sector in Stockton.
- Community Transport service has commenced providing transport to all Council community-based activities, in support and alongside Adult Social Care.
- In terms of identifying and sharing details of those older people considered to be 'vulnerable', a commitment has been made by all partners to continue to share information in a timely manner, with daily meetings (aided by technology) taking place to supplement the wider structure of meetings (e.g. safeguarding and team around the individual cases).

Councillor Call for Action (CCfA): Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School

- Some evidence of more considerate parking based on cumulative impact of all measures.
- The school has purchased a number of 'little people bollards' – the Council has worked to develop a risk assessment for installing them on street to deter parking at the school frontage.
- New 20mph scheme implemented on the Barlborough Avenue side of the school.

People Select Committee

Mental Health & Wellbeing inc. Suicide & Self-Harm

- Improved coordination of resources across the children's commissioning system. This offer has provided school based 1:1 and group support for those whose mental health had been impacted by COVID
- Increase in referrals to the GP led Footsteps clinic
- Increased number of young people supported in their transition from CAMHS to adult or GP services

Digital Optimisation

- The COVID Community Hub work is an excellent example of collaboration across Council departments to support the most vulnerable customers. This included the design and development of operating processes, systems and working practices to support the shielded community and those that were isolating and in need of help
- Microsoft Teams has enabled the Council to continue to work during the COVID pandemic. It has provided the tools to enable homeworking staff to communicate, meet and collaborate, which has enabled business to continue and also provided a platform to help staff to feel less isolated at home

Under-representation of BME Communities in the SBC Workforce

- There has been an increase in BAME representation in the workforce from 2% to 4%
- Job opportunities have continued to be shared with Catalyst and corporate communications to raise the profile of the Council as a diverse employer have taken place including social media

Place Select Committee

Fire Safety of High Rise Residential Buildings (T&F)

- Sprinklers have been installed in high-rise residential buildings in Stockton Town Centre
- Staff continue to have up to date fire safety and building safety qualifications

Asylum Seeker Services

- Mears have been the Home Officers commissioned provider of dispersal accommodation in the North East Yorkshire and Humber region since Sept 2019, since the inception of the contract they have not operated a room sharing policy.

Parking on Grass Verges (T&F)

- Service requests are recorded on CIVICA for Grass Verge Parking issues identified across ward areas within Stockton Borough by members of the public and or patrolling Civic Enforcement Officer.
- Between January 2019 and February 2021, a total of 528 Immediate Notices have been issued across the borough.

Consolidation of Thirteen Housing Group

- Relationships remain strong with operational contact between Thirteen and ward members with agreed contact arrangements
- Anson and Hudson Houses are empty, with all customers rehoused, and redevelopment plans underway

Area Transport Strategy

- The Ward Transport Budget was launched in July 2020 and has proved popular with Ward Councillors, with several issues being raised and projects being identified and prioritised to address these
- A cross Ward boundary project was carried out at Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree