



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny

End-of-Term Report
2019-2023

Executive Scrutiny Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
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Foreword

It gives us great pleasure to present this end-of-term report which provides details of the work undertaken by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny function over the last four years.

The 2019-2023 Council term began with a host of new Members taking their place on our scrutiny committees alongside many Councillors who had previously served in such a capacity. This mix of fresh perspectives combined with experience has again proved useful as we have sought to examine another vast range of topics and, ultimately, contribute to making services within the Borough as good as they can be. It was especially good to see the cross-party working and co-operation of all scrutiny members to work together to bring about positive change.

Of course, it goes without saying that the most significant development since the local elections in 2019 was the emergence of COVID-19, the impact of which has been, and continues to be, enormous. Organisations were required to quickly switch priorities, business became far from 'as usual', and ways of working had to be adapted to follow ever-changing national guidance. Against this extremely challenging backdrop, the need to maintain an oversight on local services, as well as understand, and indeed sometimes question, new practices were crucial in continuing to serve the people of the Borough in a safe and timely manner. The use of Microsoft Teams and remote meetings was also crucial in keeping the scrutiny programme on track, and thanks must go to Xentrall Shared Services and their ICT personnel for the swift roll-out and training programmes which enabled a seamless transition.

As detailed within this report, you will see that the Council's Select Committees have again covered a multitude of topics during the 2019-2023 term, many of them involving very challenging and complex issues for which there are rarely straightforward answers. We remain grateful to all those who contributed to the numerous in-depth reviews, whether they be Elected Members or officers of the Council, or representatives of external partners who operate within the Borough. We are lucky to have strong relationships with a plethora of organisations across Stockton-on-Tees and beyond, and are grateful for their understanding of the important role scrutiny has in maintaining and improving good quality local services.

These last four years have witnessed a very turbulent period in the country's history, and we close this latest Council term conscious of some serious issues which require continued focus, not least challenges involving ongoing inflationary pressures, energy costs, climate concerns, and difficulties for public services in terms of recruitment and retention. As we thank all Committee Members (working diligently in addition to their other elected duties) and officers supporting the scrutiny function, we also wish those re-elected and newly elected Councillors well in their future scrutineer roles for 2023 and beyond. Being a 'critical friend' to the Council and its various partners will continue to be an important factor in ensuring we offer the local population services which they need and deserve.



Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley
Chair
Executive Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Maurice Perry
Vice-Chair
Executive Scrutiny Committee

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Scrutiny helps to ensure that local people receive high quality services. Facilitated through Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's scrutiny committee structure, 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 for 2019-2023 has again comprised a range of in-depth reviews, including strategic elements 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 remains an embedded part of the Select Committees' work.

Members have continued to maintain 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 as set out by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), a social purpose consultancy and national centre of expertise whose purpose is to help organisations achieve their outcomes through improved governance and scrutiny, both in policy and in practice. These state that good scrutiny work:

- Provides constructive 'critical friend' challenge
- Amplifies the voices and concerns of the public
- Drives improvement in public services
- Is led by independent people who take responsibility for their role

'The role that overview and scrutiny can play in holding an authority's decision-makers to account makes it fundamentally important to the successful functioning of local democracy.'

Effective scrutiny helps secure the efficient delivery of public services and drives improvements within the authority itself. Conversely, poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership, and service failure.'

taken from the Ministerial foreword of '*Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils and combined authorities*' by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) published in 2019

Four Principles of Effective Scrutiny

This report 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 'critical friend' 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.

Amplifies the voices 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.

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, in partnership with other local organisations, or solely by external bodies themselves.

Is led by independent people who take responsibility for their role

The Council's 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 officers. 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. Executive summaries for all completed scrutiny review final reports are considered for information and shared learning.

SBC Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Overview and scrutiny at Stockton-on-Tees is organised in the following way, with an Executive Scrutiny Committee that agrees the overall work programme, and five themed Select Committees:

EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Chair
Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley



Vice-Chair
Cllr Maurice Perry

ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH



Chair
Cllr Evaline
Cunningham



Vice-Chair
Cllr Clare
Gamble

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE



Chair
Cllr Carol
Clark



Vice-Chair
Cllr Barbara
Inman

CRIME & DISORDER



Chair
Cllr Pauline
Beall



Vice-Chair
Cllr Paul
Weston

PEOPLE



Chair
Cllr Marilyn
Surtees



Vice-Chair
Cllr Mrs Jean
O'Donnell

PLACE



Chair
Cllr Chris
Barlow



Vice-Chair
Cllr Mohammed
Javed

The Executive Scrutiny Committee has 18 Members, and each Select Committee comprises nine Councillors – all are politically-balanced.





Care Homes for Older People

2019-2020

(click [here](#) for full report)

The overall aim of the review was to seek to understand the reasons why care homes in Stockton-on-Tees were not achieving the same level of Care Quality Commission (CQC) ratings as the Tees and national average, and to identify what activities could take place by the Care Homes, the Local Authority and wider stakeholders to improve CQC ratings. The SBC Integrated Strategy Team and the SBC Procurement Team were planning activity with local care homes to improve quality of provision, and the involvement of the Select Committee would support this process.

Several factors impacting upon CQC inspection outcomes were found, including poor care planning, lack of personalised care, and poor records management. Most significantly, however, recruitment and retention issues remained key challenges across the sector, with a number of local providers experiencing high turnover of management and staff. The Council was actively working to drive-up standards and performance, and the Committee commended its quality assurance work and the introduction of the Well-Led Programme which had contributed to improved CQC ratings over the last 12 months.

	Outstanding The service is performing exceptionally well.
	Good The service is performing well and meeting our expectations.
	Requires improvement The service isn't performing as well as it should and we have told the service how it must improve.
	Inadequate The service is performing badly and we've taken action against the person or organisation that runs it.

Nine recommendations were made which reflected the importance of strong leadership and management, promoted personalised care and the benefits of technology (particularly around records and medicines management), and sought to ensure appropriate staffing levels were maintained. Improving the perception of a career in adult social care was a further proposal, as was the need for the facilitation of effective dialogue between SBC and the regulator. [Reported to Cabinet: February 2020](#)

Impact...

- Contributed to continued improvement in local care home CQC ratings.
- Supported continued, and widened, access to the Council's successful Well-Led Programme.
- Encouraged the development of varied activities programmes within and outside care homes.
- Stockton Digital Care Homes Group established to implement digital connectivity solutions, and excellent uptake by providers for the Data Security and Protection Toolkit (DSPT).
- Number of care homes utilising National Early Warning Score (NEWS) observations has increased significantly, which has helped staff identify a deteriorating person.
- Called for the Council to promote and improve the local standing of careers in adult social care – six-month pilot focusing on recruitment and retention in the care sector subsequently undertaken.
- Improved relationship between SBC and the CQC regarding intelligence / data-sharing.
- Strengthened reporting of CQC and PAMMS inspection results to Committee.

Hospital Discharge (Phase 1: discharge to care homes)

2020-2021

(click [here](#) for full report)

In an extension to the originally intended Hospital Discharge review (focusing on discharge from hospital to an individual's own home), this first phase briefly examined the impact of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic on hospital discharge to care homes, an issue which gained national attention following the UK Government's response to a surge of hospital admissions in March 2020. The review focused on the national guidance, the process around hospital discharge to care homes, and any potential learning ahead of an anticipated second COVID-19 surge.

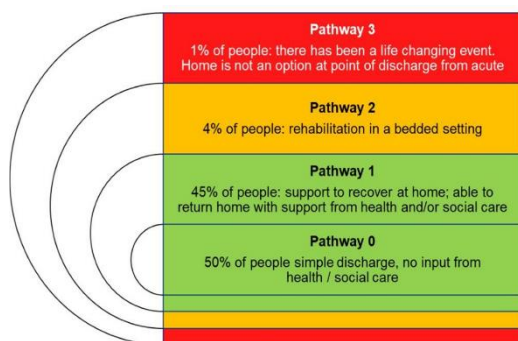


Figure 1: Discharge to Assess model

Some of the Borough's care homes expressed unease at being pressured into accepting patients without knowing if they were infected, as well as the, at times, unclear nature of discharge arrangements. Already established relationships between local health and care providers, however, were further enhanced via the onset of regular multi-agency meetings from March 2020, and the support provided by North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust was commended, in particular the work of the Infection Prevention and Control team (whose guidance and training was frequently heralded by care homes as part of this review) and the Community Matrons.

Reassuringly, local services in both the health and social care sectors indicated that they felt better-prepared ahead of a second COVID-19 surge following experiences from the first phase, though controlling numbers requiring hospital admission and, in turn, discharge to care homes remained critical. The Committee was mindful, though, that the actions of national Government, and the compliance of the general population to any local restrictions put in place, were outside the control of local health and social care providers, who were ultimately left to manage what remained an unpredictable and fast-changing public health emergency. [Reported to Cabinet: November 2020](#)

Impact...

- Urged the continued regular engagement between local NHS Trusts, SBC and care providers regarding escalation-planning and how this would be managed.
- Enabled local care homes to raise issues and recommended (and subsequently received) responses from North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust regarding communication concerns (which were then fully addressed by the Trust and led to strengthened links).
- Supported regular testing of care home staff and residents, and a quicker turnaround in the notification of test results which became available to providers within 24-48 hours.

Hospital Discharge (Phase 2: discharge to own home)

2020-2021 / 2021-2022

(click [here](#) for full report)

The second phase of the Hospital Discharge review focused on the discharge of individuals from hospital back to their own home (not care homes). The Committee's main aims were to examine the discharge process from local hospitals who provide treatment for the Borough's adult residents (including the wider communication with relevant partner organisations around hospital discharge), and to ascertain the key issues around discharge from both an NHS Trust and patient perspective to ensure a safe and sustained return home following hospital input. A further element was to explore how carers were identified when needing hospital treatment and the measures required for ensuring the people they care for were supported during their stay in hospital (and potentially for a time following their discharge). Reflecting on the information gathered, the Committee would then seek to determine if any improvements could be made to existing policies and procedures.

Following detailed contributions from a range of local health and care providers, the Committee fully supported the emphasis on getting individuals back to their usual residence at the earliest opportunity (once it was clinically safe to do so) via the *Discharge to Assess* model and *Home First* initiative. Evidence of well-established local NHS Trust and social care co-working (e.g. Integrated Discharge Team, Integrated Single Point of Access, involvement in discharge planning) was once again widely welcomed, as was the planning of discharge from the point of admission (and the stated involvement of the patient and their identified family / carers in these discussions). Enhancing processes around the identification of, and engagement with, young carers and providing clarity around post-discharge follow-up and / or signposting to other routes of support were areas for development. [Reported to Cabinet: July 2021](#)



Impact...

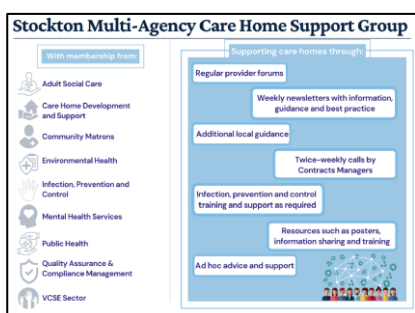
- Local NHS Trust discharge policies reviewed / updated to reflect the Committee's findings.
- Greater focus on identifying carers (of all ages) and raising awareness of / working with carer support services (i.e. Eastern Ravens for young carers).
- Highlighted the successful NTHFT *Home But Not Alone* pilot and urged relevant partners to ensure plans for the continuation of the Five Lamps *Home from Hospital* initiative were in place beyond mid-2022 when funding was due to expire (this was subsequently extended).

Multi-Agency Support to Care Homes during the COVID-19 Pandemic (T&F) [\(click here for full report\)](#)

2021-2022

This task and finish review sought to consider and understand the interplay between the local health and care sector since the emergence of COVID-19, analyse relevant data and intelligence in relation to local care home providers as part of assessing the impact of support provided by key stakeholders, and determine if any improvements could be made to current policies and practice. Care home-related updates provided to the Committee in the previous 18 months, as well as the findings and subsequent actions undertaken regarding two scrutiny reviews the Committee had completed involving care homes, namely *Care Homes for Older People* (pre-COVID) and *Hospital Discharge (Phase 1) (discharge to care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic)*, were also factored in.

Local data demonstrated that, despite widespread concerns aired in the national media regarding individuals being discharged from hospitals to care homes in the early stages of the pandemic without having a COVID-19 test, almost all COVID-19 cases within the Borough's care homes could not be attributed to hospital discharge. Indeed, no evidence was found of any correlation between the first discharge to a care home from a hospital setting and any COVID-19 infection of residents (average time from first discharge to first infection was 49 days).



Strong local partnership-working was again evident, including the support provided via several collaborative groups initiated in response to COVID-19 (not just within the Borough but also regionally). Ensuring such initiatives involved input from care home residents' families / carers was reinforced by the Committee, which also expressed concern regarding the approach of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) during this time and the sense of a shortfall in oversight from the regulator. [Reported to Cabinet: November 2021](#)

Impact...

- Stressed the importance of ensuring the voice of residents and their families / carers is clearly articulated (whether through direct representation or via another appropriate mechanism) in any current and future multi-agency professional group that is convened to support care homes.
- Continued efforts to reach-out to those staff who remained reluctant to receive a COVID-19 vaccination.
- Recommended continuation of the Care Home Protection Group (now known as the Social Care Protection Operational Group) was subsequently realised, with a refreshed Terms of Reference to broaden its scope, and a focus on how best to gain direct feedback from residents and families.

Day Opportunities for Adults (click [here](#) for full report)

2021-2022 / 2022-2023

The main aims for this review were threefold. Firstly, it sought to understand the current model used by SBC to deliver day opportunities, including their purpose, accessibility and promotion. Secondly, it wanted to ascertain the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which, in light of the development of new remote approaches to support the wellbeing of individuals, had prompted an understandable reflection on what and how day opportunities are offered in the Borough. Finally, the Committee was keen on learning about alternative methods of delivery from a community-based perspective which could potentially herald a move away from traditional building-based 'service-driven' provision.

People using these services are generally some of the Borough's most vulnerable residents and very often have families and carers whose own wellbeing is directly impacted. Enabling a wider range of community-based day opportunities that are meaningful to individuals was fully supported by the Committee, though there was also much evidence of the satisfaction of, and indeed reliance on, existing building-based provision from people who access services and their families / carers.

Several recommendations were made, including the creation of co-production groups that can support the future development of day opportunities, stronger links between SBC Adults and Health and SBC Children's Services directorates to identify and support opportunities that are most meaningful to younger people (as part of transitioning), and follow-up work with Catalyst regarding the views of the wider VCSE sector around future day opportunities involvement. A new provider peer group to share good practice / resources (inc. volunteering opportunities as a gateway to employment) was also proposed. [Reported to Cabinet: May 2022](#)

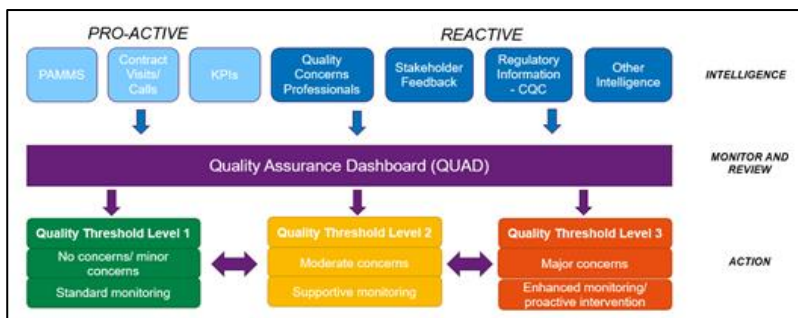


Virtual Site Visit: Allensway (Feb 22)

Impact...

- Specifications for future day opportunity contracts have been updated to include a requirement that providers have measures in place to enable people accessing services to establish involvement mechanisms.
- Regular meetings have taken place between Catalyst and SBC to collaborate on information-sharing and establish stronger relationships between day opportunity providers and the VCSE sector.

This scrutiny topic gave the Committee the opportunity to understand the Care at Home system (regulations, promotion of, access to, funding / costs to the individual (inc. use of direct payments), Council involvement) and how the Council contracts for Care at Home. Assessing the existing quality of provision of the Council’s contracted providers was another key feature, as was ascertaining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee then sought to establish future priorities for this type of service to ensure continued good-quality provision which was available in the right place at the right time.



The Committee learnt about the refreshed contracting approach following reflections upon previous arrangements which highlighted challenges around performance levels and staff travel time. The Council’s management of contracts through a variety of both proactive and reactive intelligence-gathering routes appeared robust, and the lack

of a significant waiting list (around 10 as of November 2022) suggested that the local market was being catered for at present, though with a level of fragility that had developed since the beginning of this year. This was principally down to staff recruitment and retention issues and the significant escalation in costs during 2022.

As well as provider engagement, the Committee was keen to seek the views of those accessing services (and their families / informal carers). Themes to emerge included issues around communication (lack of clarity regarding visit times and changes to visits (times and staff attending); problems liaising with offices), duration of visits (not long enough), and some uncertainty on how to raise a complaint / concern – however, comments about the actual care received were generally positive. In conclusion, the Committee called for authorities to fully support the Care at Home sector (thereby boosting its profile and also helping alleviate pressures on other already stretched parts of the health and care system) or face the possible consequences of a dwindling number of providers operating in the market. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2023](#)



Impact...

- Recommendations made to further boost the profile of the Care at Home sector and encourage joint-working between the Council and providers around recruitment and retention. Improving communications between provider and service-user regarding any changes to planned visits was another focus, as was the facilitation of platforms for all providers to share ideas / learning / concerns, and closer links between the sector and local NHS Trusts.
- Joint letter from the Committee Chair and SBC Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care sent to the Minister of State in the Department of Health and Social Care regarding the key findings of the review and reiterating the need for appropriate future support of the sector.
- Action Plan in relation to the review’s recommendations approved in February 2023 – monitoring of progress to follow in 2023-2024 (and beyond if required).

Further Committee Scrutiny

As well as conducting in-depth reviews, the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee considers a range of other health and care-related activity which takes place within the Borough. Adopting a collaborative approach with internal services and the Council's external partners, key items include the presentation of annual reports, reflections on the findings of the independent regulator of health and social care in England, and holding providers to account.

One of the most important roles of the Committee is to consider the North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust's (NTHFT) Quality Account. Members receive an annual presentation outlining performance against the Trust's quality priorities and the emerging priorities for the year ahead. The Committee then prepares a statement of assurance for inclusion in the Trust's final published version.

A host of other Annual Reports are presented to the Committee during the year which allows Members to identify areas of good practice and challenge / seek assurance for any elements which are a cause for concern. These are provided by Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB), Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), whose representatives have attended Committee to highlight the key aspects of their national 'State of Care' report, as well as comment on the local health and care environment.

Another regular feature of the Committee's work is to consider quarterly CQC reports which give an overview of the regulator's published findings following inspections of local health and care providers. Significantly impacted by the emergence of COVID-19 in early-2020, the Committee has repeatedly expressed concern to the CQC about its level of visibility, the detail of its reports, and the length of time between inspections. Issues have also been raised about the new inspection regime which the CQC has adopted.

In terms of the CQC quarterly report, as the number of published inspection outcomes has reduced since 2020, the Committee has increasingly leant on the Council's PAMMS reports which are now included within these quarterly deliberations. PAMMS (Provider Assessment and Market Management Solutions) is an online assessment tool developed in collaboration with Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) East and regional Local Authorities., and is designed to assist in assessing the quality of care delivered by providers. PAMMS assessments consist of a series of questions over a number of domains and quality standards that forms a risk-based scoring system to ensure equality of approach.

In discharging its duty to hold providers to account, the Committee has requested responses from key local organisations which had seen concerns raised by the regulator in relation to their services. Representatives of Butterwick Limited attended Committee in February 2022 to address long-standing CQC concerns at both Butterwick Hospice Stockton (adults) and Butterwick House (children / young people), and senior staff from NTHFT gave a presentation in November 2022 in response to issues raised in relation to the Trust's maternity services. Much time has also been given to the ongoing challenges being experienced by Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), concerns which resulted in the Committee sending a letter to the then Secretary of State for Health and Social Care calling for a public inquiry into the continued failings and lack of notable improvement of the Trust.

**CARE QUALITY COMMISSION (CQC) INSPECTION OUTCOMES
&
STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL (SBC)
PROVIDER ASSESSMENT AND MARKET MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS
(PAMMS) ASSESSMENT REPORTS**

QUARTER 3 2022-2023

The CQC is the national inspectorate for registered health and adult care services. Inspection reports are regularly produced, and these are published on a weekly basis.

The CQC assesses and rates services as being 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires Improvement', or 'Inadequate'. Where providers are found to be in need of improvement or inadequate, the CQC make recommendations for improvement and / or enforcement action. Specific actions taken in each case can be found in the relevant inspection report.

Where inspections are relevant to the Borough, a summary of the outcome is circulated to all Members each month. An update from Adult Services is included which summarises the position in relation to service provision and any actions taken at that time.

Quarterly Summary of Published Reports

This update includes inspection reports published between October and December 2022 (inclusive). These are included at [Appendix 1](#) and contain the results of all inspections of services based in the Borough (irrespective of whether they are commissioned by the Council).

During this quarter, 16 inspection results were published. Please note: there is a time lag between dates of the inspection and the publication of the report. In addition, where concerns are identified by the CQC, re-inspections may take place soon after the initial report is published. When the outcomes are made available within the same quarter, the result of the most recent report is included in this update.

The main outcomes from the reports are as follows:

- 11 Adult Care services were reported on (6 rated 'Good'; 4 rated 'Requires Improvement'; 1 rated 'Inadequate')
- 1 Primary Medical Care service was reported on (1 rated 'Good')
- 4 Hospital / Other Health Care services were reported on (2 rated 'Outstanding'; 1 rated 'Good'; 1 rated 'Requires Improvement')

A summary of each report and actions taken (correct at the time the CQC inspection report was published) is outlined below. Links to the full version of the reports, and previous ratings where applicable, are also included.

PAMMS Assessment Reports

SBC are utilising the Provider Assessment and Market Management Solutions (PAMMS) in the quality assurance process. PAMMS is an online assessment tool developed in collaboration with Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) East and regional Local Authorities. It is designed to assist in assessing the quality of care delivered by providers. The PAMMS assessment consists of

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Domestic Abuse and its Impact on Children (Task & Finish) (click [here](#) for full report)

2019-2020

This review was undertaken by a small Task and Finish Group of Committee Members. The overall aim of the review was to better understand the impact of domestic abuse on children and the effectiveness of interventions to inform the Domestic Abuse Strategy and future commissioning decisions.

Evidence was received from Council employees, representatives from Harbour and from the Police. During the course of the review Members were presented with a range of information which depicted the service demand was increasing and the rise in domestic abuse incident reports. Multi-agency working was highlighted as a important tool and early contact could be invaluable.

The review culminated in a number of recommendations aimed at providing training led by the Domestic Abuse Steering Group, establishing clear communication pathways and collaboration opportunities. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2020](#)

Impact...

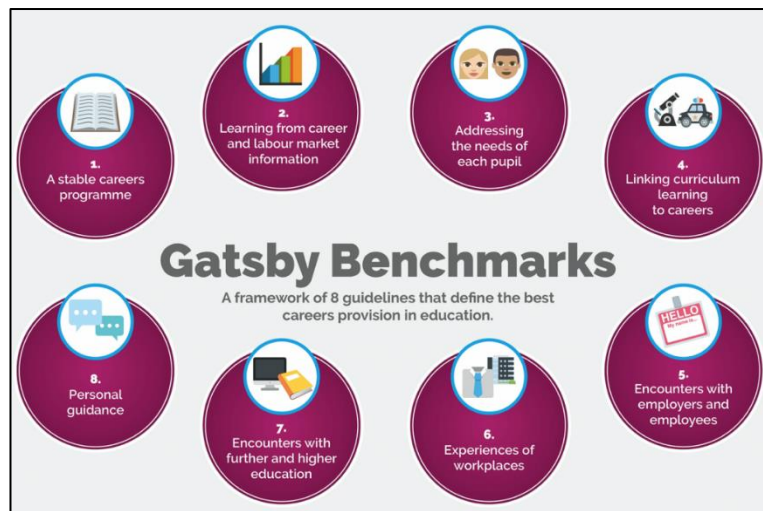
- Families have benefited from the provision of the ALTER programme which has been delivered by Harbour's Link Worker in Children's Social Care. Had this provision not been available, there is a risk that the perpetrators of abuse who engaged in the ALTER programme may not have any intervention at all.
- An approach to domestic abuse training will be embedded within the forthcoming Domestic Abuse Strategy 2023-2028.
- The Domestic Abuse Steering Group now receives regular feedback from Cleveland Police and Education Leads on the effectiveness of Operation Encompass and this has been in place from February 2020.
- Opportunities for collaboration and joint working have been considered across the Tees / Tees Valley footprint. Collaboration has brought greater insight and understanding of those impacted by domestic abuse and has directly contributed to an increase in treatment pathways for perpetrators.

Careers Provision (click [here](#) for full report)

2019-2020

The overall aim of the review was to develop a clear and joined-up approach across Stockton which supports schools in their role, is clear on the role of all partners including the Council, and how the system can work more effectively for young people.

The Select Committee recognised that a meaningful and positive careers programme improves self-esteem, promotes higher attainment, reduces drop-out rates from schools and colleges and has significant economic benefits. The Gatsby Benchmarks provided the framework for best practice



in career guidance and our recommendations sought to encourage all of our schools and colleges to aspire to meeting these standards. This will, in turn, enable our children and young people to make informed choices and better understand the opportunities that are open to them as they transition from education into employment. [Reported to Cabinet: March 2020](#)

Impact...

- Destinations data showed a limited impact of lockdowns, on both the 2020 and 2021 school leaver cohorts which suggests the CEIAG work that was completed, was effective.
- All education establishments in the Careers Hub were encouraged to ensure students have access to Independent and Impartial Careers Guidance from a qualified adviser.
- Continue to enable and encourage schools to maintain a lead from senior management teams on their Governing bodies.
- The Council worked with stakeholders to promote opportunities for apprenticeships and work experience across the Borough.
- Significant increases in schools meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks.

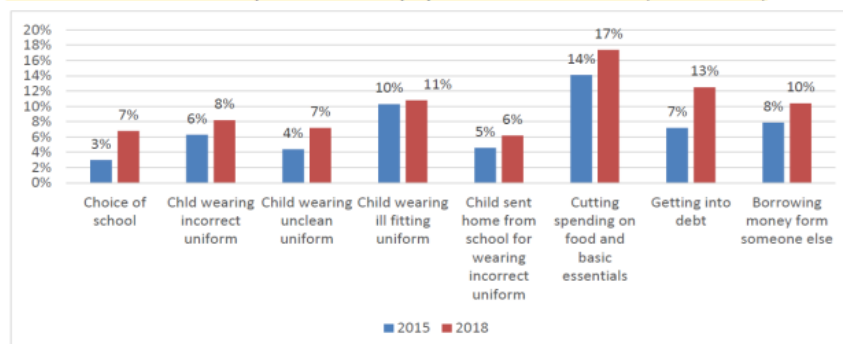
Cost of School Uniform

(click [here](#) for full report)

2020-2021

The aim of the review was to understand the issues raised by residents about the cost of school uniform and the opportunities locally to support parents in meeting those costs. It was recognised that the Council had a limited role in relation to this issue which was largely a matter for schools. The focus of the review was therefore on working with schools to identify the issues for them and for parents and identifying if there are options to support parents in meeting the costs of school uniform.

Cost of school uniforms: the impact on children – proportion of children affected (2015 and 2018)



N=948 in 2015, 946 in 2018

Through the course of the review, it was found that school uniform played an important role in contributing to the ethos of a school and sets the tone of the school. It was a way of ensuring that children living in disadvantage were not identifiable through their clothing. Schools needed to ensure that uniform was accessible and affordable. The Committee also recognised the importance of providing support to families struggling to meet uniform costs and were impressed by the support offered by Stockton-on-Tees schools and local community organisations. [Reported to Cabinet: December 2020](#)

Impact...

- The Select Committee report was well received by Academy Trusts and Schools. Messages were reinforced at Closing and Gap Sessions, Secondary and Primary Heads meetings and Governors' Briefing Sessions.
- Support was secured from the two local MPs and new legislation was subsequently passed putting the DfE best practice guidance on a statutory footing.

Care Leavers EET

(click [here](#) for full report)

2020-2021 / 2021-2022

The main aim of the review was to examine whether the Council was doing enough and what more needed to be done to further improve performance and outcomes for young people.

The Select Committee found that more work needed to be done for Children in Our Care regarding the transition into independent living. It was recognised that Children in Our Care did not enjoy the inherited opportunities and access to family help and support. Often struggling to overcome issues with mental and emotional health and low aspirations, these children can feel locked out from achieving success.

A number of recommendations were formulated as part of this review which sought to recommend more help for Children in Our Care to become work ready and maximise their opportunities through strengthened partnership working and a sustainable model to increase access to work experience and job opportunities with local employers and partners agencies. [Reported to Cabinet: July 2021](#)

Impact...

- Data used to be recorded on an annual basis but was now live data; continuous tracking had led to significant improvements and transformation
- New structures had brought teams together to meet demand and capacity; a clear vision allowed for workers to ensure that the child remained at the centre of the plan
- There had been an increase in young people moving towards Employment, Education and Training; performance was now above the national average

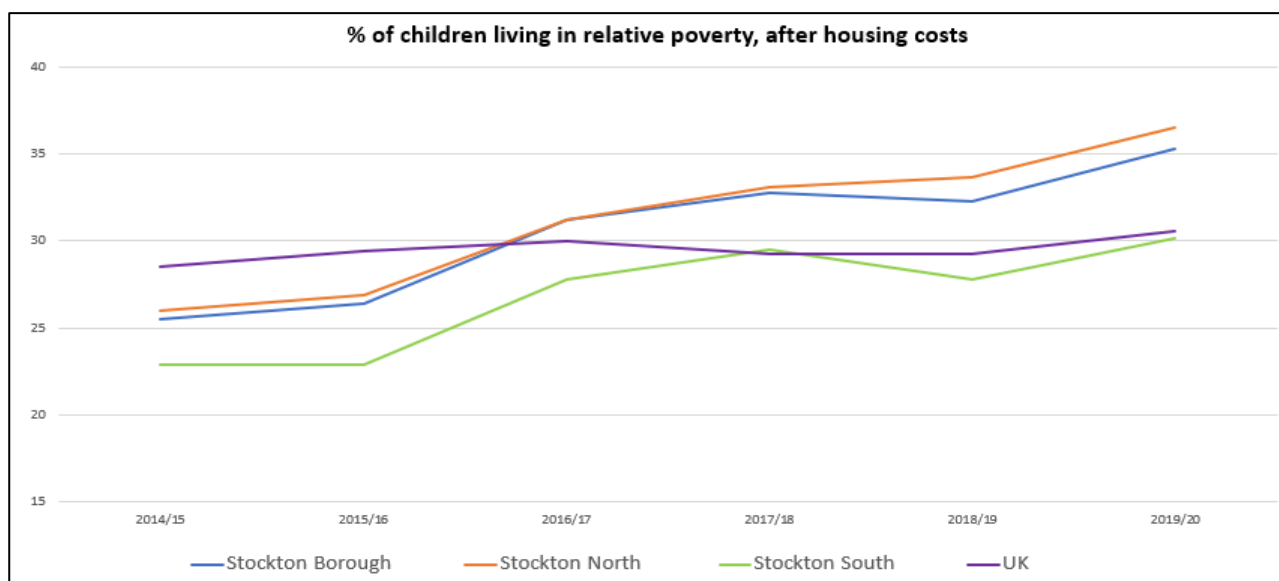
Child Poverty

(click [here](#) for full report)

2021-2022 / 2022-2023

The overall aim of the review was to gain an insight and understand the specific issues relating to child poverty.

Data presented to the Committee showed that a large proportion of children in the Northeast were living in poverty, the second highest rate in the UK. Due to a number of factors the Committee were made aware that this position would worsen significantly due to welfare changes, the increased cost of living, energy prices rising and lack of employment security.



Evidence presented to the Committee demonstrated that the impact of poverty on children is profound. With children experiencing a range of health damaging impacts, negative educational outcomes, long term social and psychological problems, and poor life chances in adulthood.

The recommendations from this review sought to better understand the issues by working with families experiencing poverty, to enhance the support and interventions in place and each year to focus on a key priority for targeted action. [Reported to Cabinet: June 2022](#)

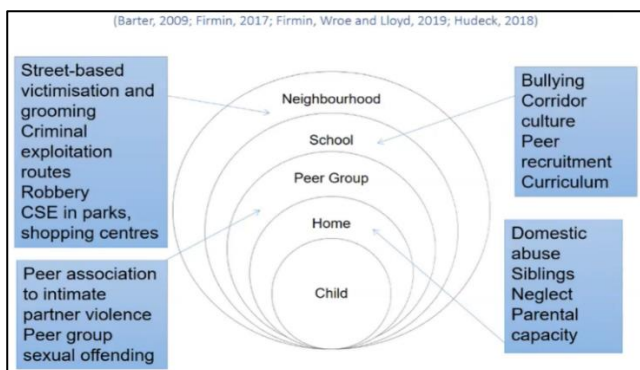
Impact...

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Contextual Safeguarding and Youth Relationships ([click here](#) for full report)

2022-2023

The aim of the review was to assess the Council’s response and approach to the issues of contextual safeguarding. This review examined the factors leading to a focus in this area and understand the work of the multi-agency child exploitation (MACE) hub. Within this context, the review has also examined violent and coercive behaviour in youth relationships.



Evidence presented to the Committee demonstrated as children grow, their sphere of influence expands from their primary care givers along with family and long-time friends to wider influences with access to the internet and mobiles cutting across traditional barriers extending their sphere of influences even further. The review found tackling extra familial risk requires a holistic approach involving a wide range of partners and the community. [Reported to Cabinet: February 2023](#)

Impact...

- The Committee’s recommendations sought to raise awareness of contextual safeguarding and strengthen the local multi-agency response, including that clear outcome measures are defined to determine success of interventions and approaches. Support around this issue for SBC Children’s Services staff and schools was also encouraged, and a community guardian programme within schools and communities across Stockton-on-Tees was proposed in order to provide wider community support.
- An Action Plan in relation to the review’s recommendations will be presented to the Committee for approval early in the new Council term.

Protection of Vulnerable Older Residents Living at Home (click [here](#) for full report)

2019-2020

In response to concerns regarding crime in local neighbourhoods, this review aimed to support local residents who may be vulnerable due to their individual circumstances, including age and housing arrangements. It undertook an assessment of local relevant public services and how they contribute to the protection of the vulnerable, as well as an evaluation of local community infrastructure and whether more support was needed to help promote safety and wellbeing of vulnerable residents.

Throughout the review, contributing organisations stressed the importance of working in partnership, and that the relationships evidenced during the Committee's information-gathering were critical in protecting older people and promoting safety and wellbeing. However, it was also noted that older people living at home may not want help (even though their families may want them to have assistance), and that organisations need to work sensitively to ensure any needs are identified and met, whilst maintaining, as far as possible, an older person's independence.

Twelve recommendations ensued, headed by the need for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Cleveland Police to provide assurance around the measures put in place to address the failings highlighted in the Force's recent HMICFRS PEEL assessment around identifying vulnerable victims and providing adequate safeguarding. Further requests were directed at the Council and its key partners, Thirteen Housing Group and Catalyst, and a continued push for better information-sharing between local organisations was advised. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2020](#)



Impact...

- Commitment made by all partners to continue to share information in a timely manner. Intra-partnership information-sharing saw further improvements since the emergence of COVID-19, supported by developments in technological aids such as Microsoft Teams which allow for quick and efficient meetings.
- Catalyst's VCSE directory updated – includes befriending and other support services in the local VCSE sector that can be offered to a wide range of residents including those older residents living independently at home. Older people feature as a dedicated category, along with a breakdown of services which provide 'social inclusion'.

CCfA: Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School (click [here](#) for full report)

2019-2020

A Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) provides Councillors with the opportunity to ask for a discussion to take place at scrutiny committees on issues where local problems have arisen, and where all other methods of resolving the issue have been exhausted. The issue of obstructive and illegal parking around Whitehouse Primary School was proposed and subsequently approved for consideration by the Committee, whereupon a detailed investigation ensued involving key stakeholders such as Ward Councillors, relevant Council officers, senior representatives from the school, and residents and parents who were keen to put forward their views.

Pertinent to the problems associated with Whitehouse Primary School was the increase in pupils from beyond the designated admission zone and the geographical nuances of the school, factors

which are extremely difficult to influence. Whilst greater enforcement of illegal parking would be welcomed (at all schools), restrictions around current enforcement resources hinders the Council's ability to penalise such activity as much as many would like. It would also be unfair to single out one school above others for increased enforcement patrols.



Concluding that the suggested Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to ban / regulate parking was not appropriate, the Committee instead agreed a number of alternative measures which both supplemented previous work on this issue, and provided further means of promoting more responsible parking around the school itself. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2020](#)

Impact...

- Termly correspondence sent by the school to parents / carers regarding parking issues (includes development and circulation of a 'parking pledge'), with evidence of more considerate parking based on cumulative impact of all measures.
- School purchased 'little people bollards' to deter inconsiderate parking – concept shared with other schools within the Borough.
- 20mph speed limit on the Barlborough Avenue side of the school since implemented.
- New Junior Road Safety Officers appointed (including at Whitehouse Primary School).
- Research into 'School Streets' initiative (awaiting decision on possible implementation).

Fly-Grazed Horses

2019-2020 / 2020-2021

(click [here](#) for full report)

Fly-grazed horses are those that are being deliberately allowed to graze on land (either on a tether or roaming free) without the landowner's (private or Local Authority) permission. They pose a real risk to public health, whether wandering onto roads due to being grazed on land with inadequate or poorly maintained fencing (as happened during an incident on Durham Lane, Eaglescliffe, in October 2019), or breaking free from tethers. Horses may also be left to graze in public spaces, making footpaths, play areas and nature reserves unsafe for users / pedestrians, and create significant restoration costs caused by damage to Council assets / land.



This review comprised several important elements, the first of which involved the establishment of the Council's and other relevant organisations' roles and responsibilities for fly-grazed horses on both Council and non-Council land. Other aspects included identifying the extent of concerns across the Borough in relation to fly-grazed horses, understanding the costs to the Council in undertaking its statutory

responsibilities (and beyond), and considering more proactive means of addressing fly-grazed horses via education or enforcement options which may be used with horse-owners. Finally, the intention was for this review to provide conclusions and recommendations which could inform the creation of a formal Council fly-grazed horses policy.

In attempting to address the longstanding concerns associated with this practice, the Committee discovered a rather short-term and potted historical approach which lacked an overarching policy that made clear who should be doing what and by when. That said, this issue is not an easy one to address. The Committee respect the rights of individuals to own horses, but also the rights of other residents across the Borough not to be affected by a horse being fly-grazed near to their property, or for people to be at risk of horses escaping from fields after being placed there. The ensuing recommendations sought to establish clearly defined processes, supported and adhered to by all key stakeholders and made available to increase public awareness, which would provide a framework for managing future cases. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2021](#)

Impact...

- Cleveland Police intend to produce a protocol based on Kent Police's response (essentially a recovery and green yard service). Need for policy added to the Police Executive Risk Register.
- Council webpages publicly available containing horse welfare information, advice to landowners and the public, as well as SBC and RSPCA contact details (will be available for hosting formal policy document once live). Since updated to note public information for equine identification law, advice for tethering, grazing on Council Land and advice for private landowners.
- SBC officers continue to support both horse-owners and those impacted by illegal grazing, and retain contact details and close relationships with all horse-owners.
- Cleveland Police senior and operational staff identified to work with SBC Animal Welfare.

Fraud Awareness (Personal)

2020-2021 / 2021-2022

(click [here](#) for full report)

The aim of this review was principally two-fold: firstly, to raise awareness of fraud against the person, and secondly, to ascertain the ways in which local victims of this crime were identified and supported. In addition, the Committee sought to understand the process for reporting (personal) fraud offences, including the role of key stakeholders in the handling of cases, and establish how the public were made aware of the required reporting mechanisms (and how this was reinforced by local organisations, including work around reducing the risk of becoming a victim of fraud). Mindful of the ongoing pandemic, the identification of any local COVID-19-related fraud concerns (and whether any targeted awareness-raising / support may be required) would also be an important factor in this work.

The Committee found that fraud was a complex and, sadly, all too prevalent crime in today's world. The broad range of national, regional and local organisations (a number of whom were listed within the report) involved in countering those manipulative perpetrators of this practice were testament to the frequency in which it was carried out.

Understandingly, this was often in a reactive way as fraudsters continually change their point of attack, seizing upon opportunities that, latterly, had even stooped to seeking gain from a global pandemic. The Committee fully supported every available means to bring such people to justice.



Behind every act of fraud is a victim, a fact that can sometimes be overlooked when analysing crime trends and attempting to nullify perpetrators, and a key message from this review was that everyone was susceptible to this type of crime (not just older people as some would believe). Locally, the Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS) provided invaluable support to victims, but was subject to potential demand pressures as a result of the drive to increase the reporting of fraudulent activity and continually emerging scams. [Reported to Cabinet: May 2021](#)

Impact...

- Views of the Committee encouraging the sharing of relevant fraud information with SBC (laid out in a subsequent letter from Lead Cabinet Member) expressed to Action Fraud.
- Post-review inspection by the City of London Police stated that Cleveland Police were good at supporting victims and safeguarding the most vulnerable victims of fraud.
- Ongoing efforts to spread the fraud prevention and scams awareness message continue across a range of forums – one particular social media post on a banking scam reached over 10,000 people and was shared widely.
- Article concerning rogue traders carrying out home maintenance and repair work was included in the Spring 2022 edition of Stockton News. An article on Christmas scams was planned for the next Winter edition.
- 16 key scams awareness messages distributed to the SBC Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF) initiative to aid awareness-raising around fraud crime with young people.

Police Communications in Stockton-on-Tees (Task & Finish) ([click here](#) for full report)

2021-2022

This task and finish review focused on information-sharing and communications in Stockton-on-Tees between neighbourhood policing, local Ward Councillors, local residents and other key stakeholders. It sought to ensure that appropriate information-sharing mechanisms were in place with a view to strengthening effective partnership-working within the Borough.

Cleveland Police Community Engagement Ward Pledge

Every neighbourhood in Cleveland has a dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) that works together with the local community and partners to:

- ✓ Prevent crime and anti social behaviour and tackling criminality
- ✓ Care and support our people
- ✓ Serve the public and put our communities at the heart of all we do
- ✓ Recognise and safeguard vulnerable victims

As a minimum expectation concerning engagement, we pledge to provide:

- ✓ Key message statements from the NPT Chief Inspector to your elected representatives on a monthly basis
- ✓ Regular contact with relevant partners to address neighbourhood priorities
- ✓ An update to the community of progress against the identify progress
- ✓ A two-way mechanism to obtain views, advice and feedback from the community
- ✓ NPT to engage with community and faith groups
- ✓ Advance notice of community engagement opportunities via the Ward newsletter and social media platforms
- ✓ Visible patrols in hotspots for anti-social behaviour and crime
- ✓ Bespoke Ward Newsletters on a bi-monthly basis
- ✓ At least one community meeting per month in each Ward
- ✓ Scanning and analysis of local issues to identify up to three Ward priorities on a bi-monthly basis
- ✓ A designated Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) assigned to every school
- ✓ Engagement opportunities with ongoing youth outreach in our Wards
- ✓ Effective use of social media to engage communities and provide effective feedback
- ✓ Ward profiles to help understand the demographics and engagement needs of each area in the Force

The Committee's Task and Finish Group found that numerous engagement mechanisms were used by Cleveland Police, both internally and externally, in order to carry out and communicate its core functions. Ensuring officers within Cleveland Police recognise the critical role of Councillors as a partnership-tool with which to address policing issues was emphasised, as was the importance of the communications feedback-loop which, if effective, enables confidence to be built between the Force and Councillors / the public.

Concerns were expressed about the Force seemingly being in a constant state of change, with officers across all ranks arriving and departing at an alarming rate which inevitably impacts upon the ability to forge relationships within communities. Whilst alternative methods of communicating (accelerated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic) were to be embraced, being as physically visible within Wards as possible would continue to be important for Councillors (as evidenced with the Ward Councillor survey undertaken as part of this review) and their residents (as reflected in the desire for more Police visibility via recent consultations) as the Force looks to deliver strong engagement as part of its service plans. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2022](#)

Impact...

- All Stockton district PCSOs asked to make monthly contact with their Ward Councillors.
- Stockton neighbourhood officers have a Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) compliance rate of 100% for their 102 live crimes (as of 02/11/2022).
- SBC Ward Councillor survey repeated in October 2022 – feedback demonstrated that there were still mixed feelings about the level of communications with Cleveland Police.
- So far in 2023, Stockton Neighbourhood Policing Team have recorded the highest level of face-to-face engagement with the public across the force area by a significant margin.

Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)

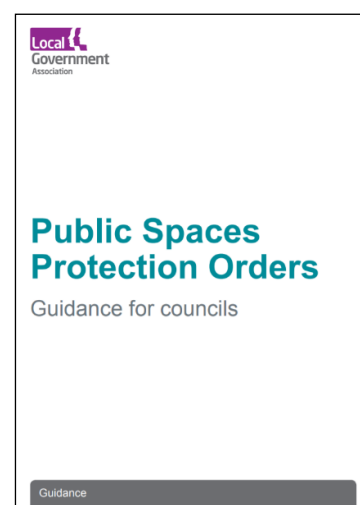
2021-2022

(click [here](#) for full report)

This scrutiny topic provided the opportunity for the Committee to consider the potential benefits and challenges from introducing a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) within the Borough. It allowed the Committee to understand what a PSPO was (powers designed to stop individuals or groups from committing anti-social behaviour (ASB) in a public space, they can include restrictions on consuming alcohol in a public place or controlling the presence of dogs) and the process which needs to be followed, consider existing ASB it could help to address, and learn about the experiences of other Local Authorities, many of whom had utilised such Orders as an additional tool to respond to crime / ASB in their areas. Crucially, what the review did not set out to do was to decide whether a PSPO should actually be implemented.

The Committee found that, whilst the Council was well-placed to be aware of the community safety issues within the locality and already had a range of options to counter ASB, concerns clearly continue (as evidenced in the report) around the behaviour of a minority of individuals who were having an adverse impact on the Borough's public spaces. Perceptions and fear of crime continued to be high, and, as noted by several contributors to this review, this was as important and significant as actual recorded cases. As such, the case for exploring further options was strong, especially if these options led to more visible and quicker action to instil confidence in the public.

Evidence demonstrated that there were a range of opinions around PSPOs (including widespread concerns that they target vulnerable individuals), and the Council must therefore ensure that, should it wish to proceed with plans for a potential Order within the Borough, it seeks views from a wide variety of stakeholders (i.e. public, local businesses, special interest groups (depending on the issues an Order seeks to prohibit), key partners) to validate any future decision. [Reported to Cabinet: February 2022](#)



Impact...

- To reinforce existing mechanisms for reporting ASB and promote operational successes in identifying and addressing ASB within the Borough, a shared approach for partnership communications has been developed further, including an increase in media releases and leaflet drops / Civic Enforcement Officer visits to hot-spot areas.
- Easy-read flowchart of the existing PSPO consultation, implementation and review procedures finalised and circulated to relevant stakeholders. This agreed process, alongside the Committee's other recommendations (e.g. adoption of a formal definition of 'aggressive begging' by SBC), has assisted in providing a framework for the initiation of a PSPO in Stockton Town Centre and Norton Village from April 2023.

Bonfires on Public Land

(click [here](#) for full report)

2021-2022 / 2022-2023

Like many Local Authority areas, Stockton-on-Tees experiences an increase in bonfires between mid-October and mid-November each year. However, whilst bonfires themselves bring an inherent safety and environmental risk to the local community, associated disorder linked to this practice has become as much, if not more, of an issue for the Council and its local partners to manage during the traditional 'bonfire night' season.



Focusing on bonfire activity upon public land, the aims of this review were to firstly establish the extent of bonfire-related concerns (e.g. personal safety, damage to property, fly-tipping, etc.) within the Borough during the traditional 'bonfire night' season. The Committee then sought to understand what the Council and its partners had historically done to identify, address and reduce bonfire-related issues, and then investigate what, if any, further measures could be put in place to strengthen the management, or reduction, of bonfires during this time period.

In summary, there was a general consensus from all partners who contributed to this review that bonfires themselves were not a major issue within the Borough (greater concerns were expressed in relation to the associated behaviours around bonfires (as well as fireworks)), though the Committee acknowledged that sporadic cases across Stockton-on-Tees had previously provided challenges for the Council and its partners despite the very established annual planning, response and review joint-working. Continuing to focus resources on these identified areas (and any emerging ones), particularly around education and diversion, remained paramount in the drive to further reduce the negative elements which bonfires can clearly foster. [Reported to Cabinet: September 2022](#)

Impact...

- Recommendations called for the Council to review its own public engagement approach to fire safety messaging across all available communication mechanisms (highlighting the dangers of bonfires and the impact on local residents), as well as consider adopting the Shrewsbury Town Council approach in emphasising a zero tolerance towards unauthorised bonfires (including contact routes for permission to light a bonfire on public land and the potential consequences for failing to seek permission).

Tree Asset Management

(click [here](#) for full report)

2022-2023

Whilst not explicitly crime and disorder related (this piece of work was allocated to the Committee in order to balance the distribution of scrutiny topics across the five themed Select Committees), this predominantly internal review provided an opportunity to consider the known issues around maintenance of the Borough's tree stock. Central to this was the substantial growing backlog in essential and routine programmed works that had been identified through the ongoing inspection regime.





The current SBC Tree and Woodland Management Service was a very small team with responsibility for managing tens of thousands of trees within the Borough's towns, highways, parks, cemeteries, open spaces and 400 hectares of woodland. The service was clearly under huge pressure already, and attempts to eat into the increasing delays to essential programmed work were always at the mercy of external factors such as adverse weather (creating potential emergency situations) and season-specific activity, as well as resource limitations. Add to this the Council's additional tree planting commitment in response to the ongoing climate crisis debate, and the emerging issue of ash dieback disease, and the Committee expressed deep reservations over the existing situation regarding management of the Borough's trees.

The current financial climate for Local Authorities made it hard to justify recommending a spending increase anywhere within the Council, though the Committee observed that tree planting was a SBC priority – should this continue to be the case moving forward, it therefore seemed incumbent upon the Council to back this up with an appropriate resource allocation which allowed its officers to undertake the required maintenance of an enlarging tree stock, something which not only strengthens the Borough's move to a cleaner and greener future, but also ensures residents and visitors are kept safe. If this could not happen, then it was imperative that the Council made it clear to its residents what tree management service it could realistically deliver, and that this remains in-line with its legal duty of care. [Reported to Cabinet: February 2023](#)

Impact...

- Recommendations included a refresh of the SBC tree and woodland management policy and procedures to provide clarity around mandatory service requirements, the realistic cycle of essential maintenance, responsibilities regarding trees on private land, and key message throughout this review regarding the planting of the correct species of tree in the right places (helping to minimise future maintenance requirements and revenue costs). Strengthening service resources was also encouraged, and planning around ash dieback was urged.
- Action Plan in relation to the review's recommendations to be approved in March 2023, with update on progress of the agreed actions to be received in 2023-2024.

People Select Committee

Smarter Working in Stockton (Accommodation and Buildings) (Task & Finish) 2019-2020 (click [here](#) for full report)

This review was undertaken by a small Task and Finish Group of Committee Members who reviewed the current arrangements within the context of the Smarter Working programme, and the future needs of the Authority and workforce.

A part of the review, the group visited existing Council buildings (Stirling House, Kingsway, Municipal Buildings, 16 Church Road, Bayheath House) and spoke with members of staff. Visits to North Tyneside Council, Thirteen Group and the Cleveland Police Community Safety Hub also informed the review.

Having reviewed the options available, the Group believed the best solution would be for the Council to move towards having a single main building for its office accommodation needs, as current arrangements were no longer suitable for modern workspace.

Reported to Cabinet: November 2019



Kingsway House

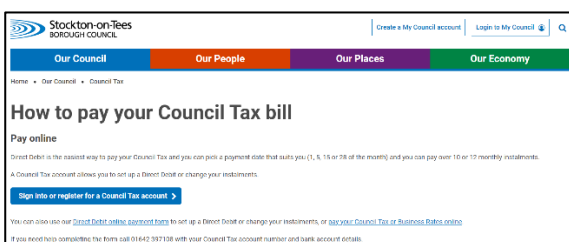
Impact...

- Focus group of over 80 staff, made up of all directorates across SBC, was set up.
- The Smarter Working in Stockton project leads communicate with this group regularly.
- There is an ongoing process of planning and providing appropriate alternative office accommodation.

Local Council Tax Support Scheme (Reporting-In) (click [here](#) for full report)

2019-2020 / 2020-2021

In 2019, the People Select Committee commenced work on a review of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme. It was expected that any changes to the scheme would be introduced from April 2021. However, due to the impact of Covid 19, the Select Committee considered a report in October 2020 on the risks of forecasting, developing, and consulting on changes during the pandemic.



The Select Committee concluded that more time was needed to understand the financial impact of Coronavirus on customers and their ability to pay a minimum contribution, the rise in caseload and any wider welfare reforms that may come through as part of the government's response to the pandemic.
Reported to Cabinet: December 2020

Impact...

- It was agreed that it would not be appropriate to make changes impacting on the financial aspects of the scheme until more was known about the affordability of the current scheme and any alternative proposals.
- In the meantime, it was proposed that funds could be set aside to provide more targeted support to those struggling to pay the minimum 20% contribution using section 13A of the local government Finance Act.

Public Consultation

(click [here](#) for full report)

2020-2021

The aim of the review was to improve performance of the consultation activity itself and of all Council activities that use the results of the consultations.



The review was well-timed following the town centre consultation and this consultation was well received by the Committee. It was agreed that paper versions of consultation forms should be retained for future large-scale consultations where appropriate. The recommendations also incorporated the need to increase engagement with young people and build on the work of Bright minds Big Futures (BMBF).

It was valuable to receive evidence from Ipsos MORI, Bluegrass Research Limited and North Tyneside Council, to learn more about private sector approaches to consultation and areas of good practice in other Local Authorities. [Reported to Cabinet: December 2020](#)

Impact...

- Work has continued to ensure all consultations are fully inclusive, including offering paper consultation forms and public meetings for large-scale consultations.
- The coverage in Stockton News, under the 'Your Views Matter' heading, remains a key a focus to ensure high-quality engagement.
- Consultations have continued to be shared on Council social media channels to help raise the profile of the activity, as well as to encourage participation, show transparency and ensure effective consultation.

Carbon Monoxide Awareness

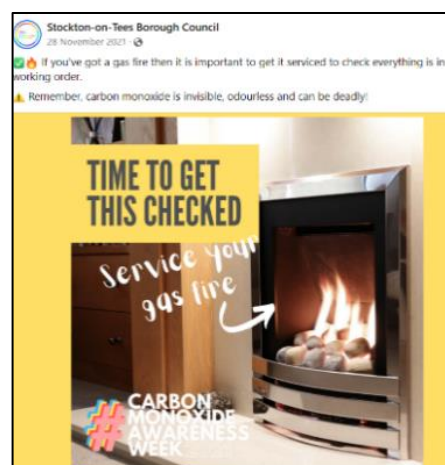
(click [here](#) for full report)

2020-2021 / 2021-2022

This review was undertaken to provide a greater understanding of the work of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and external organisations in raising awareness about carbon monoxide poisoning.

The review was enhanced by the attendance of representatives from several Housing Associations and the North East Ambulance Service at evidence sessions. Holding the meetings remotely allowed for an increased number of external contributors to provide information on best practice and answer Members' questions.

The review's recommendations supported a continued promotion of Carbon Monoxide poisoning awareness raising through existing platforms. The Committee also recommended that legislation should be extended to ensure that Carbon Monoxide alarms are fitted in all properties, including holiday homes, for gas and solid burning fuel appliances. [Reported to Cabinet: July 2021](#)



Impact...

- Letters were sent to both local MPs and positive responses were received.
- Lord Greenhalgh, Minister of State for Building Safety and Fire, also responded that the Government has consulted on proposals to extend building and housing regulations to require the provision of carbon monoxide alarms to oil and gas heating installations and to social housing.
- Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week was promoted in the November 2021 Stockton News and via social media channels.

Disability Inclusive Borough (click [here](#) for full report)

2021-2022

This review explored how Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council could contribute to a more disability inclusive borough the Committee were keen to understand hidden as well as physical disabilities. This was a very wide review, and the Committee were acutely aware that the review was part of an on-going journey to make our Borough disability inclusive.



Hearing directly from individuals and disability groups provided an invaluable insight and highlighted that there was no room for complacency. Contributors included Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Officers, Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF), Dementia Friendly Stockton Project, Horizons Specialist Academy Trust, Stockton Parent Carer Forum, Daisy Chain, Guide Dogs for the Blind, RNID and Middlesbrough Council.

The review has demonstrated that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is committed to putting every person who needs support at the heart of all that they do and providing appropriate support and services to employees and residents across the Borough with disabilities. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2022](#)

Impact...

- The recommendations support a continued promotion of good practice across the Council and wider community, but also, awareness raising and improved communication with disability groups.
- Project group led by Children's Services, with representatives from SBC Adults and Health, are delivering a programme of work to engage with families and stakeholders to co-produce and develop a vision to improve outcomes for children and young people with disabilities, and their families, that prioritises early identification / promotes independence.
- The outline design for the new civic hub includes a changing place facility and one will be considered as part of the new improvements to Preston Park.

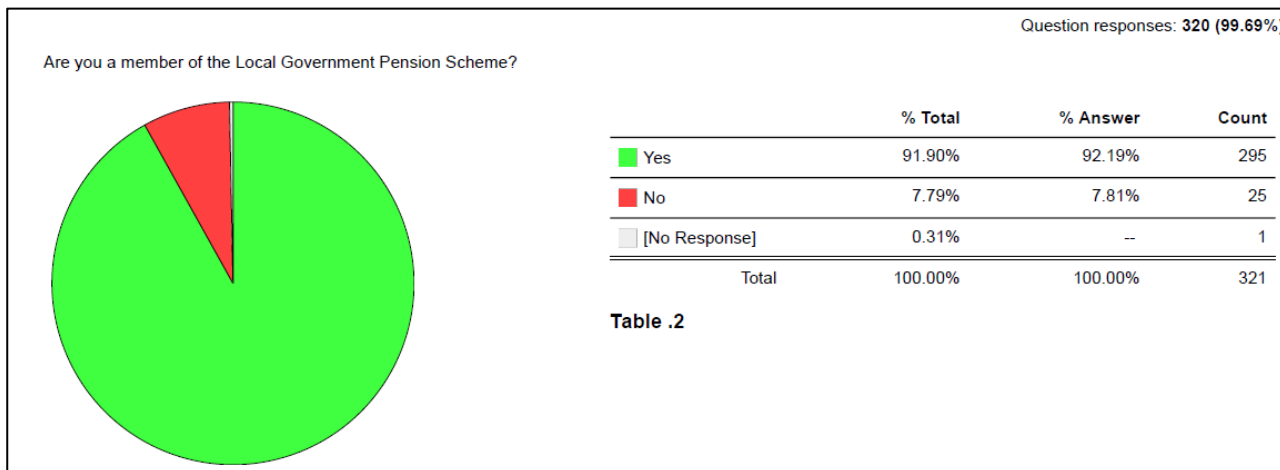
Local Government Pension Scheme (Task & Finish) (click [here](#) for full report)

2021-2022

This task and finish review investigated the reasons why 15% of the Council's workforce had chosen not to be members of the Teesside Local Government Pension Scheme and to consider what steps might be needed to address this.

As part of the review, staff were invited to complete an online survey. Feedback from this survey provided a valuable insight and contribution. The Committee's findings confirmed that affordability

was the main barrier for employees not joining the Scheme. The staff survey also revealed a general lack of understanding and a need for better information to be provided, in plain English.



The review’s recommendations sought to raise awareness of the benefits of the Scheme and to help employees to make better informed choices and improve take-up. [Reported to Cabinet: March 2022](#)

Impact...

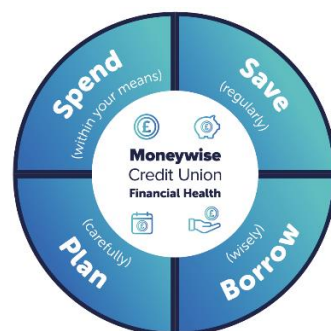
- Increased LGPS membership.
- Increase in the number of employees accessing the AVC scheme.
- It has been confirmed that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is the top performing Authority across the whole country. This is based on the number of scheme plans as a percentage of LGPS membership.

Tees Credit Union
(click [here](#) for full report)

2021-2022 / 2022-2023

The aim of this review was to consider the operation of the Credit Union since the merger with Moneywise in 2017 to ensure that it is serving the needs of the people of the Borough and specifically supporting the vulnerable who rely on it for the provision of loans, banking services and savings accounts at reasonable rates.

The Select Committee concluded that the Credit Union provided local, accessible, and flexible support and noted that since their merger with Moneywise, their financial position had significantly improved with increases in loans, savings and membership. The Credit Union is well thought of by its members and all customers are encouraged to save. As well as the online service, the Credit Union maintains a valuable high street presence which has excellent footfall. [Reported to Cabinet: July 2022](#)

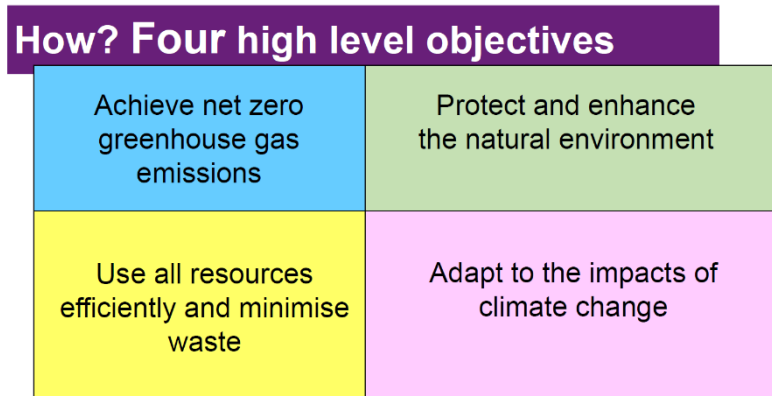


Impact...

- The recommendations and action plan focused on exploring further opportunities to promote the Credit Union and strengthen partnership working with other financial providers and sectors.
- Initial progress update due to be presented to the People Select Committee in March 2023.

(click [here](#) for full report)

The aim of the review was to understand what funding was available for home efficiency improvements and whether this met the needs of Stockton residents. The review also examined the work that was taking place across the Tees Valley to create a local workforce fit for the demands of a green economy of the future.



As part of global efforts to combat climate change, this review focussed on the improvement of home energy efficiency and the development of local employment in green industries. [Reported to Cabinet: February 2023](#)

Impact...

- The Committee’s recommendations centre on awareness raising of grants and alternative fossil fuel-based systems along with writing to government to urge them to improve energy efficiency standards on new housing developments.
- The recommendations have also captured the Council’s continued commitment to deliver its Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy and ‘green jobs’ workshops and training at all levels, including entry level jobs.
- Action Plan in relation to the review’s recommendations to be approved in March 2023, with update on progress of the agreed actions to be received in 2023-2024.

Area Transport Strategy (click [here](#) for full report)

2019-2020

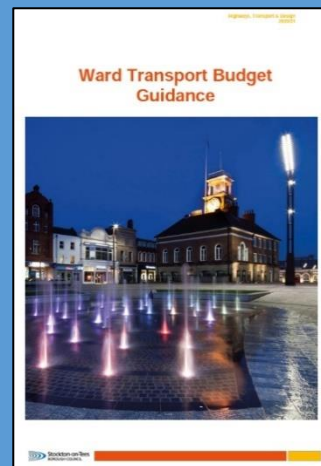
The Area Transport Strategy (ATS) scheme provides the community with an opportunity to influence where the Council targets its limited funding on improving the highway. Whilst the Committee endorsed this fundamental principal of engaging with the public, the evidence received demonstrated a number of challenges and frustrations with the existing scheme. A stakeholder survey was also issued as part of the evidence-gathering process.

The Committee recognised that the Community Participation Budget (CPB) process already enables the public to identify potential solutions to issues across the Borough, and provides a quicker response to community-originated suggestions than the ATS presently allows.

Therefore, the Committee recommend that the existing ATS scheme ceases at the end of the current financial year, with the yearly ATS funding allocation to be transferred to the CPB on a Ward-by-Ward basis determined by population per Ward. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2020](#)

Impact...

- The Ward Transport Budget (WTB) guidance document was circulated to all Ward Councillors on the launch of this budget in July 2020.
- The WTB funding from the Local Transport Plan (LTP) has been transferred into a specific budget account, separate to the Community Participation Budget (CPB).



Business Support and Engagement (click [here](#) for full report)

2020-2021

This review was initiated to examine 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. Of further consideration was the key interface with the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), both in terms of their business support activity and the funding streams that they either manage or can access.



The Committee received evidence from representatives of the Council's Business and Enterprise Team, as well as from a range of wider business support partners including the Tees Valley Combined Authority, the North East England Chamber of Commerce / Department for International Trade, and Teesside University. To gain insight into the impact of the Council's support offer, the Committee also received contributions from local businesses, though the intended visits to the Fountain Shopping Mall, Drake the Bookshop and Fusion Hive were unable to take place due to COVID-19 restrictions. [Reported to Cabinet: December 2020](#)

Impact...

- The 'Invest in Stockton-on-Tees' website has been launched which includes a feature for current and prospective business owners to search for available property and land.
- The Inclusive Growth Strategy has also been completed.

Planters in Residential Streets (Task & Finish)

2020-2021

(click [here](#) for full report)

This review provided an opportunity to evaluate the current condition of planters across the Borough to determine whether they should be retained, removed, or maintained. Contributions from Council Officers, Parkfield Resident's Association, Cultivate Tees Valley, and Catalyst highlighted the importance of planning and coordinating a sustainable community project and obtaining funding.

A key finding was that it would be beneficial to maintain the planters through sustainable community planter projects. The recommendations reflected this view and invited groups, residents, local businesses and Town and Parish Councils to get involved in the future maintenance of planters. The group also recognised that residents should be consulted informally to gather their views on the proposed options for planters in their wards. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2021](#)

Impact...

- £50,000 was secured from the Queens Platinum Jubilee grant by the Community Partnerships, Cultivate and Sprouts. Part of this grant was to work with residents and businesses on 70 planters across the borough and linked to the Edible Stockton initiative and the Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network. It is intended that ongoing support will be provided through the Community Partnerships to identify other avenues of funding and options to build on the successes of the project to look at other planters and work to support other residents living in these areas. Ingleby Barwick Town Council have also provided funding towards two planters in Ingleby Barwick.



Wren Street (Before)



Wren Street (After)

Burial Provision

2020-2021 / 2021-2022

(click [here](#) for full report)

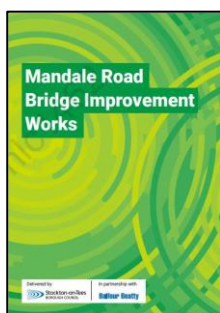
This review provided Members with the opportunity to review the current levels of burial provision within the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees. Members were asked to determine if there was sufficient capacity to allow the Council to continue to provide the appropriate choice to residents. The recommendations reflected the need for a new burial site or sites, primarily in the central or western areas of the Borough. Consideration was given to both the increasing size of the Borough and the addition of the new crematorium. [Reported to Cabinet: May 2021](#)

Impact...

- A review of Council owned land has been completed and it was identified that there were no suitable options and that it was a necessity to consider private land.
- A subsequent review of private land has been undertaken and a handful of potentially suitable options were identified and are being further investigated.
- In addition, several discussions have occurred with Town and Parish Councils on burial requirements and advice has been offered.

Highways Asset Management (including Potholes and Flooding) (click [here](#) for full report)

2021-2022



The aim of this review was to evaluate the opportunities for maintaining the Highways Infrastructure Asset as efficiently as possible, both now and in the future. This review also considered the impact of increasing demands, financial pressures, and climate change issues.

The review uncovered that the existing budget is not sufficient to manage the Highways Infrastructure Asset at a steady state. Therefore, the Council are currently managing a deterioration of the asset, utilising the principals of asset management. [Reported to Cabinet: January 2022](#)

Impact...

- In addition to using recycled rubber in materials, the Council have now moved to the use of warm asphalt on the majority of sites and over the course of the 2022-2023 financial year this has resulted in a saving of 10.2t of CO2 as compared to the use of traditional surfacing materials which is the equivalent of 7 cars off the road.
- The Leader of the Council wrote to both local MPs in September 2021. Subsequent to the letter, the Tees Valley Combined Authority and Stockton as the local highway authority was one of the Mayoral Combined Authorities that moved from the traditional one year highway capital funding mechanism to a five year settlement plan via the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. This surety of funding over a longer period will allow for better planning and co-ordinating of works. It will also allow for larger schemes to be programmed as funding profiles can be adjusted within the 5-year funding period.

Residents Parking Zones (click [here](#) for full report)

2021-2022 / 2022-2023

This latest parking-related scrutiny topic was proposed with a view to informing an overdue revision of the existing 'high-level' Council policy on Residents Parking Zones, something which had not been reviewed since 2004. It was seen as an opportunity to examine the eligibility criteria for such a zone, the pros and cons associated with their implementation, and the experiences and approaches of other Local Authorities.



Following engagement with key Council officers, local business groups, and SBC Ward Councillors, the Committee's recommendations were intended to provide a framework for strengthening awareness around what Residents Parking Zones can and cannot achieve, the process following a request for one, and the key elements within the determination and, potentially, implementation of a scheme. [Reported to Cabinet: July 2022](#)

Impact...

- It is hoped that, through this piece of work, clarity around both the benefits and challenges of Residents Parking Zones will help manage public expectations and also assist the Council in terms of administration, maintenance and enforcement requirements.
- An initial progress update is due to be presented to the Committee in March 2023.

Planning (Development Management) and Adoption of Open Space (click [here](#) for full report)

2022-2023

The aim of the review was to examine the work of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's (SBC) Planning Service, namely pre-application advice, the effectiveness of the Council's planning support service (resources / performance) and planning enforcement. In addition, the review focussed on the issues surrounding the maintenance and adoption of open space land on new residential developments.

The review included site visits to five residential developments across the Borough to view the differences and similarities between privately maintained and SBC maintained open spaces. The visits provided Members with the opportunity to express some of their concerns (and residents' concerns) over the variances in maintenance levels. [Reported to Cabinet: February 2023](#)



Impact...

- This review has provided the Committee with the opportunity to highlight the need for a greater degree of transparency and accountability regarding the maintenance of open spaces and any changes to charges passed on to residents for this service.
- It has also been recognised that the current pre-application process should be re-evaluated and options for charging for pre-application advice should be explored.
- Action Plan in relation to the review's recommendations to be approved in March 2023, with update on progress of the agreed actions to be received in 2023-2024.

Other Scrutiny Work

Quality Assurance

Historically, and in more recent times, there have been several national serious failures of care in health, adult social care, and children's services. It remains vital 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.

The Children and Young People Select Committee receive regular performance reports in respect of children's services. The 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 Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB), Care Quality Commission (CQC), NHS Trusts, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees, and quarterly round-ups of published CQC and PAMMS inspection reports.

To complement this work and improve their understanding of the issues, Members on Adult Social Care and Health, and Children and Young People, Select Committees have previously undertaken **site visits to frontline services** on a rolling programme. Due to the emergence of COVID-19 in the early part of this four-year Council term, such visits were suspended due to social distancing guidance – it is, however, envisaged that a programme of visits will re-start when the 2023-2027 term begins.

Overview Reports

Recognising the overview role of the scrutiny function, annual **Overview Meetings** provide Members with a summary of all the Council directorates and their associated services related to the theme of each Select Committee.

- Adults and Health
- Children's Services
- Corporate Services
- Community Services, Environment and Culture
- Finance, Development and Regeneration

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.

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee
Overview Meeting 2022
15 February 2022
Adults and Health

Context

Members are reminded of the Council's Vision that supports decision-making:

- A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm
 - This means the Borough will be a place where:
 - People live in cohesive and safe communities
 - People are supported and protected from harm
 - People live healthy lives
- A place that is clean, vibrant and attractive
 - This means we will enjoy:
 - Great places to live and visit
 - Clean and green spaces
 - Rich cultural experiences
- A place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed
 - This means that the Borough will have:
 - A growing economy
 - Improved education and skills development
 - Job creation and increased employment

The Council plays its part in making sure this is achieved by being a Council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve.

- This means that we will make sure that we provide:
 - Financial sustainability and value for money
 - Dedicated and resourceful employees
 - Strong leadership and governance

Performance Reporting

Performance across the Council Plan was reported on a six-monthly basis to Executive Scrutiny Committee. Please see the link
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aks/stockton/users/public/admin/kab71.p?cmte=SCR>

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** which is then agreed by the relevant Select Committee.

This is followed by **Progress Updates** on outstanding recommendations, the first of which is usually presented around 12 months after the Action Plan has been approved (though can be requested earlier). Further progress updates are provided (as deemed necessary by the relevant Select Committee) until all actions can be signed-off as fully achieved.

Training and Development

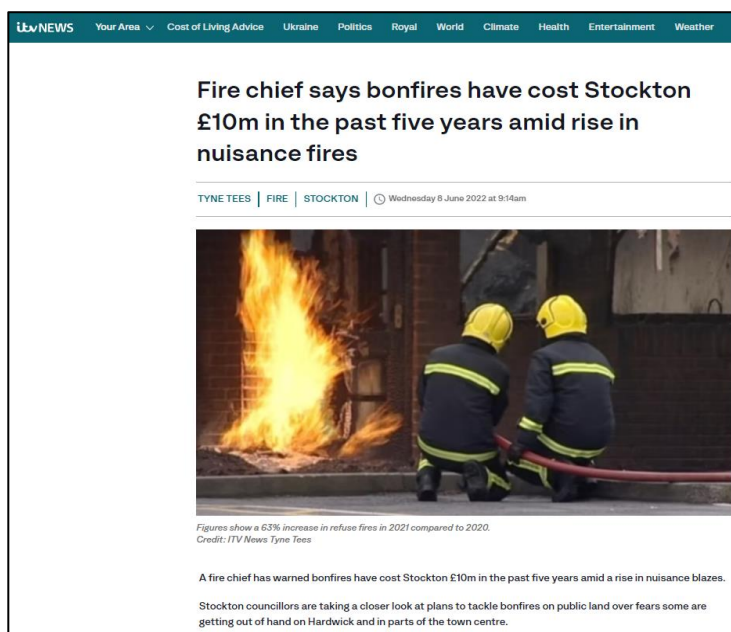
Following the 2019 elections, the Member Induction Programme incorporated a dedicated scrutiny training session for each Select Committee, which included bespoke information relevant to their individual themes. Facilitated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) (now known as the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)), a dedicated training session for senior Council officers was also held to highlight the role and benefits of the scrutiny process.

A similar programme is being designed for all Members after the 2023 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.

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. Members 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. CfGS training courses (often held remotely) are periodically advertised and available to Members.

Profile of the Scrutiny Function

The Council's scrutiny function continues to receive a wide profile, principally due to regular attendance at Committees from the local media (sometimes leading to even higher-profile coverage, as seen below). This has generated substantial interest in the topics under consideration and the role of Councillors in representing their residents.



Internally, the Scrutiny Team have been involved in several Democratic Services awareness-raising sessions for various Council directorates / departments which has further highlight the role and importance of the scrutiny function amongst Council officers.

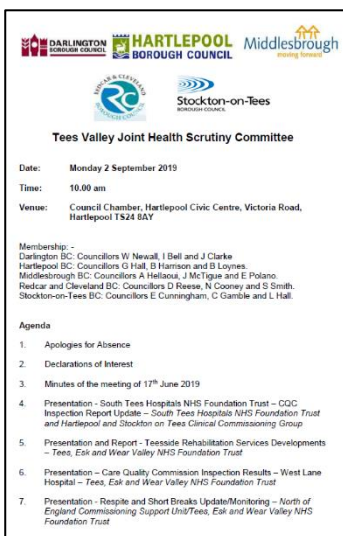
Regional Scrutiny

Joint Health Scrutiny Committees

From a broader perspective, Councillors from Local Authorities across the region scrutinise various health and social care matters via joint committees.

The **Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee**, chaired and supported by the five involved Councils (Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, and Stockton-on-Tees) on an annual rotational basis, plays an important role in holding health and care providers to account and responding to proposals for change. Consideration of health service issues frequently means that local Councillors are reflecting the concern of their residents – an important aspect of scrutiny's role.

The Joint Committee has monitored multiple aspects of activity across the Tees Valley, including:



- Provider responses to Care Quality Commission (CQC) reports
- North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) performance updates
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV) Quality Accounts
- Respite / short-breaks provision updates
- Roseberry Park remedial works updates (following the Joint Committee's task and finish work in 2018-2019)
- Local COVID-19 response (NHS / Public Health)
- Teesside Rehabilitation Services development
- West Lane Hospital updates (including visit to re-branded site)
- Tees Suicide Prevention Plan
- Community Mental Health Transformation Programme
- Breast Diagnostic Services
- Urgent and Emergency Care Access
- Integrated Care System (ICS) developments

Stockton-on-Tees will be responsible for chairing and supporting the Joint Committee for the 2023-2024 municipal year.

On a wider level, the **North East Regional Health Committee** also exists to, where appropriate, consider issues impacting upon a larger geographical area. The Committee, however, has not been convened during this reporting period.

Cleveland Police and Crime Panel

Until late-2021, we continued to support the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel on behalf of the four Boroughs covered by Cleveland Police (from 2022, support of the Panel was transferred to Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council). The Panel's role is to:

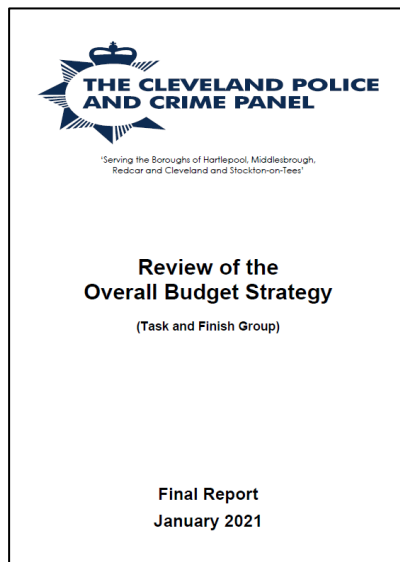
- Scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
- Review the Police precept
- Contribute to the development of the Police and Crime Plan
- Considering proposed appointments by the PCC
- Carry-out investigations

Since its inception, the Panel has established a **Budget Strategy 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 2021-2022 budget setting process, the Task and Finish Group met three times to receive information about the Police and Crime Commissioner's overall budget strategy for the forthcoming financial year. With contributions from the Acting PCC and Chief Finance Officer from the Office of the PCC, discussion took place about funding and planning assumptions, total funding projections, funding pressures, and the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In view of the information provided and the discussion that subsequently followed, a majority of the Group recommended that the proposal of the Police and Crime Commissioner to set the Band D Police Element of the Council Tax within Cleveland for 2021-2022 at £265.73 (an increase of £5.19, or 1.99%, over the 2020-2021 level) should be endorsed.

The Group felt that Cleveland Police had made very good progress under the current Chief Constable and were keen to support the Force in meeting demand, as well as helping to ensure that service improvements were maintained and further strengthened. However, concerns remained as to the allocation of resources across the whole of Cleveland, in particular Hartlepool and East Cleveland. The Group strongly urged the Force to ensure, as far as possible, that any additional funding made available through a precept rise benefitted all four Local Authority areas, and that the public could see tangible evidence of a return on their investment.



At the conclusion of each municipal year, the Panel produces an **Annual Report** detailing highlights of its activity during the previous 12-month period. Accessible via the PCC website (<https://www.cleveland.pcc.police.uk/cleveland-police-and-crime-commissioner/office/police-and-crime-panel/>), the last version (2020-2021) published before Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council took on the role of supporting the Panel included the following...



- Role of the Police and Crime Panel
- Panel Membership and Attendance at Meetings
- The Panel's Core Programme
- Annual Report of the PCC
- Police and Crime Plan – Strategic Programme 2020-2021
- Panel Training
- Review into the role of PCCs
- Resignation of the PCC
- Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS)
- National Police and Crime Panel Conference
- Task and Finish Scrutiny
- HMICFRS Integrated PEEL Assessment Report 2019 update
- Heroin Assisted Treatment (HAT) Programme – Evaluation Feedback
- Complaints

Regional Joint Member / Officer Scrutiny Network

We continue to take part in the **North East Joint Member / Officer Scrutiny Network** which allows Councillors from across the region to share their work. The network also benefits from the input of guest speakers who provide their expertise and insight on important topics – this has included regular contributions from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) and attendance from representatives of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

At the most recent network meeting in February 2023, we presented the key findings and recommendations from the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee's recently completed review of Care at Home. During subsequent discussions, the network Chair encouraged all Local Authorities to use the Committee's work to 'temperature-check' their own local Care at Home markets.

Overview and Scrutiny Team

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



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- Place Select Committee



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Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Scrutiny Challenge for a better Borough 2019-20

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 the remaining **49** can take part in overview and scrutiny

5

Select Committees



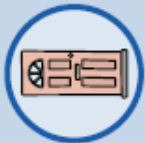
Adult Social Care and Health
Children and Young People



Crime and Disorder



People



Place

What they do

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

7

Service Reviews

- Smarter Working in Stockton – Accommodation & Buildings** – assessed the suitability of office accommodation within the existing ten Council buildings, as well as options for future workspace provision.
- Domestic Abuse and its Impact on Children** – examined the impact of domestic abuse on children and the effectiveness of interventions to inform the Domestic Abuse Strategy and future commissioning decisions.
- Area Transport Strategy** – explored the existing ATS scheme to establish if it was fit for purpose, inclusive, and allowed the public to have the appropriate level of influence, while being an efficient and effective process.
- Protection of Vulnerable Older Residents Living at Home** – looked at local community infrastructure to determine whether more support was needed to help promote the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable residents (with a particular focus on those aged 80 or over).
- Obstructive and illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School** – investigated a Councillor Call for Action submitted in relation to long-standing problem parking within the vicinity of the school.
- Care Homes for Older People** – examined why the Borough's Care Homes were not achieving the same level of CQC ratings as the Tees and national average, and identified what activities could be undertaken by the Care Homes, the Local Authority and wider stakeholders to improve quality in our Homes.
- Careers Provision** – looked at the importance of having a meaningful and positive careers programme in order to increase self-esteem, attainment and reduce drop-out rates from education, which also helps children and young people to make informed choices and understand the opportunities that are open to them.
- Contaminated Land** Inspection Strategy as part of an Officer-led reporting in review in January 2020.
- A number of other reviews began during 2019-20 and will be completed in 2020-21. These involve **Hospital Discharge**, **School Uniforms**, **Fly-Grazed Horses**, **Local Council Tax Support Scheme**, **Public Consultation**, **Business Support and Engagement** and **Planters in Residential Streets**.

Executive Scrutiny Committee

- Co-ordinates the overall scrutiny work programme
- Oversight of Council Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)
- Considered a 'call-in' regarding the ongoing Globe restoration in July 2019

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

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

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5 Select Committees



Adult Social Care and Health



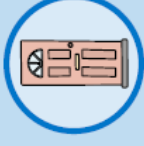
Children and Young People



Crime and Disorder



People



Place



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

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

Focus on Health

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

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**.

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

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Scrutiny Challenge for a better Borough 2021-22

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5 Select Committees



Adult Social
Care and Health



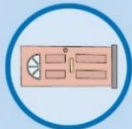
Children and
Young People



Crime and
Disorder



People



Place

What they do

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

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

Executive Scrutiny Committee

- Co-ordinates the overall scrutiny work programme
- Oversight of Council Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)
- Considered executive summaries from completed Select Committee reviews

11 Scrutiny Reviews

- **Hospital Discharge (Phase 2)**: looked at the discharge process from local hospitals to an individual's own home (not care homes), learned the key issues around discharge from both NHS Trust and patient viewpoints, and explored how carers were identified when needing hospital treatment.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att40837.pdf>
- **Multi-Agency Support to Care Homes during the COVID-19 Pandemic (Task & Finish)**: examined the overall interplay between local care homes and their various health and care partners since the pandemic began, as well as analysing relevant data and intelligence to assess the impact of the support provided.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att41523.pdf>
- **Care Leavers EET**: assessed education, employment or training (EET) support for care leavers and explored whether the Council was doing enough and if more needed to be done to further improve performance and outcomes for young people.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att40870.doc>
- **Fraud Awareness (Personal)**: ascertained the ways in which local victims of this crime were identified and supported, and sought to understand the process for reporting (personal) fraud offences; including the role of key stakeholders in the handling of cases and how the public were made aware of the required reporting mechanisms.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att40515.pdf>
- **Police Communications in Stockton-on-Tees (Task & Finish)**: focused on information-sharing and communications in Stockton-on-Tees between neighbourhood policing, local Ward Councillors, local residents and other key stakeholders to ensure that appropriate and effective engagement mechanisms were in place.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att41976.pdf>

- **Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)**: considered the potential benefits and challenges from introducing a PSPO within the Borough, and the process which needs to be followed should the Council wish to implement such a measure to address existing anti-social behaviour.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att42178.pdf>
- **Carbon Monoxide Awareness**: aimed to gain a wider understanding of the Council's role in raising awareness of Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning and the installation of CO alarms, as well as external organisations' responsibilities/ actions.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att40853.pdf>
- **Local Government Pension Scheme (Task & Finish)**: investigated the reasons why a portion of the Council's workforce had chosen not to be members of the Teesside Local Government Pension Scheme and considered what steps might be needed to address it.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att42383.pdf>
- **Disability Inclusive Borough**: explored how the Council could contribute to a more disability inclusive Borough.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att41988.doc>
- **Burial Provision**: recognised the importance of making sure the Council provided sufficient burial space within the Borough, the impact on the Council if it were unable to provide the appropriate choice to residents, and considered the allocation of appropriate resources to ensure that any future demand was met and was delivered in a timely manner.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att40517.pdf>
- **Highways Asset Management (inc. Potholes & Flooding)**: assessed the opportunities for maintaining the Highways Infrastructure Asset as efficiently as possible (currently and in the future), set within the context of increasing demands, financial pressures, and climate change issues.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att41985.pdf>
- Several other reviews began during 2021-22 and will be completed in 2022-23 - these involve **Day Opportunities for Adults, Child Poverty, Bontires on Public Land, Fees Credit Union and Residents Parking Zones.**

Focus on Health

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

Focus on Police and Crime

- For most of 2021-22 we supported the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel:
- Scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Comment on the Police and Crime Plan
- Collate and produce the Panel's Annual Report

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Scrutiny Challenge for a better Borough 2022-23

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



Adult Social
Care and Health



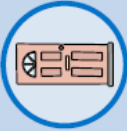
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10 Scrutiny Reviews

- **Day Opportunities for Adults:** sought to understand the current model used by SBC to deliver day opportunities, ascertain the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and learn about alternative methods of delivery from a community-based perspective which could potentially herald a move away from traditional building-based 'service-driven' provision.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att42653.pdf>
- **Care at Home:** examined the Care at Home system and how SBC contracted for these services, assessed the quality of provision of the Council's contracted providers and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and sought to establish future priorities to ensure continued good-quality provision which is available in the right place at the right time.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att44044.pdf>
- **Child Poverty:** as all 12 of the region's Local Authorities, including Stockton-on-Tees, were included in the top-20 areas which saw the biggest increases in child poverty between 2014-15 and 2018-19, this review aimed to gain an insight of and understand the specific issues relating to this topic.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att42858.pdf>
- **Contextual Safeguarding and Youth Relationships:** assessed the Council's response and approach to the issues of contextual safeguarding, and examined the factors leading to a focus in this area and the work of the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) hub (within this context, the review also examined violent and coercive behaviour in youth relationships).
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att44334.docx>
- **Home Energy Efficiency and Green Jobs for the Future:** investigated what funding was available for home efficiency improvements and whether this met the needs of Stockton-on-Tees residents, and examined the work that was taking place across the Tees Valley to create a local workforce fit for the demands of a green economy of the future.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att44298.pdf>
- **Bonfires on Public Land:** established the extent of bonfire-related concerns (e.g. personal safety, damage to property, fly-tipping, etc.) within the Borough during the traditional 'bonfire night' season, learnt what the Council and its partners have historically done to identify, address and reduce bonfire-related issues, and investigated what, if any, further measures could be put in place to strengthen the management, or reduction, of bonfires during this time period.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att43232.pdf>
- **Tree Asset Management:** an internally focused piece of work, this review ascertained the Council's legal responsibilities and its current policy for the management of public tree stock, examined the inspection and maintenance programme (including the pressures contributing to the existing backlog, and the strategy / resources in place to address this), then considered likely / potential future demand and the impact this may have on required operational arrangements.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att44329.pdf>
- **Tees Credit Union:** considered the operation of the Tees Credit Union since the merger with Moneywise in 2017 to ensure that it was serving the needs of the people of the Borough, and assessed if the Credit Union was specifically supporting the vulnerable who rely on it for the provision of loans, banking services and savings accounts at reasonable rates.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att42996.pdf>
- **Residents Parking Zones:** provided an opportunity to revise the existing 'high-level' Council policy on Residents Parking Zones, and probed the eligibility criteria for such a zone, the pros and cons associated with their implementation, and the experiences and approaches of other Local Authorities.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att42992.pdf>
- **Planning (Development Management) and Adoption of Open Space:** examined the work of the SBC Planning Service (namely pre-application advice, the effectiveness of the service (resources / performance) and planning enforcement), then focused on the issues surrounding the maintenance and adoption of open space land on new residential developments.
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/images/att44302.pdf>

Focus on Health

- Performance and quality of local hospital Trusts and care services
- Regional health service changes and reconfiguration of acute services
- Monitoring OQC ratings for local health and care providers
- Challenging the regulator regarding new inspection regimes

Reflection and Future Planning

- Produced the Overview and Scrutiny: End-of-Term Report 2019-2023 (including how reviews have impacted upon services)
- Prepared scrutiny induction/ training materials ahead of the new Council term (2023-2027)