

(c) Regular Dialogue with the NHS Chairs:

The Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet Portfolio holders for Adult and Community Services, meet regularly to exchange ideas/information on health matters with NHS Chairmen.

Urgent Care Services:

The Chair of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee was directly involved in contributing to the development of an Urgent Care Strategy which aims to assist the County Durham Primary Care Trust to commission Urgent care more effectively. The nature of urgent care is such that many different agencies may be involved in responding to a patient's needs.

Health Scrutiny Liaison Manager:

Durham County Council has agreed to support a joint appointment with County Durham Primary Care Trust. The post holder will work two and half days a week supporting delivery of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny function and two and half days a week with the County Durham Primary Care Trust (CDPCT) on involvement and engagement issues. This is an important development and the first of its kind nationally.

Regional Health Scrutiny:

The Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will scrutinise "Pathways to Healthcare: the road map to new hospital, primary and community services and facilities for Teesside". Consultation will begin in June 2008.

Healthcare Commission Annual Health Check Consultation:

Health check represents a major opportunity for the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to influence local health services. Comments from Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee are used by the Healthcare Commission to cross-check the veracity of the self-assessments by NHS Trusts. Trusts are measured against 24 core standards in 7 domains of:-

- Safety
- Clinical & Cost Effectiveness
- Governance
- Patient Focus
- Accessible & Responsive Care
- Care Environment & Amenities
- Public Health

Modernisation of Rural Ambulance Services:

The Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered an evaluation report on ambulance stations in Weardale and Teesdale. The Committee has encouraged the County Durham Primary Care Trust to enter into dialogue with key stakeholders to ensure they fully understand the outcome of the evaluation of rural ambulance services in order to improve performance, address concerns and consider the recommendations expressed by the County Durham Primary Care Trust (CDPCT) Public and Patient Involvement Forum.

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs):

Overview and Scrutiny has played a significant role in the development of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) in County Durham. LINKs will be a network of people, organisations and groups and will be able to represent the views and ideas of stakeholders/local people. LINKs will have an important relationship with the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC). They will be able to refer matters of concern to the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) to take up on their behalf.

Evaluation of Overview and Scrutiny in County Durham

The County Durham Overview and Scrutiny Officer Network (CDOSON) saw the creation of the new unitary authority as an opportunity to comprehensively evaluate Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) in the County. A PhD student from



Northumbria University with the CDOSON facilitated the evaluation using the Centre for Public Scrutiny's Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF). The SEF is a mechanism to demonstrate O&S effectiveness and to identify areas and means for improvement in relation to the Four Principles of Good Scrutiny, i.e.

- Providing critical friend challenge
- Reflecting the public voice
- Leading and owning the process
- Making an impact.

Interviews and surveys were completed with Members, Officers and other Stakeholders who have been involved with O&S across County Durham.

Brief Summary of Findings

O&S Strengths

- Provides an effective challenge to the Executive and public accountability
- Is non-political and independent of, but not an opposition to Leadership/Executive

O&S Challenges

- Capacity of Members to do effective Scrutiny
- Scrutiny work needs greater publicity and involvement with public

O&S Priorities for New Unitary Authority

- O&S aligned to Local Area Agreement themes as per DCC's bid
- Closer more pro-active working relationship with Executive
- Scrutiny of Budget and Performance needs to be improved
- Increased dedicated Member and Officer resources
- Generate more public interest, awareness and participation in O&S.

Regional Scrutiny

Significant changes are likely in the next few years which will impact upon Overview and Scrutiny at a regional level including the abolition of the North East Assembly (NEA), following the Government's Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration which reported in 2007. The current role of the NEA in holding the Regional Development Agency (One NorthEast) to account for what will become an Integrated Regional Strategy is likely to be assumed by a Regional Leader's Group, probably, in our region, under the auspices of the Association of North East Councils (ANEC). There are ongoing discussions about what role, non-executive members will have in any future arrangements.

There are also moves towards closer working of Overview and Scrutiny at regional level in relation to health, in areas such as provision of specialised services and action to improve health in line with regional health improvement strategies.

There are vibrant regional scrutiny networks at regional level for both members and officers, which act as forums to share best practice, consider new developments in Overview and Scrutiny and influence both regional and national Overview and Scrutiny.

THE FUTURE

Overview and Scrutiny will build on the work it has begun. Through legislation it has an enhanced and strengthened role e.g. Overview and Scrutiny of Local Area Agreements (LAA) are key to the future arrangements of all Overview and Scrutiny activity.

Changes in Local Government mean Overview and Scrutiny is well placed to add value, contribute to service improvements and policy developments, hold partners to account in the interests of the communities we serve. Overview and Scrutiny is an exciting function in Local Government led by democratically elected representatives securing the interests of all who live, work and bring up a family in County Durham.

For more information: visit our website on www.durham.gov.uk/Scrutiny

If you require this leaflet in another format contact Liz Finnigan (0191) 383 3673 or e-mail liz.finnigan@durham.gov.uk



**Year End Report
2007/2008**

Overview & Scrutiny



Making a difference where you live

Overview and Scrutiny sits at the heart of the improvement agenda. It provides challenge and acts as a 'critical friend' to those who deliver Council services and to our partners, for example, scrutiny of Local Government Review (unitary status).

The recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) inspection said of the function "... the Council's Scrutiny arrangements function well and are effective. The Scrutiny function is open, displays appropriate challenge and Scrutiny committees include a wide range of partners ..."

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ON A 6 MONTH BASIS

We go through a process of a six monthly Systematic Review, asking Cabinet to identify what action it will take in relation to Overview and Scrutiny recommendations.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK IN 2007/08

Below are summaries of the work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny over the past year. **Full copies of all the reports can be accessed at: www.durham.gov.uk/scrutiny.**

"CROSS CUTTING" WORKING GROUPS, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH DISTRICT COUNCILS

NEET's

The NEET'S (Not in Education, Employment and Training) Working Group looked at what needed to be done to ensure that young people in County Durham can enjoy better opportunities to gain employment and stay in education.

KEY FINDINGS:

- A partnership approach in responding to the needs of young people who are NEET is critical in addressing the NEET Challenge;
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to support young people make the right choice is fundamental;
- Mainstreaming of projects that have made a difference with a focus on young people who are NEET must be a priority.

Public Transport

This Working Group looked at the importance and impact of local transport providers (commercial, public and community) on local communities in urban and rural areas of County Durham. It also sought to develop member views on the Document 'Putting Passengers First' and the Road Transport Bill (2007).

KEY FINDINGS:

- Ensuring the Bus Strategy is implemented as soon as possible and is funded quickly
- Improving consultation mechanisms between user providers via County Durham Transport Partnership Forum

Future of Residential Care

The Group examined the decision made by the County Council to keep residential care facilities open and pursue a policy of re-provision. The Group considered a range of issues, including whether the Authority was making best use of resources (value for money); what provision the Authority wanted to see in place to meet the needs of older people in communities; the County Council's vision for supporting older people to live independently; national drivers for the future of residential care; demographic trends and implications for service delivery.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Relate to the support available to help people live independently and opportunities for partnership working
- With specific recommendations that relate to individual residential homes under the ownership of the Authority.

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE ON ALL OF THESE PROJECTS

'LIGHT TOUCH' OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEWS 2007/08

Overview and Scrutiny contributes to policy development and policy review. This focus provides opportunities to examine specific issues relevant to the Council and its partners through 'Light Touch' reviews, involving a small number of Councillors looking at a specific issue over a defined time period (normally 3-4 meetings over a 6 week period).

'Light Touch' Scrutiny Reviews in 2007/08 included:

Gypsies and Travellers

Focus: The purpose of the Review Group was to gain an understanding of gypsy and traveller issues, including provision of sites, and associated health matters, providing opportunities for members to look in-depth at issues.

Outcome: There is a need for the Authority to invest in refurbishment of permanent authorised sites in County Durham. The review also raised member awareness about Gypsy and Traveller issues generally.

Pre-School Provision

Focus: The purpose of the Review Group was to identify challenges, policy changes and opportunities for change around pre-school provision.

Outcome: Family support strategies are an essential component in pre-school provision. We need to invest more in supporting families.

Bullying

Focus: The Review Group looked at the various initiatives used by the Authority to tackle bullying, the success of these initiatives and issues or problem areas within the existing service provision.

Outcome: The Group felt that there was a need to consider mainstreaming funding for the Anti-Bullying service to enable it to grow, and that there was a need to raise awareness of the issues with School Governors.

Skills Development

Focus: The Group looked at issues of Skills Development in County Durham and how to redress these issues within the draft County Durham Economic Strategy.

Outcome: The Review Group prepared a response to the strategy, focusing on Skills Development and highlighting the need for Overview and Scrutiny to provide a challenge to the delivery by the County Durham Economic Partnership of the Strategy.

Network Maintenance

Focus: The Review Group investigated the maintenance of road carriageways within the County (footways were considered in a previous scrutiny project).

Outcome: At a meeting on 17 March 2008 it was decided that this issue be suggested as a potential project for the New Authority.

Stress in the Workplace

Focus: The Group focused on Stress Management within the Authority, how stress is identified in the workplace, stress-related sickness absence and the impact of stress-related sickness absence on the Authority and individuals affected by it.

Outcome: There is a need to investigate potential for implementing an in-house listening and support service across the Council including a possible mediation service and to review/evaluate the existing telephone counselling service.

Urban and Rural Renaissance

Focus: The Group examined arrangements for the selection and implementation of Neighbourhood Urban and Rural Renaissance Initiative Schemes. This included how schemes were selected, designed, developed and evaluated and to how the needs of communities are considered.

Outcome: The Group recommended the current URRI scheme should continue, as previously proposed, with additional funding and outstanding schemes delivered, although a very small number of neighbourhood schemes may not be able to proceed, or need reconfiguring.

Regional Spatial Strategy

Focus: The Review Group looked at the Regional Spatial Strategy, and its importance to the County.

Outcome: The Review Group felt the recent changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) should be welcomed and supported, but that greater clarification in the RSS was needed in support of the South of Seaham (Film Studios) site, with an explicit reference required in relation to the Eastgate Renewable Energy Village concerning employment policies.

The Authority was urged to encourage Area Tourism Partnership (ATP) involvement in promoting the tourism aspects of the developments at Eastgate and at South of Seaham, with an invitation from the Review Group and the relevant Cabinet portfolio holder to the Minister for the North East to enlist his support in relation to these siting issues and other economic development matters.

WHAT ELSE HAVE WE DONE IN 2007/2008?

The Budget

Overview and Scrutiny also played an important role in 2007/08 in scrutinising the County Council's Budget.

Support For Service Improvements

As part of this process Overview and Scrutiny work has contributed to securing funding to support service improvement in the following areas:

Domestic Abuse; Parish Paths Partnership; Improvements to the Lime Kiln Gill Site; Heritage Coast Support; Footpath Improvement; Academic Mentoring for Looked After Children; A focus on post 16 learning; Increase the IT provision in IMPACT centres; Focus on an E-learning pilot

JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Action to address Health Inequalities:

The Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, made up of representatives from both County and District Councils contributed to the debate with the Department of Health National Support Team on health inequalities with a view to support action to address health inequalities. This involved member participation in the following:

(a) Healthy Communities Collaborative (HCC):

The aim of the collaborative was to build leadership capacity, for executive (Cabinet), non-executive (Overview and Scrutiny) and non executive directors in the NHS, by promoting healthier communities through healthy public policy. The programme was supported by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA).

(b) Durham County Council's Health Improvement Strategy:

The Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee responded to this draft strategy which describes the contribution the County Council makes, and will make in the future, to improving the health of the people of County Durham and tackling inequalities in health locally. Responses to the strategy looked at:

The health of children and young people, Smoking, Obesity, Alcohol and substance misuse, Mental Health and well-being, the health of people aged 50+, of vulnerable adults and carers and Health Inequalities.

