

# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/2022

# Introduction

With the election of a joint administration in May 2021, the council appointed a cohort of new members into the important positions of chair and vice-chair of our overview and scrutiny committees. Some of our chairs and vice chairs were newly elected to the council and they have risen to the challenge of being a county councillor with the added responsibilities of being a committee chair and vice chair.

It has been my privilege to have been appointed as chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) alongside Councillor Chris Lines as my deputy.

The role of COSMB is to be the strategic driver of the overview and scrutiny function by overseeing and co-ordinating the work of its committees. As chair I am passionate about the important role scrutiny can play within the council's decision making structures. I want to ensure that all our overview and scrutiny committees fulfil their potential.

My aim is for scrutiny to be an open and transparent function which is inclusive for all scrutiny members. I hope that through our scrutiny work, we can make a lasting impact on our residents and communities in County Durham. This can only be achieved by working together across the committees and ensuring we represent the views and voices of our communities.

Throughout our first year I have urged all scrutiny committees to get involved in policy development work. By being involved in early discussions around policy areas we can use our influence to help shape policy and improve outcomes for communities and businesses in County Durham.

Councillor Craig Martin

Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

# Overview and Scrutiny in County Durham

Scrutiny provides a valuable tool to scrutinise how we deliver our services and to drive improvement. We are supported by a dedicated scrutiny team and senior and specialist officers across the council. We have developed a strong scrutiny culture which adds value to the work of the council.

Durham County Council has embedded the four principles of good scrutiny, developed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, in all our work. These are:

- To provide a constructive critical friend challenge to executive policy-makers and decisions-makers
- To amplify the voice and concerns of the public
- To ensure scrutiny is carried out by independent minded people who lead and own the scrutiny role
- To drive improvement in public services

Overview and scrutiny is a valuable part of local democracy and has important statutory roles in the scrutiny of health and crime and disorder.

DCC appoints members to six overview and scrutiny committees. DCC has 126 members in total and of these over 80 take part in scrutiny activity.



Scrutiny committees decide which areas they wish to examine. This may arise following representations by members of the public about a particular matter; be an issue identified by councillors themselves; or follow on from reports or performance assessment on the council's activities made by the cabinet or outside agencies.

We also promote scrutiny by maintaining an excellent relationship between executive and non-executive members and meet regularly to discuss matters of common interest.

The overview and scrutiny process provides an opportunity for members of the public and local communities to comment upon any service.

## Co-optees and engagement

We continue to work with the non-voting co-optees who sit on our scrutiny committees. They bring skills, knowledge and their own expertise and views to scrutiny and provide important external challenge to our work programme.

We have also promoted engagement of local expert and academic researchers in overview and scrutiny where they can add to our work.

This ownership of the work programme and strong organisational culture underpins scrutiny's legitimacy as an effective and strategic function.

Co-opted members appointed to scrutiny committees ensure a strong external representation and help scrutiny to engage with the public.

We value the different perspectives and challenge our co-optees bring to our work. Co-optees

- Act as an independent voice for those who live or work in County Durham.
- Bring specialist knowledge, skills and an element of external challenge to the overview and scrutiny process.
- Take an interest in, attend and contribute to the committees and working groups to which appointed.
- Establish good relations with other members, officers and co-optees.

We undertake a full refresh of our co-opted members every four years and anyone who would like to express an interest is requested to contact the Scrutiny Team.

## Overview and Scrutiny Review Activity

Each year the scrutiny work programme is developed to ensure a balanced programme. Alongside considering overview reports and updates, we plan focussed review work throughout the year. These reviews can be light touch or in depth and are usually reported to Cabinet and the appropriate thematic partnership.

Since the pandemic, most in depth scrutiny work has been paused due to the need to hold on-line meetings, a reduced schedule of meetings and the capacity of both members and officers.

In November 2021 Cabinet requested that Overview and Scrutiny establish a working group to investigate the merits and consequences of Durham County Council declaring an Ecological Emergency. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ESCOSC) considered evidence as to whether an ecological emergency should be declared over two special meetings and considered evidence from Neighbourhoods and Climate Change service grouping and key partners. ESCOSC unanimously agreed to recommend to Cabinet that DCC declare an ecological emergency and also agreed further additional recommendations in relation to:

- The development of an Ecological Emergency Response Plan
- For the Ecological Emergency Response Plan to be merged with the Climate Emergency Response Plan over the fullness of time.
- The need to ensure the best ecological practice is integrated across all Council services.
- The need to ensure that ESCOSC receives regular updates on the development of the plan and once developed monitors the progress of the plan against the actions and targets in the plan on a regular basis.

The report and its recommendations were agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 6 April 2022.

In June 2021 Cabinet agreed to review options for the potential future use of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery building and surrounding grounds. Cabinet asked the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) to consider whether the former DLI museum could be brought back into use to house the collection and to look at the options to repurpose the building and/or site.

In July 2021 COSMB held a special meeting with key stakeholders invited to submit representations framed around questions outlined by Cabinet on repurposing the building and options for the site. The meeting generated a lot of interest and gave an opportunity for questions to be asked on the

information presented. The outcomes of the meeting formed part of the evidence base for the review by Cabinet.

# Planned Overview and Scrutiny in 2022/23

The work programmes for overview and scrutiny focus on the priority areas identified within the Council Plan, the Cabinet's Forward Plan of decisions, the County Durham Vision 2035, partnership plans and strategies, performance and budgetary control data and changes in government legislation.

The process for developing the Council's overview and scrutiny work programmes is consultative and comprehensive. Initial proposals are influenced by legislation, plans and strategies, performance reports and include engagement with the executive, partners and officers. Each overview and scrutiny committee chair ensures there is a clear focus on the committee's role and forward plan of work. Where there are any cross-cutting matters, joint meetings are held to avoid duplication and make the best use of capacity of both members and officers

Work programmes are usually finalised during June and July and are designed to ensure there is flexibility and capacity to take on topics which may arise throughout the year.

A summary of the key issues for the 2022/23 Work Programme is below:

## Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

- Medium Term Financial Plan and budget setting
- Welfare Reform and Poverty
- Corporate Initiatives
  - Digital Inclusion
  - Digital Solutions
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)
- Performance and budget outturn
- Customer Feedback
- Council Plan
- HQ Review
- The County Durham Pound
- Terms of Reference for Scrutiny
- General Fund and Capital Final Outturn
- Marketing and Communications
- County Durham Partnership Update

## Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Availability of commercial land and supply across the county
- Key strategic employment sites
- Job creation
- Regeneration of Town and Villages
- Support to business sector
- Housing
- Inclusive Economic Strategy
- Skills development and skills requirements
- Aykley Heads Strategic Employment sites
- Integrated Transport Management

- Visitor/Tourism economy and cultural offer

#### Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Child Poverty
- 0-25 Family Health Services
- Early Years
- Best Start in Life
- Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
- CAMHS – Waiting Times
- Children, Young People and Families Strategy
- Support for Young People not in Education, Employment or Training
- School Funding
- SEND Green Paper
- Sufficiency Strategy
- Autism Strategy
- Reducing Parental Conflict

#### Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Air Quality in County Durham
- Climate Emergency Response Plan 2
- SUPS monitoring against action plan
- Fly Tipping
- Strategic Waste Management
- Fuel Poverty
- Highway, Footway and Bridge Maintenance
- DCC's Management of Allotments
- Visitor Economy – Tourism and Cultural Offer
- Leisure Transformation Programme
- Physical Activity Strategy
- Transport Policy & Activity – Regionally & Locally
- Woodland Management
- Parks, Nature Reserves and Open Spaces
- Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project

#### Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Arson and deliberate fires
- Off Road Bikes and Vehicles
- Reducing Re-offending
- Alcohol and Drugs Harm Reduction Strategy
- Youth Justice Plan
- Probation Services
- Counter Terrorism
- Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence
- Road Safety

#### Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- NHS Statutory Consultations/Legislation plans
- Development of Integrated Care Systems and Partnerships
- Health and Social Care Integration
- Shotley Bridge Community hospital



- Public health funding and services/campaigns
- NHS Foundation Trust performance and Oversight –
  - County Durham and Darlington NHS FT
  - Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT
  - North East Ambulance Services NHS FT

## Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board 2021/22



Cllr Craig Martin  
Chair



Cllr Chris Lines  
Vice chair

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) provides a strategic direction for the work of all the overview and scrutiny committees.

### Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2021/22 include:

- MTFP (12) 2022/23 to 2025/26 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2022/23
- Review of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Collection and Archive
- Regulation of Investigative Powers Act (RIPA) 2000
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Budget Outturn reports
- Workplace Transformation: Enabling Smarter Working
- Poverty Issues
- Customer Feedback - Complaints, Compliments & Suggestions
- County Durham Partnership
- Refresh of non-statutory, non-voting overview and scrutiny co-optees
- Annual Statutory Representations 2020/21
- Updates on Petitions
- Notice of Key Decisions

# Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22



Cllr Patricia Jopling  
Chair



Cllr Rochelle Charlton-Laine  
Vice chair

The Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (AWH OSC) has a statutory role under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 as amended to scrutinise local health services

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2021/22 include:

- Overview and Scrutiny Review of Access to GP services in County Durham
- An Overview of Adult Social Care
- An Overview of Public Health Services
- Winter Planning and the work of the Local Accident and Emergency Delivery Board
- Shotley Bridge Community Hospital updates
- Local Outbreak Management Plan updates
- Health Protection Annual Assurance Updates
- Integrated Care Systems
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Inspection CQC Improvement Plan update
- NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account 2020/21 responses and 2021/21 priorities for
  - North East Ambulance Service NHS FT
  - County Durham and Darlington NHS FT
  - Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT
- NHS Dentistry Services – Availability and Access
- Improving access to Primary Access
- QWELL – Digital Mental Health Services for Adults
- County Durham and Darlington Adult Mental Health Rehabilitation and Recovery Services (Primrose Lodge, Chester-le-Street)
- Director of Public Health Annual Report
- County Durham and Darlington NHS FT – No Not Attempt CPR Policy
- North East Ambulance Service NHS FT – 999/111 services – System processes, demand, capacity and performance
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn

# Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22



Cllr Chris Hood  
Chair



Cllr James Cosslett  
Vice chair

Children and Young  
People Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee  
(CYP OSC)

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2021/22 include:

- Introduction to Children and Young People's Services
- Children, Young People and Families Partnership
- Overview of Child Protection Process
- Relationship Based Social Work Practice
- Developing a new County Durham SEND Strategy
- Children's Adolescent Mental Health Service update
- Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
- Key Findings and Actions from OFSTED's focused visit
- Corporate Parenting Annual Report
- Child Poverty in County Durham
- Free School Meals
- Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
- Inclusion/Exclusion Update
- Developing a new County Durham Children, Young People and Families Strategy
- Impact of the Education White Paper: Opportunity for all – Strong Schools with Great Teachers
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn
- EHE Progress update
- Holiday Activities with Food
- 0-25 Family Health Services
- Young Carers
- Neglect
- Stronger Families Programme
- Reducing Parental Conflict
- Durham Works

# Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22



Cllr Bill Moist  
Chair



Cllr Andrew Jackson  
Vice chair

Economy and  
Enterprise Overview  
and Scrutiny Committee  
(Economy OSC)

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2021/22 include:

- Introduction to the Regeneration, Economy and Growth Service Grouping
- Strategic job creation plan
- Strategic key employment sites
- County Durham's visitor economy
- Managing change in County Durham's towns and villages
- Investment pipeline
- Support provided to the retail sector by DCC
- Business Durham progress
- Inclusive Economic Strategy
- Housing update
- Transport policy and activity in County Durham and the wider region
- Highways, footways and bridge maintenance
- Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project (SLERP)
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn

# Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22



Cllr Bev Coult  
Chair



Cllr Jonathan Elmer  
Vice chair

Environment and  
Sustainable  
Communities Overview  
and Scrutiny  
Committee (Env&Sust  
OSC)

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2021/22 include:

- Overview of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Service Grouping
- Environment and Climate Change Partnership
- Climate Emergency Response Plan
- Renewable Energy Projects
- Fly-tipping
- Strategic Overview of Resources and Waste Management Services
- Single Use Plastics
- Highways, Footway and Bridge Maintenance
- Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project
- Draft Physical Activity Strategy
- Scope Three Emissions
- Transport Policy and Activity in County Durham
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn
- Community Action Team
- Heritage Coast and the Tourism Offer
- Environment and Climate Change Partnership Update
- Winter Maintenance
- EU and Other Funding
- DCC Fleet
- Stockton to Darlington Railway Bicentennial Celebrations
- Theatres
- Air Quality Management in County Durham
- History Centre
- Fuel Poverty
- Bereavement Services
- Libraries

- Lumiere
- Woodland Management
- DCC Allotments
- Flood Risk Management Authorities

## Safer & Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22



Cllr Joyce Charlton  
Chair



Cllr Phil Heaviside  
Vice chair

SSC OSC has powers under the Police & Justice Act 2006, as amended, to scrutinise work being undertaken by the statutory crime and disorder reduction partnership - the Safe Durham Partnership

### Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2021/22 include:

- Safe Durham Partnership – Overview
- County Durham Youth Justice Service
- Open Water Safety
- Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction Group
- Arson and Deliberate Fire Setting
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and whole system approach to domestic abuse
- Nuisance motorbikes and quads – Time Limited Action Plan
- Community Protection Service
- Public Protection Service
- Safer Cyber
- Road Safety
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategic Group
- Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 – Prevent Update
- Probation Service
- Civil contingency planning and Storm Arwen review
- County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue
- Informal Awareness sessions on:
  - Drug and Alcohol Recovery Services
  - Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour
  - Counter Terrorism – Prevent Awareness
  - Closed-Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV)



# Regional Scrutiny

The North East Regional Employers' Organisation supports a region-wide North East Joint Scrutiny Member/Officer network where all North East local authority scrutiny leads discuss national developments in scrutiny. The network also provides an opportunity to share work programmes and priorities and consider emerging issues that have an impact across local authority boundaries.

Durham County Council have chaired and administered the regional network until recently.

## North East Combined Authority scrutiny arrangements

We continue to work with other regional authorities as the North East Combined Authority (NECA) which is comprised of the four councils of Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

NECA has three broad areas of focus:

- Transport
- Employability and Inclusion
- Economic Development and Regeneration

We have representation on the NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise and challenge decision-making on behalf of our communities. The committee investigates matters of significant importance to residents across the areas covered by the four councils with a view to influencing decisions.

Durham County Council is represented on the NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee by Councillors Craig Martin and Chris Lines the Chair and Vice-Chair of COSMB. Councillor Bev Coult the Chair of Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the nominated substitute member.

Transport is of strategic importance to the North East and both NECA and the North of Tyne Combined Authority (Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland councils) work collaboratively to ensure effective decision making takes place across the region. We work with NECA and the North of Tyne Combined Authority on a North East Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee established with representatives from all seven authorities. Councillors Craig Martin and Chris Lines the Chair and Vice-Chair of COSMB represent Durham County Council. With Councillor Bev Coult, Chair of Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the nominated substitute member.

Both scrutiny committees usually meet at varying locations across the NECA area and meetings are open to the public.

Further details on NECA can be found at [www.northeastca.gov.uk](http://www.northeastca.gov.uk).

## Regional Health Scrutiny

The Council continues to work collaboratively at a regional level to ensure that the impact of changes to health services across local authority boundaries does not adversely impact upon residents of County Durham.

The North East Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committee consists of lead Health Scrutiny members from all 12 north east local authorities.

The committee is charged with scrutinising issues around the planning, provision and operation of health services in and across the north east region, comprising for these purposes the areas covered by all constituent authorities.

## Sub Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committees

The emergence of the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System and associated Integrated Care Partnerships has resulted in the establishment of two Integrated Care System/Integrated Care Partnerships Joint OSCs within the region.

### North East and North Cumbria ICS and Northern and Central ICP Joint OSC

This Joint OSC comprises representatives from Durham County Council; Gateshead BC; Newcastle City Council; North Tyneside BC; Northumberland CC; South Tyneside BC and Sunderland City Council

### North East and North Cumbria ICS and Central and Southern ICP Joint OSC

This Joint OSC comprises representatives from Darlington BC; Durham County Council; Hartlepool BC; Middlesbrough BC; Redcar and Cleveland BC; North Yorkshire County Council and Stockton on Tees BC

Durham County Council is the only North East Council with representatives that sit on both ICS/ICP Joint OSCs.

The regional and sub-regional joint scrutiny overview and scrutiny arrangements will be used to scrutinise the development of the ICS/ICPs and any associated proposals for substantial developments or significant variations in services.



# Overview and Scrutiny Team

The Overview and Scrutiny team is part of the Resources Directorate.

Helen Lynch, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer.

Michael Turnbull, Interim Democratic Services Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Stephen Gwilym, Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

Diane Close, Jonathan Slee and Ann Whitton - Overview and Scrutiny Officers.  
Clare Luery - Scrutiny Support Assistant.

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