

# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/2023

# Introduction

During my first year as chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) I urged all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to demonstrate a commitment to inputting into key areas of policy development. I have been impressed with the wide range of member involvement in developing council policies and strategies and there are several examples of this work across all Committees which are included within this annual report.

The Council continues to operate in a period of financial uncertainty and the development of the 2023/24 budget and the medium-term financial plan (MTFP13) saw an extended role for the COSMB and thematic scrutiny committees in considering options for efficiencies and income generation opportunities within their service areas to support the budget. This “deeper dive” into the County Council’s budgets led to a number of recommendations put forward by scrutiny to the Cabinet in February 2023.

We continue to be committed to the key principle of openness and transparency within the scrutiny function. In order to enhance these principles and provide an opportunity for the voice of local communities to be reflected and amplified in the work of Scrutiny, we undertook an extensive refresh of the non-statutory non-voting co-opted representation on the committees in May and June 2022. We received over 40 expressions of interest in these key roles and following a series of interviews, we successfully appointed to all of the positions across the 5 thematic OSCs. The successful applicants received a comprehensive induction setting out the functions of scrutiny and their roles in supporting the work of the committees and I am delighted with the input of the co-optees since their appointment.

I would like to thank everybody who has been involved in supporting and assisting the overview and scrutiny process during the past year including members officers partners and the scrutiny team themselves in delivering another extensive series of work programmes.

Councillor Craig Martin

Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

# Overview and Scrutiny in County Durham

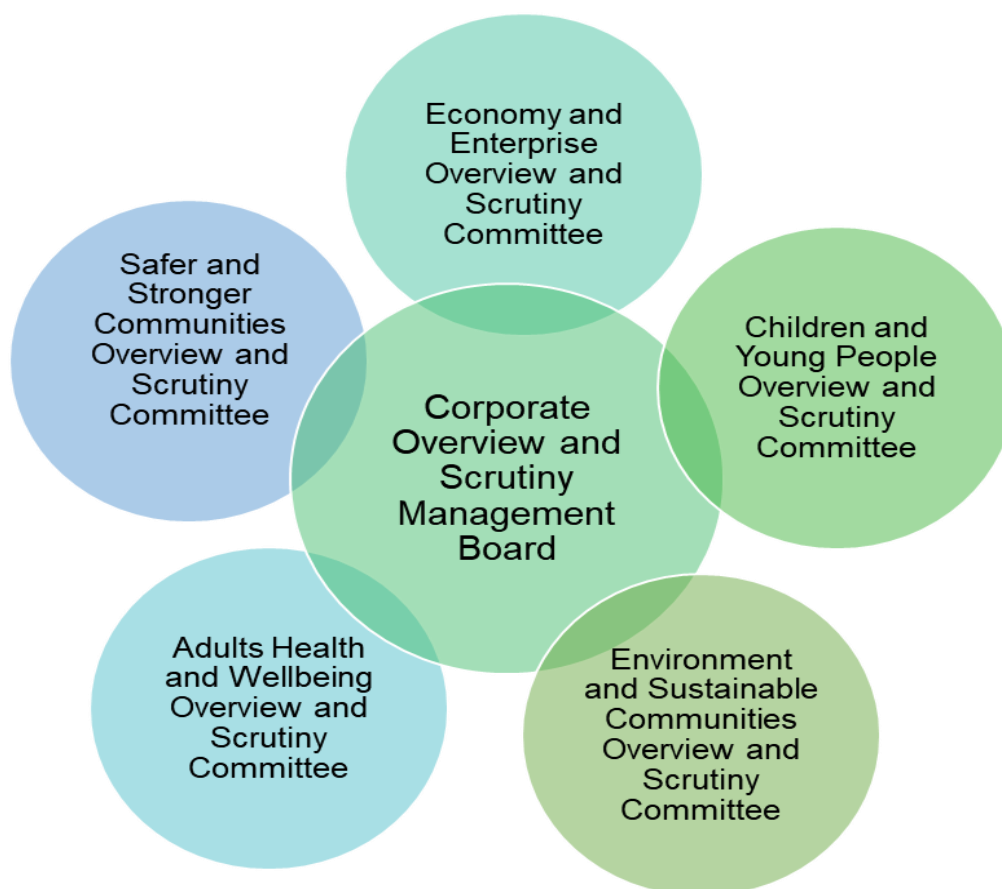
Scrutiny provides a valuable tool to scrutinise how we deliver our services and to drive improvement. We are supported by a dedicated scrutiny team and senior and specialist officers across the council. We have developed a strong scrutiny culture which adds value to the work of the council.

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 the latest refresh was undertaken in May and June 2022. The new cohort of co-optees appointed to the OSCs included some experienced co-optees who have served for a number of years, complemented by new appointees who all bring a range of skills, professional competencies and lived experience to ensure that the voice of the public is given an opportunity to be promoted and listened to.

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 COVID 19 Pandemic the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees have not returned to focussed review activity but have rather concentrated on their respective roles in shaping and informing Council and partnership policy through workshop activity and formal consultation mechanisms. Examples of this include:-

- The Inclusive Economic Strategy – E&E OSC
- Climate Emergency Response Plan 2 – ESC OSC
- The Ecological Emergency Response Plan – ESC OSC
- Library Transformation – ESC OSC and E&E OSC
- County Durham Children, Young People and Families Strategy – CYP OSC
- Contextualised Safeguarding – CYP OSC
- Safe Durham Partnership Anti-social Behaviour Strategy – SSC OSC
- County Durham Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan – SSC OSC
- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy – CYP OSC and AWH OSC
- Quality Accounts for County Durham and Darlington NHS FT; Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT and North East Ambulance Service NHSFT – AWH OSC
- Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2022-25 – AWH OSC
- Oral Health Promotion Strategy 2023 – AWH OSC
- Home to School Transport Services – CYP OSC

As part of the Council's approach to developing its Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 TO 2026/27 and associated budget proposals the COSMB, Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC and Children and Young Peoples' OSCs have undertaken bespoke review activity examining the potential for identifying and recommending efficiency savings and opportunities for increased income generation for the budget spending within their remits. Several working group meetings were held, the findings of which were reported to Cabinet and Council in February 2023 as part of the MTFP and Budget setting process.

# 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 2023/24 Work Programme is below:

## Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

- Medium Term Financial Plan and budget setting
- Welfare Reform and Poverty
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)
- Performance and budget outturn
- Customer Feedback
- North East LA 7 Devolution Deal
- The County Durham Pound
- General Fund and Capital Final Outturn
- County Durham Partnership Update
- Digital Inclusion
- Community Engagement (AAP) Review

## Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Housing Strategy
- Homelessness Strategy
- Inclusive Economic Strategy and Delivery Plan
- Selective Licensing Scheme
- Council New Housing Build Programme
- Promotion of the Tourism offer
- County Durham Visitor Economy
- Regeneration of Town and Villages
- Support to business sector
- Masterplans
- Regional and Local Transport Policy and Delivery
- Strategic Sites in the County
- Funding – UKSPF and County Durham UKSPF Investment Plan

### Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Child Poverty
- 0-25 Family Health Services
- Home to School Transport Proposals Feedback
- Best Start in Life
- Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
- CAMHS – Waiting Times
- Elective Home Education Update
- Support for Young People not in Education, Employment or Training
- Support for Young Carers
- SEND and Alternative Provision response to Government
- Sufficiency Strategy
- Third Party Payments Overview
- Pre-Birth Programme
- Support for Children and Families on the Edge of Care

### Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Air Quality in County Durham
- Climate Emergency Response Plan 2
- Ecological Emergency Action Plan
- Water Courses in the County
- Fly Tipping
- Strategic Waste Management
- Fuel Poverty
- Highway, Footway and Bridge Maintenance
- DCC's Allotments Policy
- Leisure Transformation Programme
- Physical Activity Strategy
- DCC's Woodland Management
- Tree Management Policy
- Bereavement Services
- Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project
- Work of the County Durham Environment and Climate Change Partnership
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy

### Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Safe Durham Partnership Priorities Refresh
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy Delivery Plan
- Horden Together Project update and evaluation
- Civil Contingencies and the Storm Arwen Action Plan update
- Off Road Bikes and Vehicles
- Reducing Re-offending
- Alcohol and Drugs Harm Reduction Strategy
- Youth Justice Plan
- Probation Services
- Counter Terrorism
- Open Water Safety
- Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence
- Road Safety

- Modern Slavery
- Hate Crime

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

- NHS Statutory Consultations/Legislation plans
- North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Systems and Partnerships
- Health and Social Care Integration
- CQC Adult Social Care Assurance Framework;
- 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 2022/23



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 2022/23 include:

- MTFP (13) 2023/24 to 2026/27 and Revenue and Capital Budget Outturn 2021/22
- Council Plan 2022-26
- Regulation of Investigative Powers Act (RIPA) 2000
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Resources Budget Outturn reports
- DCC Headquarters Alternative Options Assessment
- Poverty Strategy and Action Plan
- Customer Feedback - Complaints, Compliments & Suggestions
- County Durham Partnership
- Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22
- County Durham Pound Project
- Customer Relationship Management Project
- Digital Inclusion Project
- Community Engagement (AAP) Review
- Adult and Health Services Annual Statutory Representations 2021/22
- Updates on Petitions
- Notice of Key Decisions

# Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23



Cllr Patricia Jopling  
Chair



Cllr Joanne Howey  
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 2022/23 include:

- Draft Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2022-25
- Winter Planning and the work of the Local Accident and Emergency Delivery Board 2022/23
- Shotley Bridge Community Hospital
- COVID-19 Transition Plan
- Health Protection Annual Assurance
- North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys CQC Inspection Update
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys CQC Inspection – Inpatient Wards for Adult patients with a learning disability or autism
- NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account 2021/22 responses and 2022/23 priorities for
  - North East Ambulance Service NHS FT
  - County Durham and Darlington NHS FT
  - Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT
- Proposed Oral Health Promotion Strategy for County Durham
- County Durham GP Appointments and access
- Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022
- Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2022
- Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2022
- North East Ambulance Service NHS FT – CQC Inspection Report and Improvement Action Plan
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn

# Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23



Cllr Anne Reed  
Chair



Cllr James Cosslett  
Vice chair

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

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2022/23 include:

- Children, Young People and Families Partnership
- Best Start in life priorities update
- Support for Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training
- School Funding
- Home to School Transport Services Consultation
- Early Years Services
- Reducing Parental Conflict in County Durham
- Schools' OFSTED Update and Educational Attainment
- Response to the Government's Children's Social Care Review
- Relationship Based Social Work Practice
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Update
- Children's Adolescent Mental Health Service waiting times
- Sufficiency Strategy
- The Pause Programme
- OFSTED ILACS Inspection Durham 2022
- Corporate Parenting Annual Report
- Child Poverty in County Durham
- Growing up in County Durham Children, Young People and Families Strategy
- 0-25 Family Health Services
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn

# Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23



Cllr Ken Robson  
Chair



Cllr Andrew Jackson  
Vice chair

Economy and  
Enterprise Overview  
and Scrutiny Committee  
(E&E OSC)

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2022/23 include:

- The County Durham Economic Partnership
- County Durham Employment Land and Strategic Sites
- Cabinet Member Roles in attracting and supporting Investors to County Durham and input into UK Shared Prosperity Fund Bids
- Skills Delivery and supporting the Inclusive Economic Strategy
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- County Durham's visitor economy
- Inclusive Economic Strategy – The Big Econ-versation feedback
- Draft Inclusive Economic Strategy
- Inclusive Economic Strategy Delivery Plan process
- Housing update including key strategic housing roles, working with Registered Social Providers; selective licensing and empty homes
- Regional and Local Transport: Policy and Delivery
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn
  
- Informal Awareness session on:
  - Empty Homes

# Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23



Cllr Bev Coult  
Chair



Cllr Jonathan Elmer  
Vice chair

Environment and  
Sustainable  
Communities Overview  
and Scrutiny  
Committee (ESC OSC)

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2022/23 include:

- County Durham Environment and Climate Change Partnership
- Climate Emergency Response Plan 2
- Allotment Improvement Programme
- Ecological Emergency Update and Action Plan
- Management of DCC land for Biodiversity
- Fly-tipping
- Strategic Overview of Resources and Waste Management Services
- Regional and Local Transport: Policy and Delivery
- Community Action Team
- County Durham Visitor Economy
- Air Quality Management in County Durham
- Fuel Poverty
- Bereavement Services
- Library Provision
- Single Use Plastics
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn

# Safer & Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022/23



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 2022/23 include:

- County Durham Youth Justice Service
- Exploitation – Children and Adults
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy
- Open Water Safety
- Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction Group
- Home Fire Safety
- Horden Together Update
- Safety of Women at Night (SWaN) and Safer Streets 4 Programme
- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group Annual Report
- Community Protection Service
- Public Protection Service
- Road Safety
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategic Group updates
- Probation Service
- County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Community Risk Management Plan
- Informal Awareness sessions on:
  - Arson Suppression Group
  - Anti-Social Behaviour Powers and Interventions
  - Exploitation
  - Empty Properties and ASB
  - ASB Performance Dashboard

# 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 Councillor Jonathan Elmer the Vice Chair of Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Kevin Shaw. Councillors Ken Robson, Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Stacey Deinali are the nominated substitute members.

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 Bev Coult, Chair of Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Stacey Deinali represent Durham County Council. With Councillor Craig Martin, Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Councillor Kevin Shaw as the nominated substitute members.

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, Clare Luery and Ann Whitton - Overview and Scrutiny Officers.

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## Key contacts:

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Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

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Environment and Sustainability Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

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