



Altogether better

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2011-2012

**Assistant Chief Executive's Office
Durham County Council**

June 2012

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Foreword

The next four years (2012/13 - 2015/16) will be challenging for the Council. The Council's Cabinet forecast the need to deliver £159.2m. of cash savings for the five year period 2011/12 to 2015/16 and savings of £171.8m, when including forecasts for 2016/17.

A key achievement for the authority will be to maintain and deliver improvements to services, whilst meeting the required savings targets. Overview and Scrutiny will contribute in a constructive way to support the Council in meeting these challenges.

This report provides an update of the work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny during the past year. 2011/12 has been another very busy year.

Overview and Scrutiny has responded to in-house and external consultations, scrutinised the Council's budget proposals, identified and considered areas of under performance and undertaken a number of in depth and light touch scrutiny reviews. The findings of these reviews have been extremely well received by our Cabinet colleagues and the following are just a few of the positive comments received:

Councillor Alan Napier, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder Resources: Awaiting comments

Councillor Brian Stephens, Cabinet member for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships, in relation to the Scrutiny Review of Area Action Partnerships *'Fit for Purpose and Fit for the Future'*, said *"I was extremely impressed with the review and it was yet another way in which we could involve communities in the strategic direction of our services. The recommendations have provided us with a practical set of steps to ensure we are fit for the future and continue to improve."*

Councillor Neil Foster, Cabinet member for Economic Regeneration *"The recent Renewable Energy report is an exemplar of the hard work and dedication of the members and staff of the scrutiny review group. The quality and thoroughness of all the reports continue to set a high standard. They are not afraid to tackle controversial issues such as under 18 conceptions with that same high level of resolve."*

I would like to thank all those who have given their time to support and assist the Overview and Scrutiny process, be that as a member of a Committee or Task Group or as an officer providing evidence. I would also like to recognise the constructive 'critical friend' relationship that has developed between Overview and Scrutiny and the Cabinet, which should lead to further positive outcomes.

I hope that you find this report interesting and informative. If you would like to find out more, all Scrutiny Committee meetings are open to the public and the support officers will be pleased to supply you with more information. Contact details are listed at the end of this report.

Councillor Joe Armstrong



Joe Armstrong, Chair of
Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board

Key Achievements 2011-12

Overview and Scrutiny Review Activity

The following in depth evidence based reviews have been completed and been / or will be reported to Cabinet and the appropriate thematic Partnership.

Review of Physical Activity which looked at addressing the gap in life expectancy that exists across County Durham by focusing on physical activity



Review of Physical Activity

Adult Substance Misuse Services 'From Treatment to Recovery' which focused on developing recovery based services within the context of the Government's Drug Strategy and Health and Social Care Bill.



Adult Substance Misuse Services

Development of Renewable Energy Technology in County Durham, which examined the environmental, economic and social benefits to County Durham of investing in renewable energy.



Renewable Energy Technology

Area Action Partnerships, which assessed whether the Area Action Partnerships were "Fit for Purpose and Fit for the Future" by examining the difference that they had made and how they could be improved further.



AAP Review

Increasing Young Peoples' Employment Opportunities (18-24 years) which focused on an examination of how Durham County Council and its Partners can increase young people's (18-24 years) employment opportunities by further developing support for and engagement with employers in County Durham.



18-24 Employment Opportunities

Under 18 Conceptions which focused on the provision of services and accessibility to them for young people in County Durham

Key Achievements 2011-12

Overview and Scrutiny Activity

- Contributed to the budget process through consideration of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- Responded to the consultation on the proposed revisions to the Council's Homes - School /College Transport policy.
- Established the Corporate Issues Members Reference Group to assist the Internal Audit Review of Data Quality on sickness absence, following consideration of performance management information.
- Participated in the Regional Health Scrutiny Project 'Regional review of the health needs of the ex-service community', which won the Centre for Public Scrutiny 'Good Scrutiny Award' for best joint working and overall impact in June 2011.
- Increased awareness of the Council's scrutiny function through articles in local newspapers, radio and television news programmes, Durham County News, national publications and internal publications including the Members' Bulletin, Buzz and an ongoing update of the scrutiny web pages. Overview and Scrutiny Committees have received more proactive media relations presentations.
- Formally responded to NHS Quality Accounts for North East Ambulance Service, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, County Durham and Darlington NHS Community Health Services and Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust.
- Carried out light touch reviews on the Decommissioning Policy of NHS County Durham and Darlington and the consultation for the proposed relocation of Hyper Acute Stroke Services to University Hospital Durham
- Successfully engaged with County Durham Court's Service following concerns from Scrutiny Members and attended the South Durham Magistrates' AGM to highlight the impact of fly tipping on the local environment and Council's resources.
- Continued to maintain and establish links with all thematic partnerships. A series of briefings and reports have been shared with thematic partnerships, for example the Early Years/ Sure Start Overview and Scrutiny Report was presented to the Children's Trust Executive Board and the review of physical activity report has been shared with the Health and Wellbeing Partnership.
- Provided evidence to the OfSTED Team on their inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services. The inspection assessed the effectiveness of the County Durham Children's Trust and local children's organisations to determine whether their policies and practices complied with statutory requirements and guidance. Overall OfSTED rated County Durham's Children's Services as 'outstanding'.



Key Achievements 2011-12

Overview and Scrutiny Site Visits

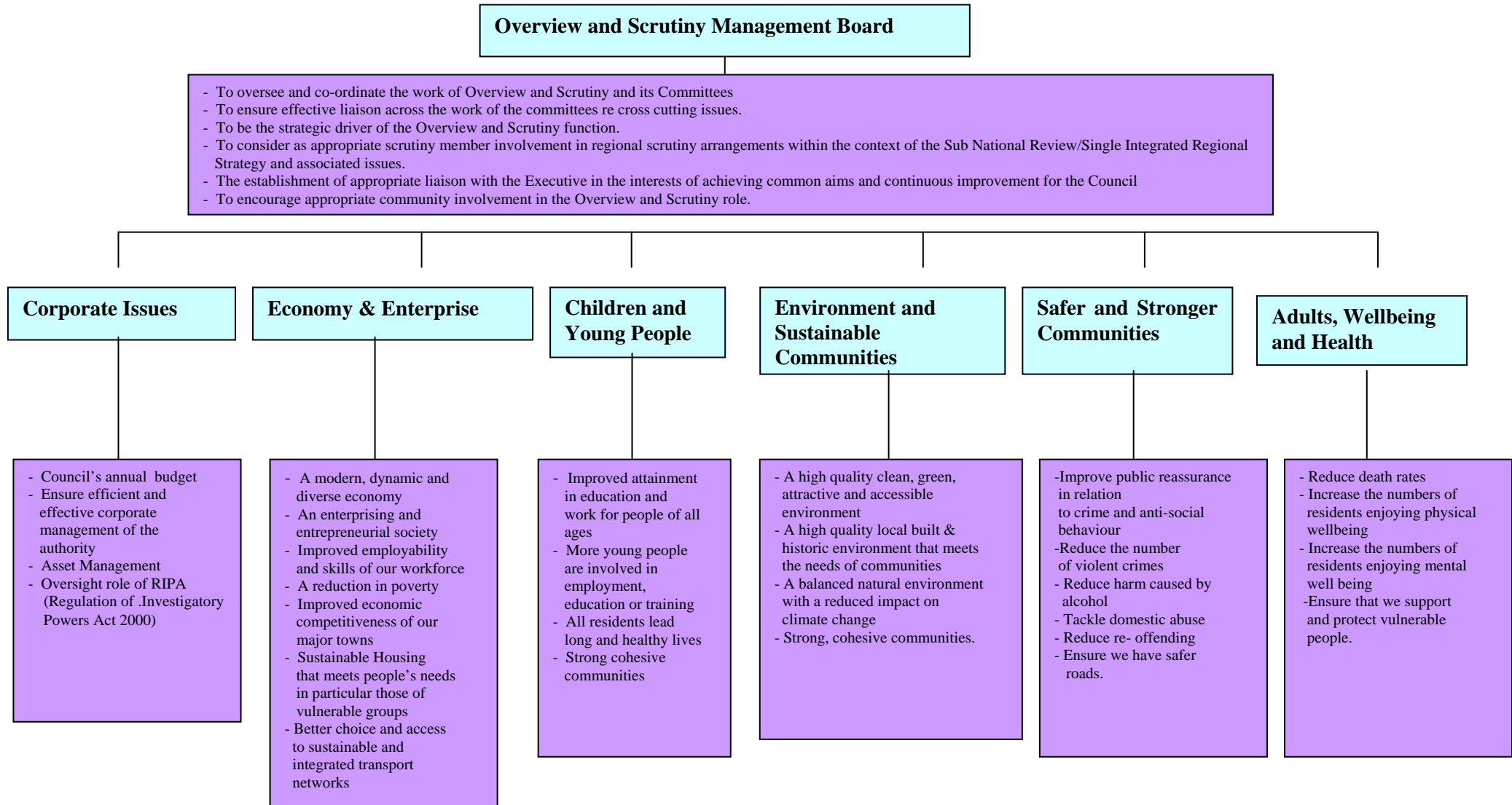
Members and/or Officers have undertaken a wide range of scrutiny visits to support the Committees' work programmes, such as visits to:

- Cleveland Potash Mine
- Drugs Recovery Wing at HMP Durham
- CCTV and Care Connect Control Room
- Specialist Hospital Wards
- Newton Aycliffe Drug Treatment Centre
- Peterlee Recovery Academy
- Durham Recovery and Wellbeing Centre
- National Centre for Renewable Energy at Blyth
- Dalkia, a biomass plant
- Construction Skills Centre
- South West Durham Training Centre
- Derwentside College
- Durham Jobcentre Plus
- Young Mothers Centre
- A 'Dragon's Den' style question and answer session on teenage sexual health services
- Comeleon House, Tanfield to look at postal systems



Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees are aligned to the key priority themes of the Council's vision, which is to build an Altogether Better Durham that is better for local people and provides better places to live and work. Information on all elements of the Overview and Scrutiny function can be found on the scrutiny pages of the Durham County Council website, www.durham.gov.uk. Below is the structure of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.



Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

The **Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB)** provides a strategic steer for the work of all the committees. Its work programme for 2011/12 included the following:

- Review of the Area Action Partnerships (AAPs), 'Fit for Purpose, Fit for the Future';
- Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2012/2013 – 2015/2016 and revenue and capital budget proposals for 2012/2013 to make sure that the Council's resources are used effectively and efficiently;
- Council's Forward Plan to ensure that Members are aware of key decisions to be made by Cabinet;
- Updates on petitions received which enables Members to track progress on behalf of communities. Members of the Board have also considered petition appeals in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme;
- Updates on major policy developments and announcements made by Central Government and the implications for the Council and County Durham.



Cllr Joe Armstrong,
Chair of Overview and
Scrutiny Management
Board



Cllr Paul Stradling,
Vice-Chair of Overview
and Scrutiny
Management Board

The Board also has:

- Received information and commented on performance management every quarter before it was disseminated to respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees for further comment;
- Received work programme updates from each of the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs so that it was able to identify cross service issues and plan accordingly;
- Received updates on the work of the County Durham Partnership.



Focus Group Session – AAP
Review

Membership

The following were members of the Board in 2011/12:

Councillors J Armstrong (Chair), P Stradling (Vice-Chair), B Alderson, B Avery, A Bainbridge, R Bell, J Blakey, D Boyes, M Campbell, J Chaplow, B Graham, M Hodgson, A Hopgood, G Huntington, P Jopling, J Moran, E Murphy, D Myers, A Naylor, B Ord, C Potts, D J Southwell, D Stoker, G Tennant, R. Todd and A Willis

Faith Communities Representatives: Revd K Phipps and Mrs M Sands

Parent Governor Representative: Mr N Hallam

Co-opted Members: Mr A J Cooke, Mrs K J M Currie, Mr D Kinch and Mr A Kitching

Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Brian Avery,
Chair of
Corporate Issues OSC



Cllr Eddie Murphy,
Vice-Chair of Corporate
Issues OSC

The **Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee**, which is aligned to **Altogether Better Council** has:

- Examined the effectiveness of the Oracle system – E-Business Suite (ordering and invoice system);
 - Worked with Internal Audit on the policy and procedures to deal with sickness absence,
 - Collaborated with the OSMB on the County Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and budget process and the Council Plan 2012-2016;
- Been updated on a number of ICT projects such as Telephony and Digital Durham;
 - Received details and commented on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 and the outcome of a RIPA inspection by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners;
 - Been updated and commented on the procurement of specialist professional services;
 - Received and commented on progress against the Council's corporate basket of performance indicators for the Altogether Better Council Theme;
 - Updated and commented on the implementation of a countywide system to process benefit claims and the progress being made in dealing with claims;
 - Carried out a light touch review of the postal arrangements within Durham County Council, focusing on the new corporate arrangements, value for money and efficiency.



Membership

The following were members of this Committee in 2011/12:

Councillors B Avery (Chair), E Murphy (Vice-Chair), J Armstrong, J Bell, G Bleasdale, P Brookes, A Cox, N Harrison, G Holland, S Hugill, E Huntington, J Lethbridge, P May, B Myers, L O'Donnell, S Robinson, A Shield, P Stradling, K Thompson, M Wilkes and R Young

Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is aligned to **Altogether Healthier** priority theme and has:

- Commented on and had input into NHS County Durham and Darlington's proposals to decommission existing Anti Coagulation Services and re-commission them under 'Any Qualified Provider' arrangements;
- Carried out a light touch review on the Decommissioning Policy of NHS County Durham and Darlington;
- Carried out a light touch review on the consultation for the proposed relocation of Hyper Acute Stroke Services to University Hospital Durham;
- Received quarterly performance management and budgetary reports to monitor performance and revenue and capital expenditure;
- Engaged in a consultation by South Tees Hospitals NHS FT on proposals to change Orthodontics Services;
- Considered regular update reports regarding organisational and service changes within NHS County Durham and Darlington, including information on recent white papers and proposed legislation to ensure that any potential implications for the County Council are highlighted;
- Continued to engage with North Tees and Hartlepool NHS FT regarding the Momentum project and its £40m challenge which could impact on residents of south and south east Durham;
- Monitored progress against NHS Quality Accounts for 2010/11 as well as engaging in preparatory work for the 2011/12 Quality Accounts;
- Engaged with the County Durham Local Involvement Network to ensure community views are reflected in scrutiny activity;
- Considered the refreshed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment;
- Examined progress made against the County Durham Health and Wellbeing Partnership's Delivery Plan Report for the Health Inequalities Strategy;
- Participated in the Council's Strategic Review of Community Alarms and Telecare.



Cllr Robin Todd, Chair of Adults, Wellbeing & Health OSC



Cllr Jean Chaplow Vice-Chair of Adults, Wellbeing & Health OSC



Membership

The following were members of this Committee in 2011/12:

Councillors R Todd (Chair), J Chaplow (Vice-Chair), J Armstrong, J Bailey, A Barker, R Bell, J Brown, B Brunskill, D Burn, A Cox, R Crute, K Davidson, P Gittins, M Potts, A Savory, A Shield, W Stelling, P Stradling, T Taylor, O Temple and A Wright

Co-opted Members - Mr V Crosby, Mrs K J M Currie, Mrs H Gibbon, Mrs R Hassoon, Mr D J Taylor Gooby and Mr P Irving

Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Jan Blakey,
Chair of Children &
Young People OSC



Cllr Christine Potts
Vice-Chair of Children &
Young People OSC

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is aligned to **Altogether Better for Children and Young People** –

ensuring children and young people are kept safe from harm and that they can believe, achieve and succeed. This Committee has:

- Undertaken a major review on Under 18 Conceptions focusing on sex and relationship education, contraception and sexual health services and support for young parents.
- Responded to consultation on Home to School Transport.
- Provided evidence to the OfSTED Inspection team on their inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children.
- Received and commented on quarterly budgetary and performance management reports for Children and Young Peoples Services.

The Committee has also received updates and overviews on:

- Joint Disability Strategy with regard to performance information;
- Safeguarding with regard to performance information concerning the numbers of looked after children;
- Progress of recommendations from a previous review of Sure Start Early Years;
- Special Educational Needs Strategy Update.
- Educational Attainment of Looked After Children at Key Stage 2;
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment providing information on the key messages;
- Alcohol, Teenage Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections information on the risky behaviour of teenagers;
- Launch of the One Point Service;
- Reform of school funding in relation to changes in government funding;
- Pathfinder Service evaluation of the end of the pathfinder project;
- Obesity levels in primary aged children;
- Tackling stigma in relation to a national pilot which Investing in Children took part;
- Educational Attainment of pupils with Special Educational Needs and their Peers without Special Educational Needs at Key Stage 4;
- NHS Reforms in relation to changes in legislation.



Parenting course at a Sure Start Centre

Membership

The following were members of this Committee in 2011/12:

Councillors J Blakey (Chair) C Potts (Vice-Chair), J Armstrong, B Bainbridge, D Bowman, P Brookes, B Brunskill, R Crooks, K Holroyd, S Iveson, J Lethbridge, N Martin, J Maslin, E Paylor, S Robinson, J Shiell, M Simmons, P Stradling, J Wilkinson, B Wilson and S Zair

Faith Communities Representatives - Mr M Davison and Mr G Moran

Parent Governor Representative - Mr N Hallam

Co-opted Members: - Mr C McCaughey and Mr R Pye

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee is aligned to **Altogether Wealthier** – focusing on creating a vibrant economy and putting regeneration and economic development at the heart of what we do. This Committee has:

- Undertaken an in depth scrutiny review on increasing the employment opportunities of young people aged 18-24 within County Durham through the further development of partnership working;
- Received an overview of the work of the County Durham Economic Partnership;
- Monitored and provided comments in relation to the development of the County Durham Plan;
- Provided comments to be fed into the consultation exercise for the development of the County Durham Economic Assessment, which explores issues relating to enterprise, business, skills, education, places, communities and connectivity;
- Received and commented on quarterly performance and budgetary reports;
- Monitored, challenged and provided comment in relation to the Stock Options Appraisal on how Durham County Council will finance and manage its housing stock in the future;
- Monitored and challenged the performance of our housing providers, Durham City Homes, Dale and Valley Homes and East Durham Homes;
- Received an overview presentation and provided comment upon the Digital Durham Programme, which plans to provide next generation (superfast) broadband to County Durham;
- Commented upon the TRANSIT 15 project, a major public transport project in County Durham focusing on improving the reliability and predictability of journey times on key routes and improving the whole journey experience;
- Received an overview and provided comments on the Empty Homes Strategy, resulting in an in depth scrutiny review to be undertaken on this issue;
- Received an update on the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).



Cllr John Moran,
Chair of Economy &
Enterprise OSC



Cllr Alice Naylor
Vice-Chair of Economy &
Enterprise OSC



Durham City Homes

Membership

The following were members of this Committee in 2011/12:

Councillors J Moran (Chair), A Naylor (Vice-Chair) J Armstrong, B Arthur, A Barker, C Carr, J Cordon, B Graham, B Harrison, J. Hunter, P Jopling, R Little, C Potts, J Rowlandson, P Stradling, Andy Turner, M Wilkes, M Williams and A Willis

Co-opted Members - Mr T Batson, Mrs O Brown, Mrs A Harrison, Mr A Kitching, Mr D Lavin and Mr JB Walker

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Dan Myers,
Chair of Environment &
Sustainable OSC



Cllr Barbara Graham,
Vice-Chair of Environment
& Sustainable OSC

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is aligned to **Altogether Greener** – ensuring an attractive and ‘liveable’ local environment and contributing to tackling global challenges. This Committee has:

- Undertaken an in depth scrutiny review of the environmental, economic and social benefits to the County Durham of investing in renewable energy technologies;
- Received quarterly performance management and budgetary reports to monitor performance and revenue and capital expenditure;
- Regularly been updated on the implementation of the alternate weekly collection scheme countywide and the implications of the system for specific user groups, including trade waste users;
- Assessed the effectiveness of issuing Section 215 notices under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to improve the condition of land and/or property in the county;
- Considered whether the most significant flood risk areas in the County were identified in the Council’s draft Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment, which the Council as a Lead Flood Authority, was required to produce under the Flood Risk Regulations 2009;
- Monitored and challenged the work being undertaken by the Council and the Environment Agency to tackle the problem of fly tipping in the County;
- Questioned representatives of the Coal Authority on the results of mine water pumping trial, that had been set up to determine the environmental risks posed by the rising mine water within the Westoe and Wearmouth mining block, and the plans to implement a permanent treatment scheme by 2015;
- Received information and provided comments on the projects to be undertaken by the Limestone Landscapes Partnership and the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership. Both partnerships have been awarded Heritage Lottery Funding;
- Received details on the benefits to health/lifestyle of adopting a Green Infrastructure Strategy and the progress being made in preparing implementation plans for the East Durham, Durham City and Bishop Auckland and Shildon AAP areas;
- Considered as part of the systematic scrutiny review process, the Council’s Winter Service Plan for 2011/12. A number of members of the Committee visited Cleveland Potash Mine at Boulby, which supplies the Council with salt.



Membership

The following were members of this Committee in 2011/12:

Councillors D Myers (Chair), B Graham (Vice-Chair), J Armstrong, E Bell, R Crooks, D Farry, J Gray, D Hancock, E Huntington, A Laing, P May, J Moran, J Rowlandson, W Stelling, P Stradling, Allen Turner, J Wilson, M Wood, C Woods and S Zair

Co-opted Members - Mr D Bell, Mr D Easton, Mr T Bolton, Mrs P Spurrell, Mr D Kinch and Mr O Graham

Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is aligned to **Altogether Safer** – creating a safer and more cohesive county, has focused on a number of key areas including:

- Undertaking an in-depth review of Adult Substance Misuse Services 'From Treatment to Recovery' that looked at Community Alcohol and Drug Treatment Services, the Government's Drug Strategy 2010 and the development of two abstinence based recovery centres within County Durham. In addition, the Committee has also received a presentation on Alcohol Minimum Pricing;
- Monitoring progress of implementing recommendations from the Committee's previous scrutiny reviews of ASB 'People and Places' and 'Parks and Open Spaces'. The Committee has also requested a progress report on delivery of actions within the Safe Durham Partnership ASB Strategy;
- Responding to consultations on the Safe Durham Partnership Priorities for 2012/13 and County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority' Integrated Risk Management Plan 2012/13. The Committee also undertook a site visit to the CCTV Control Room and commented on proposals on the removal of Public Realm Non Strategic CCTV Cameras;
- Receiving information and monitoring of the Safe Durham Partnership Reducing re-offending Strategy and County Durham Youth Offending Service's Pre-Reprimand Disposal initiative;
- Commenting on progress reports to support vulnerable people through the Partnership's 'Total Home Safety' project and development of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. The Committee also considered a report on the Joint Commissioning Strategy for Domestic Abuse Services in County Durham that builds upon previous work undertaken by the Committee;
- Considering overview presentations on Road Casualty Reduction, Consumer Protection Enforcement Activity and a progress update on Durham Constabulary Force Operating Model and Tackling Metal Theft within County Durham.
- Monitoring and commenting on quarterly performance management reports.



Cllr David Boyes,
Chair of Safer & stronger
Communities OSC



Cllr Michele Hodgson,
Vice-Chair of Safer &
Stronger Communities
OSC



Membership

The following were members of this Committee in 2011/12:

Councillors D Boyes (Chairman) M Hodgson (Vice-Chairman) J Armstrong, B Arthur, B Bainbridge, D Bowman, D Brown, D Burn, M Campbell, D Freeman, C Magee, E Mavin, B Myers, J Nicholson, M Potts, A Shield, P Stradling, T Taylor, J Turnbull, C Walker and A Wright

Co-opted Members - Mr A J Cooke, Ms M English, Mr G W Hood, Mr M Iveson and Ms E Roebuck

Co-opted Employees/Officers - Supt. P Beddow, Mr T Thompson, Mr E Suddes, Mr J Hewitt and Ms M Bewley

Cross-Cutting Issues

Fuel Poverty

A joint briefing focusing on fuel poverty was held for members of the Economy and Enterprise, Environment and Sustainable Communities and the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The response from Overview and Scrutiny was incorporated into the written submission from Durham County Council to the Hills Fuel Poverty Review.

County Durham Plan

The Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee has held a joint meeting with Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide comments as part of the consultation process in relation to the development of the Core Strategy of the County Durham Plan.

Library consultation

A joint meeting was held for members of the Safer and Stronger Communities and the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committees to provide comments as part of the Library Strategy consultation process.



Joint Regional Health Scrutiny



Cllrs Armstrong, Todd & Stradling with the CfPS Awards

The 12 local authorities in the North East worked together on a Scrutiny review of the Health and Social Care needs of Ex-Service Communities.

The review was successful in winning the Centre for Public Scrutiny 'Good Scrutiny Awards' in June 2011 for best joint working and overall impact.

Member Development and Training

Overview and Scrutiny is represented on the Member Development Group which is responsible for overseeing, reviewing and developing the learning and development opportunities available to councillors, as well as ensuring equal opportunities, effectiveness and value for money.

Appointment of Co-optees

The recruitment of Co-optees (members of the public who are not Councillors who serve on various Overview and Scrutiny Committees) concluded at the end of March, with Co-optees taking up appointment on 1st April 2012 for a two year period until 31st March 2014. The next recruitment exercise is scheduled to start in November, 2013.

Shaping up the future

New legislation such as the Localism Act, Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act and the Health and Social Care Act will have an impact on the Council's accountability mechanisms, particularly for overview and scrutiny.

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny members will continue to be updated on the new provisions to ensure that the implications for the Council, Partners and communities are fully understood and that they are acted upon from a scrutiny perspective.

Work Programmes

The current work programmes focus on the priority areas identified within the Council Plan, the Cabinet's Forward Plan of decisions, Sustainable Community Strategy, Partnership plans and strategies, performance and budgetary control data and changes in Government legislation. The work programme for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee can be found on the County Council's website, www.durham.gov.uk/scrutiny.

Overview and Scrutiny Team

The Overview and Scrutiny team is part of the Assistant Chief Executive's service group (ACE), which leads on the corporate approach to performance management and improvement, consultation and engagement, communications, partnership working, equalities and diversity and information management. ACE is also responsible for the Council's Area Action Partnerships and emergency planning functions.



Contact us in the Scrutiny Office on 0191 383 3673 or email scrutiny@durham.gov.uk, or see the Durham County Council website, www.durham.gov.uk.

