



*Altogether better*

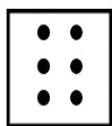
# **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013-2014**

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

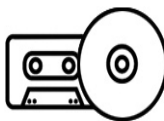
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# Foreword

The financial position facing local authorities continues to be extremely challenging. The level of savings Durham County Council (DCC) is required to deliver has increased significantly. It is now forecast that the council will need to save £224m over the 2011–2017 period, which is higher than the sum previously anticipated.

Thanks to the leadership and management within the authority, the budget continues to be managed effectively, and Overview and Scrutiny continues to play its part. The excellent relationship between executive and non-executive members continues - we are all working together to ensure every effort is made to protect frontline services, yet achieve the required savings.



**Cllr Joe Armstrong,  
Chair of Overview and  
Scrutiny**

The County Council elections in May 2013 resulted in more than fifty new Councillors elected to the Council. The Scrutiny team delivered an intensive Councillor Induction programme with bespoke sessions for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee for all Committee members to support them in their new scrutiny role. Members have embraced their roles within scrutiny, and by utilising the experience of returned Councillors alongside fresh ideas from new Councillors, we are maintaining excellent outcomes across the seven overview and scrutiny committees, with the leadership of scrutiny committee chairs and vice-chairs.

Councillor Lucy Hovvels, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Safer and Healthier Communities said: “The Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committees have continued to support the Executive in providing challenge and assurance in respect of policy development and review across the Council and its partners. Within my portfolio alone, Overview and Scrutiny has had input into the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Safe Durham Partnership’s Plan and priorities. Officer support from Overview and Scrutiny is also provided to assist the Police and Crime Panel, of which I am the Chair.”

This report provides an update on the work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny during 2013/14 – it has been another very busy year. Issues covered have included flooding; changes in NHS provision; alcohol and substance misuse and young people; continuing to build relationships with partners, including the CCGs and our Public Health colleagues; Customer First Strategy; and many other relevant topics. Many thanks to all who have been involved in supporting and assisting the Overview and Scrutiny process – be it Members, officers, partners, or co-opted members.

I hope you will find this report interesting and informative. Scrutiny Committee meetings are open to the public and the scrutiny team will be pleased to supply you with more information - contact details can be found at the end of this report.

*Councillor Joe Armstrong*  
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny

# Key Achievements 2013-14

## Overview and Scrutiny Review Activity

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

- Neighbourhood Wardens – a review highlighting the work of the warden service within a partnership context and developing service delivery.
- Impact of public sector funding and policy changes on the economy of County Durham.
- Flooding within County Durham.
- A major review on Alcohol and Substance misuse by young people looking at the number of referrals to DCC specialist services.

### **Other review activity in 2013/14 included:**

- A comprehensive Member Induction programme was delivered across all Overview and Scrutiny Committees detailing the role of Overview and Scrutiny within the Council's Governance arrangements and decision making process and highlighting how work programmes are developed and delivered.
- Contributed to the budget process through consideration of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- Increased awareness of the Council's scrutiny function through articles in local media, Members' Bulletin, and an ongoing update of the scrutiny web pages.
- Contributed to the refresh of the Council Plan and also the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- Formally responded to NHS Quality Accounts 2012/13 for: North East Ambulance Service; County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust; and the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust.
- Continued to maintain and establish links with all thematic partnerships. A series of briefings and reports have been shared with thematic partnerships.
- Contributed to consultations:
  - Community Infrastructure Levy;
  - Combined Authority;
  - Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan;
  - Responded to consultations on the Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2014-17 and County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2014/15;
  - Proposals to reconfigure Emergency Medical and Critical Care services within North Tees and Hartlepool NHS FT as part of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee with Hartlepool and Stockton Borough Councils;
  - County Durham Plan;
  - Customer First Strategy;
  - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment;
  - Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy;
  - Children, Young People's and Families Plan.

# Key Achievements 2013-14

## Overview and Scrutiny Site Visits



Members and/or Officers have undertaken a number of scrutiny visits to support the Committees' work programmes, including:

- Thrislington and Raisby quarries to look at the flora and fauna, to see the work undertaken by DCC and partners and to receive information on future opportunities for both sites;
- SITA the new waste contractor processing plant at Haverton Hill, Tees Valley, September 2013;
- Customer Access Point, Crook, in July 2013, linked to the Customer First Strategy and review of telephone calls;
- Field study activity through Staysafe and stop and search operations to gain an insight into the wide range of work undertaken by the Neighbourhood Wardens Service;
- A visit to Bishop Auckland College in January 2014 to see the pro-active work being undertaken to support local business and develop courses to meet the needs of employers;
- Members visited three locations in County Durham to view LED lighting units in operation, and compare the new lighting with the existing sodium lighting;
- Members carried out a visit to Chester-le-Street to view the river erosion scheme to stop flooding to the Cong Burn; Waldrige housing estate to view a surface water overland flow scheme and the installation of a flood fence; and then Witton Gilbert to view a proposed scheme to prevent flooding from a watercourse;
- Wise Drive Road Safety event, Durham Police Headquarters;
- Observed Fire Crews at Consett Fire Station;
- Stop and Search Operations on vehicles carrying waste and scrap metal with Durham Police and Neighbourhood Wardens in Consett and Easington areas;
- Neighbourhood Walkabout with Neighbourhood Wardens and Dale and Valley Homes in Bishop Auckland.

## Visit of Chinese Delegation

As part of a two week visit to Northumbria University to look at Government Structure and Scrutiny in the UK, Durham County Council was asked at short notice to host a 17 strong delegation from Zhejiang Province, China.

With the assistance of a translator, the delegates attended a development session in the Council Chamber, County Hall Durham on Wednesday 23 October 2013 which provided an overview of County Durham, the Council's decision making process and how scrutiny operates in practice.

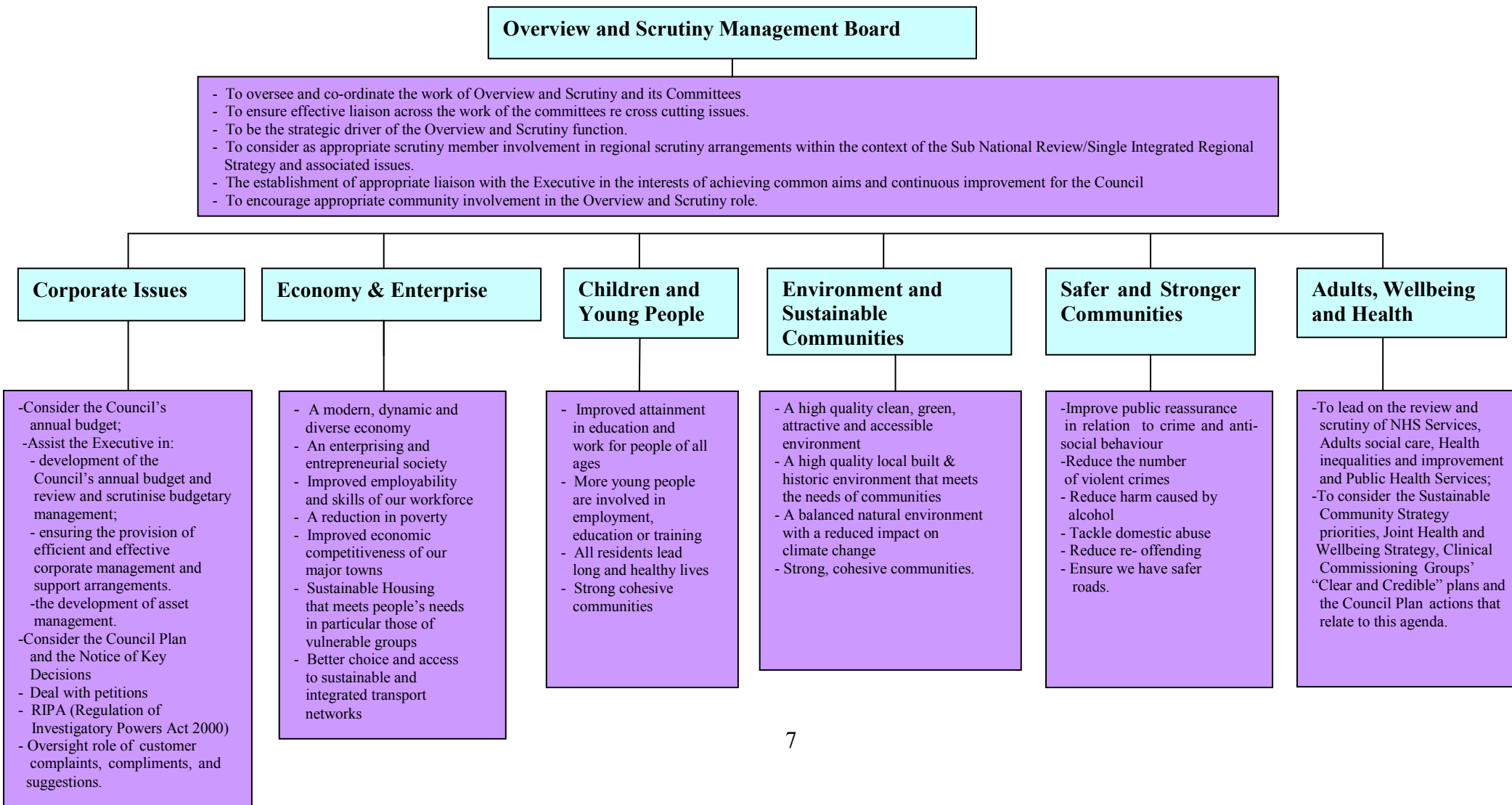
The delegation was delighted with their visit, the dignitaries who met with them, and the information they received about County Durham.



# 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](http://www.durham.gov.uk). Below is the structure of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

[Please note: As at March 2014 the Overview and Scrutiny Terms of Reference have been refreshed and can be found in Article 6 of the Council's Constitution.]



# Overview and Scrutiny Management Board



Cllr Joe Armstrong,  
Chair of Overview and  
Scrutiny



Cllr Paul Stradling,  
Vice-chair of Overview  
and Scrutiny

The **Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB)** provides a strategic steer for the work of all the committees. Its work programme for 2013/14 included the following:

- Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/2015 (MTFP4) – 2016/2017 and revenue and capital budget proposals for 2013/2014 to make sure that the Council's resources are used effectively and efficiently;
- Council's Notice of Key Decisions - to ensure that Members are aware of key decisions to be made by Cabinet, and to provide information on scrutiny involvement if any;
- Updates on petitions received which enables Members to track progress on behalf of communities;
- Updates on major policy developments and announcements made by Central Government and the implications for the Council and County Durham.

The Board has also:

- Received information and commented on performance management every quarter before it is disseminated to respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees for further comment;
- Received regular updates on:
  - the delivery of Medium Term Financial Plan 3;
  - the work of the County Durham Partnership;
  - Welfare Reform.
- Received regular updates from each of the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs;
- Held a workshop in January to give Members the opportunity to comment on Performance Indicators – Members' comments were collated and taken into consideration during the planning for this year's indicator set.



# Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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



Cllr John Lethbridge,  
Chair of Corporate  
Issues OSC



Cllr Katherine Henig  
Vice- Chair of Corporate  
Issues OSC

- Collaborated with the OSMB on the County Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (4), Council Plan and Service Plan 2014/15 – 2016/17;
- 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;
- Received quarterly performance reports, and commented on progress against the Council's corporate basket of performance indicators for the Altogether Better Council Theme;
- Received quarterly updates on the Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn for Assistant Chief Executives and Resources;
- Received quarterly reports for Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions, and also the Childrens and Adults Service Annual Representations Report 2012/13;
- Received systematic reviews of the recommendations of previous light touch scrutiny reviews on internal postal arrangements, and telephone calls; and final sign off of the review of AAPs – Fit for Purpose, Fit for the Future;
- Had involvement in the refresh of the Customer First Strategy, through a Task and Finish Group;
- Received an overview of Building and Facilities Maintenance, Direct Services;
- Received an overview of the Corporate Asset Management Plan and Property Strategy;
- Had input into the refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), Council Plan and Service Plans;
- Been updated on the ICT prioritisation project;
- Members attended a visit to the Customer Access Point, Crook, in July 2013, linked to the Customer First Strategy and review of telephone calls.

# Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Robin Todd, Chair of Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC



Cllr Jean Chaplow, Vice-chair of Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC

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

- Engaged with NHS England's Durham, Darlington and Tees area team, providing members with information around the team's role and function including its specialised commissioning role;
- Received update reports regarding the regional Securing Quality in Health Services project which aims to enhance the commissioning of acute health services in hospitals;
- Established a Joint Health Scrutiny Committee with Hartlepool and Stockton Borough Councils to formally engage and respond to proposals to reconfigure emergency medical and critical care services at North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust – as a direct result of the input from Durham's Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC, the Trust agreed to set up an oversight arrangement involving all three Councils to provide assurance to Councillors and the public around the implementation process;
- Considered a detailed report from the Director of Public Health for County Durham following the transfer of responsibility for public health across to local authorities;
- Received presentations from North Durham and Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgfield Clinical Commissioning Groups detailing their clear and credible plans in respect of their commissioning intentions /priorities;
- Examined the development of the Public Mental Health Strategy and against this context, considered the Council and partners' approaches to suicide prevention in County Durham;
- Monitored progress against NHS Quality Accounts for 2012/13 as well as engaging in preparatory work for the 2013/14 Quality Accounts;
- Considered the progress made by the Council and partners against the National Dementia strategy and set up a small working group to provide input into the development of a local dementia strategy;
- Received the Annual Report of the Safeguarding Adults Board;
- Considered the Director of Public Health for County Durham's Annual Report, using the priorities identified therein to contribute to the refresh of the Committee's work programme for 2014/15;
- Responded to consultation exercises and engagement activity in respect of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy;
- Monitored performance and revenue and capital expenditure through quarterly performance management and budgetary reports.

# Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** is aligned to **Altogether Better for Children and Young People**. This Committee has:

- Undertaken a major review on Alcohol and Substance misuse by young people looking at the number of referrals to DCC specialist services;
- Responded to consultations on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and The Children, Young People and Families Plan;
- Received and commented on quarterly budgetary and performance management reports for Children and Young People's Services;
- The Committee has received updates on the progress of recommendations from previous reviews - Review of Obesity in Primary Aged Children; and Support for Children and Young People with Mental Health Issues;
- The Committee has received updates and overviews on:
  - The Government's Stronger Families initiative – this is being run in County Durham, regular updates have been received on the number of families who have been identified, those receiving help and support and those who have completed the initiative;
  - Adoption reform – overview presentation on the Government's reforms in legislation regarding adoption and how they will impact on County Durham;
  - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – information on the reforms to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities contained in the Families Bill;
  - Alcohol and Substance Misuse by Young People – an overview presentation highlighted the number of referrals to 4Real, the Council's specialist alcohol and substance misuse service for young people, prior to undertaking a review of this topic;
  - One Point Service Update –an update indicating key principals, ambition, approach and priorities for the next 12 months;
  - School Funding Reforms – information on the scope of reforms, the different types of formula used, changes for 2014/15 and future considerations;
  - Building Schools for the Future Update – information on the remaining Building Schools for the Future projects in County Durham;
  - NHS Reforms – information on national, regional and local developments in relation to NHS reforms including Local Health Watch, Public Health and Health and Social Care integration.
  - Children with Disabilities taking part in Sports –information on governance and partners, school based activities and community based activities.
  - Young Carers –information on the numbers of young carers in County Durham and the support they receive, legislative requirements, impact for young carers and priorities for 2014/15.



Cllr Jan Blakey,  
Chair of Children and  
Young People's OSC



Cllr Christine Potts,  
Vice-Chair of Children  
and Young People's OSC

# Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Rob Crute,  
Chair of Economy and  
Enterprise OSC



Cllr Alison Batey  
Vice-chair of Economy  
and Enterprise OSC

**Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee** is aligned to **Altogether Wealthier**.

This Committee has:

- Worked with officers from the RED Service Grouping looking at the impact of changes in Government policy and funding on the economy of County Durham via a Members' Reference Group;
- Received an overview of the work of the County Durham Economic Partnership identifying issues and priorities within County Durham;
- Monitored the development of and provided comments to be fed into the consultation on the pre-submission draft of the County Durham Plan;
- Continued to monitor, challenge and provide comment in relation to the housing stock transfer project looking at how the Authority will manage its housing stock in the future;
- Received an overview of the Regeneration Statement which identifies key issues facing the County and how these issues can be tackled and regular updates on the development of the various Masterplans for County Durham;
- Monitored and challenged the performance of our housing providers, Durham City Homes, Dale and Valley Homes and East Durham Homes;
- Received an overview of the European Funding programme for 2014-2020 together with information on the Youth Employment Initiative detailing the funding opportunities this programme will provide for County Durham;
- Considered an update and commented upon the Homelessness Strategy;
- Received an overview and updates on the development of the Combined Authority and provided a scrutiny response to the consultation on the Combined Authority;
- Considered a progress update on the development of the Adult Learning Strategy and received an overview of skills development within County Durham;
- Received an overview of the work of Business Durham providing support to business within the County;
- Monitored the development of the Durham Key Options new lettings policy and received an overview of affordable homes delivery within the County;
- Received an update on tourism and the development of the tourism offer by Visit County Durham;
- Considered an update on the Digital Durham Programme which aims to provide superfast broadband to 96% of properties within the County;
- Considered an update on the Community Infrastructure Levy and provided an Overview and Scrutiny response to the consultation;
- Received updates on the progress of recommendations contained in the 'Increasing young people's employment opportunities (18-24) in County Durham' and the Empty Homes scrutiny review reports;
- Monitored performance and revenue and capital expenditure through quarterly performance management and budgetary reports.

# Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** aligned to **Altogether Greener**. This committee has:

- Undertaken a scrutiny review focusing on the impact of flooding on our local communities and examined our policies and procedures to minimise the impact on service delivery;
- Received an update on the street lighting energy reduction project and carried out a member visit to three locations within County Durham to see the new LED lighting units in operation;
- Considered an overview in relation to potholes;
- Received regular updates on the development of the waste programme and visited the SITA (new waste contractor) processing plant at Tees Valley;
- Considered an overview of the Warm Up North scheme a regional initiative available for all residents to reduce energy consumption;
- Received an update on the draft Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan and provided an overview and scrutiny response to the consultation;
- Received updates on the progress of recommendations contained in the 'Reducing the Council's Carbon Emissions' and 'The development of renewable technologies in County Durham' scrutiny review reports;
- Considered an overview of the Winter Maintenance Plan for County Durham;
- Received an update on the further development of Local Nature Partnerships;
- Considered an update on the development of the Limestone Landscapes and carried out a visit to Thrislington and Raisby quarries;
- Received a report detailing the environmental implications of the County Durham Plan;
- Received updates in relation to proposals for Culture and Sports Services;
- Monitored performance and revenue and capital expenditure through quarterly performance management and budgetary reports.



Cllr Barbara Graham  
Chair of Environment and  
Sustainable Communities OSC



Cllr David Hall,  
Vice-Chair of Environment and  
Sustainable Communities OSC

# Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** is aligned to **Altogether Safer**. This committee has:

- Undertaken an in-depth review of Neighbourhood Wardens and identified recommendations that focus on raising profile, communications and partnership activity;
- Members observed Wardens undertake Staysafe operations with partner agencies to protect young people from alcohol and Stop and Search exercises on vehicles carrying waste with Durham Constabulary's Road Policing Unit and the Council's Fraud Investigation Team;
- Monitored progress of recommendations from the Committee's previous scrutiny reviews of 'Use of Legislation to Tackle Metal Theft' and 'Road Safety for Children and Young People'. Outcomes of the road safety review have led to an application for the Centre for Public Scrutiny 'Good Scrutiny Awards';
- Provided comment on the Safe Durham Partnership's Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy and performance measures;
- Responded to consultations on the Safe Durham Partnership Priorities for 2014/15 and County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2014/15;
- Provided comment on the draft 2014-17 Safe Durham Partnership Plan;
- Received information on the Safe Durham Partnership's Integrated Restorative Practice Strategy and held a restorative approaches session hosted by Durham Constabulary with members of the Durham Police and Crime Panel;
- Considered overview presentations and reports on Consumer Protection Enforcement Activity and the Joint Alcohol Harm Reduction Unit which is a partnership approach between the Council and Durham Constabulary to provide a greater resource to tackle alcohol related crime, licensing issues and intelligence sharing to undertake joint operations;
- Maintained effective communication with Durham Police and Crime Panel to appraise the Committee of the Panel's activity;
- Received update reports on progress on tackling hate crime and domestic abuse action plans, High Impact Households and the Think Family Programme;
- Provided comment on a presentation from Durham & Tees Valley Probation Trust on the Government's Transforming Rehabilitation programme to reform the Probation Service;
- Monitored and commented on quarterly performance management reports which have been a key driver to identify topics on the work programme on suicide prevention and mental health.



Cllr David Boyes  
Chair of Safer and Stronger  
Communities OSC



Cllr Thomas Nearney  
Vice-chair of Safer and Stronger  
Communities OSC

## **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 Council continues to be represented on the North East Regional Health Scrutiny Committee and that group has overseen the final implementation of the recommendations of the 2010 review into the Health Needs of the Ex - service community. The Committee has also held conversations with the local Care Quality Commission lead officer around how to improve the CQC's relationships with local authority scrutiny committees.

The Council has worked with Hartlepool and Stockton Borough Councils as part of a joint scrutiny exercise examining proposals by North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust to reconfigure Emergency Medical and Critical Care services. This was the first example within the region of a joint Health Scrutiny Committee being established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

As a result of the recommendations arising from the Francis Report into Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, the region's Health Scrutiny officers are working with the Centre for Public Scrutiny to develop a toolkit for local authority health scrutiny committees to add robustness to its challenge to NHS partners.

## **Police and Crime Panel**

Hosted by Durham County Council, the PCP's membership consists of 10 elected Members (Durham County Council 7 and Darlington Borough Council 3 Members) and 2 independent members.

Throughout 2013/14, the Police and Crime Panel has:

- held six meetings;
- agreed its work programme;
- received reports on public confidence and restorative approaches;
- monitored progress of the Police and Crime Commissioner's budget and police crime plan;
- reviewed working arrangement documents with Overview and Scrutiny functions within both local authorities and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Panel has also fulfilled its requirements within the Act through reviewing the PCC's annual report, precept and revised Police and Crime Plan 2013-17 and holding a Confirmation Hearing for the appointment of the Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer within required timeframes.

## 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.

Following this year's elections, scrutiny induction sessions were held for each committee. These were well attended and well received, and the feedback was included in the corporate Members' induction training feedback.

## Overview and Scrutiny Workshops

Workshops have been held as follows:

- 4<sup>th</sup> November 2013 – a special Economy and Enterprise workshop to which all Non-Executive members were invited to discuss the Pre-submission draft of the County Durham Plan. A response on behalf of participants was compiled and submitted as part of Scrutiny's response to the consultation exercise.
- 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013 – a special Economy and Enterprise OSC workshop for the Council's three housing management organisations, East Durham Homes, Dale and Valley Homes and Durham City Homes, to present their latest Annual Reports and also report performance information for 2012/13.
- 17<sup>th</sup> January 2014 – a workshop was held to give Members the opportunity to comment on Performance Indicators – feedback was collated and taken into consideration during the planning for this year's indicator set.

## Co-optees

Local people may be co-opted onto overview and scrutiny committees and working groups, and can help scrutiny to engage with the public. They are used to:

- act as a non-political voice for those who live or work in County Durham.
- bring specialist knowledge and/or skills and an element of external challenge to the Overview and Scrutiny process.
- take an interest in, attend and contribute to the committees or working groups to which appointed.
- establish good relations with other members, officers and co-optees.
- feed back any appropriate discussions or decisions of the relevant committee or working group to any respective organisation or group which they may represent.

The Council has recently refreshed the appointment process for non-voting co-optees serving on the various Overview and Scrutiny Committees and new non-voting co-optees will take up their appointments from 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2014.

## Work Programmes

The current work programmes focus on the priority areas identified within the Council Plan, the Council's Notice of Key Decisions, Sustainable Community Strategy, Partnership plans and strategies, performance and budgetary control data and changes in Government legislation.



# 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 policy, planning and 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 03000 268145 [scrutiny@durham.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@durham.gov.uk), or see the Durham County Council website, [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk).