



Altogether better

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2015-2016

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

May 2016

Foreword

Overview and Scrutiny is an integral part of the Council's operations - influence can be seen in the budget process, policy formation, and the drive for continuous improvement of our services to local communities. A strong and robust Overview and Scrutiny function is an important element within the Council's governance and decision making arrangements and it is vital that we continue to support this work in an ongoing climate of budget pressures.



The Council's budget continues to be managed effectively, thanks to the leadership and management within the authority, with Overview and Scrutiny continuing to play its part. The excellent relationship between executive and non-executive members continues.

The statutory scrutiny roles of Health, Crime and Disorder and Flooding Risk Management feature within this Annual Report alongside thematic Scrutiny work in respect of Economy and Enterprise, Environment and Sustainable Communities, Corporate Issues and Children and Young People. The report provides an update of the work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny during 2015/16 – it has been another very busy year. Issues covered have included Attendance Management; 20 mph speed limits; parking on council land; free school meals and holiday hunger; skills development; alcohol and demand on the emergency services; the customer relationship management system; as well as scrutiny having input into a number of consultations.

I and the Chair of Economy and Enterprise OSC have represented the council on the NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which looks at matters of significant importance to residents across the areas covered by the seven councils, with a view to influencing decisions made in respect of all matters within the remit of the Combined Authority. The committee meets six times a year 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

Councillor Brian Stephens, Cabinet member for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships, said, "I would like to applaud scrutiny Members for their valuable work across a wide range of topics, their partnership working with AAPs, and in particular this year work on 20 mph limits. These schemes were introduced to keep children safe and the contribution from scrutiny Members working with Cabinet and officers has delivered results which have far exceeded their original objectives. This is something we can all be very proud of."

Durham County Council has recently been listed as a finalist in the Excellence in Governance and Scrutiny category of the 2016 Municipal Journal Achievement Awards for its approach to scrutiny, community engagement and consultation and governance arrangements.

As always, I would like to thank everyone who has 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 2015-16

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.

Skills Development – the Skills Development Working Group has examined the role and performance of DCC in supporting skills development within County Durham; how DCC works in partnership to support skills development; changes within Further Education and skills and how this impacts on the authority and the county; identified gaps and barriers in relation to current skills support provision; and identified future skill priorities.



Free School Meals and Holiday Hunger - the Children and Young People's OSC set out to raise awareness among eligible parents of the importance of claiming free school meals, identify any barriers that may stop parents or children from claiming their free school meals, and highlight what is being done in local communities to address holiday hunger. The review is expected to conclude in the late summer and report to Cabinet in autumn 2016.

20 mph – the 20 mph working group has completed its activity and presented its report to Cabinet in May 2016. This review revisited a previously scrutiny recommendation to explore the use of 20mph speed limits and zones around schools where the risk of accidents is higher. The report highlights the significant contribution of the working group to providing challenge for value for money and expansion of schemes beyond the initial 33 projects, engagement of local Members within scheme design and influence on policy development. Cabinet accepted the review recommendations which are informing the ongoing programme of 20 mph limit zones.



Alcohol and the Demand on Emergency Services – the Safer and Stronger Communities OSC has undertaken review activity looking at the impact of alcohol on emergency services within County Durham. Initial findings have highlighted both the volume of demand on each service and personal impact of alcohol related incidents on our emergency services personnel. To gain an insight, Members have undertaken field study activity with Durham Constabulary, North East Ambulance Service and the Accident and Emergency Department at University Hospital of North Durham. The working group are scheduled to publish its report in autumn 2016.



The following light touch reviews have also been carried out:

Attendance Management - the Attendance Management Working Group examined and commented upon the draft attendance management policy including the Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace Policy; considered a range of attendance management performance information setting out trends; considered the role of managers in managing sickness absence, including associated training; and reviewed the role of Occupational Health and the promotion of better health at work initiatives.

Customer Relationship Management System (CRMS) - the Corporate Issues OSC review of the CRMS is enabling Members to assess the functionality of the new CRM system and the range of services that will be integrated into/available through the system. It also allows Members to 'road test' the new system, and to look at their operational needs in accessing information and reporting issues/service requests on behalf of their constituents and in respect of their casework.

Parking on Council Land – Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities OSC carried out a light touch review of parking on council land, the findings of this light touch review were shared with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

Other review activity in 2015/16 included:

- Scrutiny of the budget process through consideration of the Medium Term Financial Plan. Considerations were broad-based and ranged from scrutiny of the timetable for the budget process, scrutiny of developing cost reduction proposals, as well as ongoing quarterly scrutiny of the delivery of savings.
- Increased awareness of the Council's scrutiny function through articles in local media, Members' Bulletin, and an ongoing update of the scrutiny web pages.
- Formally responded to NHS Quality Accounts 2015/16 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, for example:
 - Tourism Marketing scrutiny review activity undertaken by Visit County Durham (VCD) was shared with VCD Board and then the County Durham Economic Partnership.
 - Management of DCC's woodlands estate scrutiny review report – County Durham Environment Partnership
 - The review of Self Harm by Young People was shared with both the Children and Families Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board.
 - The report on organised crime was presented to the Safe Durham Partnership Board.

- Contributed to:

- Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC (AWBH OSC) – Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield Clinical Commissioning Group’s Review of Ambulance Services - the AWBH OSC has concluded its input into the Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield CCG (DDES CCG) proposals to change ambulance services, in particular ambulance crew skills mix within the Durham Dales area.
- Adults, Wellbeing and Health OSC examined proposals to reconfigure inpatient wards for people with organic mental illness (predominantly dementia) serving County Durham and Darlington – Statutory Health Consultation.
- Had input into the following:
 - Anti-poverty strategy
 - Refuse collection service in rural areas and isolated properties
 - Review of Youth Support
 - Home to School Transport
 - Children and Young People’s Plan 2016-2018
 - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2018
 - The Housing Strategy for County Durham
 - The Customer First Strategy
 - County Durham Drugs Strategy 2014-17
 - In-house Residential Homes Consultation Process
 - Children’s Centres consultation process
 - Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2015/18
 - Consultation on the Fire and Rescue service’s annual Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2016/17 to 2018/19
 - Safe Durham Partnership Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2015/17
 - Children, Young People & Families Plan 2015-2018
 - Healthy Weight Framework.

Key Achievements 2015-16

Overview and Scrutiny Site Visits

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

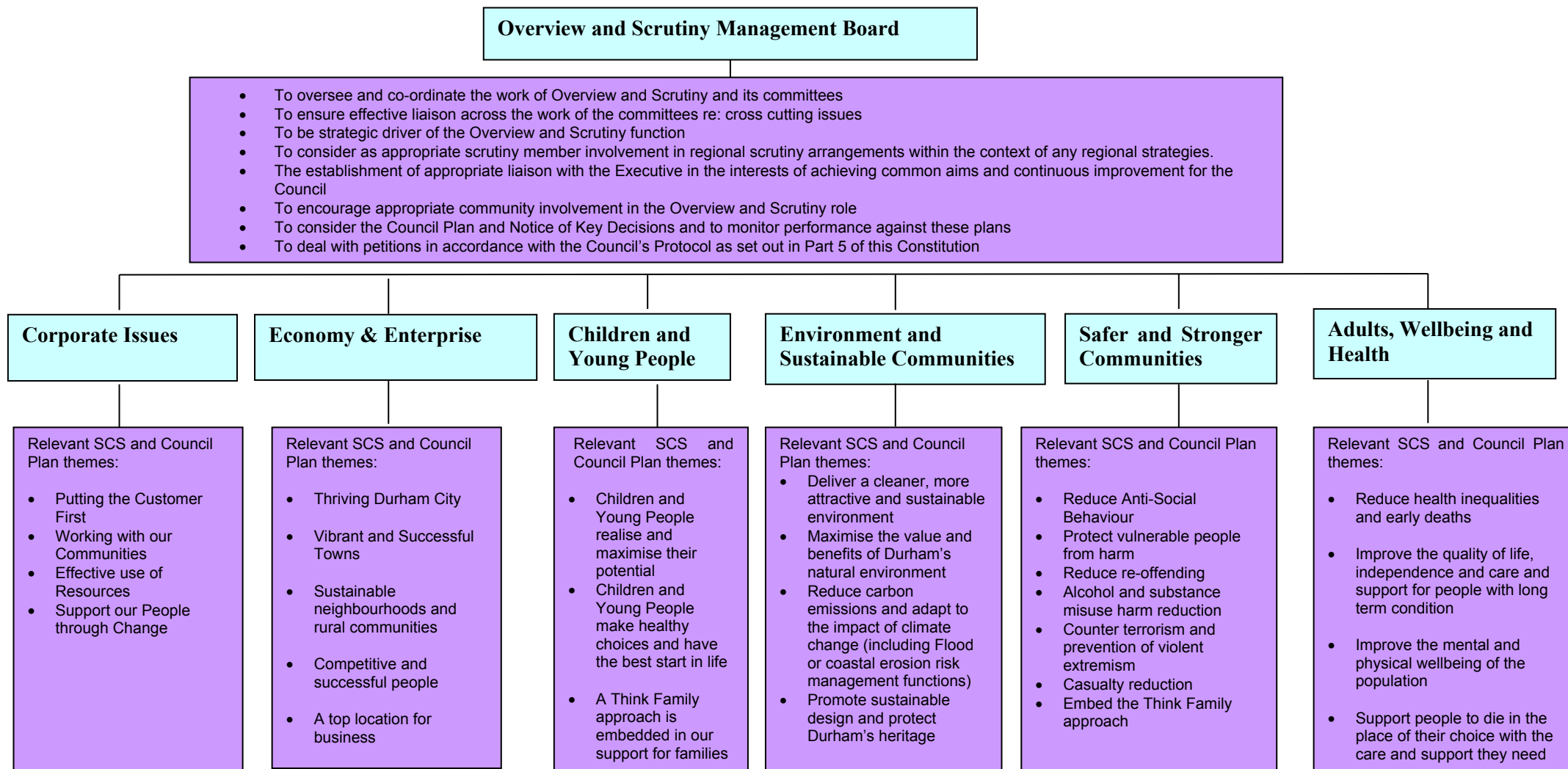


Overview and Scrutiny Site Visits also include

- Skills Development Working Group to:
 - New College, Durham
 - Infinite Learning and Development, Peterlee
 - South West Durham Training Ltd, Aycliffe Business Park
- Durham City Centre Night time Economy & Ambulance Crew Observation
- Civil Contingencies Live Exercise
- School meal with pupils at Seaham School of Technology
- School Road Safety Assembly at Etherley Lane Primary School

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 direction for the work of all the committees. Its work programme for 2015/16 included the following:

- Examination of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/2017 – 2019/2020 (MTFP 6), Council Plan and Service Plans and revenue and capital budget proposals for 2016/2017 to make sure that the Council's resources are used effectively and efficiently;
- 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 - Implications of the Government's Policy Programme on DCC;
- Received updates on:
 - The County Durham Partnership
 - Welfare Reform
 - The delivery of the Medium Term Financial Plan 5
 - County Durham Drug Strategy
- Continued to receive regular updates on:
 - Performance management every quarter before it is disseminated to respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees for further comment;
 - 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;
 - Work programme activity from each of the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs;
- Received a presentation on, and had input into, the draft County Durham Poverty Action Plan;
- Received a call-in on the proposed closure of the Durham Light Infantry Museum and future arrangements for displaying the collections;
- Held a special meeting in December 2015 to discuss the future of the DLI collections;
- Led and co-ordinated on the reappointment of the non-voting scrutiny co-optees and the appointment of new co-optees to Scrutiny Committees.



Cllr Joe Armstrong,
Chair of Overview and
Scrutiny Management
Board



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

Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr John Lethbridge,
Chair of Corporate
Issues Overview and
Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Katherine Henig
Vice- Chair of Corporate
Issues Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

The **Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee**, which is aligned to the **Altogether Better Council** priority in our Council Plan has:

- Undertaken and finalised a review of Absence Management;
- Undertaken a review on the Customer Records Management System (CRMS);
- Received a systematic review on the recommendations of the Customer First review;
- Collaborated with the OSMB on in depth scrutiny of the of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/2017 – 2019/2020 (MTFP 6), Council Plan and Service Plans and revenue and capital budget proposals for 2016/2017 to make sure that the Council's resources are used effectively and efficiently;
- Received details and commented on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000;
- Refreshed the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme;
- Received quarterly updates on:
 - Performance Management 2015/16 and commented on progress against the Council's corporate basket of performance indicators for the Altogether Better Council Theme;
 - the Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn for Assistant Chief Executives and Resources;
 - Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions;
- Received the annual update of The Children's and Adults Service Annual Representations Report 2014/15;
- Received a presentation on DCC's revised Corporate Complaints Policy;
- Had input into:
 - the refresh of the Council Plan and Service Plans;
 - the performance indicators for Altogether Better Council.

Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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. This committee is aligned to the **Altogether Healthier** priority theme and has:

- Examined and provided commentary upon Quality Accounts 2014/15 including proposed priorities for 2015/16 for Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS FT; County Durham and Darlington NHS FT and North East Ambulance Service NHS FT. The Committee also considered updates on progress from all three Trusts in respect of priorities during 2015/16;



Cllr John Robinson,
Chair of AWH OSC



Cllr Sonia Forster
Vice-chair of AWH OSC

- Considered and endorsed the County Durham and Darlington Urgent Care Strategy;
- Scrutinised the Consultation and Engagement Plans in respect of Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield CCG's Review of Urgent Care services in North Durham;
- Examined the results of independent review by NHS England's Northern Regional Clinical Senate into proposals by Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield CCG in respect of Accident and Emergency Ambulance service model changes in their area, and endorsed the implementation of the new arrangements;
- Considered and commented upon the refresh of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2019
- Reviewed Annual Reports and performance information in respect of County Durham HealthWatch and the County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board, including the results of the Board's Peer Review;
- Considered update reports in respect of:
 - County Durham and Darlington Clinical Strategy;
 - The Securing Quality in Health Services (SeQIHS) /Better Health Programme;
 - NHS England's five year Forward View;
 - The Care Act 2014;
 - North Durham and Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield CCGs Clear and Credible Plans;
 - Public Health services and funding;
 - The work of the North East Regional Joint Health OSC.
- Engaged with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as part of their ongoing inspection programme by submitting evidence reports in respect of the North East Ambulance Service NHS FT and North Tees and Hartlepool NHS FT;
- Examined the CQC inspection reports and actions plans in respect of County Durham and Darlington NHS FT and Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT;

- Considered and commented upon the Safe Durham Partnership's Draft Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy and County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan 2016-17;
- Considered the County Council's Review of its Care Connect Services;
- Scrutinised the Consultation and Engagement Plans in respect of Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys' NHS FT/Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield; North Durham and Darlington CCGs' Review of Organic(Dementia) Inpatient Wards serving County Durham and Darlington;
- Examined the Winter Plan and systems resilience plans of North Durham and DDES CCGs;
- Received quarterly updates on:
 - Performance management 2015/2016
 - Forecast of revenue and capital return for Children and Adults Services;
- Engagement with Hartlepool BC and Stockton on Tees BC in respect of North Tees and Hartlepool NHS FT proposals to close the Assisted Reproduction Unit at University Hospital Hartlepool.

Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CYP OSC) is aligned to **Altogether Better for Children and Young People** priority theme in the Council Plan. This Committee has:

- Undertaken a major review on Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Hunger to raise awareness of the importance of eligible parents claiming for free school meals and raise awareness of holiday hunger activities taking place in communities;
- Received information on young people who are not in education, employment or training and what help and support is available for them in County Durham;
- Scrutinised the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy; the Care Leavers Strategy and the Fixed Play Strategy;
- Examined:
 - the Home to School Transport Policy and fed into the consultation process
 - Educational attainment at key stage two and key stage four;
- Continued to follow closely the impact of smoking on children and young people and the Wellbeing for Life programme;
- Scrutinised:
 - the 0 -5yrs Health Visitor and Family Nurse Partnership services and 5-19 years School Nursing Service;
 - the support given to younger carers in County Durham;
- Received presentations and commented upon:
 - Welfare Reform and Poverty Issues
 - Refresh of the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2016-2019
 - Refresh of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2019
 - Review of Youth Support;
- Maintained a keen interest in the health and wellbeing of children and young people in County Durham and has received information on the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Crisis Care Pathway and Help and Support for Children and Young People with Autistic Spectrum Disorder;
- Scrutinised Annual Reports from the Director of Public Health and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board;
- Continued to receive updates on:
 - The Council Plan
 - School Funding Reforms;
- Received quarterly updates on:
 - Performance management 2015/2016
 - Forecast of revenue and capital return for Children and Adults Services;
- Received an update on the review of Self-Harm by Young People;



Cllr Christine Potts
Chair of CYP OSC



Cllr Morris Nicholls
Vice-Chair of CYP OSC

- The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management board, together with the Chair of CYP OSC, were interviewed as part of the Ofsted Single Inspection of local authority childrens' services and review of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB);
- Received summary of minutes from Children and Families Partnership;
- Involved young people through taking committee meetings to them in their school.

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Economy OSC) is aligned to the **Altogether Wealthier** priority team in the Council Plan. This Committee has:



Cllr Rob Crute,
Chair of Economy and
Enterprise OSC



Cllr Alison Batey
Vice-chair of Economy
and Enterprise OSC

- Undertaken a review on:
 - Support provided for skills development within County Durham by DCC focusing on the role and performance of DCC in supporting skills development including detail of how it works in partnership with key partners;

- Received updates and commented on key developments and the direction of travel in relation to: the EU funding programme; Youth Employment Initiative; the Combined Authority; the County Durham Plan; the Regeneration Statement and the Housing Strategy;

- Received detail of and commented on the apprenticeship offer within County Durham, the progress of the Digital Durham Programme, the delivery of the various town centre masterplans and the support provided to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) within County Durham;

- Consider on an annual basis detail of the work undertaken by the County Durham Economic Partnership and Business Durham;

- Continue to receive information on the continued development of the Homelessness Strategy and Durham Key Options;

- Considered the Regeneration and Economic Development, investment planning process;

- Received an update on the progress of recommendations of the impact of changes in Government Funding and Policy on the Economy of County Durham scrutiny review;

- Monitored the performance and revenue and capital expenditure through quarterly performance management and budgetary reports;

- Received quarterly updates on:
 - Performance management 2015/2016
 - Forecast of revenue and capital outturn for RED service grouping 2015/16;

- Received minutes from the County Durham Economic Partnership.

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** (Env OSC) has statutory responsibility under the Localism Act 2011 as amended to scrutinise flooding and coastal risk management functions of the council and external bodies (Environment Agency and Northumbrian Water Ltd.) This committee is aligned to the **Altogether Greener** priority theme in the Council Plan. The committee has:



Cllr Barbara Graham
Chair of Environment OSC



Cllr Eddy Adam
Vice-chair of Environment OSC

- Undertaken a review on Parking on Council Land;
- Scrutinised Warm up North and Fuel Poverty; Renewable Energy and the Flooding and Risk Management Authorities via special meetings;
- Received regular updates on the waste programme; European Structure and Investment Funding programme and carbon emissions:
 - Analysed Contaminated Land Strategy and Air Quality Action Plan;
 - Explored environmental campaigns and Incentives;
 - Considered the Winter Maintenance Plan;
 - Received update on the progress of recommendations on:
 - Woodlands Review
 - Flooding Review;
 - Received and commented on rural and isolated bin collections consultation;
 - Examined strategic cycle routes;
 - Received minutes from:
 - The County Durham Environmental Partnership
 - County Durham Flood Prevention Group
 - Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee;
 - Received quarterly updates on:
 - Performance management 2015/2016
 - Forecast of revenue and capital outturn for Neighbourhood Services 2015/16;
 - The Committee is the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Committee for County Durham and receives on an annual basis an update on the work of the Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham which focuses on:
 - Flood mitigation work currently being undertaken within County Durham by the Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham;
 - Future flood mitigation work to be undertaken and detail of funding;
 - Any issues identified by the Flood Risk Management Authorities in relation to flood mitigation schemes/projects within the County.

Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The **Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** (SSC OSC) has powers under the Police and Justice Act 2006 as amended to scrutinise work being undertaken by the statutory crime and disorder reduction partnership; the Safe Durham Partnership. The committee is aligned to the **Altogether Safer** priority theme in the Council Plan. The committee has:



Cllr David Boyes
Chair of Safer and Stronger
Communities OSC



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

- Completed review activity on organised crime and Substance Misuse Centres. The report's findings and recommendations were presented to and agreed at the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP) Board and Cabinet. An update on organised crime is scheduled during 2016/17 and the Committee are to hold a special meeting with the service provider to follow up on its review work for substance misuse services in June 2016.
- Led activity of the 20 mph Working Group that has completed its work and contributed to achieving value for money with the £1m scheme for 33 schools being expanded to further schools, enhancing phase 1 schemes with local member input and development of a new 20 mph policy. This activity was part of the Council's application for a Municipal Journal Award.
- Engaged with Police, Fire, Ambulance and Accident & Emergency Departments in gathering evidence for its current review on Alcohol and its demand on emergency services.
- Received information and progress reports from the National Probation Service and Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company on the implementation of the Government's Transforming Rehabilitation Programme;
- Requested the consumer protection service raise awareness of their positive enforcement activity to Area Action Partnerships and Magistrates.
- Considered a presentation from the Chair of the City Safety Group on progress on implementation of outcomes to improve safety within Durham City following the report by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.
- Responded to consultations on the Safe Durham Partnership Plan and County Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan;
- Received reports and provided comment on activity of the Safe Durham Partnership Board, Police and Crime Panel, the Road Casualty Reduction Forum, Youth Justice Plan and Checkpoint programme.
- Monitored quarterly performance reports and provided acknowledgment of high performance areas and included performance challenges within its work programme.
- Remained focused on levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB) through consideration of a presentation on reducing the number of secondary deliberate fires, receiving update reports on implementation of recommendations from previous review activity of Neighbourhood Wardens and implementation of new ASB powers.

Regional Scrutiny

The North East Regional Employers' Organisation supports a Region – wide Joint Member and Officer Scrutiny network where all twelve North East local authorities' Scrutiny leads discuss national developments in scrutiny and also have an opportunity to share their work programmes and priorities and consider emerging issues that have an impact across local authority boundaries. Key issues considered by the network during 2015/16 have included the role of Ofsted in Safeguarding Children; Scrutiny of educational performance; the effective scrutiny of Health and Social Care integration; the transfer of 0-5 Children's Public Health Commissioning; the development of relationships between Overview and Scrutiny and the Care Quality Commission.

North East Combined Authority (NECA) scrutiny arrangements

The North East Combined Authority (NECA) has agreed three broad areas of focus:

- Transport
- Employability and Inclusion
- Economic Development and Regeneration

Governance arrangements for the NECA include an Overview and Scrutiny Committee which enables local councillors, on behalf of their communities, to scrutinise and challenge all matters within the remit of the Combined Authority. The committee investigates matters of significant importance to residents across the areas covered by the seven councils with a view to influencing decisions made in respect of all matters within the remit of the Combined Authority. The North East Combined Authority (NECA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee is made up of 14 councillors from across the 7 combined authority areas. Durham County Council is represented on the NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee by Councillor Joe Armstrong, Chair of DCC's OSMB and Councillor Rob Crute, Chair of DCC's Economy and Enterprise OSC.

The first meeting of the year was held on 22nd June 2015, with an agenda including the Local Enterprise Partnership annual report and overview of funding, and potential topics for the Committee's work programme for the year. The Committee is currently undertaking a policy development scrutiny review on Transport Related Barriers to Education, Employment and Training, which began in 2015. The NECA scrutiny committee is due to meet 6 times this year 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

As part of several devolved powers, the North East Combined Authority has also established a Commission for Health and Social Care Integration, in partnership with the NHS. The Commission will look at the potential for integrating health services, including acute and primary care, community services, mental health services, social care and public health. It is hoped this will strengthen services while improving local outcomes and health inequalities.

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 and 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.

During 2015/16, the committee has:

- considered the Annual Report and Performance update for the North East Ambulance Service;
- engaged with NHS England in respect of the Review of Neonatal services in the north east;
- Considered an update by NHS England on the National Congenital Heart Review;
- Examined the North East and Cumbria Learning Disability Fast Track Transformation Plan.

It is envisaged that this work will roll forward into 2016/17.

External Review and Inspection

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny function is frequently engaged in external review and inspection processes. During the course of 2015/16:-

- the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Chair of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee were interviewed as part of Durham County Council's Ofsted inspection of Children's Services;
- the Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee attended a meeting with HMIC Inspectors as part of Durham Constabulary's 'Effectiveness' inspection that included organised crime;
- the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted an evidence portfolio setting out how they had worked alongside North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust as part of their Care Quality Commission Inspection.

Co-optees

Non-councillors 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;
- to bring specialist knowledge and/or skills and an element of external challenge to the Overview and Scrutiny process;
- to take an interest in, attend and contribute to the committees or working groups to which appointed;
- to establish good relations with other members, officers and co-optees;

- where individuals are representatives of any particular organisation or group, to feed back any appropriate discussions or decisions of the relevant committee or working group to their respective organisation or group.

A fundamental review of the appointment process for non-statutory, non-voting co-optees was undertaken in 2014, for a two-year period. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agreed in March 2016 that the appointment period for currently serving non-statutory, non-voting co-optees would be extended for a further two years with a fundamental review of the appointment process planned for 2018.

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.

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 03000 268145 scrutiny@durham.gov.uk, or see the Durham County Council website, www.durham.gov.uk.