

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18



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North Tyneside Council

Introduction

Welcome to the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2017-18.

This report gives a brief summary of the work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny over the last year and highlights some of the areas where scrutiny has made an impact, particularly in relation to policy development.

The report also sets out the process for the development of the 2018/19 work programme.

The role of Overview and Scrutiny

The role of overview and scrutiny is to provide a ‘critical friend’ challenge to the Cabinet (and other decision makers), whilst also assisting in the development of key policies and plans.

Over recent years there has been an increased emphasis on promoting and developing the policy development role of overview and scrutiny. Throughout 2017/18 this has continued, and a range of policy reviews have been undertaken with links to the priorities within the Our North Tyneside Plan and the Creating a Brighter Future Programme.

We have been a ‘critical friend’

Whilst a focus of scrutiny work during 2017/18 has been the development of policy, the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and its sub-committees have still fulfilled the important role of being a critical friend to Cabinet, providing challenge, particularly on budget and performance issues.

A Budget and Council Plan Study Group was again established to consider the Cabinet’s budget proposals in detail, and Members put forward a number of recommendations which were considered by Cabinet as part of the budget-setting process.

The Finance Sub-committee has continued to examine the Council’s budget monitoring position on a bi-monthly basis, including the forecast outturn positions for the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account and the Investment Plan. Budget management reports have been developed to bring together financial and relevant performance information and the Sub-committee has therefore reviewed the financial

information in the context of the policy priorities in the Our North Tyneside Plan. Members have also regularly reviewed the red risks associated with the Business and Technical Partnerships, and monitored the impact of welfare reform changes. The Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee has received bi-annual performance reports on the delivery of the Our North Tyneside Plan, allowing progress on delivery of the aims and objectives to be monitored and, where necessary, challenged. Some of the sub-committees have also monitored performance by receiving updates on the delivery of the various projects included in the Creating a Brighter Future programme. Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee has paid particular focus to central governments education policy and funding developments this year and its potential impact on the borough.

Critical Friend Challenge: Transition from Children to Adult Services Sub Group

The Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee set up a sub group to examine the process undertaken by both Adult Services and Children Services when a child with special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) transfers to Adult Services at age 18; more commonly referred to as “transition”. Following the implementation of new legislation in 2014, the Children and Families Act and the Care Act, and the implementation of the SEND Code of Practice, it was an appropriate time to consider whether the processes: a) were fit for purpose; b) enabled the Authority to demonstrate the progress of its disabled young people; and to c) examine the work being undertaken by the Authority on the whole life disability agenda.

The sub group met with parents whose children had been through the transition process; representatives for the North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG); Met officers from the Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding Services; and asked young people who had gone through the transition process for their thoughts and opinions.

The sub group completed its work in December 2017 and its conclusions and eleven recommendations were reported to Cabinet on 9 April 2018. The Sub Group endorsed the Whole Life Disability service’s message that “We want all young people with special educational needs and disabilities in North Tyneside to have the opportunities to live the life to which they aspire” and believed that their recommendations would assist in making this goal a reality.

We have also focused on policy development

Some examples of the policy development work undertaken during 2017/18 are:

ICT Strategy Review

A sub-group of the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee was established to undertake a review of the ICT Strategy with 'a focus on evaluating whether the Council has an appropriate ICT strategy in place and whether this strategy will meet the needs of the organisation going forward. The Study Group concluded that there was evidence that the foundations are being put in place to update, transform and improve ICT services. However Members had some concerns that the benefits of this work are yet to be felt by the users of ICT across the Council and were keen to see the benefits become evident as quickly as possible. The Sub-group made 9 recommendations to Cabinet on areas for development including improvements to scrutiny and accountability, communication with staff, and training for staff and Councillors.

Cultural Development Plan – Culture and Leisure Sub-committee

The Culture and Leisure Sub-committee set up a sub-group in 2016/17 to undertake a review on proposals for a Cultural Development Plan. The focus of the review was how the Council is able to deliver an effective cultural offer in the context of a) a shrinking financial environment, b) existing Council strategies for arts development and tourism, c) changing patterns of consumer behaviour in relation to tourism, and d) greater expectations for partnership working arising from the change programme. The sub group reported its conclusion and recommendations to Cabinet in December 2017. Two out of three recommendations, which related to the Arts Development Strategy 2014-21, and analyse of the outcomes of industry surveys alongside market intelligence to include events and visitors, were accepted by Cabinet at its meeting in February 2018. The third recommendation, which related to service improvement funding, would require further consideration on how to maximise the opportunities to secure income to support events e.g. through sponsorship. Cabinet's response to the recommendations will form part of the sub-committee's work programme 2018-19.

Cycling Strategy– Economic Prosperity Sub-committee

The Economic Prosperity Sub-Committee contributed to the preparation of the draft North Tyneside Cycling Strategy. During the period of public engagement the sub-committee gave consideration to the relevance of the five actions contained in the strategy and expressed views on the most important ways and initiatives to support everyday cycling. The sub-committee also gave consideration to the draft North Tyneside Cycling Design Guide, the responses received during the engagement process and the extent to which the recommendations of a previous scrutiny study

group had been incorporated into the strategy. The sub-committee's comments were recorded to be taken into account in formulating the final version of the strategy to be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

Elective Home Education – Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee

The Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee set up a sub-group in 2016/17 to examine Elective Home Education. Members of the Sub Committee had expressed some concerns as to the Authority's ability to check the quality of education being received by those outside of the formal school process. As the Attendance and Placement Team was due to review North Tyneside's policy on Elective Home Education, it was agreed that a review be undertaken to look at the current practices and Local Authority role in relation to home educating. The sub group reported its conclusion and recommendations to Cabinet in April 2017. All of the eight recommendations, the majority of which were related to policy development, were accepted by Cabinet at its meeting in June 2017 and the sub-committee has been kept informed of the progress on their implementation over the last municipal year.

Monitoring Role

Whilst helping to develop new policies and assisting in the review of others, scrutiny has also invested time in monitoring the development and delivery of existing plans and policies to ensure that the best quality services are delivered to residents and visitors of North Tyneside.

Some examples of the plans and policies that have been monitored throughout the year include:

Service Delivery and Performance - Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and its sub-committees have continued to receive monitoring reports on service delivery and performance across the Council. Scrutiny Members have also had the opportunity to comment on various policies and strategies prior to submission to Cabinet for approval.

Universal Credit - Housing sub committee has continued to keep up to date with the emerging changes that will come from the 'full service' roll out of Universal Credit and the impact that this will have on affected residents. Members ensured that a comprehensive communication plan was in place to inform residents of the changes and to signpost relevant support. Housing sub-committee has also considered and endorsed changes to the Moving In and Out Standards, aimed at improving customer experience and delivering efficiencies.

Flooding - Environment Sub-committee has considered reports from the Surface Water and Drainage Partnership on a quarterly basis, along with the Killingworth and Longbenton Surface Water Management Plan. Members examined the Plan to look at various solutions to alleviate flooding in the area.

Environment Sub-committee - In addition to the above the Environment Sub-committee has also continued to monitor the implementation of the recommendations in respect of the two recent street lighting reports and the action plan for the implementation of the Newcastle and North Tyneside Biodiversity Action Plan. Members have also monitored the implementation of the cycling strategy and the public rights of way reports.

Better Care Fund – the Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee has received regular reports showing progress against the national specified metrics and targets relating to the Better Care Fund (BCF).

Support for people with Dementia and their carers – following an in-depth study into support and services available to people with dementia, their family and carers, the Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee has received six monthly updates on the re-configuration of services and support for people with dementia or memory problems and their carers so they can evaluate how successful the changes have been and if necessary make recommendations.

North Tyneside Integrated Urgent Care Service – at an Extraordinary meeting of the Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee in December 2017, the sub-committee received an update on the future of urgent care in the Borough from the North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The sub-committee raised a number of key points which were forwarded to the CCG Governing Body for consideration.

Northumberland, Tyne & Wear and North Durham Sustainable Transformation Plan – during 2017/18 the Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee have received updates about the establishment of the Northumberland, Tyne & Wear and North Durham Sustainable Transformation Plan Joint Scrutiny Committee. The joint committee started meeting in the autumn of 2017 and the sub-committee have since received feedback from the meetings.

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Annual Plan and Quality Account – the Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee receive each year a presentation on the Trust's Annual Plan and Quality Account. The views of the sub-committee are included in the sub-committee's statement to the Trust.

Safeguarding – the Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee received the Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report and Action Plan at its meeting in November 2017.

Children, Young People and Learning Plan 2014-18 - the Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee received updates on the delivery of the Children, Young People and Learning Plan, to monitor the delivery of key services aimed at improving the lives of children and young people.

Safeguarding - the Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee received the *North Tyneside Safeguarding Children Board's Annual* report in October 2017 and also received quarterly updates on work undertaken by the Authority and its partners to prevent and protect young people from sexual exploitation.

Attainment - the Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee receives an annual report on: the attainment of children and young people in the borough; attainment of free school meals (FSM) / pupil premium (PP) pupils to monitor the effectiveness of the support and challenge to ensure these pupils attainment is comparable to those pupils not in receipt of FSM or PP; and the attainment of the Authority's looked after children. The provision of adult education has also been on the agenda this year.

New ways of working - the Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee has received regular updates on the work to embed the locality teams' model in children's services, the changes to early help and the introduction of Signs Of Safety and Liquid Logic into Children's Services and the other projects under the Transforming Children's Services umbrella.

The Chairs and Deputy Chairs have continued to meet on a quarterly basis throughout the year to share information on ideas and topics for review, to identify issues where services could be improved for residents, and to avoid any potential areas of duplication.

Achievements

Recommendations

During 2017-18, four in-depth reviews were completed and 31 recommendations were put forward to cabinet. Cabinet has responded to 20 recommendations, with 11 still under consideration. Of these, 12 have been accepted and Cabinet have set out actions for implementation as part of the response to the recommendations. A further 6 recommendations were considered and noted. The Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and the sub-committees will continue to monitor implementation of these recommendations and the subsequent outcomes on the delivery of services.

Engagement and partnership working

A key role of overview and scrutiny is to promote issues of concern to the public and, where appropriate, consult with residents and service users on scrutiny investigations to be taken forward.

Scrutiny has continued to work closely with its partners, maintaining positive relationships and sharing key information, particularly in relation to health issues and policing issues.

Representatives of the Clinical Commissioning Group, Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust, Healthwatch, and the Care Quality Commission have all been in attendance at various meetings to share information and maintain key links with Members.

The Housing sub-committee is designated as the crime and disorder committee and has met with the Police and Crime Commissioner in relation to the delivery of priorities contained within the Police and Crime Plan. The sub-committee also welcomed some tenants to a meeting in order to receive a final update on the implementation of recommendations made during a previous review of anti-social behaviour.

Various pieces of work this year have involved engagement with service users and partner organisations and this has been highlighted throughout this report. Positive feedback has been received. For example, a resident who had attended a meeting of the Environment Sub-committee in relation to street cleaning standards contacted the News Guardian highlighting how her concerns had subsequently been dealt with and thanking the Council for offering residents the chance to have their voices heard.

Scrutiny Going Forward

Preparation for the development of the 2017/18 overview and scrutiny work programmes has already begun. There are proposals for the chairs and deputy chairs of scrutiny committees to meet with the Cabinet to discuss up and coming policy issues and to identify areas where scrutiny can have an impact in terms of policy development. The Chairs and Deputy Chairs will be discussing these areas in more detail in order to prioritise topics for scrutiny during 2018-19. Elected Members, senior officers and the public will be encouraged to suggest topics that scrutiny could usefully investigate.

All suggestions received will be allocated to the relevant sub-committee, with the topics being discussed and prioritised at the first meetings of the 2018/19 municipal year. There will also be some reviews begun or assigned in 2017/18 that will carry forward to next year. When prioritising topics, consideration will be given to whether the issue is timely and if it will contribute to the development of policy.

Given the on-going financial pressures impacting on all areas of the organisation, Council has agreed a slightly reduced timetable of scrutiny meetings for 2018/19. This will require scrutiny committees to work more efficiently, and there may be

scope to consider alternative means of ensuring important issues are scrutinised effectively other than formal scrutiny meetings.