

**SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

Report of the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer  
(Legal and Democratic Governance)

**Foreword**



**Councillor Lisa Smart**

*Scrutiny Co-ordination  
Committee Chair 2020/2021*

*2020-21 has been a busy year for the five scrutiny committees and the Scrutiny Coordination Committee in Stockport with all meetings held remotely online due to the pandemic. Scrutiny committees have looked at a range of issues both within their formal meetings and as part of the scrutiny reviews. We started the year by making recommendations to the Cabinet about which portfolios sat most comfortably within the remit of the relevant committees. Scrutiny committees continue to review progress and performance, provide challenge to decision makers and contribute to the policy formation work taking place.*

*This year, we have built upon the work from previous years in looking at how we do scrutiny in Stockport. As part of that work we were pleased to welcome the Council's two new Deputy Chief Executives to a meeting of the Scrutiny Coordination Committee and we thank them both for their time and their thoughts which helped to form the basis of several recommendations from the committee.*

*Scrutiny Reviews continue to be a valuable means of improving understanding and accelerating change in how the Council operates and I would like to thank all those councillors and officers who took time to participate and contribute to the review process.*

*I would also like to place on record my thanks to those scrutiny members for rising to the challenge of addressing some big and sometimes difficult issues. Particular thanks go to those members who have joined reviews and working groups where they have been needed to bring political balance.*

*My final thanks go to Jonathan Davies who took on the role of Interim Statutory Scrutiny Officer during the parental leave of Kathryn Rees. Both officers offered strong and valuable support to the scrutiny function over the municipal year.*

## **1. How Does Scrutiny Work?**

1.1. The Leader of the Council and Seven Cabinet Members are responsible for the strategic management and decision making of all Council Services. Every council which operates "executive arrangements" (those that have a Leader and Cabinet – such as Stockport Council) must have at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Overview and Scrutiny does not make decisions, it acts as a 'critical friend' to the Cabinet (and partners) and undertakes evidence-based reviews and makes recommendations to the Cabinet. It is an essential element of governance arrangements in the council and seeks to improve policies and services for the people of Stockport by encouraging openness and accountability about the way decisions are made. Overview and Scrutiny can scrutinise and review the work and policies of the council and hold Cabinet Members and Chief Officers to account for their actions. It can also be consulted by the Cabinet or the council on the development of draft policies, action plans and reviews. It can also call-in Cabinet key decisions and initiate reviews of council services, functions or policies. It is not a mechanism for the handling of individual complaints, intervening in planning applications or acting as an appeals mechanism.

1.2. Five Scrutiny Committees made up of non-executive councillors are ultimately responsible for calling and holding the Cabinet to account and taking a lead in reviewing policy and matters of strategic direction. They also consider other issues relating to services provided by the council and, in some cases, services provided by partner organisations. The Committees assist in shaping new policies and monitor performance information against the standards we have set ourselves. The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee co-ordinates the overall work of the scrutiny committees.

1.3. For the 2020/2021 municipal year, the Council appointed the following five Scrutiny Committees:

<b>Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>No. of Members</b>	<b>Cabinet Portfolio</b>
Adult Social Care & Health	9 members	Adult Care & Health
Children and Families	10 members (plus 2 co-optees)	Children, Family Services &

		Education
Communities & Housing Scrutiny	9 members	Inclusive Neighbourhoods Cabinet Portfolio and the Sustainable Stockport Portfolio
Corporate, Resource Management & Governance	9 members	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Devolution Cabinet Portfolio, Resources, Commissioning & Governance Cabinet Portfolio and the Citizen Focus & Engagement Cabinet Portfolio).
Economy & Regeneration	9 members	Economy and Regeneration
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee	The 5 Scrutiny Committee chairs.	

1.4. Each year, each of the Scrutiny Committees typically undertake one or more Scrutiny Reviews that focus on a particular issue, considering it in greater detail than is possible at the programmed Committee meetings. These reviews are undertaken by a Review Panel and will normally last around six months and may include a mixture of interviews with relevant officers, research of best practice elsewhere, meetings with service users and community groups and consultation with wider parts of the community and experts in their fields. Some scrutiny review panel meetings are held in one session for up to 4 hours and the reports then drafted and finalised; these are known as “deep dive” scrutiny reviews.

1.5. As all Scrutiny Meetings post April 2020 until March 2021 took place online via a remote meeting platform, the Scrutiny Review Panels also took place remotely online. One point to note from holding the Scrutiny Review Panels online was that Partners and experts (national and local) were able to attend more easily online rather than having to travel and include travel time. One of the recommendations from the 2020/21 Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee was to continue with Scrutiny Review Panels online where appropriate to assist in accessibility for the panel members and increase the breadth of expertise available to invite to attend the panel meetings given that they do not have to travel and attend a meeting in Stockport.

## **2. Scrutiny activity during the year**

### **2.1. Performance and Resource Monitoring**

2.1.1. Each quarter the Scrutiny Committees monitor the performance of each of the Cabinet portfolios and the Council service areas that fall within the remit of that Committee. The performance is assessed against the priorities set out in each of the Portfolio agreements agreed at the start of the year. The Committees also receive reports on request which cover the council services within their remit.

### **2.2. Scrutiny of External Bodies**

2.2.1. Overview and scrutiny committees have accumulated a number of powers to undertake 'external scrutiny' of specific additional bodies. These include:

2.2.1.1. Provision for 'health scrutiny' – of health bodies and authorities. Local authorities have the power to scrutinise health bodies and providers in their area or to set up joint committees to do so. They can require members or officers of local health bodies to provide information and to attend health scrutiny meetings to answer questions.

2.2.1.2. Provision for a 'crime and disorder committee'. These are mandatory committees for all local authorities, which must scrutinise the delivery of crime and disorder strategies. Authorities which are delivering these strategies and which are subject to a report from such a committee must respond to the report and have regard to it when exercising its functions. They are also subject to a

requirement to provide information and attend meetings of the committee to answer questions.

## **2.3. Scrutiny Review Panels**

2.3.1. During the municipal year 2020/21 each of the Scrutiny Committees planned to undertake at least one Review either individually or jointly with another scrutiny committee and finalise any Reviews that were outstanding from the 2019/21 municipal year.

### **2.3.1.1. Adult Social Care & Health – Diabetes Prevention Programme**

In 2019/20 the Adult Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee selected to undertake a review looking at Diabetes and how the Council can do more to raise awareness of diabetes and how to seek to support and how to make the best use of community facilities. The final report was brought to the Adult Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee on 24 September 2020.

The panel was made up of Councillor John Wright (Lead Councillor) together with Councillors Angie Clark, Chris Gordon and Dena Ryness.

The Review considered:-

- The dangers of developing diabetes and how it can impact on a person's life;
- Lifestyle changes required to avoid the risk of developing diabetes;
- Ways of developing easier access to the programme and what the benefits of undertaking it can be; and
- How to increase publicity of the programme and its benefits for those involved.

The Review Panel met in February 2020 with key individuals with experience in the field who attended and presented information relating to the Diabetes Prevention Programme across Greater Manchester and specifically relating to Stockport.

The Review Panel agreed the following recommendations:-

1. Leaflets – due to the serious nature of Diabetes and the lack of information that is publicly available to communicate the effects and raise awareness, leaflets/publicity material should be placed across the Borough in public places e.g. reception areas, GP surgeries/practices etc.
2. Area Committees – to increase the public awareness and to engage with local residents it is proposed that an agenda item about Diabetes Prevention is placed on each of the Area Committee agendas for one cycle and Public Health be invited to present and answer any questions.

3. Council Motion – to seek cross party support for a cross party motion to be submitted to a future Council Meeting highlighting the importance of the Diabetes Prevention Programme and seeking the Council to agree a way forward of raising awareness.
4. TV Soap Dramas – to advise the national team and Diabetes UK to campaign for one of the TV Soaps to address the issue of Diabetes Prevention correctly and highlight the risks/challenges with Diabetes.
5. Scrutiny Committee – to request that the National Diabetes Prevention Programme (NDPP) update is included in the PPRR monitoring report to the Adult Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee providing an update on the progress of the prevent programme.

The Review Panel in considering the following agreed that the recommendations being proposed were the most appropriate actions to implement across the Borough to raise awareness of: -

- The dangers of developing diabetes and how it can impact on a person's life.
- Lifestyle changes required to avoid the risk of developing diabetes.
- Ways of developing easier access to the programme and what the benefits of undertaking it can be.
- How to increase publicity of the programme and its benefits for those involved.

A joint Scrutiny Review was also undertaken with the Corporate, Resource Management and Governance Scrutiny Committee (during the 2020/21 year (see further below)) on the Council's relationship with health partners (the report being presented to the Adult Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee on 15 April 2021).

#### 2.4. Children & Families - Supporting Young People's Mental & Emotional Wellbeing & Counselling in Schools

In 2019/20 the Children & Families Scrutiny Committee selected to undertake a review looking at supporting young people's mental wellbeing and developing resilience.

The panel was made up of Councillor Linda Holt (Lead Councillor) together with Councillors Laura Clingan, Yvonne Guariento & Becky Senior.

The review was commenced with one meeting being held in February 2020, but was not completed during 2019/20 due to a combination of a lack of officer resource and the pandemic. The review was completed during 2020/21 and reported to the

committee meeting on 14 April 2021. The review was expanded in scope during 202/21 to encompass a review of Counselling in schools.

As part of the Scrutiny Work Programme approved by the Council for the municipal year 2020/21, the Children & Families Scrutiny Committee requested a scrutiny review to consider the support for young people's mental health and wellbeing in schools. The breadth of support for emotional wellbeing and mental health support to children and young people of school age is broad ranging. The specific focus of the review was therefore agreed as twofold:

- a. To understand provision and how we support those young people who have emotional health issues but perhaps are not acute enough to warrant full scale intervention.
- b. To understand how schools feel in terms of dealing with emotional health issues and whether there is more that could be done.

The Review Panel heard from a broad range of invitees regarding the current offer for the identification of mental and emotional need, along with the provision and support available for children and young people of school age in Stockport.

The Review made the following recommendations:-

- Early Help and universal support is critical to ensuring there is a robust offer of support. There was a clear agreement to continue to develop the early help offer in respect of mental and emotional wellbeing. It is recommended that a robust programme of workforce development for universal and early help staff is commissioned, along with expert supervision and consultation from specialist provision to support the universal and early help sector.
- Ensure the mental health support offer is understood and reaches all parts of the population is paramount. It is recommended that a programme of awareness raising with regard to the support available to for young people regarding mental health and wellbeing, is undertaken with first steps taken before the end of the academic year (July 2021). This must make specific consideration of reaching all sectors of the community. This should could start as a 'week of action' with a view to ensuring a programme of ongoing awareness raising across the annual calendar. This should be co-created with young people and the voluntary and community sector key providers (specifically Beacon Counselling and Kooth). It should ensure that, "information includes messages which remove stereotypes and stigma attached to mental health in order to promote active engagement by young

people,” Scrutiny Review, Children and Young People’s Participation (March 2021).

- Ensure that awareness of the mental health and wellbeing support available, reaches all areas of our community and takes account of the view of young people in the Scrutiny Review into Children and Young People’s Participation. It is recommended that Beacon Counselling and the school nurse service, jointly link with the Ethnic Diversity Service and young people representatives in Stockport to maximise the reach of the support and services to young people.
- The Healthy Young Minds (HYMs) waiting list is of particular note. It is recommended that the HYMS waiting list progress is incorporated into the dashboards received by the Scrutiny Committee from the next possible date post April 2021.
- There is a growing recognition that the mental health workforce is our whole network of family, friends, neighbours, teachers, nurses, early help teams, education services, social workers, voluntary and community sector. There is a strength in this wider network of mental health support. Future service design needs to capitalise on the strength in the wide range of provision and support offer. It is recommended that a review of the current local investment into mental health provision for young people should be undertaken with immediate effect. This should be undertaken in time to meet the commissioning cycle and budget planning of the LA and CCG for 2021/22 implementation. Consideration of local investment in the context of funding for young people’s mental health across GM should be made.

A second Scrutiny Review was undertaken in 2020/21 entitled Children and Young People’s participation. It was agreed that this review would consider:

- current arrangements for the participation of children and young people;
- opportunities to further develop work with children and young people;
- ways of increasing publicity to involve young people, including those with SEND, in the democratic process, links to elected members and influence decision making.

The panel consisted of Councillor Grace Baynham, Councillor Linda Holt and Councillor Becky Senior.

The review made the following recommendations:-



There are many areas of existing and developing good practice across a number of services which recognise the voice of the child in developing service areas and it would be beneficial to create stronger links across the range of children's services with the formal, democratic processes. It is therefore recommended that the following actions be implemented:

- Collate recommendations relating to mental health and emotional wellbeing with the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review Panel for Supporting Young People's Mental/Emotional Wellbeing & Counselling in Schools, i.e. to ensure that there is improved awareness raising about services and provisions available for young people; that information includes messages which remove stereotypes and stigma attached to mental health in order to promote active engagement by young people;
- Invite young people to attend Children and Families Scrutiny Committee every six months to speak directly to elected members about topical issues and for elected members actively seek to attend young people's groups and hear directly about the work they undertake as messages directly from young people are heard more strongly;
- Support active promotion of participation activities for young people, particularly through schools, to engage and have their voices heard through the various groups available;
- Feedback on the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review to be provided to the young people in attendance by 30th April 2021 to ensure momentum is maintained for working with young people;
- Explore and promote opportunities for financial awareness training and 'guardian accounts' for young people's debit cards to enable ease of access for public transport;
- Establish links with work around transport to ensure young people's voices directly influence planning and development, particularly around public transport, cycle networks, buses;
- Explore access opportunities with the National Trust in support of wellbeing in line with previous undertakings for Stockport residents, and other leisure providers as appropriate.

## 2.5. Communities & Housing – The Council's policy for Active Streets, Play Streets and School Streets

The Communities & Housing Scrutiny Committees selected to undertake a review of the Council's policy for Active Streets, Play Streets and School Streets within the 2020/21 Scrutiny Work Programme.

Councillors Adrian Nottingham (Lead Councillor); Charles Gibson, John McGahan, Mark Roberts and Kerry Waters were nominated to sit on the scrutiny review panel.

The panel has met and undertaken the review. Recommendations have been made and are being finalised to put to Cabinet.

## 2.6. Corporate, Resource Management and Governance – the Council's relationship with Health Partners

The Corporate, Resource Management and Governance Scrutiny Committee selected to undertake a join review with the Adult Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee (during the 2020/21 year (see further below) on the Council's relationship with health partners (the report being presented to the Adult Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee on 15 April 2021).

Councillors Angie Clark, Dickie Davies, Carole McCann, John McGahan, Dena Ryness, Lisa Smart, Aron Thornley, Wendy Wild, John Wright were nominated to sit on the Panel.

The Panel considered a range of information from health partners, notably from the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership and Stockport Clinical Commissioning Group, alongside proposals for Integrated Care Systems contained within the recent Health and Care White Paper.

The Final Report was agreed at the final Review Panel Meeting on 25 March 2021.

In light of the information supplied to the Panel and the discussions held, the Panel identified seven key recommendations that it wished to make for consideration by the Cabinet which are detailed below:

- To review data sharing and information governance arrangements across partners, ensuring that this operates in the best interests of residents as the owners of their personal data and continues to improve.
- To develop a locality approach within new ICS structures, ensuring that the needs of local communities can be met, and they remain accountable to local people and elected representatives.

- To improve navigation of care pathways for residents, including consideration of a 'named individual or keyworker' approach which puts the resident first, and ensuring access to records is linked into digital inclusion.
- To embed a person centred and asset-based approach into organisational culture and decision making.
- To develop and embed a preventative and early help approach to reduce health and related inequalities.
- To ensure a strong, vibrant, thriving and skilled workforce through regular and clear communication supported by joint culture, values, training and development opportunities across partner organisations.
- To review and commission further research on evaluating and quantifying value for money and impact of early help and prevention in reducing spend on acute services and improving outcomes for individuals answering the question of 'so what impact has the intervention made'.

In order to monitor progress against the above recommendations, it was proposed that an update be provided to the two Scrutiny Committees no sooner than 12 months after adoption by Cabinet.

In the meantime, it was proposed that these comments and recommendations should be taken account of in the development of the joint Health and Care Plan sitting under the Health and Wellbeing Board.

## 2.7. Economy & Regeneration - Changes to Bus and Train Services in the light of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Economy & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee selected to undertake a review in the 2020/21 Municipal Year on Changes to Bus and Train Services in the light of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Councillor Tom Dowse (Lead Member); Councillors Steve Gribbon, Colin MacAlister and Charlie Stewart were nominated to sit on the scrutiny review panel.

The Final Report was considered at the final Review Panel Meeting on 7 April 2021. The report came to the committee meeting on 15 April 2021.

In respect of rail services, Members were provided with information on pre-Covid travel patterns in Stockport and how travel changed during both the first national lockdown in March 2020, and during the recovery after that initial lockdown.

In summary it was found that:

- Mobile phone data showed that the level of trips to, from and within Stockport are in line with the GM average on weekdays, but above the GM average on weekends. In Stockport the average daily number of trips being made is only 38% below the pre COVID-19 level. The average for GM is 41%.
- This dataset also showed that around 32% of those who made a regular commute in Stockport are still making that trip. This is marginally above the GM average of 31%.
- The higher rate of weekend mobility for Stockport in the Mobile Phone data is also reflected in the traffic count data. Weekend traffic volumes in Stockport are 16% below typical. The average for GM is 24% below typical.

In respect of bus services, the consultation response on bus reform in Greater Manchester was analysed.

In light of the information presented in the report it was proposed that:

- The Council continues to work with TfGM, Transport for the North, Rail North and rail operators to continue to secure and maintain the best possible rail services for Stockport.
- The Council continues to support the Greater Manchester approach to bus organisation and continues to work with TfGM to understand the implications for Stockport.

## 2.8. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee – Governance of Outside Bodies

At the Scrutiny Co-ordination committee meeting held on the 27 July 2020 it was resolved that the Committee would undertake a Scrutiny Review entitled “The Scrutiny of Outside Bodies”, which was subsequently narrowed to the governance of Outside Bodies.

The report was presented to the committee meeting on 26 April 2021. The progress made by the Scrutiny Committee in undertaking this review was behind where it had hoped to be and it was acknowledged that the review could not be completed within the remainder of the current Municipal Year.

The report provided a useful baseline in understanding where and how the Council developed the structures that it currently had in place.

There was a general consensus amongst members of the Scrutiny Committee that the current structure by which these functions were exercised was non-optimal. It was agreed that it would be useful to have an understanding of the benefits and disadvantages of the current arrangements in Stockport. It was important that an appropriate distinction was drawn between the role of members as decision-makers and scrutineers when exercising the functions of these committees.

It was recommended that the Cabinet investigate the current arrangements for the discharge of the governance-related functions relating to the Council's partner organisations currently exercised by the Contributors, Funding and Member Committees and to determine whether these remained the most appropriate structures for this purpose in the light of the experience and examples of good practice from elsewhere in the country. The Cabinet have agreed to the recommendations and a review will be undertaken and reported back through the governance process during this municipal year.

## **2.9 Call-ins**

2.9.1 There were no call-ins during the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Vicki Bates

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