

Annual Report 2007/08

Making a Difference: Scrutiny at Staffordshire County Council



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Key Achievements of Scrutiny 2007/08

The past year has seen the ongoing strong development of Scrutiny in Staffordshire building upon nationally regarded good practice.

Key achievements at Staffordshire County Council during 2007/08 are set out below.

- The Scrutiny and Performance Team being chosen by the Cabinet Office as a Standard Bearer for the new Customer Service Excellence Standards.
- The Healthier Communities and Older People Scrutiny and Performance Panel providing an informed assessment to Cabinet on the effectiveness of the consultation process in respect of the future of care homes in the County prior to decisions being taken.
- The development of Level 5 Foster Carers, and corresponding support packages, following recommendations made by Scrutiny.
- The Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny and Performance Panel's agreement to support the Council's adherence to the National Youth Agency's Hear by Rights Standards.
- The incorporation of a carers target in the Local Area Agreement.
- The introduction and development of new performance management arrangements in which scrutiny takes a lead role.
- The Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel continuing to encourage positive joint working with District and Borough Members and partner organisation to enable them to review complex partnership bodies.
- The conclusion of the Climate Change Scrutiny Review resulting in recommendations focussed on ensuring that thinking and action on climate change happens throughout the Council. The Council has gained a significant reputation for work in this area with the Leader acting as climate change champion.
- The Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee has continued to comment on consultation documents. In addition we have focussed on developing a constructive relationship with NHS commissioners and providers.

Scrutiny at Staffordshire County Council

At Staffordshire County Council Scrutiny and Performance Panels/ Committees undertake work to support the Council in improving the services it provides.

Some of the key ways in which Scrutiny fulfils its role are set out below.

Holding the Cabinet, who are the Authority's decision-makers, to account by monitoring decisions that they make, checking whether they are successfully implemented, and exercising the right to 'call in' a decision which they consider needs to be reviewed.

Supporting the Cabinet in policy and service development by: considering regional, national and local policies; participating in consultation exercises; and undertaking scrutiny reviews to make recommendations for improvement to the relevant body/organisation.

Undertaking performance management by monitoring the Council's achievement of its priorities as set out in the Local Area Agreement, Strategic Plan and Thematic Improvement Plans.

External Scrutiny, in particular of health services, is another key function of Scrutiny. By reviewing health services, contributing to consultation exercises on key local, regional and national health policies and initiatives, and determining the impact of such policies and practices upon health services in Staffordshire scrutiny can work with partners to ensure that health services in Staffordshire are improving and health inequalities are reduced.

Community Engagement is an essential part of all the work of Scrutiny. Scrutiny has a responsibility to encourage Staffordshire residents, the County Council's partners and the local media, to participate in Scrutiny – to ensure that the work of Scrutiny is focused on matters that are important to the communities of Staffordshire.

Scrutiny and Performance Panels/Committees

Scrutiny and Performance Panels/Committees consist of Elected Members who undertake annual Work Programmes which focus on: the delivery of the County Council's and partners main aims, as set out in their business plans; areas where their involvement could help improve performance; or priorities and concerns raised by the public.

Six Scrutiny and Performance Panels/Committees carry out this work for Staffordshire County Council. They are:

- Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel
- Corporate Policy Scrutiny and Performance Committee
- Economic Prosperity and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny and Performance Panel
- Healthier Communities and Older People Scrutiny and Performance Panel
- Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel

- **Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee**

Scrutiny work takes place in formal meetings of the Panels/Committees and in Member Working Groups, which are established to look at specific subjects in depth. This annual report provides a summary of the work undertaken by the Panels/Committees during 2007/08, with a focus on how they have contributed to the achievement of the Authority's priorities.

Among the items that Members regularly receive at Scrutiny and Performance Panel/Committee meetings are:

Cabinet Members Progress Report - These reports provide a summary of decisions that have been taken at Cabinet and issues relevant to the delivery of their portfolios, together with a summary of areas that the Cabinet will consider in the near future.

Performance Management Reports - The Corporate Policy Scrutiny and Performance Committee is responsible for scrutinising the County Council's progress in delivering its priorities. Quarterly performance reports are provided to the Committee to enable them to undertake this role. The Committee can identify areas that they wish to investigate further and/or recommend to the other County Council Scrutiny and Performance Committee/Panels that they investigate a particular performance area.

Scrutiny Reviews – Scrutiny reviews are undertaken in order to support the delivery of corporate priorities and to support policy development and review. Members make recommendations that are evidence based to the Cabinet or Council upon conclusion of a Scrutiny review.

Scrutiny Outcomes 2007/08

Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel



The Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel is responsible for scrutinising: education and educational attainment; health of children and young people; vulnerable children; libraries, archives and the arts; some leisure, cultural and sports facilities; community and Learning Partnerships; youth service and outdoor education; post 16 and continuing education; road safety (in relation to children and young people); and consultation and participation of children and young people.

During 2007/08 Members of the Panel formed a joint Member Working Group with Members of the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee to investigate the reasons for the low take up of school meals, particularly in primary schools in Staffordshire, with a view to proposing solutions. The review included a series of visits to primary schools to see the provision and discuss any issues with head teachers and catering managers, issuing a questionnaire to parents to field their views and liaison with the County Council's Head of Direct Services. The Final Report of the joint Member Working Group was endorsed by both Panels and forwarded to the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) and the Director of Children and Lifelong Learning for consideration. Members of the Panel and Committee are awaiting an Executive Response to the Working Group's recommendations.

The Panel also established a Working Group to consider the developments between schools and the Local Authority working together to ensure ongoing improvements in Key Stage results, especially at Key Stage 4. The Working Group will be hearing from Head teachers and partner agencies about the work taking place to achieve stretching targets for improvements in Key Stage outcomes across the board and in specific demographic groups. The Working Group is considering the importance of strong leadership and early support and intervention.

In April 2008 the Panel received a report on the progress in developing Level 5 Foster Carers (experienced foster carers who provide placements for individual young people who require intensive support). The recruitment of Level 5 Foster Carers is underway and a package of support for them put in place. This has developed following previous recommendations made by a Working Group established by the Panel.

As part of its performance management role the Panel has sought assurances about the action plans in place to continue to improve performance in specific priority areas. These have included the progress in implementing the Common Assessment Framework, the number of people accessing substance misuse advice, information or treatment services, reducing the number of looked after children and the percentage of young people not in education, employment and training. The Panel considered the steps being taken to ensure improvements in these areas and where accountability lay for improved performance. Its findings will be reported back to the Corporate Policy Scrutiny and Performance Committee. The Panel has also received updates on the development of the Children and Young People block of the Local Area Agreement and were given the opportunity to comment on the draft Children and Young People Thematic Improvement Plan.

In terms of policy development the Panel has been regularly updated on the 'Building Staffordshire's Future Programme' which it will have an ongoing interest in as the Programme progresses. The Panel has also considered the implications of the Care Matters: Time for Change White Paper and has had an ongoing interest in the development of PISCES and the Vulnerable Children's Service restructure.

The Panel has agreed to actions that will contribute to the Council's objective of adhering to the Hear by Rights Standards. The Hear by Rights Standards have been developed by the National Youth Agency and sets out a good practice model for the engagement and participation of children and young people in all aspects of public service that directly impacts upon them. The Panel has agreed to adopt the principles as part of its work programme and to scrutinise the rest of the Council in respect of its adherence to the Standards.

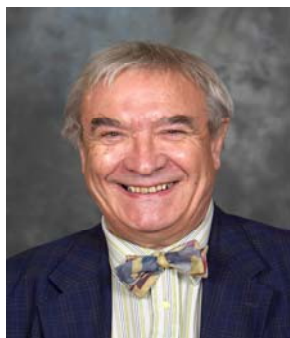
During the year the Panel also piloted a shared learning experience with a group of students from Fair Oak Business and Enterprise College. The students, who were undertaking GCSE Business Administration received a visit from the officer supporting the Panel and attended a Scrutiny Panel meeting to gain an understanding of how such meetings are organised and run. In turn they were asked to contribute suggestions that have been incorporated into the Panel's work programme for 2008-09.

In addition the Panel held discussions with representatives of JCB Academy. This was to provide the Panel with an opportunity to understand the ethos of the Academy and consider the relationship it would have with neighbouring schools and the wider community. During the year the Panel also considered the performance of the Directorate in respect of complaints and compliments, has contributed to the development of the revised Arts Policy for the County and received updates on developments in library provision in Great Wryley & Cheslyn Hay; the Staffordshire Education Welfare Service; the annual report from Staffordshire Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education; and the New Vic Theatre capital support.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Members and co-opted members of the Panel and officers of the Children and Lifelong Learning Directorate for their continued support, dedication and hard work. I would also like to thank the students and teachers of the Fair Oak Business and Enterprise College and other external witnesses that contributed to the work undertaken by the Panel over the previous twelve months. I look forward to developing and delivering upon our 2008/09 Work Programme.

Councillor Steven Norman
Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Corporate Policy Scrutiny and Performance Committee



The Corporate Policy Scrutiny and Performance Committee are responsible for scrutinising those areas of the County Council's activity focused on corporate improvement. Their remit covers: cross cutting issues; efficiency and value for money; customer care; ICT; finance - budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy; legal services; communications; performance management; strategic policy and corporate strategy; human resources; procurement; property; and European issues. The Committee also consider all Cabinet decisions that are called in.



During 2007/08 a key element of our work has been to scrutinise the County Council's progress in delivering the Strategic Plan, the Thematic Improvement Plans and the Corporate Improvement Plan. Quarterly performance reports have been provided to the Committee to enable us to undertake this role. Where appropriate we have identified areas to investigate further and/or made recommendations to the other Scrutiny and Performance Committee/Panels that they investigate a particular performance area. The Committee have made comments on the nature of the performance reports which have helped to inform the development of performance reporting. In addition, the performance management working group has continued to monitor and contribute to the development of the Council's performance management arrangements.

We have received the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter and details of the 2007 Use of Resources assessment. The Committee have welcomed the overall improvement in performance which was recognised in the recent Audit Commission judgement that the County Council was "improving well".

Our Work Programme during 2007/08 afforded Members the opportunity to comment upon a variety of issues including: revisions to the policy and procedures for the County Council's Criminal Records Bureau checks; revised proposals for pay modernisation; statistics relating to staffing numbers; and procurement for business travel. The Committee also considered: Strategic Procurement; the future of residential care in Staffordshire; and the implications of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act for overview and scrutiny at the County Council, these are areas that the Committee will continue to consider and monitor as part of its work programme for 2008/09.

This year Members also had the opportunity to consider the issue of recording County Council meetings. In the interest of promoting community engagement in the County Council's activities, the Committee requested that the County Council pursue the development of methods to record meetings, including web casting. We are pleased to report that this is taking place as part of the County Council's communications strategy.

Contributing to the preparation of the County Council's key business plans, in advance of the consideration of these plans by Cabinet and full Council, has been an important element of the Committee's work during 2007/08. The Committee made a number of comments in relation to: the Sustainable Communities Strategy; the Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2008/11; the Strategic Plan 2008/11; and the Corporate Improvement Plan, which were taken into account in finalising the plans.

A number of cross cutting Scrutiny Working Groups have also been in operation during the year. The Budget Working Group is an ongoing Working Group that assists us to contribute to the development of the Councils Medium Term Financial Strategy and the annual budget and Council Tax setting process.

The role of the Climate Change Working Group has been to direct and oversee the development of the Council's response at member level, reporting back to scrutiny, Cabinet and full Council as appropriate. The Committee considered the final report of the Working Group, which focused on ensuring that thinking and action on climate change was embedded across the County Council as a whole, in January 2008 and the report was submitted to Cabinet in March 2008. The majority of the comments and recommendations were supported. The Working Group has one further task for 2008/09: to look at the apportionment of the target reduction in carbon dioxide emissions between the County Council's Directorates/service areas.

Finally, since May 2007 we have considered ten calls in of Cabinet decisions. Further to our consideration of the decision regarding which four options should form the basis for consultation on the future of County Farms we referred the decision back to Cabinet with the recommendation that two of the options form the basis of the consultation. We also recommended that a Member Working Group be established to consider the full strategic implications of the County Farms estate service. Cabinet proceeded on this basis and their eventual decision, in the light of the consultation, included the retention of some County Farms.

The Committee considered further calls during the year surrounding: the performance management arrangements for the Council's Corporate Climate Change Strategy; the financial management of under spends, as set out in the 2006/07 Fourth Quarter Budget and Monitoring Report; County Council property and the rolling programme of disposals; the Staffordshire Speed Limit Policy, for which the Committee recommended the establishment of a Working Group to look at the implementation of the Policy; the development of Tipping Street car park; Barlaston Library; early retirement and severance arrangements; Gating Orders; and substance misuse. and the impact on health and community safety in Staffordshire and the County Council's role. Where appropriate the Committee has requested reports back on these issues.

We look forward to our 2008/09 Work Programme and the challenges it may afford us in making Staffordshire a great place to live, work, visit and invest in.

Councillor Mike Poulter
Chair of the Corporate Policy Scrutiny and Performance Committee

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Economic Prosperity and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny and Performance Panel



The Economic Prosperity and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny and Performance Panel is responsible for scrutinising: economic development; business support; tourism; transport and highways; local and regional strategic plans; planning and development control; environment; waste disposal; climate change; and employment (including adult education and skills).

A key role of the Panel is to contribute to the Authority's performance management framework. Therefore, during 2007/08 the Panel received, for consideration and comment, the Economic Development and Enterprise and Sustainable Development Thematic Improvement Plans. The Panel particularly considered whether the Plans formed a robust basis for monitoring progress and performance. Members commented on and endorsed these Plans prior to consideration by Cabinet. In addition, the Panel has been requested, by the Corporate Policy Scrutiny and Performance Committee, to consider issues in relation to a number of performance indicators. We have also received updates throughout the year on the development of the relevant blocks of the LAA.

As part of our 2007/08 work programme the Committee has been consulted and commented on: the Staffordshire Decriminalised Parking Enforcement Communications Strategy; the County Farms proposals; the draft Street Trading Policy; the development of a waste recycling facility; the County Council's 'Selling to the Council' website; and the Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership (DMP). In all areas our comments were noted and taken into consideration. The Panel also agreed to continue to consider DMP progress reports as part of its 2008/09 Work Programme.

We have appointed two of our Members, Councillors Barber and Lewis, to participate in the partnerships review of Staffordshire Highways, with a view to advising and updating the Panel when the final report of the review of Staffordshire Highways is available. The Panel will scrutinise the outcome of this review, considering any recommendations for change that may follow and by monitoring the implementation of any recommendations/action plan resulting from the review.

The Panel have also considered a variety of issues relating to the Lichfield InSpire project including: the programme of work; the support already secured; and the criteria for and progress with bids for other funding. We also reviewed the implications of County Council involvement for the delivery of the project and questions about elements of the programme of work. Further to that consideration we advised Cabinet of our support for the project and the funding of £10,000 to support the application for an Advantage West Midlands development grant for the project. Members also undertook a visit to the Cathedral to consider their views on further funding for the project and will maintain an overview of progress. As part of our work programme for 2008/09 we have agreed to consider the economic, social and educational benefits of the Lichfield InSpire project with a view to further advising Cabinet in regard to the County Council's financial and in kind support to the project.

During 2006/07 a Working Group established by the Panel gave consideration to the Authority's performance in relation to Local Planning Authorities achieving the 8-13 week

timescale for completion of planning applications and determining Section 106 Agreements. The Working Group examined the Authority's roles and responsibilities in relation to Section 106 Agreements, to determine how the relationship between the County Council and District Councils in Staffordshire may be enhanced. This review was completed during 2007/08. We received an Executive Response to the Section 106 Agreements Member Working Group recommendations, all of which were agreed to by Cabinet. We have also agreed to monitor action against the accompanying action plan as part of our 2008/09 Work Programme.

Members have also formed a Working Group to undertake a review of the Planning Regulation Service, further to a request from the Planning Service. This Group has met during 2008 and will continue and present its findings to the Panel and then to Cabinet during 2008/09.

I would like to extend my thanks to Members for their commitment to the work of this Panel and look forward to the year ahead and the contribution that Scrutiny can make to improving service delivery and performance across the Authority.

Councillor Peter Haynes
Chair of the Economic Prosperity and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny and Performance Panel

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Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel



The Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel is responsible for scrutinising the County Council's involvement in partnership working and determining that the Authority is satisfied that good governance, finance, risk and performance management arrangements are in place and that the County Council is receiving Value for Money for its contribution. The Panel is also responsible for overseeing and performance monitoring the delivery of Staffordshire's Local Area Agreement.

Our Work Programme is a dynamic document that has been reviewed and updated throughout the year to reflect emerging issues and priorities. During 2007/08, we undertook an ambitious Work Programme scrutinising the high risk partnerships for which Staffordshire County Council is the Lead Authority or Accountable Body. A Register of Partnerships has been developed and is now a corporate document.

The process of scrutinising a partnership involves the completion of the Partnership Approval and Evaluation Form, which the Panel has further developed this year, by the County Council's Lead Officer for the partnership. The Partnership Evaluation Team then produce and present to us a themed report highlighting any issues and concerns regarding the partnership's arrangements, how effectively the partnership is being performance managed and the extent to which the partnership is providing value for money for the County Council's contribution. Lead Officers responsible for managing the County Council's involvement in the partnership attend the Panel to respond to the questions in the themed report and any additional questions from Members. Members may decide, in considering the response to questions that they wish to visit the partnership. Once the review is concluded we produce a response letter or report which we submit to the relevant Director and / or Cabinet Member.

We have reviewed the following 'high-risk' partnerships this year:

:

- [Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Strategic Partnership](#)
- [Staffordshire Children's Fund – Development Group](#)
- [Staffordshire County Drug and Alcohol Action Team](#)
- [Delayed Discharge Partnership](#)
- [Staffordshire Integrated County Equipment Service](#)
- [Staffordshire Supporting People Programme](#)
- [Staffordshire Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board](#)

Where appropriate we have referred a report to Cabinet regarding any concerns and / or also requested that we receive update reports to monitor progress. In some instances we have also written to partners for additional information regarding their role on the partnership.

We have also been updated on the progress of the following partnerships, which we initially reviewed during 2005/06 and 2006/07:

- [Staffordshire Connects](#)
- [Staffordshire Business and Environment Network](#)
- [European Regional Development Fund](#)
- [Staffordshire Healthy Schools Programme](#)

- [Staffordshire Casualty Reduction Partnership](#)
- [Staffordshire Children Trust](#)
- [Rural Access to Services Partnership](#)

We have been pleased to note that many of the above partnerships have responded to the recommendations of the Panel and made improvements in their governance, performance, risk and financial management arrangements.

In order to develop a detailed understanding of the workings of the Authority's partnerships Members of the Panel have undertaken a number of site visits during the year. In particular, Members attended meetings of the Locality Boards for the Learning Disabilities Partnership (which was initially reviewed during 2006/07) with a particular view to reviewing Member involvement and visited the Staffordshire Integrated Community Equipment Service to see how they operate. The Panel produced a report which was sent to both the Cabinet Member (Healthier Communities and Older People) and the Chair of the Healthier Communities and Older People Scrutiny and Performance Panel for their comments.

This year we have continued to build upon the Register of Partnerships. It has been restructured according to the LAA Governance arrangements, outlining the various tiers of partnership working (strategic, operational and neighbourhood/community levels), mapping the relationships and accountabilities to other partnerships, seeking to address the contribution of each partnership to the LAA themes and to establish the LAA targets for which it is responsible. The Register is now to be adopted as a corporate document by all Directors and the Corporate Partnerships Manager will be accountable for ensuring that the Register of Partnerships is maintained.

We have also been responsible for receiving and commenting upon the performance of the Local Area Agreement. The performance information we receive provides a narrative summary, a table of indicators classified according to the traffic lights system, and a direction of travel indicator. So far, we have received two quarters of performance information on the delivery of Staffordshire's Local Area Agreement. Members wrote to the Chair of the LAA Strategic Board to refer items of concern within the second quarter performance summary and we received a response at our February 2008 meeting.

The Panel have also received presentations throughout the year regarding the refresh of Staffordshire's LAA, in particular informing the Panel of the statutory requirements of the Authority as the accountable body and consulting us on the 35 priorities selected from the National Indicator Set for the new LAA 2008-2011. Undertaking the performance management of the LAA is an area of work that we will develop during the forthcoming year. In addition, the Panel has agreed to establish a Working Group to review Member involvement in partnership working and, in particular, the level of Member engagement in the County Council's highest risk partnerships.

We are delighted to report that during the year we have received requests from various agencies and other Local Authorities to share the Panel's approach to scrutinising partnerships. Presentations on the Staffordshire approach were given to audiences at: the University of Warwick; an IDeA Course, 'Improving Partnership Working'; a Centre for Public Scrutiny Conference, 'How to Win Friends and Influence Partners'; the County Council's Network meeting (Local Government Officers); and the Staffordshire Plus Improvement Partnership Action Learning Set for elected Members regarding Scrutiny of partnerships. In addition, an article entitled, 'Developing an Approach to the Scrutiny of Partnership Working in

Staffordshire', written by the Scrutiny and Performance Support Officer for the Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel, was published in a Centre for Public Scrutiny Policy Paper, 'Scrutiny of Local Area Agreements'.

We hope to continue our good work and build upon our best practice status during 2008/09 and will ensure that our approach continues to respond to the challenges we face with regard to performance managing partnerships, both internally and externally, and the delivery of Staffordshire's Local Area Agreement.

Councillor Richard Gorton
Chair of the Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel

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Healthier Communities and Older People Scrutiny and Performance Panel



Our Panel's remit covers the functions of the County Council relating to the provision of social services for adults (learning disability, physical disability, mental health and older people) and to public health. This year has been a challenging one for the Social Care and Health Directorate as it continues to advance the Changing Lives agenda and cement the district based service delivery structure. Strong improvements have been made that have been reflected in better performance in various areas and in the Annual Performance Review of Adult Social Care. As a Panel we have sought to provide a constructive challenge and independent consideration of issues during this period of rapid change.

One of the most significant, and at times challenging, issues facing the directorate over the past year has been the Changing Lives Programme. The Panel have been regularly updated on progress in regard to the Programme as a whole. In November 2007 decisions were taken in relation to the future of care homes in the County. The Scrutiny Panel scrutinised the consultation process that was used to evidence the decisions that were to be taken. Reflecting on national good practice the Panel presented in views on the consultation process and highlighted its role in monitoring the implementation of any decisions to ensure they delivered against the original intentions of the Changing Lives Programme.

The Direct Payments Working Group reported to the Panel in June 2007 on the key issues that had emerged from their work gathering views on Direct Payments in regard to increasing their take up. Issues included: officer training and support; support to service users and carers; contract monitoring; and further expansion. The Panel welcomed the considerable improvement in the take up of Direct Payments and retain an interest in how Direct Payments can support improvement in adult social care.

The Services for Carers Working Group was established in response to the Social Care and Health Directorate identifying services for carers as an area for improvement. The Group's focus is on the progress being made to improve performance in relation to services for carers. The Group's plan of work is linked to the work streams of the Social Care and Health Directorate's transformation programme for these services (carer involvement, strategy and commissioning; performance management and 'Think Carer'). The Group made an early representation to the Leader of the Council about the inclusion of a carer related target in the Local Area Agreement refreshed for 2008/09, to support the development of a multi-agency approach in this area. A 'Carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carer's service' target will be included. The Group's work is ongoing and will take account of the 'Improving Support for Carers' Review being undertaken by Lichfield District Council's Health (Overview and Scrutiny) Panel and interest in the subject of young carers from the Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel. The Working Group has also linked into National Carers Week in order to seek feedback as to support that is needed. The Working Group is ongoing and will be producing recommendations in the coming months.

The Panel have maintained oversight of the restructure of the County Council's Social Care and Health Directorate on a district basis and the formation of an Integrated Joint Commissioning Unit and Integrated Mental Health Services. Where appropriate we have resolved to maintain an overview of these areas, to ensure that they deliver the intended benefits to the Community.

The Panel's role in performance management has included the progress being made in the eight districts in the county in improving performance in the provision of housing adaptations through Disabled Facilities Grants and the annual report of Social Services compliments, comments and complaints. The Panel also sought specific reassurances of the action plans in place to improve performance in respect of adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home. The Panel were informed, by the Social Care and Health Directorate, of the action plan that had been developed to improve performance in this area. We intend to monitor performance in respect of this indicator as part of our work programme.

Members joined Cabinet to consider the findings of the Annual Performance Review of Adult Social Care and will be monitoring progress against actions, bringing forward recommendations, where appropriate, to assist in the process of improvement.

The Panel has been updated regarding progress developing of the County Council's LAA, in particular in relation to the governance arrangements and mechanisms for the delivery of outcomes relating to Healthier Communities and Older People. The Panel also had the opportunity to contribute to the draft Thematic Improvement Plan for Healthier Communities and Older People, which will incorporate the LAA targets. The improvement priorities set out in the plan will inform the Panel's work programme for 2008/09.

The Panel has also been kept apprised of progress in relation to: the development of extra care housing across Staffordshire; the development of Alzheimer's Cafes in the County; the activity of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Service and its caseload; the development of the Learning Disability Services Action Plan; delayed discharges from hospital; and work being undertaken by the Social Care and Health Directorate to ensure that the voice of users and carers has a demonstrable impact on the commissioning, design and delivery of adult social care services in Staffordshire, in particular the development of Local Involvement Networks (LINKS). Indeed, Members look forward to participating in the development of the working relationships between the Directorate, scrutiny and the county LINKs. Some Members of the Panel took part in a seminar held at the end of March by the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee to anticipate opportunities for working together to ensure that overview and scrutiny, and patient and public involvement, contribute effectively to improved care services delivery and outcomes.

I would like to thank the Committee for all their hard work over the past year and the input provided by the Directorate and external witnesses.

Councillor Dennis Dixon

**Chair of the Healthier Communities and Older People Scrutiny and Performance Panel
Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee**

Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee



The Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee is made up of County, District and Borough Council Members. We are responsible for scrutinising the planning, provision and operation of health services in the County Council's area, in accordance with regulations under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and subsequent guidance. To do this, we work with lots of different organisations that are involved in tackling health inequalities in various ways. These organisations include the Healthcare Commission, the Strategic Health Authority and local NHS health trusts, as well as the County, District and Borough Councils. During the year, we have updated the codes of joint working which support some of these relationships.

In Staffordshire there is a fully devolved and inclusive model of health overview and scrutiny. Members of Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee concentrate on scrutinising issues that cover the whole or large parts of Staffordshire. The District and Borough Councils in Staffordshire have a health overview and scrutiny committee, or equivalent, and their Members focus on scrutinising issues of local concern within their area.

In 2007/08 the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee has responded to consultation on two important regional plans: the West Midlands Regional Health and Wellbeing Strategy "Healthy Choices? You Decide" and NHS West Midlands's Strategic Framework "Investing in Health".

We have also contributed to the preparation of some of the County Council's business plans, from a health perspective, in advance of the consideration of these plans by Cabinet and full Council.

Through significant organisational change, such as a merger of ambulance services, our relationships with local health trusts have matured. They are required to consult us on substantial variations and developments in services but many engage with us on a much wider basis. The trust business plans on which we have been consulted include: North Staffordshire Primary Care Trust's five-year Strategy for improving health and healthcare services, South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust's Strategic Plan and Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Strategy; and the West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust's Strategic Framework.

Our comments on the various plans highlighted above covered a wide range of considerations such as: communities; priorities; intended outcomes; performance management, communications; patient and public involvement; and partnership working. As a Committee, we are able to respond independently to health related consultations and this year we have developed our arrangements for receiving feedback on the outcomes of consultation. This means that we can see where our, and others', input has made a difference.

This year, our other work with local health trusts has included scrutiny of the following developments: South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust's palliative care strategy; the Out of Hours GP service in south Staffordshire; equitable access to primary care services (health centres); South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service; West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust's Emergency Operations Centres; and Practice Based Commissioning. We have also kept in touch with the

progress of those trusts working towards Foundation Trust status, responding to Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust's consultation on their application.

We hold regular informal 'relationship management' meetings with the relevant local trusts, along with our District and Borough colleagues, to discuss issues (for example infection control), sort out how we will work together and follow up on the outcomes of work we have already done. We also address with trusts their responses to any reports published by the Healthcare Commission. We attend other events and visits offered by the trusts to help us maintain an overview of their work, such as the Clinical Governance Day offered by University Hospital of North Staffordshire NHS Trust.



The Annual Health Check is the Healthcare Commission's system for assessing the performance of NHS health trusts. Towards the end of each financial year we contribute to the trusts' declarations about their compliance with the core standards of the Check, based on the contact that we have had with them. We include the comments of the District and Borough Councils health overview and scrutiny committees. This year, together, we contributed to twelve trusts' declarations, having extended contact to include Stoke-on-Trent Primary Care Trust, Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals NHS Trust and Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust because Staffordshire residents use services provided by these trusts. We are also very pleased to have been involved by the Healthcare Commission in looking at ways to develop the Annual Health Check, particularly in respect of 'third party' contributions.

The Committee also reviews subjects which cut across the work of different organisations. This year, as a result of contact from the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, we obtained information from North and South Staffordshire Primary Care Trusts the action they were taking to address the issues of long waits for audiology assessment and services. We are continuing to monitor progress in this area. We have also explored the subject of hospital discharge and emergency readmissions. This resulted in a referral to the Healthier Communities and Older People Scrutiny and Performance Panel who are following up by scrutinising social care and health work to develop all elements of the 'customer journey' relating to hospital discharge. We have also pursued consultation on learning disability respite care in south Staffordshire, whilst maintaining an overview of the NHS Campus Reprovision Programme for People with Learning Disabilities.

We are able to work jointly with other health overview and scrutiny committees outside the county, if and when appropriate. As Chairman I have reviewed the management and operation of the Burton Independent Treatment Centre with colleagues from Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Derbyshire and Leicestershire County Councils and East Staffordshire Borough Council and support from the relevant organisations. I will be pursuing further scrutiny in regard to the Centre. I also participate in the West Midlands Regional Health Scrutiny Chairs Group. The County Council is leading on the development of Terms of Reference for this Group.

Through our devolved arrangements, we have referred, to our colleagues in Staffordshire Moorlands and Newcastle-under-Lyme, consultation from North Staffordshire Primary Care Trust on: their principles and values; a specialist centre for people with organic mental health needs (dementia) for North Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent; and North Staffordshire Service Review and Improvement in Urgent Care. We also receive presentations on the reviews conducted by the District and Borough health overview and scrutiny committees, which this year included: Staffordshire Moorlands District Council review on Substance Misuse; and the joint review by East Staffordshire Borough Council and Patient and Public Involvement in Health Forums, Burton Hospitals and South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust into Hospital Discharge Policy and Practice at Burton Hospital.

There have been various Scrutiny Working Groups in operation during the year that have involved Committee Members. A Working Group of Members of the Committee and the former Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel investigated the take up of school meals in primary schools in Staffordshire, against a picture of falling take up. We endorsed the Group's final report, which contained recommendations aimed at increasing the take up of schools meals, providing some ideas as to how improvements may be made (to support the School Meals Service), assist the schools and benefit children. The majority of the recommendations were supported by the Cabinet and we are monitoring their implementation.

One other important piece of work that we have undertaken this year has been to contribute to and review the process for establishing Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) in place of Patient and Public Involvement Forums. We used a day of the support that we get from the Centre for Public Scrutiny for a seminar on the transition from Forums to LINKs. The key points arising from the seminar were forwarded to the Leader of the Council. As a result, an advisory group was established to help the County Council prepare for the process of procuring a host organisation. We scrutinised the County Council's approach to procuring a host organisation to help ensure that value for money was achieved in the procurement process. I am pleased to report that the County Council's approach to this procurement has been held as good practice by other local authorities and that Staffordshire was one of the first local authorities to appoint a host organisation. We also responded to the Department of Health consultation on the draft

regulations for LINKs and held a further seminar exploring: developing overview and scrutiny and LINKs' Work Programmes; and developing the relationship with regulatory bodies. This resulted in some principles for working together in the year ahead.

We have continued to maintain a high profile regionally by contributing to the regional Scrutiny Chair's meeting and attending regional and national seminars and conferences.

I would like to thank my Committee and our other District and Borough colleagues for their hard work and commitment this year. They have given considerable amounts of their time in addition to attending our formal meetings, which has included some Members pursuing a special interest in the work of a particular trust. I would also like to thank the local health trusts for their willingness to develop positive working relationships with overview and scrutiny.

We look forward to working with all our colleagues in respect of the implementation of the plans and developments that we have been consulted on this year and continuing to tackle health inequalities.

Councillor Jim Muir
Chair of the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee

DRAFT

The Year Ahead - 2008/09

The County Council acknowledges Scrutiny as an integral part of its improvement activity with the potential to add value to the services that are delivered to the residents of Staffordshire and to improve the performance of the Authority.

During 2008/09 Scrutiny will move forward by developing the Scrutiny function and the support provided to Elected Members, who sit on the County Councils Scrutiny and Performance Panels/Committees, by:

- assisting in the delivery of the County Council's corporate priorities by carrying out targeted reviews that add value to the work of the Authority and support the County Council's Improvement Agenda;
- reviewing the arrangements in place to contribute to the delivery and performance management of Staffordshire's Local Area Agreement, to ensure that they are fit for purpose;
- implementing the Scrutiny Improvement Plan for 2008/09;
- undertaking a six monthly Scrutiny Development Forum to engage all Members and key stakeholders in determining how the Scrutiny function at Staffordshire can be developed and improved;
- progressing our work as a Standard Bearer for the Customer Service Excellence Award;
- develop a local response, working where appropriate with district and borough colleagues, to the implications of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- continuing to develop the Scrutiny and Performance Team's Business Procedures Manual;
- developing the system for recording and monitoring Scrutiny outcomes;
- delivering a Scrutiny Training and Development Programme for 2008/09 for Members and Officers;
- ensuring greater public, service user and partner involvement in Scrutiny Work Programme planning and reviews;
- continuing to seek best practice and assisting other Local Authorities in the development of their Scrutiny functions; and
- continued involvement and partnership working with the Centre for Public Scrutiny, Democratic Health Network, INLOGOV and the West Midlands Local Government Association and other appropriate agencies/forums.

Getting Involved

Community engagement is central to the work of Scrutiny at Staffordshire County Council and ensures that the recommendations made by our Scrutiny and Performance Panels/Committees are reflective of what the people of Staffordshire feel and want and that services are developed and delivered in response to these views.

We welcome and encourage your involvement in the Scrutiny process and there are a number of ways in which you can get involved.

Scrutiny Meetings

Except on rare occasions, Scrutiny meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity to listen to proceedings. There may be an opportunity to contribute directly to a Scrutiny Review depending upon the nature of the work being undertaken.

The Scrutiny Work Programme

You can inform the Scrutiny Annual Work Programme by suggesting a topic for a Scrutiny Review. All suggestions will be considered in accordance with the focus of the Scrutiny on the County Council's corporate priorities and service improvement. Suggestions can be made by contacting your local County Councillor or the Scrutiny and Performance Team.

You can view Scrutiny Work Programmes at www.staffordshire.gov.uk

Health Scrutiny

Individual Scrutiny Reviews may indicate the need to undertake consultation with patients, service users and carers which provides an opportunity to comment upon health provision. You can also get involved in Local Involvement Networks.

Feedback

If you would like to discuss getting involved or have any comments or suggestions on how we may develop and improve the Scrutiny function then please contact the Scrutiny and Performance Team.

Contact Us

The Scrutiny and Performance Team provide dedicated support to Staffordshire County Council's Scrutiny Members and Officers. If you require further information about a Scrutiny Review, would like to suggest a topic for inclusion in the Scrutiny Annual Work Programme or are keen to get involved in Scrutiny at Staffordshire County Council then please do not hesitate to contact us at the following address:

Scrutiny and Performance Team
Staffordshire County Council
County Buildings, ST16 2LH

Alternatively you can contact the Scrutiny and Performance Team using the following contact details:



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Sarah Garner – Scrutiny and Performance Support Officer

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Lucy Stratford – Scrutiny and Performance Support Officer

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Should you require this Annual Report in an alternative format please do not hesitate to contact the Scrutiny and Performance Team.

www.staffordshire.gov.uk