

# Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report

2021-22



## Chairman's Foreword

Welcome to Staffordshire County Council's Annual Scrutiny Report.

I am delighted to present this report describing the work of Overview and Scrutiny during 2021-22. It includes a wide range of information about the work elected members have undertaken over the past year; and most importantly the impact this has had. Overview and Scrutiny continues to play a vital role in Staffordshire County Council by holding decision makers to account; developing and reviewing policy; as well as considering how the Council is delivering on its commitments to the residents of Staffordshire. Over the past year, all Overview and Scrutiny Committees have welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the Cabinet and Senior Officers as they lead the Council.

The Committees have sought to focus on the critical issues for the Council and provide constructive input in finding ways to improve outcomes for residents. A warm thank you goes to the Chairs and Vice Chairs as they continue to bring energy and enthusiasm to their roles.

I would also like to note my thanks to the wide range of officers who support all the Committees with particular thanks to our excellent team of Scrutiny and Support Officers. I look forward to another year of working through Overview and Scrutiny to help ensure improved outcomes for all customers, residents, and businesses within Staffordshire.



**Councillor Colin Greatorex**

Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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## Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs



**Councillor Colin Greateorex**

Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Councillor Jeremy Pert**

Chairman of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Councillor Tina Clements**

Chairman of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Councillor Bob Spencer**

Chairman of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## Introduction

Following the lockdowns caused by the pandemic, this year saw a return to 'normal' in the way Overview & Scrutiny was carried out. The reduction in social distancing restrictions allowed for much more collaborative and interactive activities - something which was definitely missed by elected members and officers alike during the previous two years.

Work programmes were refreshed to ensure that the right things were considered at the right time, that resources were where they needed to be, to ensure services kept pace with Government guidance, to communicate to local residents, to ensure access to services could be maintained and to plan for the lifting of restrictions as quickly and safely as possible.

The following report takes a look back at what has been delivered by Overview and Scrutiny over the past 12 months as well as looking forward to what is planned for 2022/23.

## What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Good scrutiny is an essential part of the Council's governance framework and is integral to decision making. Overview and Scrutiny Committees in Staffordshire fulfil the statutory responsibility placed on local authorities to review and scrutinise decisions and actions taken, and they play a vital role in influencing services and shaping policies and plans which affect our business and our citizens.

## What is an Overview and Scrutiny Committee?

Staffordshire County Council's (SCC) Constitution allows for four Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees investigate issues affecting the communities of Staffordshire. Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has its own area of responsibility which is themed around SCC directorates and reflect the priorities in the Corporate Plan.

The terms of reference are approved by Council and are set out in the Constitution.

Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee is made up of County Councillors from the different political parties represented on the County Council. They consist of a Chairman, two Vice Chairmen and members. Some committees also have co-opted members who are District or Borough Councillors or who are co-opted for their particular expertise.

#### Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This is the Council's Principal Scrutiny Committee, responsible for the overall management and coordination of Overview and Scrutiny Committees as well as; overall performance; Strategic Corporate Planning; improvement and transformation; the Local Enterprise Partnership; and the Council's support services. It also deals with any Executive decisions that have been called in.

#### Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This Committee is responsible for scrutiny of matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in the Authority's area, including public health and adult social care, in accordance with regulations made under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and subsequent guidance.

#### Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutiny of achievement against the Council's strategic ambitions for promoting prosperity and economic growth including highways infrastructure and connectivity and flood and water management, education, learning and skills.

#### Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee is responsible for scrutiny of safeguarding vulnerable people, community safety and localism.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees are designed to support and enhance the decision-making process, they aim to make a positive impact by supporting the development of policy, monitoring performance and making important recommendations that will lead to improvements in services and make best use of resource in everything the Council does.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees are able to review and scrutinise a wide range of functions and responsibilities including those delivered in partnership with other agencies and organisations. Partnership working is an integral part of the scrutiny process and of good governance which creates a platform to question, shape and develop policies and services with key strategic partners for the people and communities of Staffordshire.

## How Does Scrutiny Work?

Scrutiny members identify matters that are importance to local residents or business, or that are of strategic importance to deliver services in order to meet the Local Authority duty as required by law and form a scrutiny work programme for the year.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees can invite people to attend meetings or inquiry sessions to provide information, explain structures and situations and respond to questions. Committee meetings take place regularly, they are open for the public to attend (either in-person or on-line), and they are broadcast live on the Staffordshire Web.

Other methods of scrutiny where members investigate a topic in depth are scrutiny reviews or working groups, these take place over a set period of time and are

scoped to ensure the right focus and evidence is gathered to inform a final report and recommendations. Review reports are usually reported to Cabinet or the lead for an external organisation, for example the Chair of a Clinical Commissioning Group.

## How Does Scrutiny Make a Difference?

There are many ways scrutiny can have impact, by looking closely at something members gain an understanding of the facts, the issues and of different perspectives and scrutiny starts to make a difference. How?



## Alignment to the Strategic Plan

Overview and Scrutiny Committees' remits and work programmes are developed to ensure that scrutiny reinforces the value and importance of challenge, and they are aligned to the ambitions and delivery of the principles, priorities and outcomes of the Staffordshire Corporate Plan.

'The Staffordshire Vision: A county where big ambitions, great connections and greener living give everyone the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy.'

<b>Principles</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee remit</b>
Our workforce will be ambitious for Staffordshire, and make a difference for our people	Corporate
Be digital, using technology and data to connect, inform and support our citizens	Corporate
Think climate change in all we do to limit our impact on the planet	Corporate
Our Pledge: Deliver value for money for residents and businesses and live within our means	Corporate

<b>Outcomes Everyone in Staffordshire will:</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee remit</b>
Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth	Prosperous
Be healthier and independent for longer	Health and Care
Feel safer, happier and more supported in their community	Safeguarding

<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee remit</b>
Help Staffordshire's economy to grow and generate more good jobs	Prosperous
Invest in infrastructure for growing communities	Prosperous
Improve education and training so that lifelong learning offers everyone the opportunity to succeed	Prosperous
Inspire healthy, independent living	Health and Care
Support more families and children to look after themselves, stay safe and well	Health and Care
	Safeguarding
Encourage residents and communities to help themselves and one another	Safeguarding

## What Did Scrutiny Do In 2021-22?

	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Activity	2021-22
	Number of Formal Committee Meetings	37
	Number of Final Reports	92
	External Partners at Meetings	35
	Call ins	1
	Working Groups and Inquiry Days (Completed)	4
	Working Groups and Inquiry Days (Ongoing)	2
	Informal planning meetings (including previews)	34

This table provides a snapshot of scrutiny activity this year. Later in this report, tables are provided to list all of the topics considered in Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in 2021-22 (see Appendix 1).

## How Has Scrutiny Added Value in 2021-22?

### Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee's focus is on the principles in the corporate plan that build a strong organisation, keep Staffordshire strong and look to future proof services and resources.

During the municipal year the Committee has concentrated on the following key pieces of work:

**Climate Change Annual Report (2021) and the Draft Climate Change Action Plan:** These documents summarised the Council's priority themes and the work undertaken to address climate change to date. The Committee established a small working group chaired by the Vice Chair to look at the Climate Change agenda and share their views and recommendations with Cabinet, this remains ongoing.



The Committee considered regular **Integrated Performance** quarterly updates. In an attempt to fully understand and get the most out of the updates, Members held a workshop with officers and made suggestions for developing the reports to provide a greater level of detail and to enable more thorough scrutiny. These suggestions were accepted and have helped to evolve the data into a more useful format.

**The Chair and Chief Executive of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)** were invited to attend the Committee at their meeting on 6 January 2022 where they were held to account for delivery of the various outcomes included in their Annual Delivery Plan. Both Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire Districts and Borough Councils were also invited to attend as observers and raise questions on the LEP's work. During the meeting, Central Government's review of LEPs and likely outcomes for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent were discussed. It was hoped that whatever the results, City and District/Boroughs Councils would continue to work together in partnership to promote economic growth and prosperity for all residents in the area.

**Call-In:** The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee also considers 'Call-In' of Cabinet Decisions. Following a Cabinet decision, scrutiny has five working days to call-in a decision. The Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee called in a decision concerning the proposed relocation of Burton Library. A meeting was convened on 6 January 2022 to consider the decision taken by Cabinet and the detailed reasons for the call-in prior to implementation. Members questioned the Cabinet Members on the detail and their concerns in relation to the decision. Following detailed discussion, the Committee agreed for the decision to be

implemented as set out in the original decision notice. This was agreed by a majority.

Pre-decision scrutiny:

1. The **Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan** was considered by the Committee as pre decision scrutiny. The Committee commented on the Principles; Objectives of the plan and the initial action plan which they intend to monitor through the quarterly performance reports. 
2. **Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Capacity Building Recommission** - the committee added areas which they would like to see included in the contract.
3. **Proposed New Coroners Service** - the panel made a number of comments on the proposed merger which needed to be considered prior to referring the proposal to the Chief Coroner and Ministry of Justice.
4. **Strategic Plan** - this key corporate document was scrutinised and commented on prior to decision. The Committee made a number of recommendations relating to action plans and delivery documents which need to be established in order to deliver the vision and aims of the Local authority.
5. **Corporate Delivery Plan 2022/23** - setting out the deliverable performance priorities and targets for each service area. The committee felt there was a need for specific targets against which performance could be scrutinised and that there was a need to mention in the plan the commitment to working with Council colleagues across Staffordshire to maximise the benefits of joint working. The committee also recommended that there was a need to include full details of Town Deals across Staffordshire. 

The Committee, through their **annual Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Working Group**, had spent some considerable time scrutinising the Budget and making recommendations to the Cabinet. The Group had spoken to outer local authorities and looked for national examples of good practise prior to making recommendations to the Cabinet.

The Committee also produced a **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Working Group** final report. The working group had been set up to monitor the development and implementation of the 'Written Statement of Action' which was produced to address concerns raised by the Joint Local Area SEND inspection produced by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission following their inspection in November 2018.

For more information on the work of the Committee, and to view reports and minutes, visit our webpages: [Committee details - Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Staffordshire County Council](#)

## Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee's focus is to ensure scrutiny of the planning, provision and operation of health, public health, and care services in the Authority's area, to consider the risks to residents' health and to seek assurance that what is being done is appropriate for all residents of Staffordshire now and in the future. The meetings continued to be broadcast live to ensure openness and transparency.

### **Covid-19 Pandemic and Vaccination Programme:**

The Committee maintained overview and scrutiny on all aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic this year. The updates provided data, information and raised awareness about Covid rates, variants and vaccinations across Staffordshire. Public received clear messages about reducing risks, keeping safe (hands, face, place, outside space) and emerging issues were communicated. The committee considered the impact on services and staff, it provided trusted information for members and residents about guidance, restrictions and getting vaccinated. The emergence of the Omicron variant in December 2021, initiated a high level roll out of the vaccination programme, committee considered plans, pressures and partnership working.



Members brought forward local residents concerns and scrutiny was a powerful tool in ensuring the public voice was heard, that checks, and balances were in place when change was required, that residents received factual data about their local areas infection rates, roll out of vaccine and any changes to guidance on restrictions. County, District and Borough Members on the Committee relayed information and made sure that the furthest communities were also aware at each stage.

The pandemic has significantly affected people coming forward with concerns that they have and to receive diagnosis and treatment and the plan to recover diagnoses and treatment will need ongoing scrutiny to ensure waiting times are brought down as much as possible and every opportunity is taken to be as efficient and effective as possible in addressing the backlog, by any means.

**GP Access:** Getting a face-to-face GP appointment and long telephone waits were some of the frustrations highlighted by residents and members from across the eight Districts and Boroughs of Staffordshire. Committee has looked in depth at the issue and is keeping overview of the performance data and the Primary Care Access Plan which details 6 stages to improve GP access. They understood frustrations but were assured that measures were in place to tackle concerns raised, timelines set to move forward and the number of in person appointments increasing once services

had re-opened post lock down. The plan highlighted lessons learned through the pandemic and alternative ways to access primary care such as seeing a different health professional, making use of digital appointments and technology. Committee will continue to monitor the Primary Care Access Plan and associated actions, notwithstanding the general shortage of staff within primary care and the need to migrate to a new model for residents to access health services medium term.

**System Pressures in the NHS:** Committee held a special meeting on 13 December 2021 with partners from across the NHS system, ambulance service and County Council to focus on pressures in the system with a focus on the risk to residents' health. Members raised residents' frustrations about ambulance handover delays, access to services, waiting times and discharge from hospital rates.



Committee considered the many and varied reasons for pressure on different parts of the system, and the impact that a problem in any part of the system had on the whole system. In home care, legislation to mandate care worker vaccinations had created additional pressure on workforce and there was a shortage of carers in the community to support people in their homes for people to leave hospital safely - which had an impact throughout the system. All partners stressed that increased demand on services, reduced service levels due to restrictions in place, Covid sickness levels in staff and shortage of trained workers to recruit (which reduced capacity) had increased pressure on each part of the system and put the whole NHS System in crisis.

The system pressures had impacted and continue to have impact on other workstreams, including consultations on major service changes and restructure, digitalisation of frontline services and addressing the backlog of procedures. The session considered risks and was open and transparent. Committee understood collaborative working across the system was good and were assured that plans were in place, but they will continue to monitor the situation due to the risk to residents' health.

**Walleys Quarry:** Scrutiny of health implications and monitoring the impact of measures in place to mediate the risks of Hydrogen Sulphide omissions from Walleys Quarry Landfill Site. The special meeting took place at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council (NuLBC) with members of the scrutiny committee invited to participate. A wide range of professionals attended the meeting to provide evidence relating to air quality and health implications and about the mitigations planned to reduce the risk to residents' health. The committee were concerned about the long-term impact on health and mental wellbeing of residents and agreed to write to Government to express its concerns. Two further meetings were held to monitor progress. On 25 October 2021 improvements in the data were found to be encouraging and public complaints had reduced, however by December 2021 data indicated an increase in omissions which were reported to a meeting on 15 March 2022. Committee highlighted the data was of concern and due to the 18-month

period this situation had spanned it was agreed to write to Government again. NuLBC and the Leader were advised at each stage of the scrutiny process.

There needs to be a solution to this issue found either by Walleys Quarry Ltd. or by the Environment Agency – the regulator – based on the sheer length of time that this issue has been ongoing. If this cannot be found, then government needs to step in and resolve the issue based on the potential long-term impact to both physical and mental health.

**Integrated Care System (ICS) for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent:** the Committee has maintained overview of the reconfiguration the County's current clinical commissioning arrangements into a single strategic unit and development to the Integrated Care System. Due to commence in April 2022 the Government delayed the start date to 1 July 2022. The next stage will be for the ICS to draft and approve an ICS strategy and develop an Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) by April 2023. Scrutiny will continue overview and scrutinise the draft ICS strategy in 2023.

**Mental Health Awareness:** Committee Awareness Day on 21 October 2021 gave Members an understanding of the breadth of services available to residents in Staffordshire and to consider parity of esteem between mental and physical health of residents. The Committee understood that actions to improve mental health in the wider population would require a sustained system-wide, multi-agency approach. Mental health strategy and delivery mechanisms such as Mental Health Support Teams in Schools has been the focus for Vice-Chair Overview and Vice Chair Scrutiny this year, they will report back to committee in 2022-23.



**Social Care:** the impact of the pandemic on residential and nursing homes was reviewed a number of times to identify if the pandemic had impacted residents demand for care home beds due to the various lockdowns and physical isolation. As well as the overall financial viability of the sector. Staff shortages in general recruitment remain a key concern and retaining staff has been a longstanding ongoing issue. Homecare is affected by the same pressures and further work will be undertaken to focus more on staff recruitment, retention and the creation of long-term career pathways to make the sector as a whole more attractive for people to work in.



**Rolling programme:** Issues raised through scrutiny this year will be carried forward in 2022-23 as a rolling work programme. Committee plan to prioritise overview of key topics identified including the backlogs in the system, primary care and GP access, the sustainability of the care homes market, performance of NHS Hospital Trusts and workforce issues across the system.

The Vice Chair Scrutiny and the Vice Chair Overview have led work on the Mental Health workshop, researched and met with key stakeholders in relation to scrutiny of mental health teams in schools and developing healthier communities - wider determinants of health. These work streams will report at the start of the new municipal year.

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at: [Committee details - Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Staffordshire County Council](#)

## Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee's focus is on the Council's strategic ambitions for promoting prosperity and economic growth including highways infrastructure and connectivity and flood and water management, education, learning and skills.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills updated the Committee on progress towards Staffordshire's **Economic Recovery, Renewal and Transformation** following the 2020-22 Covid 19 Pandemic, as set out in the Strategy adopted in June 2020. They heard of the continuing challenges facing the economy but noted that support for and links to the business community were being maintained so that sector Partners could be actively involved in shaping the recovery. During their scrutiny, Members highlighted the critical importance of revitalising high streets/town centres, attracting high skilled, well-paid jobs and raised serious concerns regarding the negative impact of imposing further 'lockdowns'.



In addition, they gave detailed pre-decision scrutiny of the Council's draft **Economic Strategy 2022-2030** and made comment, following approval of a consultation draft by Cabinet at their meeting on 16 March 2022.

They also discussed **the economic impact of HS2 in Staffordshire** and scrutinised the action being taken to secure the best deal for the County in terms of mitigation measures, compensation for residents, improved connectivity and economic growth.



The Cabinet Members for Environment and Infrastructure and Climate Change and Commercial Matters updated them on the progress made with regard to insourcing elements of the Authority's **future Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC)** operations with effect from 2022/23 Financial Year, following the decision by Cabinet at their meeting on 17 March 2021.

During their Scrutiny, Members were pleased to note that significant progress had already been made towards implementing the new arrangements across all 14 sites. However, they reviewed and made comment on various options being considered for the collection and sale of 're-use items' in order to optimise Staffordshire's performance in terms of quantity and value of material collected. They also highlighted the importance of greater consistency in service provision in order to minimise 'carbon miles' but undertook to keep all the changes under close review during the implementation phase, holding the Cabinet Members to account, where necessary.

The Committee were addressed by Messrs M. Barr and P. Jones of the 20s Plenty for Staffordshire (20PS) campaign group who had submitted a Staffordshire County Council Proposal for a Scrutiny Review Form in March 2021 suggesting the following subject for scrutiny:

**“Normalise 20 mph speed limits in built-up areas and villages for safety, public health, sustainability, the climate and because its what residents want”.**

The representatives of 20PS provided evidence in support of their request including various statistics, photographs and by reference to practice in other Highway Authority areas, nationwide all of which suggested that the wide-spread implementation of 20 mph speed limits should be adopted in the County.

Members gave preliminary scrutiny to the issues raised. However, they noted Staffordshire's good performance with regard to accident casualty statistics together with the significant costs associated with implementing additional 20 mph speed restrictions and therefore, respectfully declined the request to undertake further scrutiny at this time.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport gave them details of the Authority's **new vision and ambitions for the County's Highway network** over the five-year period to 2027 having regard to the Authority's current contract with their Highways Partner ending in 2024.

The Committee learned that and Cabinet Member's ambition was for the new service to be more customer focused. Therefore, they raised various areas of initial concern e.g. the need to ensure greater quality and consistency of road repairs in the future and the importance of routine maintenance such as gulley emptying for him to have regard to during his reconfiguration of the service.

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at: [Committee details - Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Staffordshire County Council](#)

## Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee's focus is on safeguarding vulnerable people, community safety and localism.

**Joint Spotlight Review on Sexual Harassment in Schools:** At the beginning of the new municipal year the Safeguarding, Prosperous and Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees all raised sexual harassment in schools as an area for further scrutiny, with each separate Committee including this issue on their work programme. To avoid duplication the Committees agreed to undertake a joint spotlight review with one member from each committee taking part.

Sexual harassment in schools is an issue of concern nationally. The "Everyone's Invited" on-line platform raised the profile of this issue and highlighted concerns around the levels of abuse and harassment in education. The Government asked Ofsted to complete a rapid review to identify the extent of any problems and give recommendations for addressing these. This joint spotlight review considered the issues highlighted nationally and scrutinised whether these were reflected in Staffordshire Schools, to what extent, and how/whether the issues identified were being addressed. The Spotlight Review was held on 14 January 2022. Representatives attended with a range of expertise, including educationalists and safeguarding professionals. Further information was gathered after the review to address remaining queries. The findings from this investigation give a current picture of the work to identify and address sexual harassment and abuse within schools, with the report also setting out the Review Group's conclusions and seven recommendations to support the considerable work already in place.

As this was a joint review, with representation from three separate Overview and Scrutiny Committees, each Committee considered the report and recommendations, endorsing and commenting on it. The final report, together with accompanying submissions from the three Committees, have been submitted to the Cabinet Members for Children and Young People and for Education (and SEND) for their Executive Response.

At the beginning of the municipal year my Vice Chairmen and I met with the Chairman of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel and the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture. This was to agree a way forward that avoided duplication between the Police, Fire and Crime Panel's role, that of the Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny Committee's role as the **designated crime and disorder panel** and of the eight district/borough Community Safety Partnerships with their overarching Community Safety Agreement that is monitored by the County wide Safer and Stronger Communities Strategy Group (SSCSG), chaired by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture. Our agreed way forward from that meeting is for the Vice Chairmen and I to receive a briefing from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture after each of the SSCSG meetings. Issues highlighted

from those briefing that we feel require further scrutiny will then be included on our work programme.

The Committee undertook pre-decision scrutiny on proposed changes to **Community Support (including Domiciliary Care) and 1-1 intensive support for Children with Disabilities**. This considered the Council's duty to ensure Children's Community Support (including Domiciliary Care) provision is in place to support children and young people with a range of disabilities who are eligible for a personal care service within the family home and local community. A further legal obligation for the Council is to offer a range of commissioned community short break opportunities for Children with Disabilities under the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children regulations 2011. Staffordshire's "Aiming High for Children with disabilities" programme has been developed to support these duties, augmenting the in-house and commissioned Overnight Short Breaks Unit, and the support of Short Breaks Foster Carers in providing the range of short breaks for children to give parents and carers a meaningful break from their caring responsibilities. The Council also commissions a range of providers from across Staffordshire to deliver Children's Community Support and Short Breaks. These have been commissioned and contracted as two separate support programmes but are brought together under one commission to provide a more flexible and responsive support. The Committee included a progress report on this item at the end municipal year to scrutinise developments and timescales achieved and were reassured by progress made, particularly with the increase in provider numbers and in the recognition of potential problems with Direct Payment reductions and the proactive work to address this.

The Committee scrutinised **Domestic Abuse and the impact of the Pandemic on this Service**, being reassured by the mitigating actions put in place during the pandemic lockdowns. Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Staffordshire Commissioners Office (SCO) jointly commissioned Domestic Abuse (DA) services across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, with the SCO acting as lead commissioner. Services include the provision for victims, perpetrators, children and young people. The service contract for victims' services had been awarded to Victim Support, with services for perpetrators awarded to the Reducing Reoffending Partnership. Both these services are provided under New Era.

Pre-decision scrutiny was undertaken on the **development of Family Hubs**, considering the emerging vision for development, demonstrating how ambitions for Family Hubs would contribute to the delivery of the Families Strategic Partnership, Children, Young People and Families Strategy, the Early Help Strategy and the development of the Place Based Approach for Children and Families.



The Committee supported these changes and the aim to develop a Staffordshire Family Hub model which:

- a. brings together a range of provision into a coherent, connected and accessible offer to families around a local place, supporting them to achieve and maintain positive outcomes and seek to prevent needs from escalating;
- b. places a focus on early help and prevention;
- c. takes a whole-family approach and is available to families with children aged 0-19 (and up to 25 for those with SEND);
- d. has a physical presence within a community as well as an online offer and maximises the use of existing resources within a locality, as part of the Place Based Approach; and
- e. adopts a Restorative Practice Model, which seeks to build and maintain healthy relationships and a sense of community.

The Committee are keeping abreast of progress with the regional **Together4Children Permanency Partnership** which, since going live on 28 September 2020, has delivered the regional adoption service for Staffordshire County Council, Shropshire Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Telford & Wrekin Council. Partnership development activity had started in 2018 in response to the Government's 'Regionalising Adoption' agenda and brought together four Partner Council's to plan the delivery of adoption services regionally. Through the development phase the vision had been beyond the delivery of Adoption Services and focused on a broader range of activities to ensure that children entering care achieved permanency and improved outcomes, enabling:

- a. best use of collective resources to recruit, assess and support prospective adopters across the region;
- b. improved quality and speed of matching for children through better planning and by having a wider choice of adopters;
- c. high quality support to children and their families delivered through a combination of direct provision and effective partnerships;
- d. all children and their families being provided with the right support at the right time through a consistent permanency support offer across the region.

Each year the Committee consider the **Customer Feedback and Complaints Service Annual reports for both Children's and Adults Social Services**. Members were pleased to see that for the 2020/21 report the number of adult complaints had reduced. The Authority has a statutory duty to publish details of adult complaints made under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 and Local Authority Act 1970. The Children's report had also seen a reduction in complaints, particularly around SEND. There was also a 17% increase in the number of compliments reported in the Children's Annual Report.

Staffordshire County Council had seen a year-on-year increase in the number of adult safeguarding concerns received, equating to a 63% rise since 2017. The **Adult Safeguarding Transformation Project** had been developed to help address the issues concerned with this increase. The Project started in February 2020 and aimed to ensure the correct processes and resource were in place to deliver the Council's

statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. A timeline of Transformation activity was developed, with all changes expected to be in place by December 2021, including three additional full time senior practitioner posts being filled. The Committee requested an update on progress with this project, which came to our January meeting and included detail of key performance indicators and quality assurance measures.

The Committee are aware that in some instances adults within the community do not meet the requirement for a statutory safeguarding response but may come to the attention of partner agencies where there are high risks to them or the wider community. Currently there is no formal forum to help address such situations and agencies have reported feeling isolated in managing these risks. The Committee looked at **safeguarding adults on the cusp of care** and noting the variety of different approaches to support these adults, including the system used in Stoke-on-Trent, which was led by a charitable organisation, suggesting that having a lead organisation other than the local council helped in fostering a more open forum where all felt on an even footing. The Committee considered the virtue of creating a similar forum in Staffordshire, including looking at the work of partner organisation and specifically disruptive practice techniques and the disruptive practice toolkit developed by the Police.

Another of the reports that the Committee considers annually is the **Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report**. The 2020/21 Report focused on differences made rather than activities undertaken, detailing the impact of Covid19 on children and young people in Staffordshire, the consequent changes to services and the challenges this brought. These included:

- a reduced opportunity for face-to-face meetings and concerns that potentially this would prevent early signs of neglect being identified. However, Early Help referrals overall had increased which may signify that agencies were now more adept at spotting the early signs;
- the emotional impact of partners being unable to attend births and the development of Maternity Voices Partnership champions;
- the loss of face-to-face education and the resultant impact on wellbeing of children and young people, particularly where on-line learning was not accessible to them;
- face-to-face training opportunities reduced, however on-line provision had been provided and proved very successful; and
- significant delays in judicial services.

The Board will be focusing on two priorities during 2021/22, neglect and exploitation. Part of the work of the SSCB included ensuring learning was identified, improvements embedded at both individual and multi-agency levels, as well as an alertness to emerging risks and understanding systemic issues which policy and practice changes could address. To implement and monitor these a structure of five sub-groups have been established on:

- scrutiny and assurance
- child safeguarding practice review
- joint child death overview
- review of restraint
- learning in practice

We were pleased to note that these sub-groups have delegated powers to deliver against their specific responsibilities.

The Committee also considers annually the **Report of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board (SSASPB)**. Key findings for the 2020/21 SSASPB Annual Report showed that:

- there had been 12,176 occasions of concerns reported where adults with care and support needs had been, or were at risk of being, abused or neglected, a significant rise from the previous year which may have been reflected in changes to reporting;
- 62% of Section 42 enquiries involved females which was disproportionately above the average for females in Staffordshire (50.3%);
- the most prevalent types of abuse were broadly similar to those reported in the previous year: 36% neglect and acts of omission; 18% physical harm; 15% financial abuse;
- 98% of adults involved in a Section 42 enquiry confirmed their desired outcomes had been fully or partially met, higher than the national figure of 95%.

**Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)** provides protection for the most vulnerable people living in residential homes, nursing homes or hospital environments. DoLS are the statutory requirement to ensure that care will always be provided in a way that is consistent with the human rights of people lacking capacity, who are not otherwise protected or safeguarded through Mental Health legislation. Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPSs) will be introduced through the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019 to replace the DoLS system. The associated codes of practice have not yet been published and the department for Health and Social Care have extended the timescales, with no date currently given for implementation. However, the Committee are reassured by the activity undertaken to prepare for its eventual introduction.

Services to support **Young Carers** were explored by the Committee, considering the new all age carers strategy developed with the five Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) "All Together for Carers (2019-2023)". Engagement activities whilst developing the strategy had shown that pathways and processes for carers were at times unclear, with no single point for initial contact. We explored the rationale for the new strategy and noted the delay in its implementation due to the Pandemic. The Service finally went live in April 2021 and is an all-age carers service with one lead commissioned provider, n-compass, allowing a more straightforward

and clearer contractual arrangement. The initial support and assessment has been brought in-house to enable a one-stop-shop for initial contact with a service pathway that aims to provide:

- high quality and easily accessible information, advice and guidance that explains when and how to find support and who is likely to be eligible, including an initial assessment on need and active referral on to preventative support and beyond as necessary;
- an enhanced range of preventative support for carers of all ages in the community to prevent, reduce or delay the need for additional and higher cost support;
- further assessment and support planning where necessary and access to formal support to meet assessed eligible needs on a basis that was transparent and equitable.

Performance data from the three-quarter reports gave an indication of progress made but we welcomed the further developed of data collected to enable a greater clarity in reporting, with more depth behind the figures given and some reported figures sub-divided to give a more accurate reflection of the caring activity undertaken.

We are in the process of facilitating face to face meetings with Young Carers so we can reassure ourselves that the new service is working well in its support offer.

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at: [Committee details - Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Staffordshire County Council](#)

## What's Coming Up In 2022/23?

To find out more about Overview and Scrutiny work for 2022-23 visit: [Committee structure - Staffordshire County Council](#)

Scrutiny Committee	Date of Meeting	Topic	Details / Background
<b>Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>			
Corporate Overview	21/06/22	Work Programme Planning	Planning of the 2022/23 work programme at the beginning of the new municipal year
Corporate Overview	21/06/22	Appointment of MTFs working Group members	Annual task and finish group
Corporate Overview	21/06/22	Boundary Commission update	Update
Corporate Overview	21/06/22	Climate Change Working Group Update	Appointment of a new Chairman
Corporate Overview	02/08/22	Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 1	Quarterly report. To include information on the Household support fund.
Corporate Overview	02/08/22	Boundary Commission update	Update
Corporate Overview	13/09/22	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes	To ensure communication between the committees and no duplication
Corporate Overview	13/09/22	Boundary Commission update	Update
Corporate Overview	13/09/22	Governance of outside partnerships	
Corporate Overview	25/10/22	Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2021/22	Annual report - to enable members to identify areas which need more scrutiny
Corporate Overview	25/10/22	LGSCO Annual Report	Annual report - to enable members to identify areas which need more scrutiny
Corporate Overview	25/10/22	Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2	Quarterly report.
Corporate Overview	25/10/22	Entrust - review of changes	Scrutiny of changes to contract

Scrutiny Committee	Date of Meeting	Topic	Details / Background
Corporate Overview	12/12/22	Diversity and Inclusion - Principles, Objectives and Action Plan	Requested by members - action plan is monitored by Cabinet annually
Corporate Overview	12/12/22	Equality Update - (to include recruitment and retention)	Pre decision scrutiny - Also goes to Audit and Standards committee to monitor implementations of audit reviews. Goes to Cabinet in December reporting annual progress. People strategy every 4 years.
Corporate Overview	17/01/23	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes	To ensure communication between the committees and no duplication
Corporate Overview	17/01/23	MFTS 2022-2027 Working Group Report	Final report of the MFTS working group. For approval by the committee prior to Cabinet
Corporate Overview	27/02/23	Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3	Quarterly report.
Corporate Overview	27/02/23	People Strategy update	Pre decision scrutiny - goes to Cabinet in March
<b>Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>			
Health and Care	TBC	Draft Mental Health Strategy	Policy and transformation
Health and Care	TBC	Public Health Outcomes and Services - Children's	Public Health overview
Health and Care	TBC	Mental Health Support Teams in Schools	Scrutiny of mental health support - partnership working
Health and Care	30/05/22	Elective Recovery	Risk and Performance
Health and Care	30/05/22	Changes to Healthy Communities Service from April 2023	Public Health service change
Health and Care	30/05/22	Work Programme Planning	Planning and prioritisation
Health and Care	21/06/22	Healthier Communities Workshop	Public Health - Wider determinants of health
Health and Care	11/07/22	Staffordshire Healthwatch	Partnership
Health and Care	11/07/22	The Families Health & Wellbeing (0-19) Service	Public Health pre-decision (Private)
Health and Care	11/07/22	ICS & ICB Update	ICS Risk and Performance
Health and Care	11/07/22	Primary Care Access Plan Update	ICS Risk and public concern

Scrutiny Committee	Date of Meeting	Topic	Details / Background
Health and Care	11/07/22	Transformation Programme - Maternity Update	ICS Transformation
Health and Care	01/08/22	ICS Transformation Programme - George Bryan Centre	Service transformation
Health and Care	19/09/22	The Future Supported Living Services in Staffordshire	Social Care pre-decision
Health and Care	19/09/22	Health and Care Performance Updates	Performance scrutiny
Health and Care	19/09/22	West Midlands Ambulance Service Performance Update	Risk and performance scrutiny
Health and Care	19/09/22	Adult Social Care Reform Implementation	Social Care policy & service development
Health and Care	19/09/22	Care Home Update	Social care provision future services
Health and Care	22/09/22	Joint meeting with Wolverhampton RWT Acute Hospital QA Performance	Risk and performance scrutiny
Health and Care	17/10/22	UHDB Acute Trust QA Performance	Risk and performance scrutiny
Health and Care	17/10/22	Ockenden Report Implications	Risk and performance scrutiny
Health and Care	17/10/22	Workforce Planning - Health and Care / Acute Trusts	Risk and performance scrutiny
Health and Care	28/11/22	NSCHT QA Performance	Risk and performance scrutiny
Health and Care	30/01/23	MPFT QA Performance	Risk and Performance scrutiny
<b>Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>			
Prosperous Overview	26/05/22	Rural Economic Strategy	Pre-decision scrutiny of draft 2022-2030 Strategy
Prosperous Overview	15/06/22	Highways Transformation - Update	Scheduled update in Programme progress with opportunity to shape reconfigured service
Prosperous Overview	15/06/22	SEND Green Paper	Pre-decision scrutiny of Staffordshire's formal response

Scrutiny Committee	Date of Meeting	Topic	Details / Background
Prosperous Overview	07/07/22	Highways Transformation Programme - Three Strands Review Progress	Scheduled update in Programme progress with opportunity to shape reconfigured service
Prosperous Overview	07/07/22	HS2 Connectivity with existing 'Classic' Network	Engagement with HS2 and Avanti West Midlands with a view to maximising benefits for Staffordshire
Prosperous Overview	07/07/22	Flood Risk Management Strategy 2021/27 Outcome Measures	Scrutiny of specific targeted measures identified through the operation of the Plan
Prosperous Overview	29/09/22	North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan	
Prosperous Overview	29/09/22	Highways Transformation Progress and Performance Quarterly Update	Scheduled update in Programme progress with performance monitoring of existing arrangements
Prosperous Overview	29/09/22	Schools White Paper	Pre-decision scrutiny of the County Council's formal response
Prosperous Overview	19/10/22	Countryside Review - Update	
Prosperous Overview	19/10/22	Staffordshire history Centre-Update	
Prosperous Overview	19/10/22	Libraries and Arts - Update	
Prosperous Overview	19/10/22	Chasewater Vision	Scrutiny of the County Council's proposed new Chasewater offer
Prosperous Overview	19/10/22	Economic Recovery Renewal and Transformation (Economic and Rural Strategies) - Six monthly update	Scheduled update in Plan progress and delivery
Prosperous Overview	10/11/22	Household Waste Recycling Centres	New service performance against key performance indicators
Prosperous Overview	10/11/22	Digital Infrastructure - Update	Monitoring performance against the Update Plan considered by the Committee in April 2022

Scrutiny Committee	Date of Meeting	Topic	Details / Background
<b>Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>			
Safeguarding Overview	16/06/22	Low Level Neglect	Suggested by Cabinet Member at triangulation to look at the impact of low level neglect, the current changes to ways of working and remaining challenges.
Safeguarding Overview	16/06/22	Work Programme Planning	Planning of the 2022/23 work programme at the beginning of the new municipal year
Safeguarding Overview	19/07/22	Customer Feedback & Complaints Annual report - Children's Social Care	Report brought annually
Safeguarding Overview	19/07/22	Customer Feedback & Complaints Annual report - Adult Social Care	Report brought annually
Safeguarding Overview	19/07/22	Draft Early Help Strategy	Pre-decision scrutiny
Safeguarding Overview	19/07/22	Family Hub	Pre-decision scrutiny
Safeguarding Overview	01/09/22	Children's Services Transformation	The new Children's Transformation went live on 1 October 2021. Six months on this is an opportunity for Members to seek reassurance that it is delivering as intended, including on SEND.
Safeguarding Overview	24/10/22	Community safety and the outcome of the Fishmonger's Hall investigation	Findings from the Fishmonger Hall incident showed there had been inadequate management of Usman Khan. Members want to satisfy themselves that changes have been made to prevent further such incidents. This also impacts on the Committee's role as the designated crime and disorder panel.
Safeguarding Overview	24/11/22	Staffordshire safeguarding Children's Board Annual report	Report brought annually
Safeguarding Overview	05/01/23	Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Adult safeguarding Partnership Board Annual report	Report brought annually

## Appendix 1: Items considered during the year 2021-22

### Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- SEND working group - final report
- Customer feedback and complaints annual report 2020/21
- Impact of Covid-19 on Communities, Economy and organisation and recovery progress
- Climate Change Annual report (2021) and the Draft Climate Change Action Plan
- Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion action plan
- Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) capacity building recommission
- Proposed New Coroners service
- Strategic Plan
- Quarterly Integrated Performance Reports
- Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
- Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- Call - in: Proposed relocation of Burton Library

## Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Covid-19 Vaccination, Phase 3 Vaccinations Programme and Covid-19 updates
- NHS Restoration and Recovery
- Access to General Practices and Primary Care
- Future Delivery of Residential Replacement Care Services (Learning Disabilities)
- Walley's Quarry Landfill Site - Health Implications
- George Bryan Centre
- Maternity Services
- Urgent and Emergency Care Programme
- Difficult Decisions
- Introduction to Mental Health Workshop
- Mental Health Hospitals in Staffordshire
- NHS Transformation Programme Updates
- Integrated Care Strategy Performance Overview
- Public Health Outcomes and Services
- NHS System Pressures
- Home Care Services Update and Pressures
- Integrated Care System
- Care Home Services
- Integrated Care Hubs
- Mental Health Support Teams in Schools
- Healthier Communities - the wider Determinants of Health
- Draft Mental Health Strategy
- Post Covid Lessons Learned
- Green NHS Agenda

### **Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- The Effects of Covid-19 on Further Education
- Economic Recovery, Renewal and Transformation Strategy and Quarterly Updates
- Community Learning Briefing Paper
- Covid-19 School Update
- Infrastructure and Lighting for Staffordshire Performance Review
- Flood Management
- Draft SEND Strategy and Draft Accessibility Strategy
- North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Action Plan (NSLAQP) - Outline Business Case
- Protecting Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation for Future Generations
- Household Waste and Recycling Centre Contract - Re- Procurement
- HS2 Updates - Impact on Staffordshire
- Update on Return to Schools and School Transport
- The relationship between Training and Skills and the Future Staffordshire Economy
- Staffordshire Community Learning Service Annual Self-assessment (2019-20)
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

### **Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- Community Support (including Domiciliary Care) and 1-1 intensive support for Children with Disabilities
- Domestic Abuse and the impact from the Pandemic
- Developing Family Hubs in Staffordshire
- Together4Children Regional Permanency Partnership Update Briefing Children & Families System Transformation
- Customer Feedback & Complaints Service - Adult Social Services Annual Report 2020-21
- Customer Feedback and Complaints Service - Children's Social Services Annual Report 2020-20211
- Safeguarding Adults on the Cusp of Care
- Adult Safeguarding Transformation Project Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board Annual Report 2019/20
- Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual report
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- Young Carers