

# Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee

**Monday, 11 December 2023**

Present: Councillors D Cox, L Bones, D Drummond,  
T Mulvenna, M Murphy, P Oliver, W Samuel, J Shaw,  
M Wilson, Rev M Vine and P McIntyre

Apologies: Councillors J Montague, L Bartoli, A Newman,  
M Thirlaway, Burton and C Davis

## **OV26/23 Appointment of Substitute Members**

In accordance with the Council's Constitution the following Substitute Member was reported:

Councillor D Cox for Councillor J Montague as Chair.

## **OV27/23 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

Councillor Liam Bones declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 6 Emergency Care In North Tyneside – Task and Finish group, he has a family member who is employed by North Tyneside Council.

Councillor Debbie Cox declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 6 Emergency Care In North Tyneside – Task and Finish group, family member receives adult social care.

Councillor Pat Oliver declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 6 Emergency Care In North Tyneside – Task and Finish group, family member receives adult social care.

Councillor Martin Murphy declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 6 Emergency Care In North Tyneside – Task and Finish group, he has a family member who is employed by North Tyneside Council.

Councillor Jane Shaw declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 6 Emergency Care In North Tyneside – Task and Finish group, she has a family member who undertakes work on behalf of North Tyneside Council.

**OV28/23 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minute of the meeting held on 9 October 2023 be **agreed**.

**OV29/23 Annual Report of the Elected Mayor**

The Elected Mayor began by thanking both the Elected Members and officers for their hard work, support and commitment to the improvement of the borough throughout the last year.

Following the refresh of the Council Plan and its focus on the five themes (a Thriving, Family-friendly, Caring, Secure and Green North Tyneside), the Elected Mayor set out the achievements and plans for these themes.

**Thriving:**

- Preparation of regeneration master plans for North Shields and Wallsend, and the initiating of the same for the North West.
- Completion of a draft Conservation Area Management Strategy for North Shields.
- Improvements to a range of derelict land and properties.
- The continuation of support for job creation and apprenticeships in Planning, as well as the publication of updated Employment Land Review.
- The publication of a Cultural Plan and the establishment of a Boroughwide Cultural Partnership to drive it forward.
- A diverse events programme that has seen visitor numbers continue to increase and support town centres.

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- Investment in The Exchange in North Shields, marking the beginning of the transformation of the area into a Cultural Quarter.
- The new Transport Hub and town square in North Shields.
- The redevelopment of Northumberland Square and Howard Street as part of North Shields Heritage Action Zone continuing.
- Delivering the final year of the 'Made in North Tyneside' programme which provided support and guidance to start-up to businesses across the Borough.
- The encouragement of individuals considering starting a business and supporting the growth of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises with consultancy and workshops.
- Securing £750k to deliver a refreshed Business Factory to provide support to all types of businesses and supporting the Business Forum to deliver their programme of activity.
- Working in partnership with Invest North East England and the North of Tyne Combined Authority to promote the area to potential investors.
- Supporting the delivery of new, and affordable, homes in new developments like Rake Lane.
- The Embankment Walkway project work is hoped to be completed in 2024.
- Keeping all our leisure and library facilities open alongside continuing investment for the future.
- The retention of blue and green flags for our parks and beaches.

### Thriving Future Plans:

- The 2024 opening of a new £4m sports hub at St Peters Playing field with external funding from the Football Foundation and Rugby/Football league.

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- Planning has commenced for North Shields 800 and a year of celebration in 2025.
- Launching / delivering the first year of the new Business Factory programme
- Continuing to work closely with Invest North East England and regional partners to attract new businesses and jobs.

### Family Friendly:

- The Mayor stated that the 0-19 Children's Public Health Service had received an overall good rating by the CQC and was rated as outstanding in the category 'well led'. Breastfeeding and support for parent infant relationships was featured as an outstanding practice.
- The childcare offer remained available to families across the borough, working with a range of schools and the private, voluntary and independent sector. Plans had also begun for the national expansion of the government funded childcare offer.
- A Strategic Education Review was underway to ensure that we maintain a sustainable, sufficient and high-quality educational system in partnership with schools which enabled all children and young people to achieve positive outcomes.
- The School Rebuilding Programme continues to progress, and in addition to the new school building at Whitley Bay High School, Wellfield Middle, Redesdale Primary, Marden Bridge Middle, and George Stephenson High Schools have all been identified by the DfE for rebuilding.
- The new 10 classroom extension at Beacon Hill School continues to progress well, on target for completion in Easter 2024.
- A new Attendance Strategy is being drafted and will be circulated to schools for comments in the near future.

- The DfE announced in June that the Authority will receive over £4m in capital funding. Officers are working on detailed plans for this investment to support and address our SEN provision across borough.

#### Family Friendly Future Plans :

- In the coming months the 0-19 Children's Public Health Service will be working with local partners and the North of Tyne Combined Authority to provide baby boxes to first-time parents who are particularly impacted by the current challenges with the cost-of-living crisis.

#### Caring:

- The Authority continues to manage significant pressures in local acute hospitals well in comparison to the national picture.
- Continued our effective joint working with Integrated Care Board.
- Created a new Care Pathway post that will work between health and social care to optimise care pathways for residents.
- Provided new extra care services at Havelock Place and Clifford's Mews.
- We are looking to provide extra care flats and step-down beds at Howdon as an alternative to residential care for residents on discharge from hospital.
- The Drug and Alcohol Residential Rehab pathway has been developed.
- We have continued to support care providers in times of high inflation with an above inflation increase in fees for care homes and homecare providers. Homecare providers received a fee increase in 2022/23 to allow them to pay the real living wage to their staff and this has been maintained in 2023/24.
- A review of the council's 'My Care' website has been completed to help people access the support they need more easily.

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- We launched the Baby Breathe Pilot aimed at helping women who have quit smoking during pregnancy.
- Provided funding to our local Voluntary and Community Sector to bespoke weight management programmes and support to over 300 residents in communities experiencing inequalities.
- Established joint working with environmental health, health visitors and housing colleagues to identify and address damp and mould in homes across the borough.

### **Caring Future Plans:**

- Deliver improvements in our joint commissioning of specialist services.
- Continue to promote direct payments to increase choice and control.
- Explore the roll out of technology as part of support packages.
- Capitalise on and support delivery of Better Care Fund and discharge funding with our Integrated Care Board colleagues.
- To continue to drive forward the partnership working to meet the ambitions of the Joint Local Health & Wellbeing Strategy: Equally Well: A Healthier, Fairer Future for North Tyneside 2021-2025 to improve health and reduce health inequalities across North Tyneside.

### **Secure:**

- Continuing to invest in our roads and pavements.
- We have successfully delivered several sea wall renewal schemes to protect our coastline from damage and erosion.
- Council wardens continue to work in partnership with Northumbria Police to prevent and tackle all forms of antisocial behaviour.
- We have reduced the levels of Anti-social behaviour at the coast with

Operation Coastwatch and Operation Maple through a high visibility joint approach with Northumbria Police.

**Secure Future Plans:**

- We will continue to work with our partners and the police to prevent and reduce serious violence like knife and gun crime.
- To look at what we can offer as Authority along with our partners to help steer people away from crime and anti-social behaviour.

**Green:**

- The Air Quality Strategy (2023–2028) was approved by Cabinet in June 2023 and sets out the main objectives over the next five years to improve Air Quality.
- Significant funding was secured for the delivery of the seafront cycle scheme. The first phase will start this year, with the remainder of the route to be completed through 2024. A number of other major cycling and pedestrian improvement schemes were also completed.
- The upgrading of three existing, and the creation of six new, EV charge points within a selected number of the Council's off street car parks.
- Continued to support the delivery of the Northumberland line.
- Developed the Business Factory programme to support the Action for Climate Change initiative and help businesses of all sizes understand and contribute to the journey to Net Zero.
- Installed 100 bins in new locations and introduced additional resources to help crack down on littering.
- Additional resources introduced to enhance environmental maintenance standards, along with three new pedestrian sweepers.
- A dedicated seafront litter management team will help maintain

cleanliness during seasonal peaks.

- We reduced the carbon footprint of the Council by 58% in 22/23, ahead of the 2023 target of 50%.
- Delivered a range of projects to support delivery of the Carbon Net-Zero Action Plan e.g. solar PV and battery storage at the Killingworth Depot, low carbon heating systems in leisure centres and heating, insulation and renewable energy systems in resident's homes.
- We have established the Borough-wide Climate Emergency Board to work with large businesses and public sector organisations to drive down carbon emissions.
- We have planted over 10,000 trees across 15 hectares in the borough, easily exceeding the Tree Planting Strategy 2024 target of 2,400.

#### **Green Future Plans:**

- Continuing to actively monitor the air quality in North Tyneside and publishing an action plan of the steps taken and the national investment sought to make North Tyneside carbon net-zero by 2030.
- We will secure funding to help low-income households to install low-carbon heating.
- Looking to increase the amount of waste (including additional electrical recycling and vapes) that can be recycled and introduce food waste collections and deposit return schemes.
- To develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy with Newcastle City Council and Northumberland Council.

In closing, the Mayor spoke on the General Fund pressure of £11.3m, the majority of which was related to Social Care with £8.3m within our Children's and Adults Services.

The Mayor mentioned the other pressures facing the Authority, including both the



Home to School Transport and Catering Services driven by several factors including an increase in pupils qualifying for support and inflationary pressures from food, staffing and energy costs as well as a reduction in the take up by several schools.

The Elected Mayor stated that many of the challenges in the current year could roll forward into 2024/25 if action is not taken, and therefore the Cabinet and SLT would continue to address the in-year and future year mitigations in a consistent way through the MTFP.

The Mayor stated that the Authority would continue to be committed to supporting the most vulnerable residents, local communities and businesses wherever possible within the funding streams.

Whilst there continued to be uncertainty for the overall level of funding, the Mayor committed to approach the medium-term financial planning in a robust way and set a balanced budget for 2024/25 and beyond.

The Chair thanked the Elected Mayor for the thorough report in highlighting officers and members work done for the benefit of North Tyneside's residents in a difficult financial climate.

A member raised a question about funding for the North Tyneside Transport Hub, and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor that stated that the funding information had already been made available to members.

A question was raised about road and pavement repairs, and a discussion took place around funding levels, the rate of inflation and the difficult choices being made amongst competing priorities.

A member raised a question regarding the current situation with school meal provision, and a discussion was held regarding non-statutory provision of services, and price matching.

The Mayor stated that she had an open door policy and was happy to meet and discuss matters whenever possible.

It was **Agreed** that the Annual Report of the Elected Mayor be noted.

**OV30/23      2023-24 Performance and Financial Management Report to 30  
September 2023**

The Committee received a report that had been considered by Cabinet at its 27 November 2023 meeting.

The report set out the forecast outturn position to 31 March 2024 for both revenue and capital, and details of additional revenue and capital grants received up until 30 September 2023 for Cabinet to approve.

The Committee was informed that the General Fund will outturn with a pressure of £9.648m, which is an improvement of £1.662m from the previous report. The Authority's key pressures were described as consistent with the expected areas of concern.

The report sets out the programme of work which is in place to manage and mitigate the 2023/24 budget pressures and form part of the 2024-2028 Medium Term Financial Plan.

In terms of performance, whilst service delivery remained strong there continued to be high levels of demand in children in need residential placements, Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Needs Assessments, home care costs and nursing care placements.

The projected outturn position for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is an underspend of £0.070m. The Housing Repairs service continues to face pressures through housing management costs and more specifically to the costs of utilities attached to sheltered accommodation schemes, but the overall spend for repairs is forecast to come in on budget. There is also an anticipated pressure due to the 2023/24 pay award that is expected to be greater than assumed in the HRA Business Plan.

It was Agreed that the 2023/24 Performance and Financial Management Report to 30 September 2023 be noted.

**OV31/23      Emergency Care In North Tyneside – Task and Finish group**

The Chair introduced a report prepared by the Emergency Care Scrutiny Task and Finish Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Finance and Co-ordination Committee (OSCFC). This Task and Finish Group had been formed in June 2023 specifically to examine matters relating to the provision of emergency healthcare for North Tyneside. This followed a Council motion on this matter, agreed by full Council on 16 March 2023.

The Chair explained that in Councillor Montague's role as Chair of the OSCFC he had agreed to establish and chair this Task and Finish Group. Taking forward the matters in the Council motion around emergency healthcare through a Scrutiny route would allow sufficient rigour to the examination of the issues in the motion, and also for the findings and recommendations to be properly evidence based. Terms of Reference for the Emergency Care Scrutiny Task and Finish Group had been agreed by the OSCFC at the meeting of the Committee on 12 June 2023.

The Chair explained that the motion agreed at Council on 16 March about emergency healthcare covered important issues for all residents of North Tyneside. It was essential that membership of the Task and Finish Group was open to all non-Executive members. Councillor Montague, as Chair of OSCFC, had confirmed that all members on the Council who are not Cabinet members were invited to volunteer to be part of the Task and Finish group, and every member who expressed an interest was invited to participate in the Task and Finish Group. The Task and Finish group therefore comprised members drawn from the Labour, Conservative and Community Independent groups on the Council. The names of those members are shown in the report on p44.

The evidence, set out in section 3.2 of the report, demonstrated that both regionally and nationally, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust is performing extremely well, ranked first in the country for accident and emergency care. On p33-34 of the Task and Finish Group's report are two tables showing this performance and ranking of NHS Trusts.

As explained in the report, the Task and Finish Group had met with senior officers

from North Tyneside Council, and from Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, as well as the Integrated Care Board to scrutinise information relating to hospital location and performance. This was described in the report on p23. As set out in the report, the Chair explained that the model in place had been designed to optimise clinical outcomes by enhancing access to specialist medical staff and a large specialist and emergency care hospital gives advantages that might not be otherwise possible. Medical evidence shows that for some health conditions, earlier access to a specialist makes for much better clinical outcomes for patients. The Northumbria Specialist and Emergency Care Hospital (NSECH) at Cramlington had been designed to deliver optimal standards of emergency clinical care for patients. The Emergency Care Task and Finish Group found that this would be of benefit to all patients attending NSECH, including those from North Tyneside.

The Emergency Care Task and Finish group had concluded that this information about performance should be publicised to North Tyneside residents. The Task and Finish Group had therefore recommended in their report that performance standards around emergency care should be communicated regularly to North Tyneside residents, led by the Authority working with partner organisations.

The report of the Emergency Care Task and Finish Group had also highlighted a matter around the language used to describe different methods of care. The Task and Finish Group had heard reference to 'emergency care' and to 'urgent treatment'. Some members felt this distinction may not be clear and that communicating this was important because the nature of the treatment determines where and how it is accessed.

The Task and Finish Group report explained that emergency care is for the most serious, life-threatening health matters. This covers things like suspected stroke, severe chest pains, loss of consciousness, and serious head injuries. By contrast, urgent treatment provides medical care for minor injuries and minor illnesses which are not life threatening, including things like sprains, broken bones, minor cuts and bites. The Task and Finish Group report (p21-22) sets out the local NHS sites offering each type of care.

The Task and Finish Group recommended that some further awareness raising about where to access treatment for which types of medical condition should take place. They recommended that a communication campaign within the

borough, involving the Authority and partner organisations, should be arranged. This communication should set out the differences between 'emergency care' and 'urgent treatment' and when, where and how to access each type of care. In the view of the Task and Finish Group this would help ensure that all residents of North Tyneside know where and when to go for help.

Finally, the Task and Finish Group also reached some conclusions regarding the matter of transport. Any patient attending the NSECH hospital in Cramlington for emergency care will most likely travel by ambulance, or as a patient in a car, given the serious and life-threatening nature of their condition. Taking this into account, transport for emergency care should not be in issue.

There may however be other reasons why North Tyneside residents need to travel to the NSECH site, such as attending other departments at the site for non-emergency care, such as the fracture clinic, or to visit family members in hospital. The Task and Finish Group found that in these cases, transport may become an issue for North Tyneside residents, particularly where residents rely on public transport. Evidence showed that in 2022/23 journey times on public transport had increased significantly for some North Tyneside residents.

The Task and Finish Group therefore recommended in their report that the Authority, working with partners, should explore what transport options might be implemented to improve accessibility to the NSECH site. This will be important for North Tyneside residents travelling for non-emergency reasons.

The Chair outlined that the Task and Finish group had appreciated the support provided by officers of the Authority, both those who are based in the Council's buildings and those operating from Rake Lane Hospital. It also valued the support and help offered throughout its work by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and by the Integrated Care Board. As Chair, Councillor Cox, on behalf Councillor Montague as Chair of both OSCFC and of the Task and Finish Group, wished to commend this report to both OSCFC and Cabinet.

Members of OSCFC stated that they had found the report very interesting and useful. In response to a query from a member, it was confirmed that as set out in the report the views of the public had been sought via work undertaken by Healthwatch. A member said that they wanted Rake Lane Hospital to be open 24 hours a day and that they also wanted Battle Hill Walk-In Centre to be

reinstated. The Chair stated that it was her understanding the decision about where, when and how 'emergency care' and 'urgent treatment' would be delivered was one that was taken by the NHS and could not have been made by the local authority as it is not within the local authority's powers to make such a decision. A member commented that they were very happy with the Task and finish group's work and the supporting evidence supplied.

The Chair asked members of OSCFC to vote on whether they accepted the recommendations of the Emergency Care Scrutiny Task and Finish Group in the report. On putting this to the vote, all members present except one member agreed to accept the recommendations of the Emergency Care Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Bones asked that the minutes record that he had not voted to accept the recommendations of the Emergency Care Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

**OV32/23      Date and Time of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on 15 Jan 2024 at 6.00 pm.