

**NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL****22 July 2020****Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20****1.0 Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To bring to the attention of the County Council the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20.

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20 is provided at Appendix 1, on behalf of the Chair of Scrutiny Board, Councillor Derek Bastiman, and the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager, Daniel Harry.
- 2.2 The report highlights key activity by the council's Overview and Scrutiny function over the period from May 2019 to the beginning of April 2020 in its role of holding the Executive to account and ensuring that value is added to the Council's ongoing work to improve outcomes for customers and communities.
- 2.3 As the period covered by the report runs to the end of the 2019/20 financial year and as this coincides with the beginning of the phase of national restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, this report does not review overview and scrutiny work undertaken at the council following the start of the 'lockdown' period or in response to Covid-19 issues. These will instead be captured in the annual report for 2020/21 and within the county council statements by the Chairs of the five thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

**3.0 Recommendation to Council**

The County Council is invited to:

- 3.1 note the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/20; and
- 3.2 consider whether there are any issues arising from the Annual Report which need to be factored into the work programmes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in 2020/21.

Daniel Harry  
Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager  
County Hall  
Northallerton  
DP – July 2020

# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

A review of the work of overview and  
scrutiny in 2019/20 and looking ahead to  
work that will be done in 2020/21

**Cllr Derek Bastiman, Chairman of the NYCC  
Scrutiny Board and Daniel Harry, Democratic  
Services and Scrutiny Manager**



**2019/20**

# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20

## Foreword by County Councillor Derek Bastiman Chair of Scrutiny Board



As Chair of the Scrutiny Board, I am pleased to introduce the 2019/20 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report.

I was privileged to take on this role a year ago now and be able to take a greater role in championing scrutiny at the council. At a time of ever-changing demands and increasing financial pressures, scrutiny is vital in holding decision-makers to account; in contributing to policy development and in ensuring that the County Council continues to work hard to improve outcomes for its residents.

This report highlights the varied portfolio of work undertaken through scrutiny over the past year in achieving these aims, as well as an outline of the work that will be done over the next 12 months.

Reflecting back over the past year, it is clear to me that Members of the overview and scrutiny committees and officers supporting them have worked hard to create a culture where transparency, involvement and accountability are welcomed and where challenge is seen as a vital and positive part of improving outcomes.

In an Executive-based council system, scrutiny provides an imperative check and balance and enables the voices of all councillors to be heard; particularly important in this period of change and uncertainty.

Scrutiny has not rested on its laurels and we have continued to find ways to shape scrutiny practice for the benefit of the communities we serve. For example, there has been useful cross-collaboration between the Young People's Committee and Care and Independence Committee on the transition of young people from children's social care to adult social care. I have also been pleased to lead on a piece of work recently to reflect with colleagues on current overview and scrutiny practice, which will hopefully help to ensure continued improvement across the function.

This report covers the 2019/20 financial year. It would be odd, however, if I did not make mention of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact that this has had upon our committee meetings and overview and scrutiny in 2020. As of 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020, all committee meetings were postponed as the lockdown commenced and all public gatherings stopped. Since then the council has been establishing a programme of informal and formal meetings through Skype. I now look forward to the first live broadcast meeting of the overview and scrutiny committees in the autumn.

I would like to finish by thanking all those Members, co-opted committee members, officers and partners who have contributed to overview and scrutiny over the past 12 months.

I commend this report to the council.

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## **Purpose of the report**

This Annual Report highlights key activity by the council's Overview and Scrutiny function over the period from May 2019 to the beginning of April 2020 in its role of holding the Executive to account and ensuring that value is added to the council's ongoing work to improve outcomes for customers and communities.

As the period covered by the report runs to the end of the 2019/20 financial year and as this coincides with the beginning of the phase of national restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, this report does not review overview and scrutiny work undertaken at the council following the start of the 'lockdown' period or in response to Covid-19 issues. These will be appropriately captured in the annual report for 2020/21 and the county council statements by the Chairs of the five thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

In terms of the format of this report, the Chair of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has provided reflections on the wide variety of work that has been carried out this year and how they expect their programme of work to develop in the year ahead. In addition, this report highlights work commissioned by the committees, such as more in-depth reviews, to help inform policy development and decision-making at the council.

The structure of scrutiny at the council is complemented by a range of other bodies and groups, such as the Area Constituency Committees, and oversight is provided by a Scrutiny Board. This report provides an illustration of the role and contribution these have made over the last year.

## **What is Overview and Scrutiny?**

The Local Government Act 2000 first introduced the requirement for every local authority to include provision for at least one overview and scrutiny committee.

The overview and scrutiny function is a key element of the County Council's governance arrangements and decision making process.

Although not a decision-making body, overview and scrutiny is at its most effective when it grasps the potential to influence and inform decisions made by both the Council and partner bodies affecting the County.

## **What does it aim to do?**

Scrutiny aims to contribute to the Council's corporate outcomes in many ways, including:

- Enabling Councillors to become directly involved in the development of: policy and strategy; consultation and public engagement planning; and the performance management of the Council.
- Keeping Councillors and the public informed of key issues, priorities and initiatives.
- Enabling direct engagement with the people of North Yorkshire.

- Acting as a critical friend and providing Executive Members and senior officers with a non-partisan forum in which to test out ideas, approaches and gain feedback and suggestions.
- Providing a structure, through the call-in process, for scrutinising specific decisions of the Executive.
- Scrutinising issues of public concern beyond the remit of the Council.

## **How is overview and scrutiny structured at the County Council?**

The work of the executive is monitored by various overview and scrutiny committees, which can check recent decisions, advise on policy development and review service performance. They can also call the executive to account where it is felt that their decisions have not been as effective as they should be. There are four overview and scrutiny committees and an additional scrutiny of health committee. Their remits are broadly as follows:

### **Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- the needs of vulnerable adults, older people and people whose independence needs to be supported by intervention from the public or voluntary sector.

### **Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- Our corporate organisation and structure, resource allocation, asset management, procurement policy, people strategy, equality and diversity, performance management, communications and access to services; and
- Partnership working, community development, community engagement, community strategies and community safety (the designated crime and disorder committee).

### **Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- Transport and communications infrastructure of all kinds, however owned or provided, and how the transport needs of the community are met;
- Support to business and helping people develop their skills, including lifelong learning; and
- Sustainable development, climate change strategy, countryside management, waste management, environmental conservation and enhancement and cultural issues.

### **Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- the interests of young people, including education, care and protection and family support.

### **Scrutiny of Health Committee**

- To review any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in the county, including ambulance trusts and the policies of the strategic health authority;
- To act as a lever to improve the health of local people, ensuring that the needs of the local people are considered as an integral part of the delivery and development of health services; and
- To focus on action to achieve health improvement; to examine health care in the context of the wider determinants of health; to examine how health services address the needs of local communities; especially to address health

inequalities; to ensure that local health and health related issues are being tackled jointly and in a co-ordinated way across agencies.

Each Committee has provided, below, an overview of some of the key issues reviewed and scrutinised over 12-month period to April 2020.

## **Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** **County Councillor Janet Jefferson**



It has been another busy year for the Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee; providing constructive challenge and support on a range of important issues facing provision of services to children and young people in North Yorkshire.

One such service area facing multiple challenges and pressures is the council's service for children and young people with **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**. The Committee gave focus to looking at how well the council is providing a service which is appropriately tailored to meet individual and family circumstances. We probed the service on how the criteria for support provision are applied and while this can be complex, we were reassured that a fair and consistent level of support is being provided where needed.

Together with the Care and Independence Scrutiny Committee Members, we reviewed whether the **transition of young people from children's social care** to adult social care was a seamless experience. We welcomed the development of a new pathway which builds on the strengths of both directorates, enabling greater focus on identifying and planning earlier for young people moving into adulthood.

An issue which has come into the spotlight more nationally and locally in the last year is that of **Elective Home Education (EHE)**. Numbers of children in EHE are increasing nationally and North Yorkshire is following this wider trend. The Committee had concerns around the rationale behind this increase, but based on the information provided were reassured that in the main this is about an active parent/carer choice rather than one which parents/carers feel compelled to take. The Committee felt that the directorate has a good understanding of the issues associated with EHE, is making appropriate efforts to identify "off-rolling" from school rolls, and procedures and practices are effectively observed.

We were pleased to be able to support the directorate's proposals for the **Medical Education Service**, which works to ensure children with long-term illnesses are supported to continue to receive a good education. We should see an increased range of options available, including digital solutions, to provide a more flexible and family-centred approach and which enables pupils to maintain involvement with their school.

In reviewing school and education improvement across the year, the Committee has also sought opportunity to scrutinise the issue of **school deficits**. The number of school deficits has decreased but the amount of deficit for schools has increased. We particularly were concerned to look at impact on small schools in the county, which are

reducing in number and have higher deficits. We were encouraged by the progress being made and support available to schools but this is something the Committee will return to.

Finally, the Committee was pleased to engage with the new Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, Professor Maggie Atkinson, to get a better understanding of how effectively **new multi-agency regulations for safeguarding** are protecting children and young people locally. We were encouraged by Maggie's assessment that there is strong partnership leadership and commitment from partners and that the new regulations have afforded greater clarity and accountability to agencies. We hope to continue our constructive dialogue with the LSCB Chair going forward into 2020/21.

Looking ahead to the next year, key areas of focus for the Committee will include:

- Picking up broader strategic issues around SEND and reviewing the effectiveness of the Strategic Plan for SEND Education Provision 0-25;
- Reviewing the progress and effectiveness of the Opportunity Area in Scarborough;
- A project looking at links between schools and the level of engagement by schools (including academies) with the communities they serve;
- An overview of our arrangements on adoption including work planned by the directorate on key policies and procedures; and
- An account of the work over the last 12-18 months undertaken by the Looked After Children's Members Group.

## **Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee** **County Councillor Karin Sedgwick**



I am privileged to have taken on the Chairmanship of the Care and Independence Committee this year, at a time when providing effective support for older people and vulnerable adults in our communities is becoming ever more critical.

**Mental health** has, rightly, continued to take focus nationally and locally this year as an area which has long experienced considerable pressures. We were very encouraged to hear of the new social care mental health offer for working age adults. There will be a clearer pathway from referral into the service, triage and prevention. A restructured mental health service with a clear hierarchy, transparent lines of accountability and, significantly, an integrated care workforce team, strengthens this approach. We expect to see a reduction in the number of people requiring specialist mental health services as a result and better tailoring of support when treating someone with particular needs or a particular condition.

We are keen that all older and vulnerable residents are supported to exercise choice and control over the support they receive. One way in which the council looks to enable this is through provision of **Direct Payments**. Unfortunately, there is a disappointing lack of take-up of Direct Payments across the county. The Committee



found good reasons for this in respect of social care market conditions and lack of confidence by individuals to be an employer to a personal assistant. Overall, the Committee felt reassured from the evidence presented that while progress in this area is slow, this is not for want of appropriate efforts being made by the council in terms of promotion, resources and enhancing staff awareness around Direct Payments. It is an issue we will review again next year.

The Committee reviewed the **Learning Disabilities and All Age Autism Strategy**. On the basis of what we heard, we believe that the directorate's actions are consistent with the aims of the strategy that people with a learning disability should have the opportunity to live as long and healthy lives as possible.

The **Living Well** service is a genuine success story for the council and the Committee were pleased to see this borne out in a recent evaluation report. Among a range of indicators pointing to the project's success, one in particular stands out: it delivers improved wellbeing worth £3.84 per every £1 spent. This really illustrated for the Committee how creative and innovative the council has been in deploying public health grant money to further public health and social care objectives.

We also welcomed the recent partnership arrangement set up with Nottingham Rehab Services (NRS) for **assistive technology** to enable people to live independently for longer. Initial results from the new arrangement seem to demonstrate that more people are being supported with a far wider range of equipment, and the contract provider is able to stay much more up-to-date with new and emerging technology.

Of course, there is no room for complacency as regards budget pressures and the need for the council to have measures in place to deal with the overspends to the care and support and mental health budgets. We have continued to address this at Committee and feel that the council has a good understanding of the underlying issues and some sound actions proposed to tackle these. We are keen to keep under review the council's role in market shaping and intervention and its role as a care provider.

Looking ahead this next year, the Committee expects to review a number of issues including:

- Suicide prevention;
- The learning disabilities transformation agenda; ensuring people with the most complex disabilities are enabled to live in communities with the right level of specialist support;
- Services that the council commissions on the prevention agenda.

## Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### County Cllr Stanley Lumley



The Committee has taken forward a varied programme of work this year on some important issues, including progressing detailed reviews via task groups on key areas of concern.

The first of these was the Committee's **20mph speed limit policy task group**, which was created to look at the council's current policy regarding the introduction of 20mph speed limits; reviewing this against the DfT guidance and research on 20mph speed limits. The review completed in December 2019 and the final report included recommendations to the Executive to help refine the council's policy on the introduction of 20mph speed limits. Further details of the outcomes of the review can be found below at 'In-depth Reviews' (page 13).

The Committee is also leading on a piece of work relating to reducing the unnecessary use of **single-use plastics** in the county. A Task Group has been formed and has met to consider its parameters and avenues for further research. The group will meet over the coming months, to:

- Consider good practice already adopted within the council and identify areas where single-use could be further reduced;
- Examine the LEP's work on the circular economy and good practice in businesses;
- Meet with businesses demonstrating good practice; and
- Meet with campaign groups on single-use plastic.

Following this, a review will be undertaken and a report brought back to Committee.

The Committee also took an update from Highways England on the **strategic roads in our county**, looking mainly at the A64. Concern was expressed by the Committee about the decision to downgrade road improvements to the A64, particularly as this assessment had involved Highways England taking tourist traffic out of the equation. The Committee probed Highways England on other areas where there was felt to be a general lack of clarity and transparency about assessments and decisions made. We welcomed that a letter was sent to the Prime Minister signed by the County Council and the A64 Growth Partnership regarding our concerns at the decision to downgrade A64 road improvements.

We expressed our frustration over delays to the government decision whether or not to fund the re-routing of the A59 at **Kex Gill**. The route has to be diverted no matter what and we called for the County Council to step in to fund the whole costs if this transpired to be the only option.

Flooding has continued to ravage parts of Yorkshire and elsewhere nationally over recent months and flood mitigation is ever more important. Further to a Motion submitted to the County Council which called for utility companies to be required to

make a mandatory contribution towards **flood and coastal protection schemes**, the Committee agreed to recommend to the council that I write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to call for this to be made mandatory. The Committee also recommended to the council that County Councillor Derek Bastiman be authorised in his capacity as Vice Chairman of the Local Government Association Special Interest Group (LGA SIG) Coastal Issues to contact (in consultation with the Leader of North Yorkshire County Council), other relevant agencies to call for utility companies to make a proportionate and appropriate mandatory level of financial contribution where flood defence schemes will protect their infrastructure.

Over the next year, the Committee intends to look at a number of issues, including:

- Single use plastics – the outcomes of the task group review;
- Outcomes of the council’s climate change scrutiny joint sub-committee and the specific strands of work to be picked up by this Committee;
- A review of the Ringway highway maintenance contract.

## **Corporate & Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee County Councillor Derek Bastiman**



The Committee has continued this year to review and scrutinise a range of key issues for the council, including the council’s management of its assets, its library strategy and partnership working, to name a few.

In relation to the latter, we have continued our constructive engagement with the **North Yorkshire Community Safety Partnership**, and welcomed an update on the good practice underway following the development of the Community Safety Hubs; in particular in Scarborough, which is held up as an exemplar in North Yorkshire. The Committee also received an update on the partnership’s work on its first Domestic Homicide Review and were pleased to note the productive relationships at work between agencies and practitioners across North Yorkshire and beyond its boundaries.

The Committee has kept a regular watching brief on **adult reoffending rates** in North Yorkshire since 2017, following changes nationally to the delivery of probation services. In our final report, produced last summer, we had identified a lack of appropriate and timely access to education and training; a recognised barrier to reducing re-offending rates. We were therefore pleased to note that the Ministry of Justice was aiming to drive down re-offending through a wider education and employment strategy. We recommended to the Executive that they write to the National Probation Service to seek assurance that the provision of fast and efficient access to appropriate education will be addressed through the design of the model. We will continue to monitor the work of the National Probation Service going forward.

It is critical that the council has adequate arrangements and controls in place to satisfy itself that it can maintain a secure financial position with its companies and assets. It was on this basis that the Committee provided some constructive challenge in relation to the performance of the **Brierley Group**. While the group reported a profit of £1.6m

within its annual update, the Committee was concerned that this could quickly become a loss-making position if the governance arrangements were not adequate; particularly as the component companies had variable financial positions. The Committee sought reassurance and consequently, I attended a number of meetings of the Shareholder Committee. I was able to report back positively on my findings and an open invitation has been extended to all members of the Committee to attend future Shareholder Committee meetings. We will of course continue to review the performance of the Brierley Group.

In addition, the Committee reviewed progress against the County Council's **alternative investment framework**. The Committee was reassured that appropriate assessments are being made of the risks and rewards across the council's portfolio. We particularly welcomed the council pursuing an opportunity to invest in a solar farm as this aligns with the council's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and we will continue to seek updates on this.

It was encouraging to hear that many **community libraries** are looking to extend their services, and that the delivery model in place is considered nationally to be very innovative. However, the Committee learned of a number of sustainability concerns for these libraries, which included issues around short-term leases and rents. With that in mind, when considering possible future topics for review, the Committee agreed to look at NYCC property / land holdings, with a focus on identifying opportunities for improving best value e.g. through sharing premises with District Councils, and partner/voluntary organisations etc, and considering rent/lease related issues experienced by community libraries.

Looking ahead to the next year, the Committee will continue to keep under review the issues outlined in this update and, in addition, will review a number of other areas including:

- Operation of the parish portal and Parish Council engagement
- Implementation of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan
- Progress made in achieving the County Council's Equality and Diversity objectives"

## **Scrutiny of Health Committee County Councillor John Ennis**



This was my first year as Chairman of the Scrutiny of Health Committee. As such, I would like to thank my predecessor, County Councillor Jim Clark, for all of the work that he did over the past 9 years to champion local health scrutiny.

The work of the committee over the past 12 months has been demanding, as changes to health services in the county have been numerous, complex and demanded a significant understanding of medical processes and how specialist services are delivered.

This has been a challenging year for the NHS locally, regionally and nationally as it has faced significant financial pressures and work force shortages. These pressures have led to system wide changes to the way in which health services are delivered, changes that have had a particular impact upon the population of North Yorkshire.

Shortages in specialist roles, such as consultant anaesthetists, have made it very difficult for urgent and critical care services to be safely sustained at the **Friarage Hospital in Northallerton**. The committee had been kept informed of the problems faced by the South Tees NHS Foundation Trust over a two-year period. This culminated in a formal public consultation on proposed changes to urgent and critical care services in September 2019. The options proposed were: 1) a 24 hour, 7 days a week Urgent Treatment Centre for adults and children with minor injuries and minor illnesses; or 2) a 16 hour, 7 days a week Urgent Treatment Centre for adults and children with minor injuries and minor illnesses. It is anticipated that the model adopted will be that of 24 hours, 7 days a week.

A combination of financial pressures and shortages in specialist roles have also driven a review of how hospital and community health services are being delivered on the east coast, particularly at **Scarborough Hospital**. The committee has seen a number of changes to services over the year, with a number of specialist interventions, such as Urology, being moved to York or Hull. The consultation with the committee is ongoing and we have been re-assured in public that there will always be a need for an Accident and Emergency department at Scarborough hospital.

**Mental Health service provision** for the population of North Yorkshire is undergoing a significant change as resources are moved from in-patient services to enhanced community services. Over the past 12 months, this has seen the closure of in-patient beds for mental health at the Friarage Hospital and Harrogate Hospital and the end of the development of a new in-patient unit in Harrogate. Instead, in-patient care for the North Yorkshire population will be provided in York and Middlesbrough. The committee has supported the drive to enhance community mental health provision and to keep people living independently in the community but further scrutiny is needed to ensure that the community provision is able to cope with the level of complex need that would otherwise have been met in the in-patient setting.

The committee has been engaged by health commissioners and providers in these proposed changes to services at the earliest opportunity. The committee has observed a growing centralisation of NHS services. Whilst it is aware of the clinical and workforce issues which drive this, it has emphasised repeatedly the importance of good access to services, particularly for communities in rural and very rural parts of the County.

Over the next year, the Committee intends to look at a number of issues, including:

- The Integrated Care Systems that are leading the development of health services across the region
- The Primary Care Networks that were introduced under NHS Long Term Plan and which typically serve a population of 30,000 to 50,000
- The development of integrated health and social care services, focussing on the work of the Harrogate and Rural Alliance
- The East Coast Review and changes to services being delivered at Scarborough and Whitby hospitals

- The development of enhanced community mental health services and the reduction in in-patient beds
- The performance of the Urgent Treatment Centre model at the Friarage Hospital in Northallerton and what this then means for the future delivery of urgent and emergency care to the population of the county as a whole.

The programme of work that the committee put in place for 2020/21 is extensive and varied and will now need to be reviewed to take into account the impact of the Coronavirus upon the commissioning and delivery of NHS and social care services.

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The work programmes for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in 2020/21 will be reviewed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Scrutiny Board will co-ordinate the scrutiny of how the response of the council and partners to the pandemic has changed the way that we work and also assess whether there are any lessons that can be learned for the future.

### **Overview and scrutiny functions are also supported through the following bodies:**

- Scrutiny Board – this is made up of the Chairs of the five thematic overview and scrutiny committees and enables co-ordination across all five thematic overview and scrutiny committees.
- Police, Fire and Crime Panel - which scrutinises the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. There is also a Complaints Sub-Committee which meets on an ad-hoc basis. The County Council is the host authority for the Panel and the Panel is supported by the County Council's scrutiny team, along with officers providing guidance from Legal, Communications and Finance.
- Looked After Children's Members Group – this is not a formal committee but acts as an informal advisory group to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Children's and Young Peoples Services. The group performs a role consistent with statutory guidance for local authorities to promote the health and well-being of looked-after children.

### **North Yorkshire Scrutiny Officers' Network**

This group is an informal information-sharing group for overview and scrutiny officer leads across the county. Over the last year, the network has considered issues such as local authorities' planning for Brexit, environmental sustainability and new government guidance on local authority overview and scrutiny.

### **Call-In**

There has been one Call-In at the County Council this year. This was around the decision relating to the contribution rate for post-16 home to school transport for the 2019/20 academic year, which had been set at £600 following a decision by the Executive in May 2019. The Transport, Economy and Environment Committee reviewed the Call-In at their meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Having reviewed representations from the signatories to the Notice and from the Executive Member

concerned, the Committee concluded that it would not refer the decision back to the Corporate Director or to full council to be re-considered.

## **In-depth reviews**

Extended pieces of overview and scrutiny can be undertaken, where a more in-depth analysis of the issues is required. Over the past 12 months, a number of these have been undertaken. Examples include:

### **Health and Social Care Integration: Joint Scrutiny Evaluating the success of Integration**

The aim of this group, started in 2018/19, has been to:

- Understand what services are being delivered, what is planned, and what the impact of these services has or will be upon patient/service user outcomes.
- Establish whether the potential benefits are being realised in the integrated services currently delivered.
- Assess whether the current approaches to integrated health and social care services being developed, trailed and implemented are the most appropriate.

This has proven to be a complex and demanding area of work, involving the issuing of a comprehensive call for evidence and pursuing various subsequent lines of enquiries with partners. The findings of the group are to be reviewed in light of the integrated work that has been undertaken by health and social care as part of the emergency response to the coronavirus pandemic.

### **20mph speed limit policy task group**

This task group was developed through the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look at the council's current policy regarding the introduction of 20mph speed limits. The group reviewed current policy against DfT guidance and research on 20mph speed limits. The group consulted with a range of partners, including North Yorkshire Police, 95 Alive, and the '20's Plenty' campaign group, as well as researching other local authorities who have rolled out 20mph schemes more widely. The review completed in December 2019. A number of key findings and recommendations were made to the Executive to help refine the council's policy on the introduction of 20mph speed limits. These included the following:

- It is unrealistic for there to be 20mph speed limits existing in all settlements in the county where there are vulnerable road users. In enforcement terms, speed limits should reflect the nature of the road and in essence be 'self-explaining'. The costs of introducing 20mph schemes are also an unknown but findings from other local authorities show that larger schemes generally having higher implementation costs and a range of ancillary costs have to be taken into account.
- The current policy of the county council should be more explicit in considering 20mph speed limits in school zones.
- The policy should reference links to the wider policy agenda in relation to driver education (promoting behavioural change), supporting alternative modes of transport and shaping the built environment.
- For 20mph limits to be adhered to there needs to be a partnership approach involving a wide number of organisations including planning departments.

- The economic impact has to be taken into account with regards to extending journey times by a wide area introduction of 20mph speed limits.
- Most collisions are in relation to roads with a 50mph or 60mph speed limit as this is where most collisions are so this is where most targeting is required.
- Ongoing improvements in car technology are seeing the introduction of enhanced driver safety driver aids such as automatic braking and speed limiters.
- When considering planning applications for new housing or commercial development, North Yorkshire County Council, in its capacity as the lead Highways Authority and as statutory consultee to the planning process, makes recommendations to local planning authorities based on written national policy indicating the appropriate best practice and guidelines for the implementation of measures, to design out speed as part of the condition of approval and also to put in place infrastructure to create safe walking and cycling routes.

### **Single-Use Plastics**

The Transport, Economy and Environment Committee has been leading on a piece of work relating to reducing the unnecessary use of single-use plastics in the county. A Task Group has been formed and has met to consider its parameters and avenues for further research. The group will have three meetings over the coming months, to:

- Consider good practice already adopted within the council and identify areas where single-use could be further reduced;
- Examine the LEP's work on the circular economy and good practice in businesses;
- Meet with businesses demonstrating good practice; and
- Meet with campaign groups on single-use plastic.

Following this, a review will be undertaken and a report brought back to Committee.

### **Other Approaches**

#### **Work with Area Constituency Committees –**

The council's six Area Constituency Committees have continued to work closely with the overview and scrutiny committees and particularly with the Scrutiny of Health Committee. Constituency committee members have taken a strong interest in changes to NHS services and have been able to offer a local, grass roots view of what this will mean to local residents and communities. This has enriched the work that has been done by the Scrutiny of Health Committee and enabled a more informed and effective scrutiny of proposed changes.

#### **Government guidance on overview and scrutiny**

In January 2017, the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Committee launched an inquiry into overview and scrutiny in local government. The Committee considered whether overview and scrutiny arrangements are working effectively.

Recommendations were made and in response (March 2018) the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government stated that new guidance on overview and scrutiny in local government would be published. The guidance was published in May 2019 and is available via the following link -



The guidance reiterates the key role that overview and scrutiny has to play in holding decision-makers to account. It identifies four key areas in which increased awareness and understanding is needed: the purpose of scrutiny; what effective scrutiny looks like; how to conduct it; and the benefits that it brings.

The guidance has a number of policies and practices that it highlights that would support the establishment and development of effective scrutiny, including:

- Establish an organisational culture whereby overview and scrutiny is valued, supported and independent. This can involve developing an Executive-Scrutiny Protocol.
- Enable scrutiny to access information in a timely manner, particularly data about the management of the local authority, performance and risk
- Ensure that work planning is undertaken that is co-ordinated across committees, draws upon a broad range of data, information and analysis and which clearly states what the benefit is from scrutinising a topic.

Local authorities are left to determine what scrutiny arrangements best suit their local needs. Councils will have to 'have regard to' the guidance in the way that they work and the decisions they make. Following on from the publication of the government guidance, a review of overview and scrutiny practice at the council has been undertaken through its Scrutiny Board (see below).

### **Review of overview and scrutiny practice at the council**

The review drew on the government guidance, issues raised through the Member Working Group on the Constitution in relation to overview and scrutiny and a self-assessment tool developed by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. This work identified possible areas with scope for further improvement and development and an improvement plan has been formulated around these. This includes:

- Refresher training for all overview and scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs on overview and scrutiny practice and chairmanship skills, along with similar training for all overview and scrutiny Members on overview and scrutiny practice;
- Awareness-raising sessions at a Senior Management Forum meeting on overview and scrutiny practice, as part of a larger piece of work around good governance and decision-making;
- Scrutiny Board to hold joint work programme co-ordination meetings with the meeting of the Area Constituency Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs

### **Joint Scrutiny**

The Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny arrangement that were put in place were intended to enable effective scrutiny of proposed changes to health systems over a regional and sub-regional footprint that were being led by the 3 Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) that covered the county. Over the course of 2019/20, there have been changes to the configuration of the ICSs and, as a result, Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny arrangements are being reviewed.

### **Climate Change Scrutiny Joint Sub-Committee**

In December 2009 the County Council issued a Statement of Intent to play its part in contributing to the national target of an 80% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050, with at least a 34% reduction by 2018-22. In 2019, the Leader of the Council tasked Executive Members and Scrutiny Members with examining what more the County Council could do to further its objectives and to ensure that organisationally the County Council is doing all it can to contribute to cutting emissions. As such, a sub-committee was formed comprising Members of the council's 5 overview and scrutiny committees. The remit of the sub-committee was to:

- review existing work by the Council to reduce carbon dioxide emissions that result from its own activities and service provision;
- identify possible actions that could be taken to further reduce carbon dioxide emissions that result from the Council's own activities and service provision; and
- refer the findings and resulting recommendation(s) from this scrutiny review to the Executive.

Further to two meetings of the Sub-Committee and some additional officer research commissioner by them, the council is in the process of developing its carbon reduction plan and embedding use of a climate change assessment tool which will ensure that climate impacts are fully considered within council decision making. The Sub-Committee have looked at 'quick win' and longer term projects for the council. Some proposals, such as a campus boiler replacement programme, will be taken forward; others will need to be fully costed and assessed. Further work to realise the council's objective for 2030 will be taken forward through each of the scrutiny committees.

### **Notice of Motion**

In 2019/20 three Notices of Motion were reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny. These were:

- Allocation of 20% of the net profit of Brierley Homes to a fund specifically to support the provision of social housing;
- Utility companies to make a mandatory contribution towards flood and coastal protection schemes.
- The production of a carbon reduction plan for the county.

### **How to find out more about Overview and Scrutiny**

Further information on Overview and Scrutiny is available on the North Yorkshire County Council website - <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/23665/Scrutiny>

Or contact the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager, Daniel Harry  
E: [daniel.harry@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.harry@northyorks.gov.uk) or T: 01609 533531.

Members of the public are welcome to attend any meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Committee papers are available from the North Yorkshire County Council website as follows - <http://democracy.northyorks.gov.uk/>