

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report

2022-23



Chair's Foreword



I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function for 2022/23. This report provides an overview of the work undertaken by our committee members throughout the municipal year. This includes work undertaken as part of our committee meetings as well as our task and finish groups in considering services vital to the residents of Barnsley.

Overview and Scrutiny plays an important role in holding the local authority as well as partner agency decision makers to account. It helps to provide 'critical friend' challenge to ensure the effective delivery of public services and drive improvement. Although the committee is not a decision-making body, it is where parties come together to represent the voice of our diverse communities by influencing services and making recommendations.

I am proud to report that throughout the last 12 months we have continued to provide successful critical-friend challenge on a variety of issues to support the improvement of services for the benefit of the communities we serve. The committee has undertaken 35 meetings (committee meetings and task and finish group meetings); made 67 recommendations; and considered 20 different topics covering the work of both the Council and its partners.

Our Task and Finish Groups met with a variety of representatives, including officers delivering services as well as service-users and young people, and I am incredibly pleased to say that the work of the Sexual & Reproductive Health Task and Finish Group, specifically the work on teenage conceptions, will be used as a case study to demonstrate exemplary strategic leadership and partnership working between Elected Members and Council officers.

The work of the committee contributes to the Council's priorities for 2022/23:

Barnsley - the place of possibilities			
Healthy Barnsley	Learning Barnsley	Growing Barnsley	Sustainable Barnsley
People are safe and feel safe.	People have the opportunities for lifelong learning and developing new skills including access to apprenticeships.	Business start ups and existing local businesses are supported to grow and attract new investment, providing opportunities for all.	People live in great places, are recycling more and wasting less, feel connected and valued in their community.
People live independently with good physical and mental health for as long as possible.	Children and young people achieve the best outcomes through improved educational achievement and attainment.	People have a welcoming, safe and enjoyable town centre and principal towns as destinations for work, shopping, leisure and culture.	Our heritage and green spaces are promoted for all people to enjoy.
We have reduced inequalities in health and income across the borough.	People have access to early help and support.	People are supported to have safe, warm, sustainable homes.	Fossil fuels are being replaced by affordable and sustainable energy and people are able to enjoy more cycling and walking.
Enabling Barnsley We are a modern, inclusive, efficient, productive and high-performing council			

We continue to undertake business by upholding the Council's values of being **Proud**, **Honest**, **Excellent** and **Working as a Team** and will continue this into our work during 2023/24.



I would like to thank committee members as well as all those who provided information, attended meetings, and assisted with the Overview and Scrutiny function's work during the last 12 months, it is much appreciated. I look forward to the next 12 months and contributing positively to both the Council and our partners' work.

Councillor Jeff Ennis OBE

Introduction

What is Overview & Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny is the process of achieving open and democratic accountability of the provision of public services to ensure they meet the needs of residents.

Like many other local authorities, Barnsley Council operates the Cabinet system of governance for decision making, which is made up of the Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader and eight other Elected Members.

Overview and Scrutiny is carried out by non-Cabinet Members and is there to act as the check and balance to the decisions being made by both the Council and its partners.

The key principles of Overview and Scrutiny are to:

- Provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge
- Amplify the voices and concerns of the public
- Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- Drive improvement in public services

Although Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the political process, it is not party political. Elected Members involved in the process are from across all political groups and are there to work together to look objectively at borough-wide issues. It is not a mechanism for individual complaints from the public or Elected Members - the Council has separate procedures for these - nor can Overview and Scrutiny look at individual planning or licensing decisions.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) Structure in Barnsley

There are 12 Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings per year. The full committee of 34 Elected Members, plus any Statutory Co-optees on the Committee, meet in plenary mode three times a year to look at safeguarding topics, including private briefings on Children's Social Care performance, and to consider other significant issues such as substantial NHS changes.

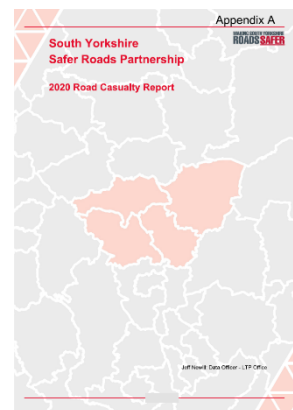
For the remaining nine meetings, committee members allocate time to three workstreams (Sustainable Barnsley, Growing Barnsley & Healthy Barnsley) which each meet three times per year. Workstreams consist of 12 Elected Members (with the same Chair for each) plus any Statutory Co-optees; however, all committee members have an open invitation to attend all workstreams if they so wish. These workstreams were introduced in 2020/21 and are now well embedded, enabling the committee to continue to align to the priorities of the Council as it works towards 2030.

The OSC also carries out its work programme through three Task and Finish Groups (TFGs), each made up of around eight committee members. Each of the groups examine a topic in detail and then report their findings and recommendations to Cabinet.

Work Carried Out in 2022/23

Sustainable Barnsley Workstream

Progress on Road Safety: In May 2022, Members were keen to see what work had been done to improve road safety in Barnsley since the previous report 12 months ago. They were presented with data dashboards for South Yorkshire; however, they were eager to be presented with information broken down to a local authority and ward level, and were given reassurance that although this information hadn't been provided, witnesses were confident the number of local fatalities is low. They were interested in the work being done to look at behaviours and attitudes associated with hit and runs; challenged the provision of rest facilities for HGV drivers, including women, to ensure that there are welcoming and safe spaces for drivers; parking enforcement in schools; and speeding offences. They queried how much driver fatigue was a factor in accidents; stressed the importance of using 'near miss data', which has not been used in the past; and questioned whether insurance company data could be used. Members were reassured that the quality of data on the CRASH reporting system is now more robust and is quality-checked. Further questions were asked around the considerations given to active travel and road safety in new housing developments and the wider road network, and the use of best practice from other local authorities. Members were incredibly pleased to see that the partnership was moving to a more proactive rather than reactive approach to road safety, as this is something the committee have encouraged over recent years. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:



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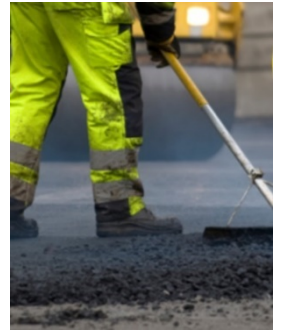
Cost of Living Crisis: At the second meeting of the Sustainable Barnsley workstream, Members were keen to look at the work done by the Council and partners to respond to the Cost-of-Living Crisis in Barnsley, including the 'More Money in Your Pocket' Website and the Affordable Warmth Charter. Members asked questions around the long-term plans to support residents out of poverty, including the strategic approach to help economically inactive people gain employment by enhancing skills, and were pleased to hear that witnesses were using a range of national and international best practice to develop an action plan to support people back into work. Discussions were held around the provision of food past the 'best before' date; support for cooking on a low budget; and the community pantry. Concerns were raised about the housing crisis due to increasing mortgage rates and were reminded that early engagement with services can help prevent homelessness. Further investigations revealed that a grant had been obtained to provide support for the armed forces community via 'More Money in Your Military Pocket'. Additional concerns were raised about the potential energy 'blackouts' and Members were pleased to hear that mitigations are in place for a crisis response, but it was hoped that there would also be a national response in such instances. Discussions also covered support for employees affected by the crisis; the rationale for deciding which buildings would be open as 'warm spaces'; access to information by those digitally excluded given the target audience; warm homes grants; support for care homes; the impact of Barnsley Homes rent charges; and an increase in mental health issues and the impact on related services. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:



**MORE MONEY IN
YOUR POCKET**

<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=224&MId=8563&Ver=4>

Highways Peer Challenge – Outcomes & Actions: At the final meeting of the workstream, members were presented with the outcomes from a recent peer review which had been invited in by the Council to look at specific elements of the Highway Service and provide critical friend challenge over a period of three days. Members pursued lines of enquiry relating to how progress would be measured; what success looks like; what was considered to be the greatest positives from the review; funding and grants; recruitment issues and the employment of ex-service personnel; service standards; what changes the public can expect to see; and key priorities for improvements including communications with Elected Members and the public. Members were encouraged to hear that a working party was to be established to look at the member enquiry process and that a large piece of work was being undertaken with IT to ensure that the enquiry system is as efficient and effective as it can be. Further challenge was provided around repair and reporting of potholes; support for the physical and mental wellbeing of employees; and comparisons to other local authorities. To support the work of the service and build relationships, members suggested that they visit the Smithies depot to engage with employees based there. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:



<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=224&MId=8568&Ver=4>

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Sustainable Barnsley Workstream Added Value

Members were able to challenge, debate and make suggestions to improve road safety. They are well placed within the community to provide robust intelligence on 'near misses' in their area and this will be adopted moving forward to support prevention work.

Elected Members also have knowledge of the facilities and individuals operating within the community that are supporting residents with the cost-of-living crisis but may not already be known to the Council. They will also be aware of those who are in greatest need and at significant risk of being adversely affected by the crisis. Where appropriate, this information will be shared with the services to ensure those who are disproportionately affected receive appropriate support and that services are delivered in a joined-up way to maximise impact.

By scrutinising these topics, the committee has contributed to the following outcomes:

- People are safe and feel safe
- Fossil fuels are being replaced by affordable and sustainable energy and people are able to enjoy more cycling and walking
- We have reduced inequalities in health and income across the borough
- People have access to early help and support
- We are a modern, inclusive, efficient, productive and high performing council

Growing Barnsley Workstream

Housing & Support Model to Prevent Homelessness: In June 2022, committee members heard about the Council's response to the Government's 'Everyone In' campaign and the findings of a recent visit by the Regional Homelessness Advisor. They welcomed the service's offer to visit self-contained units used to house those who are homeless, as well as the invitation to shadow the outreach worker that supports rough sleepers. Members were keen to scrutinise the offer for young people and families, and the work done to minimise disruption to their lives. Specific questions were asked around out of area placements; the suitability of existing accommodation for families; the number of children and young people presenting to the service who were already known to social care; and options for 16-17-year-olds presenting to the service.



Discussions were held around preparations for the potential impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the impact that the use of B&Bs can have on an individual's social and emotional health. Members were pleased to hear about the work being done and the aspirations of the service, and informed officers that they would welcome a return to joint working with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) to uncover the 'hidden homeless', which had to be put on hold due to Covid. They were also keen for the service to return to adopting a more prevention-based approach rather than 'crisis management' which again was a result of Covid. Members moved on to focus on the support offered to those fleeing domestic abuse and given the detailed questioning at this session, this topic will be scrutinised in the next municipal year. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:

<https://barnsley.mbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=224&MIId=8560&Ver=4>

Affordable & Social Housing Provision in Barnsley: At the following meeting, members of the committee were presented with a report on local housing need along with a summary of the Council's work on affordable housing and how needs are addressed in the borough. Following questioning, committee members uncovered how national and regional strategy shapes local decisions; how Barnsley compares to other South Yorkshire authorities; the impact of the Right to Buy scheme; and what funding arrangements look like, including Right to Buy receipts, the Housing Revenue Account and funding from South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority.



Members challenged the work done to tackle the housing waiting list; support for veterans; partnership working, including with housing associations and housing developers; garage sites; and the availability of suitable accessible housing. As in previous years, Members challenged the condition of social housing when handed over to tenants and were reassured that the performance against the housing decency target of 100% was currently 99.7%. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:

<https://barnsley.mbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=224&MIId=8564&Ver=4>

Corporate Communications Strategy 2023-25: At the last meeting of the workstream in March 2023, the committee were given the opportunity to look at the draft Corporate Communications Strategy and shape the content before it was presented to Cabinet. Given the increasing shift to digital methods of communication, Members reminded officers that they need to consider how they reach the most vulnerable residents so that they are not excluded. They also raised concerns over the use of certain digital platforms being unsafe and queried what safeguarding measures are in place. Members questioned how success is measured; how demographics and the target audience influence which channels



are used for promotion; the criteria used for editing and filtering comments on social media posts; how they deal with the spread of misinformation online; advertising and funding; impartiality when promoting local businesses; verification of accuracy and misreporting; promotion of the night-time economy and visitor sites such as the Trans-Pennine Trail; and what safeguards are in place to protect employees from abusive language, hate crimes and slander online. Members shared their frustrations about the role of Ward Alliances and the difficulties faced when sharing messages and questioned how the service could assist. Following a suggestion from Members, it was agreed that officers would explore the possibility of the Council's website being moved under the control of the Communications & Marketing Service. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:

<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=224&MIId=8569&Ver=4>

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Growing Barnsley Workstream Added Value

Members were able to challenge, debate and make suggestions regarding different solutions to keeping people safe and ensuring that the Council is inclusive and high performing.

As a result of scrutiny by the committee, it is hoped that links between the Homelessness Team and Children's Social Care are strengthened; that additional support is provided for young people and those fleeing from domestic abuse in a crisis; and that existing prevention and early help provision is enhanced.

Members are well placed within the community and by strengthening links with the Homelessness Team, will be able to provide information to help the service identify and support individuals in the community who are providing support to those fleeing domestic abuse.

With the ever-increasing adoption of digital communication methods, Members continue to ensure that sections of the community are not excluded, particularly the most vulnerable.

By scrutinising these topics, the committee has contributed to the following outcomes:

- People are supported to have safe, warm, sustainable homes
- People have access to early help and support
- People are safe and feel safe
- We have reduced inequalities in health and income across the borough
- Children & young people achieve the best outcomes through improved educational achievement and attainment
- We are a modern, inclusive, efficient, productive & high performing council

Healthy Barnsley Workstream

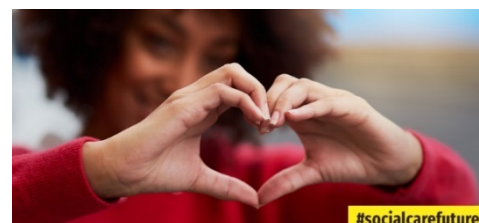
Better Lives Programme: In July 2022, the Healthy Barnsley Workstream of the Committee looked at the work done by adult social care to support people to live independently in their own home for as long as possible and ensuring those in need of support have more say over the care they receive. Members were curious to find out how the service defines 'fair' in relation to fair pay and fair costs of care and were pleased to hear that this means consistency across the whole of Yorkshire & the Humber.



Additional challenge was provided on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis; early help; the role of community pharmacists; and transition from children's services to adults. Given that the session was held when the country was in the middle of an extreme heatwave, Members also took the opportunity to ensure that healthcare providers such as the hospital and care homes have heatwave plans that had been tested and proved to be effective. By the end of the session, committee members were reassured and were keen to understand what more Members could do to support the work of the Better Lives Programme. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:

<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=224&MId=8561&Ver=4>

Adult Social Care Performance Report: At the same meeting, Members held a private session to look at the year-end performance report for Adult Social Care. This was the first time the report had been presented to Members and they were pleased to be given the opportunity to interrogate the data within the report. Discussions covered a wide range of topics including the Mental Capacity Act; carers' assessments; and Section 42 enquiry decisions. Members requested additional information so that comparisons could be drawn between Barnsley and other local authorities and enquired what good practice was being used locally. The committee heard that investigating good practice from other authorities is part of all project plans and staff previously employed in other local authorities bring ideas and good practice with them. Members were pleased to hear that Barnsley Adult Social Care is often approached by other local authorities as a source of good practice. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:



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<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=224&MId=8561&Ver=4>

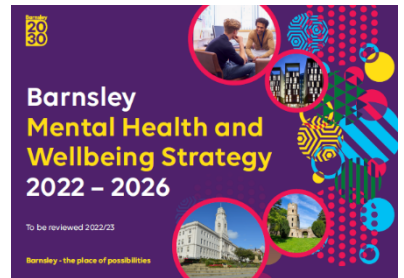
Progress on the Development of Integrated Care & Access to Primary Care:

At the next meeting, Members looked at the work done to progress Integrated Care in Barnsley and were given an update on access to primary care, including a position statement provided by Healthwatch Barnsley. In response to serious concerns about access to GP appointments, Members were told that GP surgeries are beginning to move away from the traditional model with surgeries introducing other healthcare professionals, such as Nursing Associates and Physician Associates, to support the work of GPs. Further discussion took place around GP recruitment; the use of technology in primary care; the i-Heart programme; Did Not Attend statistics including by electoral ward and patient patterns; and communication methods used to contact the public. Members expressed an interest in the work being done by the partnership to tackle health inequalities across the borough and although they were assured that this would be a key area of work, Members were keen to look at it in more detail at a future session. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:



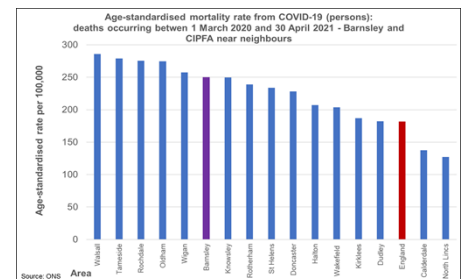
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Adult Mental Health in Barnsley: At the final session of this workstream, Members looked at the work done to tackle poor mental health, including the development of the local mental health strategy, crisis care and an update on suicide prevention. Members were keen for partners to understand the challenges faced by residents when accessing appointments and sought assurance that sufficient resources are available to effectively deliver the zero-suicide ambition. Following on from a previous task and finish group, Members queried if officers had identified a correlation between gambling and suicide and wanted to find out whether any young people have taken their own lives. Whilst Members were pleased to see that the number of crisis response vehicles were due to be increased, they questioned whether more could be done to support those experiencing a crisis. As a result of the session, Members were invited to attend the new Mental Health Hub on Eldon Street to see the recently opened service for residents. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:



<https://barnsley.mbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=224&MId=8570&Ver=4>

Excess Mortality: Members were also presented with an item on Excess Mortality at the final session, looking at the driving factors behind high excess deaths in Barnsley, including the impact of Covid 19. Members raised concerns about the number of people living in more deprived communities and welcomed the fact that more work was being done to break data down to ward level to provide granular information of how communities are affected. Members sought assurance about the impact health improvement is having on communities; how support is targeted; and the lessons learned from the pandemic. Following on from a previous task and finish group, Members were eager to understand what is being done to support 'dying well' and were pleased to hear that the RESPECT programme had been introduced which helps to identify individuals wishes around end-of-life care. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:



<https://barnsley.mbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=224&MId=8570&Ver=4>

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Healthy Barnsley Workstream Added Value

Members were able to challenge, debate and make suggestions to improve services that support the physical and mental wellbeing of residents and reduce health inequalities.

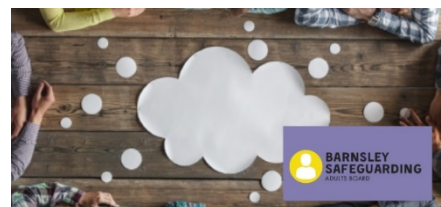
As a result of the sessions, Members were able to hold services to account for their performance; amplify the voice of the public in relation to challenges faced when accessing primary care services; and further enhance their knowledge so that they can provide more accurate advice to residents requiring support. Given their role within local communities, Elected Members would use their influence to support health protection measures by raising awareness of the Covid vaccination booster programme with those most vulnerable to infection.

By scrutinising these topics, the committee has contributed to the following outcomes:

- People are safe and feel safe
- People live independently with good physical and mental health for as long as possible
- We have reduced inequalities in health and income across the borough
- People have access to early help and support
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Full Committee

Barnsley Safeguarding Adults Board (BSAB) Annual Report: At the first Full Committee meeting in September, Members were presented with the annual report of the Safeguarding Adults Board. They queried the process for referrals from Berneslai Homes and were assured that there were robust policies in place with the ambition to add Berneslai Homes to the Front Door Service to strengthen links.



Questions were asked about how involved individuals are in the safeguarding processes that surround them; how the board works with the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership; the value added by peer reviews; understanding the increase in referrals; how Members can increase their understanding to help them discharge their duties in the safeguarding of residents; partnership working; and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the potential impact on vulnerable people. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:

<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=224&MId=8562&Ver=4>

Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) Annual Report: As in previous sessions to look at the BSCP Annual Report, online harms and bullying continued to be a key concern for both the Board and members of the committee. Members were pleased to hear that workshops had been delivered and that the board had recruited young people to act as 'peer inspectors' and report back on how well the bullying commitment was being implemented in schools.



Members were also concerned that the views of children and young people were not sought, but the Board provided reassurance that the 'voice of the child' is heard in a variety of ways, including the Youth Council and the Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Youth Group. Members discussed links with Area Councils; the impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis on young people and their families; and the availability of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for young people. The Board reported that they had been involved in a vast amount of work in relation to safe sleeping and Members were pleased to hear that no deaths had occurred since the last update. Members gained valuable feedback from the independent scrutineer in attendance at the session, who explained that the committee would benefit from a stronger focus on the work of the partnership as opposed to individual services at future sessions. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:

<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=224&MId=8562&Ver=4>

Provisional Education Outcomes Across the Borough: At the meeting in January, the committee was provided with a report detailing the provisional education outcomes for children and young people in the borough across all Key Stages and cohorts, including those with SEND. Considering the continuing impact of Covid 19, Members sought assurance that sufficient support was in place so that young people could manage the anxieties and pressures of examinations, including pastoral support, within schools and college. Following on from a session with the Youth Council, Members also pursued lines of enquiry around the approach to work experience, and the inclusive offer, including the youth employment programme and NHS supported internships. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:



<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=224&MId=8567&Ver=4>

Hospice Care Quality Commission (CQC) Report & Action Plan: At the final meeting of the Full Committee, Members were pleased to welcome officers from Barnsley Hospice to talk about the improvement journey since their last inspection, culminating in an Outstanding rating from the CQC. Members also heard about the work done to deliver palliative and end of life care both at the Hospice and by partners of the Integrated Care Board. Members challenged witnesses about staff turnover and 'buy-in' of the improvement plan; support for employees' wellbeing; feedback from service users and their friends/families; the use of volunteers; the financial health of the Hospice and funding arrangements; bed occupancy; competitive rates of pay for staff; the operation of the retail hub and income generation; and support for those who choose to die at home. Members were impressed with the dedication and hard work of all those involved in delivering the improvement plan. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:



<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=224&MIId=8571&Ver=4>

TFG Report Progress Reports (For Information Only): Members were provided with a 12-month update on the recommendations made by the three Task & Finish Groups from the previous year (Dementia; Gambling & Gambling Related Harms; and Air Quality & Carbon Reduction) and were pleased to see that the majority of the recommendations accepted were progressing as planned. Reports from the session can be found here:

<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=224&MIId=8571&Ver=4>

Children's Social Care Monthly Performance Report: Throughout the Municipal Year, private member briefings are held for committee members to provide overview and scrutiny of performance in relation to children's social care services. The reports include a summary section with an overview of performance, using RAG (Red, Amber, Green) ratings and a direction of travel for most indicators. Areas of performance considered good and areas where improvement is required are highlighted.



This year has seen a fairly significant increase in the number of children being looked after and Members were keen to understand the associated challenges that this presents to children, young people and the services involved, and whether the needs of the child are being met.

Additional key lines of enquiry during the year are the challenges associated with recruiting and retaining staff, including alternative ways of working and incentives; the needs of care leavers; school exclusions; and caseloads.

Members were particularly keen to seek assurances following high-profile reports in the media about the treatment of children and young people in some regional private care homes. They were pleased to hear that no children from Barnsley were affected, and any children based outside the locality are closely monitored with results at that time showing that they were well cared for. Reports and minutes from the session can be found here:

<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=224>

Overview & Scrutiny Full Committee Added Value

Members were able to challenge, debate and make suggestions to improve services that safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults.

As a result of these scrutiny sessions, all Elected Members have been given the opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge to support the most vulnerable in our communities. In addition, links between the Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the Area Councils should be strengthened.

Members gained valuable feedback from the independent scrutineer in attendance for the item on the Children's Safeguarding Partnership and this will be used to deliver more rigorous and robust scrutiny at future sessions.

Following the session with the Hospice, Members are now better equipped to signpost those who may require palliative care and will be able to effectively promote the message that the Hospice is not just about end-of-life care, it also offers support for those with life-limiting conditions. To further support the work of the Hospice, Members also agreed to undertake a volunteering session at the Hospice's Retail Hub. Given that the Chair is aware of a recent national debate around hospice sector funding reform, he has written to Barnsley MPs on behalf of the Committee to raise awareness and to request that they add their voice to the growing support for such a reform. It has been agreed that the issues will be raised with the Chancellor and that they will lobby the Government to ensure that hospices are provided with the financial means they so desperately need to deliver their vital services.

By scrutinising these topics, the committee has contributed to the following outcomes:

- People are safe and feel safe
- People live independently with good physical and mental health for as long as possible
- We have reduced inequalities in health and income across the borough
- Children & young people achieve the best outcomes through improved educational achievement and attainment
- People have access to early support
- People are supported to have safe, warm, sustainable homes
- People live in great places, are recycling more and wasting less, feel connected and valued in their community
- Fossil fuels are being replaced by affordable and sustainable energy and people are able to enjoy more cycling and walking
- We are a modern, inclusive, efficient, productive and high performing council

Task & Finish Groups (TFGs)

In addition to meetings undertaken throughout the year, committee members can opt to participate in TFGs, which undertake detailed investigations into particular topics. These provide Members with opportunities to work in small groups and visit services both within and outside the borough to learn from good practice, meet with a variety of service-users and officers, as well as gain a better understanding of the complexities involved in the issues concerned.

At the conclusion of each investigation a report is compiled and presented to the Council's Cabinet with a number of recommendations, to which a formal response is provided from relevant services, outlining whether they accept the recommendation, and if so, how they propose to implement it. During 2022-23, committee members undertook the following detailed TFG investigations:

Sexual & Reproductive Health: Following a referral from Barnsley Local Medical Committee on Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC), Members agreed that it should form part of a larger task and finish group to look at sexual and reproductive health, with a specific focus on LARC and teenage conception rates. The group were joined by a co-opted member from Healthwatch Barnsley and looked at performance data, including comparator information and trends; current and future plans; attended the Barnsley Sexual Health Conference and the Integrated Sexual Health open evening; and met with a number of professionals from Public Health, Primary Care, and the Integrated Sexual Health Service throughout the course of their investigation. They identified what sexual health services are currently available locally and where the gaps are; the implications of poor sexual health and those



who are most likely to be affected; and the benefits of LARC including whether existing commissioning arrangements are fair, equitable and easily accessible by all sections of the community. They also looked at the impact of being a teenage parent; the support available; and the work being done to reduce teenage conception rates, including work done in schools via the national curriculum.

As a result of the investigation the group made a number of recommendations in support of further improvement. This included increasing access to information and support for young people; increased partnership working, particularly with primary care to look at the improvements that can be made to the LARC offer, so that it is equitable across the whole of the borough; a move towards collaborative commissioning for services; and the development of a model to deliver a targeted approach so that young people can give their child the best start in life and develop positive relationships.

Following on from the investigation of this group, the Committee has been approached to use their work as a case study to demonstrate exemplary strategic leadership and partnership working between Public Health colleagues and Elected Members. Also, in response to the recommendations made by the group, Spectrum Health Service (the provider for the Integrated Sexual Health Service) has developed a new website to provide support and information to residents which can be found here: <https://spectrum-sexualhealth.org.uk/> The TFG's full report is available on the following link: <https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s104972/Report.pdf>

Customer Experience: This TFG considered 'what it's like to be a customer of BMBC'. This included focusing on BMBC's Customer Experience Strategy 2021-2024, its subsequent action plans and key performance indicators (KPIs) to determine whether the Council offers a high quality, customer driven service to all sections of the community, including those who are 'hard to reach'. The TFG met with several officers across Council departments including those who ensure provision of front-line customer service such as the Contact Centre, Barnsley Libraries and Area Teams, as well as those who deal with customer compliments and complaints. The group also attended a meeting of the My Barnsley Too (Disability Forum) to hear from customers with additional needs, and their experiences of accessing Council services.



As a result of the investigation the group made a number of recommendations in support of further improvement. This included improving timeliness and quality of information provided to customers who request Council services, including utilising automated messages. The group were keen for the Council to learn from, and address, any trends in customer feedback, and be particularly mindful of those with additional needs, giving consideration to how they would access information and services. The TFG's full report is available on the following link:

<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s104973/Report.pdf>

Inclusive Economy: This TFG undertook an investigation into what is being done to ensure an inclusive economy and good economic growth in Barnsley. This follows on from the OSC's previous work on poverty, acknowledging that Barnsley needs to have a sustainable inclusive economy which benefits all communities in order to reduce poverty in the borough. The group took a detailed look at the work of the Inclusive Economy Board (IEB) and its sub-groups which are made up of local representatives from the Council and others from the public and private sector. The TFG considered work to develop thriving urban centres, getting people into work, creating more and better jobs in the borough, as well as support to businesses. The group also went on a site visit to Ardagh Glass in Barnsley to understand more about their business, the challenges they face, employee initiatives, as well as their work regarding Corporate Social Responsibility.



The group were reassured by the amount of work being undertaken to develop an inclusive economy in Barnsley and made a number of recommendations in further support of this work. This included further development of the IEB, including reviewing its membership, and better communications around its work. The TFG were keen to improve public perceptions of jobs in logistics and manufacturing and noted the importance of the skills obtained in any employment whether that be at entry level or in management. The group also requested further involvement of the OSC in the upcoming development of the Inclusive Economy Strategy for the borough. The TFG's full report is available on the following link: <https://barnsley.mbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s104974/Report.pdf>

Task & Finish Groups Added Value

Task & Finish Groups allow members to scrutinise subjects in greater depth and Members were able to challenge, debate and make suggestions to improve services that reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for the residents of Barnsley. The work also demonstrates exemplary strategic leadership and partnership working between elected members and council officers.

By scrutinising these topics, the committee has contributed to the following outcomes:

- People are safe and feel safe
- People live independently with good physical and mental health for as long as possible
- We have reduced inequalities in health and income across the borough
- People have the opportunities for lifelong learning and developing new skills including access to apprenticeships
- People have access to early help and support
- Business start-ups and existing local businesses are supported to grow and attract new investment, providing opportunities for all
- Children and young people achieve the best outcomes through improved educational achievement and attainment
- People have a welcoming, safe and enjoyable town centre and principal towns as destinations for work, shopping, leisure and culture
- People are supported to have safe, warm, sustainable homes
- People live in great places, are recycling more and wasting less, feel connected and valued in their community
- We are a modern, inclusive, efficient, productive and high performing council

Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)

Within legislation, there is provision for Local Authorities to form Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees with other councils to respond to substantial reconfiguration proposals covering more than one council area. These can be convened over varying geographical areas as well as over varying timescales as is deemed appropriate for the matters being considered. During recent years, the NHS has been through transformational change into Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) which came into fruition in July 2022. As a result, guidance was sought from the national Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) on how best to operate these arrangements in the region to ensure continued effective scrutiny of services.

During 2022/23, Barnsley's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has continued to be actively engaged with the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board on any matters of mutual concern and has been represented at all formal and informal meetings with the Chair contributing positively in the region to the South Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The committee has met to consider the work undertaken to develop the Integrated Care Strategy for South Yorkshire. This includes engagement activity undertaken in local areas, regarding which, the committee raised serious concerns over the low numbers of people accessed, both across the population as well as within the workforce. Members questioned witnesses with regards to workforce

challenges and the plans in place to address these, and highlighted health inequalities across the region. As a result, Members agreed to consider health inequalities at their local committees and the work being undertaken to address the challenges in specific areas, over the coming municipal year.

Links to all meetings of the South Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee are available here:

<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=468>

Partnership Working

In addition to the formal meetings undertaken by committee members, work is undertaken to ensure constant liaison with partner agencies to share learning and good practice, as well as avoid duplication. Regular contact is maintained with those involved with the Council's governance arrangements including Area Council Chairs, the Audit Committee, Corporate Parenting Panel, partnership boards including Barnsley Safeguarding Adults Board (BSAB), Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP), and the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The committee also maintains links with other scrutiny committees in the region, including the South Yorkshire Mayor Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SYMCAOSC). Liaison is undertaken with NHS colleagues at Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (BHNFT), and South-West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SWYPFT). Additionally, the committee works closely with Healthwatch Barnsley on matters of mutual concern.

During 2022/23, the committee has worked in partnership with local NHS providers to provide scrutiny of, and assist in communication, with regards to local service changes. At the end of each financial year, the committee also provides a comprehensive written response to be incorporated into the Quality Accounts for South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SWYPFT); Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (BHNFT); and Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS).

In March 2023, the Chair was invited by the Local Government Association (LGA) to work in partnership with them to provide peer support to another council's scrutiny function. This included presenting to officers and Elected Members on the model and approach used in Barnsley, sharing good practice on how to undertake scrutiny investigations and provide critical friend challenge to services.

Additional Meetings & Activity

Throughout the year, Members keep a watching brief on matters that may impact upon the residents of Barnsley. In response to high profile national and regional cases, Members have sought assurances relating to South Yorkshire Police's vetting procedures; Polio vaccination rates; and Berneslai Homes procedures for inspecting properties and dealing with mould; and have also been given the opportunity to contribute to the annual Community Safety consultation exercise.

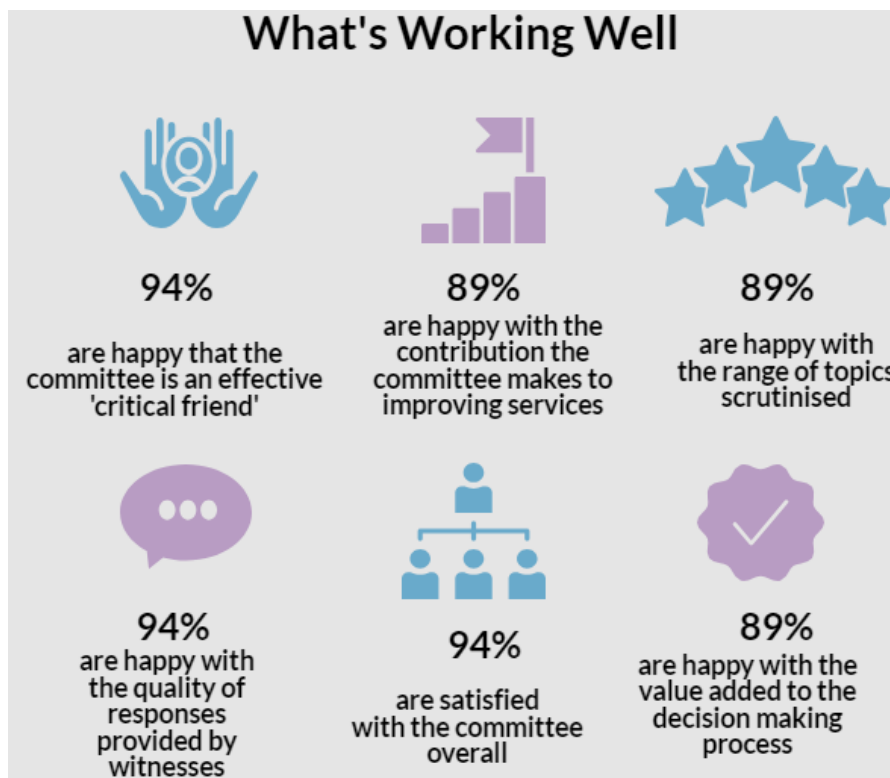
On behalf of the Committee, the Chair has corresponded on the work of the Gambling & Gambling Related Harms TFG from the previous year with a number of people, including local MPs, and changes in legislation relating to community safety.

To enhance Members' knowledge and the quality of scrutiny, several All-Member Information Briefings (AMIBs) have been held throughout the year to complement the committee's work, including the work of the Hospice and their improvement journey and the work done to improve the Principal Towns. These sessions add value as they provide the background detail to allow members to deliver more robust scrutiny. Members can also add value by making informal recommendations and provided several ideas for income generation and support at the session with the Hospice.

Member development sessions have also been held including the 'Welcome to Scrutiny' induction session for Members and 'Understanding Children's Social Care'.

Feedback

At the end of the municipal year, committee members are surveyed regarding their satisfaction with the operation of the Overview and Scrutiny function. The questionnaire provides opportunity for committee members to comment on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the arrangements and make suggestions about improvements. Highlights of the Committee Member Survey 2022-23 are shown below:



Information based on a total of 18 respondents out of a possible total of 34 with 1 respondent equating to 5.56%



Throughout the year, surveys are also undertaken of expert witnesses who attend the meetings to answer questions from committee members. This enables the committee to understand how the scrutiny function is perceived and identify any improvements to the function for the following year. Highlights from the Expert Witness Surveys 2022-23 are:

Overview & Scrutiny Expert Participants' Survey Results 2022-23			
95%	95%	100%	86%
Communication and information received prior to the committee was timely and helpful	Felt welcome at the committee meeting	Understand the scrutiny process and the role of committee members	The committee were effective in acting as a critical friend and providing appropriate challenge
95%	19%	95%	71%
Able to be honest with the responses given	Had to be cautious with the responses given	Were treated with respect and allowed time to represent their service/organisation to the best of their ability	The committee were effective in holding decision makers to account
71%	48%	71%	19%
The committee helps to build relationships amongst partners and stakeholders	Attending the committee helped them to think differently and consider different approaches to areas of work	Attending the committee was a positive experience	Changes have been made to service delivery as a direct result of attending the committee meeting

Information based on a total of 21 respondents (1 respondent equating to 4.76%) either agreeing or strongly agreeing to questions asked

We were asked some good questions and it has made me reflect on some of our processes moving forward.

Members need to consider what topic is being discussed and what is trying to be achieved to make a difference.

I think most witnesses felt nervous/apprehensive in advance of the meeting, although these concerns were eased as the meeting progressed. OSC feels like an essential element of local democracy, and I was pleased to be involved.

Very positive experience, good discussion and debate. Excellent questions from Councillors, very much appreciated their views, challenge & support.

Number of attendees was low given the subject matter and the fact that you have very senior execs from partner organisations in the room.

Some questions did not relate to the report being presented/my service area/expertise which made it more challenging to respond effectively.

Not had chance as yet to make changes but will be taking ideas forward.

In some ways I would like scrutiny to be more challenging.

The Year Ahead

As we enter the 2023-24 municipal year, not only is the world continuing to recover and manage the long-term impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, but we are also still in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis. Budgets for delivery of public services are already stretched and are continuing to see a rise in demand. Although the cost-of-living crisis is having a significant impact across the country, it is disproportionately affecting boroughs like Barnsley where poverty was already increasing before the pandemic.

The committee is mindful of the challenges faced by both the public and service providers, and will continue to provide critical friend challenge to all services, including those of partners, to ensure the best use of resources available, and support the journey towards achieving the priorities for Barnsley 2030. The committee will continue to take a keen interest in support provided to our most vulnerable residents, including maintaining oversight of the additional investments made into Children's Services and the development of Integrated Care, to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes across the borough.

Over the last 12 months, the committee has continued to make use of virtual as well as in-person meetings as appropriate. The OSC plans to continue this approach into 2023-24 and undertaking site visits where possible to enhance the work of the committee.

How to find out more

If you would like further information, the agendas, reports and minutes for all of our Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings are available here:

<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=224>

Alternatively, you can contact us at: Scrutiny@barnsley.gov.uk