

## North East Regional Scrutiny Officers' Network

8 July 2019, County Hall, Durham

Present:

Tom Gorman - Chair	Durham County Council
Alison Pearson	Redcar & Cleveland Council
Caroline Breheny	Middlesbrough Council
Gary Woods	Stockton on Tees Council
Janet Howard	Newcastle City Council
Joan Stevens	Hartlepool Borough Council
Karen Christon	Newcastle City Council
Liz Kerr	North of Tyne Combined Authority
Paul Baldarsera	South Tyneside Council
Stephen Gwilym	Durham County Council
Clare Luery	Durham County Council

Apologies: Judy Trainer (Stockton on Tees Council), Bev Parker (Cleveland FRS).

### 1. Notes of NEREO Regional Scrutiny Officers/Health Officer Network meeting 28 February 2017

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 February 2017 were agreed.

### 2. New Scrutiny Guidance

Tom Gorman outlined Durham's approach to reviewing current scrutiny arrangements in light of the new guidance recently issued. All Durham scrutiny chair and vice-chair positions were appointed to by the majority party at council. Overall Durham followed much that was covered in the guidance and there were only a few areas where it was considered any change would be required. A gap analysis report had been considered by the all-party Constitution Working Group and would be submitted to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

The scrutiny team at Durham primarily use Twitter to publicise scrutiny work and in addition advise the Comms team of any sensitive or potentially high profile matters due to be discussed. This had worked well with recent issues such as the climate change emergency and changes to delivery of services at Shotley Bridge hospital. An annual report was submitted to council each year which also raised the profile of the work scrutiny undertakes.

For Newcastle CC, Karen Christon stated they would be carrying out a gap analysis on the guidance over the summer. All scrutiny chairs are opposition members. Newcastle CC recognised that they could probably improve in areas such as engagement and social media.

Liz Kerr advised that she had developed a scrutiny work programme for the North of Tyne Combined Authority. She was programming in regular meetings to ensure executive engagement and had found the timing of the new guidance helpful in raising the knowledge and profile of scrutiny.

Paul Baldarsera commented that a presentation was being made to members in South Tyneside and they would be asked to match current practice with the guidance. He was happy to share the member led analysis. There had been some discussion around the use of 'independent' within the guidance and how some interpreted it as independent politically rather than as an independent mind. Local Democracy reporters attend all scrutiny meetings and it had been commented by some members that their presence limited discussion on some matters. South Tyneside used social media proactively and included the use of the #lovesouthtyneside in tweets. South Tyneside did not provide an annual report to Council as this was not in their constitution. Cabinet members attend scrutiny meetings – it is very clear that they are present to be scrutinised.

Joan Stevens from Hartlepool stated that only statutory scrutiny was undertaken now as the authority had moved from the executive to committee system. Committees were now expected to be 'self-scrutinising'. It had been difficult keeping the momentum of effective scrutiny going although there was good buy-in for health and crime and disorder scrutiny. There was a strong relationship with the PR team. A paper on the new guidance had been prepared for the Chief Executive rather than CMT. The guidance was seen as an opportunity to raise the profile of scrutiny.

The requirement to produce an annual report had been removed from Hartlepool's constitution. Joan confirmed that the chair and vice chairs of scrutiny committees were not members of the majority group. It was felt that the new independent members were hoping to make a significant impression in their first year. A boundary review would be implemented the next year although this wasn't expected to make a material difference to the political balance.

Caroline Breheny updated the meeting on Middlesbrough's changes in political leadership with 20 new independent members and an independent Mayor. All scrutiny chairs and vice chairs were now members of the new Middlesbrough Independent Councillors Association. The Mayor and his Cabinet are also all independent with one Conservative member. Many very experienced chairs had been lost and as the new councillors were also new to serving on a local authority there was much work to be done. The new Mayor is keen on social media and council meetings are screened live. It is expected that scrutiny meetings will also be screened live in the future.

Alison Pearson explained that Redcar and Cleveland had been without a ruling group for a long period. There was a partnership in place between the Independent Group and the Lib Dems. Opposition members chair scrutiny committees. There are no scrutiny officers as scrutiny has been decentralised and aligned with directorates. Cabinet members are invited to all scrutiny committees and there is a healthy degree of challenge. All members recognise the need to engage with other groups. A gap analysis of the new guidance had not been completed yet. One area that was felt needed improvement was around the emphasis on pre-decision scrutiny.

Redcar and Cleveland had received more publicity following the introduction of Local Democracy reporters and this had been a positive move. Health scrutiny tended to struggle a little as major health services were delivered outside of the authority's boundary. Scrutiny reports would only be submitted to council if they were

specifically referred there. It is expected that scrutiny chairs attend Cabinet meetings and the Leader asks for views from the committee chairs.

Gary Woods stated that although Labour had lost their majority on Stockton Council they were still the majority group. The CfPS had recently led a training session for all members and it is felt there is buy in from members for scrutiny. Stockton News, a quarterly publication, is used to publicise scrutiny. There had been some concerns from members that the presence of Local Democracy reporters at meetings might inhibit discussions. The scrutiny work programme was comprehensive and there was an acceptance that matters would be added to it for future scrutiny. A scoring matrix is used as a guide.

Paul Baldasera stated that all scrutiny reports at South Tyneside included a question at the top of the report asking, 'why the report was coming to scrutiny?'. This had assisted officers in considering whether the report added value or was just for information. Paul mentioned that the Local Democracy reporters had on one occasion picked up on a line in a scrutiny report and had used it as a headline. It was felt that this was hard to avoid although if something was said during a meeting which may be misinterpreted it is possible to clarify the point with a reporter at the end of the meeting.

Tom Gorman indicated that training for officers attending scrutiny committees in Durham had been highlighted following discussions on the new guidance and was something which would be followed up.

Liz Kerr asked officers about their relationship with the Tees Valley Combined Authority and how/if its work was reported to their authorities. Middlesbrough report what the CA scrutiny boards are doing to council. Redcar and Cleveland have no structure in place but were aware something would need to be developed. Stockton are not aware of any formal processes. Hartlepool receive scrutiny minutes but nothing further.

### **3. Future Topics**

Future topics for the network were discussed. The following were suggested:

- Housing
  - Refugees, student accommodation
  - Private sector landlords and selective licensing
- Transformation Programmes
- Different models of building affordable homes to rent and sell
- Impact of Universal Credit – foodbanks and holiday hunger
  - Just Change campaign to reimburse change for pupils receiving free school meals. Any change is normally returned to the provider rather than to families. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/give-pupils-their-free-school-meals-change-says-citizens-uk/>
- Commercial activities to raise revenue
- Decline of town centres – South Tyneside are planning work following the publication of a Select Committee report on the Regenerating Seaside Towns

and Communities

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldseaside/320/320.pdf>

- Brexit and the future of EU funding – the Shared Prosperity Fund – impact, what might replace it, how will it operate, will deprivation be used as a factor for funding
- Parks and Allotments Trust/ transfer of assets such as libraries and parks.

#### 4. Work Programmes

Work programmes were shared – both work that had been recently completed or underway and topics for the upcoming year. These included:

Durham County Council

Completed or ongoing	2019 /20
Arson and deliberate fires in the east of the county Cybercrime Allotments – dealing with issues inherited following LGR Residential Children’s Homes Retail Support – decline of the high street Suicide rates and mental health wellbeing Mental Health Triage – working with Durham Police	Shoplifting following the rollout of UC Crime Survey - public confidence Road Safety Climate Change Fly tipping Elective Home Education GP Accessibility Shared Prosperity Fund

Stockton

Completed or ongoing	2019/20
Inclusion in schools Gambling Temporary Accommodation Hate Crime Mental health and Wellbeing – suicide and self-harm Management of memorials – grave personalisation policy Digital automisation Parking on grass kerbs Recycling sites – Value for Money Under representation of BME community in the council workforce Consolidation of Housing 13 Group	Care Homes for Older People Hospital Discharges Careers provision Domestic abuse School Uniforms Protection of vulnerable older people in the home Action on Fraud Roadside tethered horses Local Council Tax Support Scheme Smarter Working Tees Credit Union Child Bursary fees Public Consultations Area Transport Strategy Business engagement Contaminated Land Planters in residential streets Planning Enforcement

### Redcar and Cleveland

Completed or ongoing	2019 /20
Education and Transition between primary and secondary Waste and recycling	Exclusion and Behaviour Management policies in schools Climate Change Mental Health

### Middlesbrough

Completed or ongoing	2019 /20
LGBTQ and Elderly People in Care Homes Selective Licensing Vulnerable and Fragile Health Services Breast Radiology	Loneliness Opioid use and prescribing rates

### Hartlepool

Completed or ongoing	2019 /20
Preventative Mental Health services Maternity Hub – creation of	Anti-Social behaviour – impact on drug use, drug and alcohol use, impact on police resources ICS

### South Tyneside

Completed or ongoing	2019 /20
Special Education Needs Houses in Multiple Occupation Palliative Care – St Clare’s Hospice Littering and Fly Tipping Integrated Housing Structure and Local Plan Path to Excellence	South Shields as a seaside town Skills Loneliness Strategy Primary care network Poverty/UC/Holiday Hunger

### North of Tyne Combined Authority

2019/20
Job Creation/Skills creation Local Industrial Strategy Tourism Marketing Events – Tour of Britain Budget The LEP possibly

### Newcastle

Completed or ongoing	2019 /20
Mental Health – out of area placements GP Provision Equality of Access to NHS Services – GP provision, Refugees Parks and Allotments Trust	Immunisation and screening SEND Public Health Health and Social care Integration CCG challenges

Education – good performance at primary, poor at secondary SEND Waste Budget Commissioning of Cycle routes – is it too focussed? Affordable Housing Staff Sickness and Mental Health absence Commercial developments	ICS Urgent treatment centres Suicide Prevention Community Access to Defibrillators Herbicides in the city Climate Change/Air Quality Fluoridation
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## 5. Implications of ICS/ICPs for future health sub-regional scrutiny arrangements

Stephen Gwilym updated the meeting about changes around regional Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) which were being remodelled into an Integrated Care System with Integrated Care Partnerships. Work has been undertaken on potentially reviewing the terms of reference for the two existing sub regional STP Joint OSCs to ensure that they better reflect the emerging ICS/ICP footprint. It was confirmed that the North East and Cumbria had been announced as the largest ICS in June 2019. The Durham Darlington Teesside Hambleton Richmondshire and Whitby STP Joint OSC had met in June and there had been some concern and frustration at the lack of clarity in respect of the emerging ICS/ICP model.

Caroline Breheny commented that a recent CQC Inspection report of South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust had found that critical care required improvement with 26 areas identified as not meeting statutory requirements. Stephen Gwilym added that a CQC inspection was expected for CDDFT.

Engagement and consultation is due to begin on Phase 2 of the Path to Excellence Programme. A referral had been made to the Secretary of State on Phase 1 and a legal challenge had been received so it was hoped that Phase 2 would not be so acrimonious. Paul Baldasera commented that more frequent meetings were being held with the CCG to improve outcomes. Capital funding requirements for the proposed models under Phase 2 were still to be resolved.

## 6. Any Other Business

None

## 7. Date and time of next meeting

It was agreed that a meeting of members and officers would be arranged after the recess and a further officers meeting near Christmas. No dates had been set yet.