

Health Scrutiny Committee 2013/14

As Vice-Chairman of the Council's Health Scrutiny Committee during the 2013/14 Municipal Year I am pleased to introduce a snapshot of the work that the Committee has been involved in during that period. It has been a challenging year for the health service, both nationally and locally, in terms of the increasing demands placed upon it by the population during the climate of a shrinking budget. A key aspect of our job as health scrutineers, is to act as the voice of the public in monitoring both the commissioning and delivery of health services to ensure that excellence in patient care is not compromised during times of pressure such as those we are currently experiencing.

Blackpool continues to present some of the more unfortunate statistics in terms of health inequalities in England. Life expectancy for males is the lowest in the country and life expectancy for females is amongst the lowest. The Health Scrutiny Committee has a key role to play in ensuring that both service provision and preventative care is targeted to improve those health inequality issues that exist largely as a result of lifestyle choices, which are, to a large extent, preventable. These include Smoking and Tobacco Control; Cardio Vascular Disease; Alcohol and Substance Misuse; Cancer; Mental Health; Sexual Health and Childhood Obesity. During the last year, the Committee has been working closely with the Council's public health team in monitoring those priorities and the action being taken to address them. Evidence of improvements are starting to show through, albeit slowly. There is of course no 'silver bullet' that will lead to rapid changes, but even small improvements in percentage terms translates to positive changes for significant numbers of people and we should all be encouraged by that.

The beginning of this reporting period coincided with the publication of the report by Robert Francis QC into the widely reported failings at Mid-Staffordshire NHS Trust. The report included a section that was critical of Staffordshire's health scrutiny function and at Blackpool, we took the opportunity to examine the report and apply the findings to the way that we conduct scrutiny here. As a result, our focus has become more concentrated on patient safety, quality and ensuring that patient complaints are properly dealt with.

The Committee enjoys a good working relationship with both the commissioners and provider services that are responsible for health provision in Blackpool. However, when things do not go according to plan, or we disagree with decisions, we hold the officers to account and make recommendations for improvement. A particular case in point during the last year has been our involvement, alongside the commissioners, in monitoring and seeking assurance in terms of a number of improvements at our local hospital Trust. The hospital was one of 14 in the country that was subject to a review undertaken by Sir Bruce Keogh as a result of its higher than average mortality rates and this was followed up by a separate review by the Care Quality Commission. The Health Scrutiny Committee continues to be involved in monitoring the resultant action plans and is pleased to note a number of targeted improvements. Of particular note are the improved patient pathways relating to pneumonia, sepsis, stroke, acute heart attacks, heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

It is very important that going forward, we continue to maintain a good working relationship with all of our key stakeholders and partner organisations and I would like to thank all of those people involved for their cooperation in attending our Committee, providing reports and answering questions. In particular, I would like to mention the people involved in Healthwatch Blackpool who voluntarily provide their services to gather information and intelligence relating to Blackpool's health economy and with whom we enjoy a close working relationship.

Looking forward to 2014/15, I am confident that with the enthusiasm and effort of my colleagues, that health scrutiny will continue to play an important and influential role in serving the health needs of Blackpool's residents and visitors.



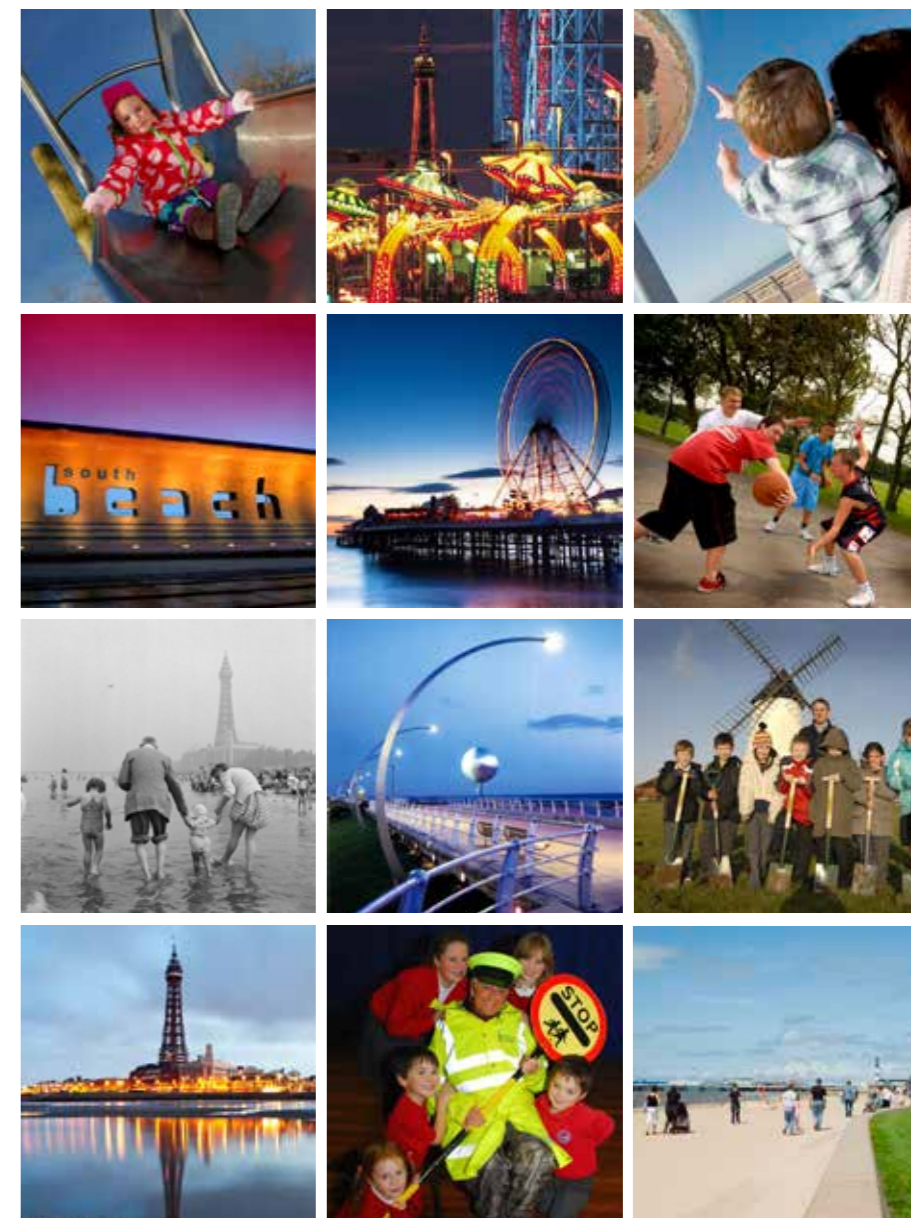
Councillor Martin Mitchell.
Vice-Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee,
2013/14 Municipal Year.

Health Scrutiny Committee 2013/14, Key areas of Involvement:

- Review and comment on the Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account.
- Review and comment on the Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account.
- Review and comment on the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust Quality Account.
- Continued to monitor the planning and progress relating to the new mental health in-patient unit at 'The Harbour'
- Monitoring action plans at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust in relation to the Breast Care Review, the Keogh Mortality Review and the Care Quality Commission Review.
- Overseeing the plans and implementation of the Better Care Fund.
- Scrutinising the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Close working relationship with Healthwatch Blackpool.
- Working closely with Public Health on monitoring key areas of work around health inequalities.
- Membership of the joint Lancashire Health Scrutiny Committee, with work on the Dementia Consultation.

Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14

Blackpool Council



If you want to know more, or have any suggestions for scrutiny, contact us in Democratic Services on Tel 01253 477123 or Email: scrutiny@blackpool.gov.uk.

Welcome to the 2013-14 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for Blackpool Council. The report provides the opportunity to review last year's activity within overview and scrutiny and to highlight some of the key achievements.

Blackpool Council operates a Cabinet system where ten elected Councillors are responsible for making major decisions. Scrutiny is a key way in which the remaining Councillors, or Members, can improve the quality of life for Blackpool residents by holding decision makers to account.

During the last year, the major challenges for local government in dealing with reductions in funding have continued. The development of new legislation and the changing shape of partner organisations, in particular the health service, have all impacted on the way that services are delivered to the public. Scrutiny councillors at Blackpool have been involved in monitoring those developments and have worked hard to ensure that the Council continues to deliver and prioritise its key services in the most effective way.

Scrutiny in Blackpool is centred on a single scrutiny committee which takes a lead role in both managing and developing the scrutiny process. It remains committed to development and improvement and during this Municipal Year, certain changes have been made to the lead member roles in order to maintain accurate alignment with cabinet member responsibilities. They are now arranged as follows:

- Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care
- Corporate Management and Resources
- Urban Regeneration
- Children, Young People, Schools and Children's Social Care and Equality, Diversity, Technology and Youth Employment
- Tourism and Culture and Highways and Transport
- Housing, Public Protection and Street Scene and Crime and Community Safety

In addition, there is a separate section within this report covering the work of the Health Scrutiny Committee, which continues to scrutinise health service provision and health inequalities in Blackpool.

I would like to thank everyone who has made contributions to the scrutiny process during the last year, in particular the lead members who have played a key part in managing the individual scrutiny reviews and the ongoing scrutiny panels.

I also feel that it is important for the Cabinet Members to be acknowledged and thanked for the collaborative way that they have worked with Scrutiny during the past year. Co-operation in responding to questions from the Committee and the way in which recommendations from reports have been received have contributed to the value of the scrutiny process.

Expectations upon Overview and Scrutiny for the forthcoming year will be high as the Council continues to seek out improved ways of working and value for money in the services it delivers. I am confident that with the engagement and enthusiasm of the members, it can respond to the challenges ahead and demonstrate that scrutiny forms an important part of the democratic and decision making process.

If you would like to know more about the work of scrutiny at Blackpool then please get in touch. Contact details for Democratic Governance, who support the scrutiny function, can be found at the end of this report.



Councillor Sylvia Taylor
Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee
2013/14 Municipal Year

Scrutiny Committee 2013/14; Key improvements and achievements

■ Changes to Roads

A Scrutiny Review Panel established to consider the process used by the Council when making changes to road designs within a fixed six month timeframe. 5 recommendations were made, all of which were accepted by the Executive that will lead to an improved information and consultation process when schemes are being considered.

■ Flood Risk Management

A Scrutiny Review Panel established to consider the new statutory responsibilities for flood risk placed on the Council by the Flood Risk Regulations 2009, the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Flood Risk Management Overview and Scrutiny (England) Regulations 2011. The review resulted in 5 recommendations which were accepted by the Executive. In addition, a number of other directives around flood risk management were issued by the Executive at the same time.

■ Community Safety Partnership

This Review Panel continues to meet on a six monthly basis. During the course of 2013/2014, the Panel considered key themes of domestic violence and changes to anti-social behaviour legislation. The Panel also monitored current issues around community safety, the performance of the Community Safety Partnership and received information on the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

■ Education

This standing Review Panel was established to consider and make recommendations on school performance information including attendance at schools, attainment of children and Ofsted Inspection Reports and to review and make recommendations on key strategic documents and issues affecting schools. The Panel meets on a regular basis and has considered performance information from a number of schools to date.

■ Community Rights, Assets and Services

A Scrutiny Review panel established to undertake a review of Community Assets and Services in light of legislation in the Localism Act establishing 'Community Rights'. It was also considered a valuable opportunity to undertake a wider review by incorporating an examination of the Council's policy on Community Asset Transfer. A total of 7 recommendations were made, all of which were accepted by the Executive.

■ Alcohol Advertising

A Scrutiny Review in response to a recommendation from the Community Safety Scrutiny Panel. During discussions on substance misuse at the Panel, alcohol advertising was revealed to be a key priority of Public Health in Blackpool and members of the Panel also considered it be a high priority when considering the problems caused by substance misuse. 6 recommendations resulted from the review, all of which were accepted by the Executive.

■ Outside Bodies

The Panel was established to scrutinise the performance and strategies of companies owned or part-owned, by the Council. Over the course of the 2013/2014 year, the Panel has scrutinised Blackpool Zoo, Blackpool Airport and Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Development Company.

■ Adult Services – Advice and Information

The Panel was formed to assist the Adult Services department in developing and promoting its online resource directory and adult social care portal, in order to provide information in a more consistent and easily accessible format, as well as increasing the choice and control people have in deciding how their needs would be met.

The review produced seven recommendations, with the objective of assisting in the development of a new online directory, consistent with the requirements of the 'Caring for our Future – Reforming Care and Support' White Paper. All of the recommendations were accepted by the Executive.

■ Bathing Water

Established in anticipation of a revised Bathing Water Directive, due to come into effect from 2015. The revised Directive would place an even stronger emphasis on beach management and public information and could have a significant impact upon Blackpool's tourist economy.

The Panel aimed to ensure that plans and proposals to improve the quality of bathing water at Blackpool's beaches were drafted and implemented by the Council and its partner organisations, in order to ensure Blackpool's bathing waters met the standards required of them.

Following a thorough review, the Panel was able to conclude that the proposed action of the key partner organisations should be endorsed and that scrutiny would continue to monitor their progress.

■ Blackpool Transport Services Ltd

Initiated to review the relationship between the Council and Blackpool Transport Services Ltd, the Panel raised a number of issues and concerns with regards to the governance arrangements of the company's Board, as well as communication mechanisms between the Council and Blackpool Transport Services Ltd.

The concerns raised by the Panel initiated a process which resulted in a Governance Code of Practice being produced, bringing a consistent approach to all council companies. The Panel noted the establishment of the Shareholder's Panel, its composition and terms of reference and it was also consulted on a reviewed draft articles of association and proposed management agreement for Blackpool Transport Services Ltd, before it was formally approved.

■ Apprenticeships

A Scrutiny Panel Review initiated to ensure the apprenticeship scheme was providing value for money to the Council and to ensure Blackpool Council offered quality jobs for young people through the effective and efficient provision of apprenticeships as part of its workforce. The 6 recommendations that resulted from the review were all accepted by the Executive.

■ Children's Services

A standing Review Panel that replaced the Joint Executive / Scrutiny Panel upon the conclusion of the work of that Panel. The Panel meets on a regular basis with the objective of ensuring that the Council maintains an appropriate, sustainable focus on the scrutiny of Children's Services.

■ Budget Consultation

Contributed to the Council's budget consultation process as follows:

- a) Held a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to which all non-Executive Members were invited to attend.
- b) A meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee was held to which representatives from the Trade Unions were invited to attend. This meeting was chaired by the Finance and Audit Committee Chairman.
- c) A meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee was held to which representatives from the National Non-Domestic Ratepayers were invited to attend. This meeting was chaired by the Finance and Audit Committee Chairman.

■ Other areas of work monitored by the Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis:

- Voluntary Sector Funding
- Child Poverty Framework
- The effect of transience in Blackpool
- Performance management / priority reporting
- Problematic empty properties
- Adult Services / Safeguarding adults
- Members visits to care homes

Call-In Sub-Committee

If a Councillor thinks that a Cabinet Member or the Executive has made a wrong decision, they can ask them to think again. This process is known as Call-In. When a decision is called in, it is firstly considered by the Call-In Sub-Committee, which has been appointed by the Scrutiny Committee for that purpose. The Call-In Sub Committee then decides what action to take, against the following set criteria;

- a) No further action (in which case the decision can be implemented immediately)
- b) To refer the decision back to either the Cabinet Member or the Executive for reconsideration
- c) To refer the decision to full Council

During the period of this report, there were no call-in requests considered.