

City Council – 9 September 2024

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24

1. Introduction and Background

Overview and Scrutiny is a statutory function that supports both good governance and open and transparent decision-making. It works to enhance both the Council's policy and strategy development processes and the planning and delivery of services for the benefit of local people. It promotes democratic accountability by enabling non-Executive councillors to hold their Executive colleagues to account for their decisions and actions in a public way. It has a wide remit to explore how the Council and its partner organisations can improve services for Nottingham by offering constructive review, feedback and challenge on decisions, actions, policies, strategies and performance, so that decision-makers can maximise the robustness of their actions.

The overall purpose of Overview and Scrutiny is to:

- a) hold local decision-makers (including the Council's Executive and the relevant Boards of the Council's group of companies) to account for their decisions, actions, performance and management of risk;
- b) review the existing policies and strategies of the Council and other local decision-makers where they impact on Nottingham people;
- c) contribute to the development of new policies and strategies of the Council and other local decision-makers where they impact on Nottingham people;
- d) exercise the Council's statutory role in scrutinising local NHS healthcare services in accordance with the NHS Act 2006 (as amended) and the associated regulations and guidance;
- e) explore any matters affecting Nottingham and/or its people;
- f) make reports and recommendations to relevant local agencies with respect to the delivery of their functions, including the Council and its Executive; and
- g) review decisions made (but not yet implemented) by the Council's Executive in accordance with the Call-in Procedure.

As part of the Council's wider improvement work, the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) was commissioned in 2021 to undertake a review of the Overview and Scrutiny function. The CfGS identified some limitations to the then Scrutiny arrangements and, coupled with the Council's Improvement and Assurance Board's Instruction to have an efficient and effective decision-making process in place by the end of June 2023, significant work has taken place to address the issues – with a new structure for the Overview and Scrutiny function implemented from May 2023.

The new structure was developed following the consideration of a variety of different options, including a review of the approaches taken by other Core Cities. The number of individual Scrutiny Committees was increased to five, with each aligned to one of the Council's directorates, and full terms of reference for each Committee have been established within the Constitution. The previous Call-In Panel was discontinued, with each of the Committees now responsible for managing any call-ins within its remit. Each Committee is politically balanced, with a membership of eight councillors. In terms of resourcing, the Committees are

supported by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer and three Scrutiny and Audit Support Officers.

Holding their first meetings in September 2023, following an initial programme of training and development for Committee members (including the carrying out of work programming activity), the five new Scrutiny Committees are as follows:

- The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, chaired by Councillor Naim Salim, which focused on the issues and services relevant to the health, wellbeing and safeguarding of Nottingham's children and young people.
- The Communities and Environment Scrutiny Committee, chaired by Councillor Imran Jalil, which focused on the issues affecting local communities and the environment, including community protection, environmental health, waste and cleansing, energy, sport, culture and tourism.
- The Corporate Scrutiny Committee, chaired by Councillor Leslie Ayoola, which focused on the issues relating to the Council's corporate services such as IT, customer services, commercial strategy, financial management and commissioning and procurement, along with cross-cutting topics such as the development and delivery of the Strategic Council Plan, the annual budget, and overall transformation and improvement.
- The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee, chaired by Councillor Georgia Power, which focused on the issues relating to the Council's provision of Adult Social Care and the physical and mental healthcare services delivered by the local NHS.
- The Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee, chaired by Councillor Sam Harris, which focused on the issues relating to housing, economic development, employment and skills, business growth and inward investment, property and asset management, transport, traffic and parking.

All five Scrutiny Committees worked together to consider the Council's developing 2024/25 Budget, returning formal comments on the proposals to both the Executive Board and Full Council. The Committees also engaged with individual Executive members and directorates to examine the potential service impacts of the budget proposals on Nottingham people, and the outcomes of these discussions are set out under Section 4 of the report ('Corporate Scrutiny Committee').

As part of their evidence gathering, the Scrutiny Committees often invited Executive Members, Council officers and external colleagues and partners to attend meetings to provide information about their work, experiences and expertise. The Committee Chairs and members would like to thank all of those who participated in and contributed to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny activity during the 2023/24 municipal year.

2. Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held six meetings during 2023/24 to review a range of issues, including:

- The Children's Services Improvement Journey
- Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities Improvement
- Nottingham City Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report
- Youth Justice Service
- The Priority Education Investment Area
- Early Help Strategy
- Children in Care Placement Sufficiency
- Preventing Child Exploitation

The Children's Services Improvement Journey

The Committee has played a pivotal role in monitoring the progress made in Children's Services following the 'inadequate' rating the Service received in July 2022. Members have received both verbal updates from the Executive Member and reports following Ofsted monitoring visits. The monitoring visits centred around specific themes within the Service. These were children in need and children with a child protection plan, care leavers aged 18+, and children in care (planning and achieving performance). Following each of the monitoring visits, inspectors have noted evidence of tangible progress being made with some areas of strong improvement. Areas that have required improvement have been identified, which the Committee are assured that senior leaders are aware of. Members have been keen to follow the improvement journey closely and will continue to do so as part of the Work Programme for 2024/25.

Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Improvement

The Committee scrutinised progress made in improving support and services for children and young people with SEND and their families, with a particular focus on communication, engagement and co-production with parents and families to improve outcomes. This followed on from an inspection from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in November 2021 into how well the City carried out its statutory duties which highlighted strengths and areas of improvement. The Committee had previously welcomed the largely positive findings of the inspection and looked forward to hearing how the service would strengthen on areas found to require some improvement.

A number of changes and improvements had been made including a new inspection framework for Local Authorities and a new set of strategic priorities for Nottingham. These included strengthening governance arrangements, increasing engagement opportunities for young people and parents, developing a revised SEND Strategy, increasing partnership working with partners such as the NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Nottinghamshire County Council, and reviewing the current local offer platform.

The Committee recommended that the Council should investigate publishing information outlining the support it offers in different languages, and it further considers how it can communicate its services better and to a wider audience.

Nottingham City Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report

The Committee considered the Nottingham City Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report, which outlined safeguarding arrangements provided by the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership (NCSCP). The report highlighted work undertaken during the course of the year and plans for the future. The partners responsible for the arrangements are the Council, the ICB and Nottinghamshire Police. The production of the report is a statutory requirement.

The Committee heard that the strategic priorities of the Safeguarding Partnership in 2022-23 were to promote, monitor, coordinate and evaluate multi-agency effectiveness in safeguarding children across the child's journey, to strengthen and support a competent and equipped workforce that is committed to learning and developing safeguarding practice with the assurance that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and to evidence the impact of the NCSCP. It also had a Business Plan which contained 7 priorities: tackling and reducing child exploitation, implementing the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Action Plan, ensuring that the voice and lived experience of children is integral to the development and delivery of services to children and families across Nottingham, recognising and responding to the diverse population of Nottingham's children, delivering the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership Neglect Strategy, understanding the impact of Covid-19, and providing leadership and ensuring core duties are met in line with Working Together 2018 and other relevant legislation.

The Committee welcomed the report and activity of the Safeguarding Partnership and recommended partners be proactive in regards to safeguarding concerns, disseminate information to other organisations about its work, and to continue to focus on the voice of the child.

Youth Justice Service

The Service received a full three-week joint inspection in November 2019 from HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in which the service was graded 'requires improvement'. In November 2022, the Service invited a peer review team from across the country to provide their own assessment of the Service. The Committee considered the findings of the inspections and progress made since then. Members heard that the Service has addressed the recommendations from both the HMIP inspection and peer review through an operational delivery plan reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Youth Justice Management Board.

A further inspection was anticipated in 2024 and the Committee received assurance that management are aware of the improvements expected and that a further inspection will have better outcomes than the first.

The Priority Education Investment Area (PEIA)

The Committee received an update on partnership work between the Department for Education (DfE), Nottingham City Council and Multi-Academy Trusts operating schools in the city, who were working on local education priorities identified and being supported with additional Government funding as an identified PEIA. Nottingham was confirmed as one of 24 PEIAs in March 2022. PEIAs have particularly low attainment and high rates of disadvantage and there are a number of ambitions that underpin priority areas.

In order to drive this ambition and the programme in Nottingham, a Local Governance board was established by the Regional Director of the DfE working with the Local Authority and Multi-Academy Trusts operating in the city, and the two local universities. The Board agreed that local priorities were literacy and attendance. The Committee received presentations from several partners at the meeting who outlined work being done in their areas to advance the local priorities. The Committee commented that the dedication and commitment in those present was clear, and that they looked forward to further progress updates on the PEIA.

Early Help Strategy

The Committee considered progress made since the launch of the Early Help Strategy and website in October 2023 and whether it was achieving its intended outcomes. Partners had identified five priorities to drive initial activity:

- Embedding a whole-system approach to facilitate Early Help being an integral part of a city-wide service
- Partnership working
- Partnership workforce development and structure
- Measure the impact of Early Help
- Pool funding and identify sustainability

The Committee heard that an Early Help Partnership Steering Strategic Group had been established which has set up four sub-groups to address the priorities within the Strategy. These were Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Family Voice, Workplace Development, and Impact Monitoring. The Committee received an update on work done against these priorities.

Members made a number of recommendations which included amendments to the Strategy regarding the statistics outlining the local context in Nottingham and data outlining child criminal exploitation. They also recommended that the Council explored how it could make some of its buildings more teenage friendly and assessed how it could use existing provisions to better support families during the cost of living crisis.

Children in Care Placement Sufficiency

The Committee received a report on the Children in Care Placement Sufficiency Strategy, Action Plan, and Market Development. It was noted that the Council has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient accommodation for their looked after children and young people and that the Council has a mix of placement types for those that do.

As such, the Strategy responds to that duty by setting out the Council's vision in achieving its commitment to improving the life chances of children and young people who come under its care, and provide sufficient, safe and secure placements for looked-after children and care leavers.

The Committee heard and agreed that issues around placement sufficiency was not unique to Nottingham and was a national challenge. Members made a number of recommendations including enhancing work with community groups, and carrying out comparative analysis work to ascertain the outcomes between internal and external provision. The Strategy was refreshed annually and the Committee looked forward to considering the item as part of its Work Programme for 2024/25.

Preventing Child Exploitation

Members considered how the Council was preventing child exploitation following a number of recommendations previously made in regards to the production of a Tackling Child Exploitation Strategy. The Committee was presented with a report outlining the Tackling Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-26, and detailed how the Strategy was being implemented through the Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Partnerships and the Tackling Child Exploitation Steering Group. The aim of the Strategy was to create a single, whole system response to child exploitation aiming to reduce exploitation, and extra familial harm, protect communities and reflects the need for a cross-border approach. The Committee heard how the Strategy and various partnership working was being used to tackle child exploitation in its various forms.

The Committee welcomed the Strategy, however, it had a number of concerns regarding accountability and how performance would be measured. The Committee made a recommendation regarding ensuring that the Council was using the appropriate mechanisms and support available to children identified at risk of exploitation. This was in response to the number of children being referred by the Council through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to the Home Office. They also made a number of requests including receiving a list of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and other measurables that the Strategy will be using to measure success and information on the waiting times for children referred to services as a result of exploitation. Members requested that the Strategy be brought back to Committee in the future to assess its progress.

3. Communities and Environment Scrutiny Committee

The Communities and Environment Scrutiny Committee held seven meetings during 2023/24 to review a range of issues, including:

- The Municipal Resources and Waste Strategy
- Carbon Neutral Nottingham 2028
- The District Heating Network
- Safety and Environmental Regulation
- Community Resilience and Environmental Services
- The Nottingham Community Safety Partnership
- Nottingham Events
- Nottingham Castle

The Municipal Resources and Waste Strategy

The Committee scrutinised the implementation plans for the Municipal Resources and Waste Strategy for 2023-50 and the options available in relation to domestic waste, green waste and recycling collection. The Committee considered how waste was collected from 31,950 properties across the city every day. Only one quarter of this waste was recycled, so a significantly improvement was required in recycling rates, including a need to collect and recycle food waste. The Committee reviewed the outcomes of the food waste recycling collection trial where 1.2 tonnes of food waste had been collected in one week, with the weight of residential waste collected being reduced by 2 tonnes. The Committee examined how the most effective collection of recycling was to achieve clean waste at source and the consideration being given to supporting residents in separating their waste appropriately for collection.

The Committee considered that clearer communications were needed on recycling and, as some areas within the city saw rapid changes in the people living there, information and education programmes needed to be ongoing. The Committee advised that the Council needed to work collaboratively with citizens to gain their support for the requirements, with the existing 'Clean Champions' network being engaged to help encourage recycling and promote a positive recycling culture. The Committee felt that there needed to be an ongoing focus on addressing fly tipping and ensuring that bin collections were not missed.

The Committee recommended that further work was done to explore the potential for temporary or pop-up recycling points in communities and how Ward Councillors, Green Champions and other community networks could contribute to increasing recycling rates and reducing contamination. The Committee also recommended that the balance between bulky waste collection and fly tipping clearance times was reviewed, and that the companies were approached regarding their social and corporate responsibilities as part of developing a Nottingham Waste Charter with businesses.

Carbon Neutral Nottingham 2028 (CN28)

The Committee scrutinised the approach to achieving a carbon neutral Nottingham by 2028, as an important part of the current Strategic Council Plan for developing a

healthy environment and economic growth in the city, and the ambitions for the delivery of CN28 going forward. The Committee reviewed the significant financial pressures that faced the Council, resulting in a number of challenges to progressing CN28 initiatives as the overall project was not a statutory requirement and it carried a certain level of cost.

The Committee considered the initial outcomes of the 'best value' thematic review has been done to identify how CN28 could continue to be delivered in an effective and efficient way, going forward. A great deal of data was fed into the review, which included interviews with internal staff and a range of external partners and stakeholders. CN28 represents an ambitious strategy with a strong level of commitment to its delivery by both the Council and its wider partners, and there has been a great deal of investment to date in green transport within the city for a sustained period. However, the direct funding and resourcing of CN28 activity would now be more difficult, particularly in the national context of wider economic issues and delays to the phasing out of petrol and diesel vehicles. As a result, there was a risk that the Council will need to focus on planning to address difficult issues in the short-term, making it harder to focus effectively on long-term projects such as CN28.

The Committee heard that proposals were being developed for a strategic commercial partnership to secure large-scale investment from private sector stakeholders, particularly in the area of growing clean energy production within Nottingham itself. A detailed and costed investment programme plan for the Council was being developed, with the Council working to be in a position where it could deploy CN28 investment quickly and in a focused way while taking full advantage of any available funding available regionally, nationally or from partners.

The Committee welcomed the findings of the 'best value' review and recommend that the Council liaised with the local universities to explore research opportunities for green energy generation in Nottingham, engaged with sector leaders on the use of green technology for Council buildings and considered how commercial partnerships could be used to progress the work towards delivering the CN28 targets.

The District Heating Network

Nottingham's district heating network was created in 1968 to provide heat and power to homes and businesses across the city. The heat energy is produced from the incineration of 170,000 tonnes of municipal waste at the Eastcroft Incinerator. Options for the future of the heat network beyond 2030 are now being considered and, as part of this process, the Committee established a Spotlight Review Group to participate in the consideration of the options open to the Council at the appropriate point in the development timeline.

Safety and Environmental Regulation

The Committee scrutinised the performance of the Council's Safety and Environmental Regulation Services, reviewing the challenges that they faced and the impact they had on the Council's revenue budgets. The Committee examined the Council's wide range of regulatory responsibilities for environmental health and

public safety. In term of food safety, the Committee learned that there were nearly 3,000 food premises in Nottingham, where problems of access due to the Coronavirus pandemic had led to a significant inspections backlog that the Environmental Health team was working to address with support from Community Protection Officers.

The Committee also reviewed how the Council was delivering its statutory responsibility for inspecting workplaces in the context of health and safety, and carrying out detailed investigations of any workplace accidents that resulted in either death or serious injury. The Committee learned that there could be two to three workplace-related deaths per year on average, with around 30 cases of serious injury. The results of investigations into deaths are fed into the Coroner's inquest processes, and the Council could take a business to court if a death or serious injury arose due to corporate negligence. Council officers were also part of the Safety Advisory Group for large-scale events, alongside other organisations such as the Police and the Fire and Rescue Service, to ensure that these could take place safely.

The Committee felt that it had been very positive to highlight the important statutory duties that the Council delivered in this area, and recommend that consideration was given to how communications with the public could be used to emphasize the importance of the good work carried out by the Council's Safety and Environmental Regulation Services.

Community Resilience and Environmental Services

The Committee scrutinised the outcomes of the 'best value' review relating to Community Resilience and Environment Services. The Committee considered how 'best value' reviews were carried out to ensure that Council assets were being used efficiently to improve and safeguard services, and generate savings. The initial review of Community Resilience and Environmental Services sought to better understand the investment needs and costs of community assets, and to identify potential disposal opportunities to support ongoing transformation work. Part of the review included detailed consideration of rent and lease arrangements for community assets using the Corporate Landlord model and a Social Value framework, with a view to moving rents to market rates with discounts offered where the services provided demonstrate social value or represented savings across Council services.

The Committee considered that it was vital for a place-based approach to be used to draw together the Council's resources to make the best use of assets, staff and technology in a holistic way to ensure the continuation of sustainable community assets. The Committee recommended that further work was done to explore how the funding available could be used to enable community centres to be run by their communities effectively, how the Social Value framework was used as a clear part of informing decisions, and how Nottingham businesses could be further engaged in investing in local communities.

The Nottingham Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

The Committee scrutinised the performance of the CSP in its delivery of the priorities set out as part of the CSP Strategy for 2023-26. The CSP (previously the Crime and Drugs Partnership) is a multi-agency group responsible for tackling crime, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and reoffending. It is made of up five statutory 'Responsible Authorities' and a number of other public sector partners who participate on a voluntary basis. The Committee examined how the new Strategy had been put in place to set out how the CSP would meet its responsibilities, with the current three-year priorities being addressing slavery and exploitation, domestic abuse and sexual violence, radicalisation and violent extremism, substance use, anti-social behaviour and serious violence. The CSP also had an additional focus on tackling hate crime on a Nottinghamshire-wide basis, working with partners across Local Authority boundaries.

The Committee reviewed the strategic assessment exercise underway to understand the current service needs and required provision, how partnership work could be used to improve services, and how service impact could be measured effectively. A series of key performance indicators were in place so that the outcomes being delivered can be seen and assessed easily. A great deal of the funding used by the CSP to support its initiatives and interventions was granted by central Government on a fixed-term basis, so this can make it difficult to plan activity in the long-term. Currently, £5.7 million of funding will end in March 2025, so the Committee examined the work underway to seek to mitigate against any potential future financial shortfalls. Fully supporting all potential priorities was extremely challenging, as there was a shrinking level of resourcing for a growing level of need.

The Committee considered that it was important for the CSP to fully understand the reasons behind first-time youth offending effectively. The Committee noted that the Council's Community Protection provision formed an important part of the delivery of the CSP Strategy, and the potential restructuring of neighbourhood policing should be considered carefully in partnership with other stakeholders.

Nottingham Events

The Committee scrutinised how large-scale events were held across the city and their environmental, tourism and economic impacts, examining how the Council supported a number of public events (including regular, civic and commercial events) through the Nottingham Events team, which had to be self-sustaining – with the events that it ran funded by its own income and support from partners and sponsors.

The Committee considered how all events commissioned directly by the Council needed to clearly justify the use of public funds, with detailed business cases produced to set out what each event was intended to achieve and the wider benefit that it would bring for the city. The Committee also explored how the Events team acted as a single point of contact for others seeking to organise events in the city such as commercial, sporting and promotional events, and coordinated requests for commercial filming in public spaces. The Events team further provided 'value in kind' event management support to help community events to continue to form a core part of the city's events programme.

The Committee welcomed the activity being carried out to support events in the city, but recommended that as much work as possible should be done to engage effectively with potential sponsors of public events, including the local business community, and that consideration should be given to how the existing structures for coordinating volunteer activity could be used to help resource public events. The Committee also recommend that it should be ensured that all clean-up activity following an event covered the appropriate wider residential area impacted, and that more information was collected on the level of car travel to public events as opposed to the levels of public transport usage.

Nottingham Castle

The Committee scrutinised the performance of Nottingham Castle following its reopening, including the current commercial risks and opportunities. The recent restoration, redevelopment and operation of the Castle under an independent charitable trust had not been successful, so the Council resumed direct management from November 2022. The Committee reviewed how a sustainable business plan had been developed and a straightforward 'pay once, visit all year round' ticket structure had been put in place. A medium-term financial plan had been implemented and was on target to ensure the delivery of a best value service in the long term.

Since reopening in June 2023, the Castle's annual visitor numbers had nearly reached the target of 200,000. The Committee considered the work that had been carried out to learn from the Castle's first six months of operation, and from the feedback that had been received when the castle was open under the previous trust. A great deal of engagement had been carried out with partners to ensure that the Castle provided a strong local offer and to emphasise to Nottingham communities that the castle was open to all and represented good value. Low-cost community days were run at £1 per person and these had seen a strong overall attendance of above 30,000. A volunteer programme had been established with a number of people engaged from across a range of city communities.

The Committee felt that the work done to reopen and operate the Castle since June 2023 had been extremely positive. The Committee considered that it was important to further develop engagement with new and emerging communities. The Committee recommend that consideration should be given to how pricing and special offers could achieve additional benefits for Nottingham residents, and that further consideration was given to how local businesses could be engaged with to support the Castle.

4. Corporate Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee held six meetings during 2023/24 to review a range of issues, including:

- The 2024/25 Budget
- Improvement and Assurance Board Updates
- Transformation Performance
- Performance Management
- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-28
- The Strategic Council Plan

The 2024/25 Budget

The Committee met on three separate occasions to consider the development of the Council's 2024/25 Budget, at its meetings on 13 September 2023, 17 January 2024, and 14 February 2024. The Committee considered the Council's Budget Strategy and Methodology, the proposals that Executive Board agreed to send out for public consultation on 19 December 2023 and in which the Committee responded to it as a formal consultee, and the final budget that the Executive put forward to Full Council for formal decision and setting of Council Tax on 4 March 2024. The Committee provided Full Council with its views on the budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2024-2028 in the form of a report that summarised the key findings, observations and conclusions from its budget meetings. The full report can be viewed [here](#) and is also attached as Appendix 1.

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee reviewed the potential impacts of the 2024/25 budget proposals on the services delivered by the Children's and Education departments. The Committee highlighted that it was crucial for all Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to be published as soon as possible. Committee members raised concerns with a number of proposals, including those impacting the Bulwell Riverside Centre and the Ridge Adventure Centre. The Committee stressed the importance of preventative and early intervention services, highlighting that this work reduced pressure on statutory services in the long-term.

The Committee sought assurance on work being done to ascertain the impacts of the proposals stopping the Area-Based Grant, highlighting that this was likely to impact a high number of services across different directorates. Committee members also raised concerns about the impact that a reduction in the Household Support Fund may have on young people's access to school uniforms and the implications this may have for them in a wider setting.

The Communities and Environment Scrutiny Committee reviewed the potential impacts of the 2024/25 budget proposals on the services delivered by the Communities, Environment and Resident Services directorate. The Committee considered that everything possible should be done to ensure that city streets were kept clean and free of waste, and to maintain the vital services delivered by Community Protection Officers. The Committee stressed that very clear engagement should be carried out with all community centres to seek to reduce the very high levels of uncertainty that they were facing. The Committee was also concerned about the potential impacts of proposals on the Council's Bereavement Services, the

Museums, Galleries and Library Services, and the ambitions to achieve a carbon neutral city.

The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee reviewed the potential impacts of the 2024/25 budget proposals on the services delivered by the Adult Social Care department. The Committee stressed that all Equality Impact Assessments relevant to the budget proposals must be reviewed and published as soon as possible, and that the capacity requirements required within Adult Social Care to deliver the savings proposals effectively must be scoped very clearly – particularly in the context of ensuring properly supported transitions of care. The Committee advised that there must be close monitoring of any changes to waiting list times in the context of the proposed restructure of the Adult Social Care Assessment function. The Committee recommend that full consideration should be given to how the Council’s relationships with external providers could be maximised to ensure that the most vulnerable people were supported to the required level of care.

The Committee expressed very significant concerns regarding the proposals relating to residential respite care, homecare and residential care home services, as it considered that the level of anticipated savings was low relative to the potential substantial impact on people and the real risks to delivery. The Committee recommended that full consideration must be given to how these services could be maintained and continued on an in-house basis (such as through utilising any commercialisation opportunities) given the potentially high risk relative to the value of the projected savings, and the possibility that it might not be achievable to source an external provider to an equivalent service standard at a viable cost.

The Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee reviewed the potential impacts of the 2024/25 budget proposals on the services delivered by the Growth and City Development directorate. The Committee stressed that full account must be taken of the associated Equality Impact Assessments (as updated where appropriate following the results to the public consultation) in the development of the final proposals for delivering savings, given the potential for the service changes put forward to widen existing inequalities.

The Committee was extremely concerned about the impacts on the most vulnerable people in the city and recommended that everything possible must be done to mitigate against the future demand for statutory services in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping being increased as a result of the proposals, and that full consideration was given to how the free use of accessible toilet facilities could be provided. The Committee also recommend that full consideration should be given to how live information on public transport times could be made easily accessible to everyone travelling in the city by alternative means (particularly when there was service disruption), and that everything possible was done to maintain capacity within the directorate to apply successfully for relevant grant funding opportunities for supporting the services that it delivered.

Improvement and Assurance Board (IAB) Updates

Prior to the Section 114 report issued by the Corporate Director for Finance and the subsequent appointment of Commissioners, the Committee had been receiving

updates on instructions issued by the IAB. This was done at the request of the previous incarnation of the Council's Scrutiny function, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee was updated on progress made against 39 instructions that had been issued by the IAB in February 2023 to bring about change at an increased pace in several areas including governance, finance, transformation, corporate planning, companies, workforce culture, and performance. Members heard that the Council was waiting on the Government's response to the latest report, which was issued in July 2023 with the outcome potentially determining whether Commissioners were appointed and/or a change in status to the IAB. There was a consensus that good progress was being made, however, the Committee queried whether the pace of change was sufficient enough to prevent any further Government intervention.

Transformation Performance

The Committee considered progress made on delivery of the Council's Transformation Programme, including an in-year position. It was outlined that gross 2023/24 transformation savings are made up of both service-led (£3.134 million) and transformation-led savings (£12.537 million). As at period 2, across the total target of £15.671 million, 5.4% had been delivered, 15.6% were on track to be delivered, 28.9% were at amber risk of non-delivery and 50.10% were at red risk of non-delivery. Transformation-led savings were made up of five key programmes: Adults, Children's, Homelessness, Customer Support and Corporate Landlord.

As part of this item, the Committee requested reports on how the overspends within the Children and Adults departments were being addressed given that 50.1% of transformation savings were at risk of non-delivery and these were predominantly within those departments. The Committee expressed concern with the amount of savings at risk of non-delivery and the pressure this was placing on the Council's finances. The Committee also queried how urgent corrective action would be implemented, sought assurance on how the transformation savings could be steered back on course, asked how forecasting could be more accurate, queried the impacts of increased demand, and queried challenges surrounding recruitment and retention.

Members heard that costs had significantly increased due to high demand and the cost of care. Urgent corrective action was being taken to address the shortfall and find savings. This included a mitigation action plan to speed up the delivery of savings and regular involvement of the Transformation Oversight Board to oversee the programmes. As a key workstream within the Committee's remit, Transformation Performance will continue to be reviewed in future Work Programmes, particularly given the importance placed on it within the Council's Improvement Plan.

Performance Management

The Committee was consulted on the new Performance Management Framework (PMF) as an approach to enhance performance monitoring and management. The redevelopment aimed to embed a robust and consistent approach to the use of data,

business intelligence and performance management across the Council, creating a step change in the Council's analytical and performance management offer.

Previously, the Council's approach to performance management focused primarily on the delivery of political manifesto commitments. However, the Council also carries out a wide range of other statutory duties, so the PMF will now report on progress in these areas – which can then be measured both nationally and in relation to other similar Local Authorities. The PMF will have a clear hierarchy of metrics, with reporting to be targeted to the right level at the right time, and monthly and quarterly performance reviews built into the current corporate reporting structures. Members also received an overview of the emerging Office for Local Government (Oflog), which was a new performance body with an aim to provide authoritative and accessible data and analysis. Oflog was established in the summer of 2023 and was in its early stages.

The Committee queried how the performance of the new PMF will be assessed against the previous system to demonstrate better value, and what benchmarking had been done with other core cities to demonstrate that this new framework was appropriate for Nottingham. Members looked forward to reviewing the new PMF once it was fully operational and would work with officers to ascertain how performance data will be assessed by the Council's Scrutiny Committees in the future.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2024-28

The Committee considered the draft EDI Strategy as part of its policy development function and heard that a new EDI Strategy was being produced as part of the Council's continued commitment to tackling inequality and promoting diversity, and to outline the vision for a fully inclusive Council. The draft Strategy sets out four primary strategic outcomes, with focused action plans for implementation to be produced once the Strategy had been finalised. It had been developed to reflect the core values set out in the Council Plan and took into account the views expressed by a wide range of partners and stakeholders.

Although the Committee welcomed the Strategy, a number of queries were raised including action taken to address EDI concerns within the Council, clarification on how stakeholders would be appropriately consulted, ensuring the Council's workforce reflected the diversity of the City, how the success of the Strategy would be measured, and ensuring there are appropriate reporting channels for employees raising concerns. Fifteen recommendations were made to the Executive Member as part of suggested improvements to the Strategy and EDI within the Council. Members requested the Strategy return to the Committee as part of its Work Programme for the 2025/25 municipal year prior to it being formally approved by Executive Board.

The Strategic Council Plan (SCP)

The Committee was updated on the refresh of the SCP, which had been approved at Council on 4 March 2024. The refreshed SCP has been subject to a review of its contents to ensure the statutory and 'business as usual' work remained deliverable

within the available financial envelope. The refresh also included pledges from the Labour Manifesto for 2023's Local Election, which have been assessed for their deliverability within the available finances. This means that the SCP remains fully integrated with the Council's Divisional Business Plans and the MTFP.

The SCP sets out a vision that 'Nottingham is Healthy, Safe, Clean, Green, Proud and Ambitious'. It contains ten outcomes across the three themes of 'People', 'Neighbourhoods' and 'City'. The SCP contains both the statutory duties that the Council discharges and the Administration's 111 pledges made in its Manifesto.

The Committee queried discrepancies and deliverability of the SCP within the context of the 2024/25 budget and MTFP. Members focused on the deliverability of the Plan, ensuring that it reflected the Council's ambitions and the services it was able to offer to residents given its challenging financial situation, and how it would mitigate any impacts on residents as a consequence of service reduction. There were also a number of pledges paused due to a lack of funding and the Committee tested other viable options of achieving those for example through partners such as the City's universities.

5. Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee held nine meetings during 2023/24 to review a range of issues, including:

- Recovering and Sustaining General Practice
- Access to NHS Dental Services
- Hospital Development
- Maternity Services
- Mental Healthcare Services
- Ambulance Waiting Times
- NHS Provider Quality Accounts
- Adult Social Care Transformation
- Winter Preparedness
- The Nottingham City Safeguarding Adults Board

Recovering and Sustaining General Practice (GPs)

The Committee scrutinised access to GPs, the impacts on patient experience and outcomes, and the knock-on issues for other areas of the health system. There are national challenges facing primary care, with GPs representing 90% of patient contact with it. There were 166,000 GP appointments in the Nottingham in July 2023, which was approximately 20,000 higher than the same period in the previous year – 47% were same day appointments and 77% were held face-to-face.

The Committee reviewed the work carried out by the NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) to develop its Primary Care Strategy to empower patients to manage their own health, implement modern GP access to provide rapid assessment and response, build capacity and tackle workforce challenges, and cut bureaucracy – particularly across the interface between primary and secondary care.

The Committee noted the work being done by the ICB to ensure good access to GPs, but considered that more engagement was required with both frontline staff and the most vulnerable patients (who would be particularly difficult to reach) for the Primary Care Strategy to be delivered effectively. The Committee recommended that the ICB considered how it could influence the priority that GPs place on ensuring continuity of care by the same care professional when scheduling and booking appointments for patients, and how to facilitate joint working between secondary care providers and GPs to ensure that patients on waiting lists for specialist care were supporting in 'waiting well'.

Access to NHS Dental Services

The Committee scrutinised the ICB's approaches to improving access to dentistry as part of its new remit for the commissioning of local NHS dental services (including primary care dental services, specialist dental services in primary care and dental services provided by hospitals). The Committee also reviewed how this connected with the Council's Public Health activity in delivering a package of interventions at the individual, community and population levels focused on preventing people from

experiencing poor oral health, improving health and wellbeing outcomes and reducing health inequalities.

The Committee examined the significant challenges both locally and nationally in accessing NHS dental services, with a lack of registration of new NHS dentists and many dentists not taking on new NHS patients. It was estimated that around 631,000 appointments had been lost across the Midlands in primary care dentistry as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, and a treatment backlog still remained. Access for children and young people had been particularly badly affected. A Nottinghamshire Oral Health Needs Assessment was being produced to support the development of the current and future ICB commissioning and procurement plans to meet the requirements of the local population, with a risk assessment undertaken of the potential equality impacts going forward, particularly in the context of the most vulnerable people and communities.

The Committee noted that the ICB was working hard to identify local need and increase provision, but that there was still much more to be done for people to be able to access local NHS dental services easily. The Committee recommended that the ICB should establish an indicative timeline for the planned recovery of access to NHS dental services, with indicators to show what recovery would look like and how it would be measured, and what current recovery initiatives had achieved to date. The Committee also recommended that the ICB engaged with the Council to consider where new housing was being developed to inform dental service commissioning and procurement planning in the context of where future population growth within Nottingham was projected to be, and that consideration was given to whether there was the potential or capacity for more dentists to be trained in the local area.

Hospital Development

The Committee had previously reviewed the development of the 'Tomorrow's Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust (NUH)' programme, which is a capital and service change scheme for the City Hospital and the Queen's Medical Centre funded through the national NHS New Hospital Programme. The ICB and NUH attended Committee meetings on six occasions between September 2020 and May 2022 to provide information and receive feedback on the development of the Tomorrow's NUH project, including sharing details of the public and clinical consultation and engagement carried out and how this had informed the development of the proposals. The ICB then completed a Pre-Consultation Business Case in advance of a public consultation on the proposals, which was planned to be carried out over a 12-week period at a minimum with a target of achieving 10,000 responses.

The Committee scrutinised the proposed scope and conduct of the public consultation. The Committee considered that there should be an appropriate 'green' theme delivered as part of the Tomorrow's NUH proposals, and recommended that detailed work must be done to ensure effective consultation with Nottingham communities (particularly those close to the two hospitals), NUH staff and their unions, and people who primarily use public transport to get to hospital. The

Committee considered that it was vital that the consultation was fully inclusive and accessible.

However, in January 2024, the ICB announced that a new period of strategic development would now take place around the Tomorrow's NUH project, so the public consultation process would be delayed. As such, the Committee will review any revisions to the overall project scope, and the intended approach to carrying out the formal public consultation, with the ICB and NUH at such time as the further developed proposals are put forward.

Maternity Services

In December 2020, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published a report that re-rated the maternity services provided by NUH from 'requires improvement' to 'inadequate'. The CQC also raised concerns about a potential culture of bullying and racial discrimination within the NUH workplace. After receiving a number of reports from NUH, considering the lived experience of a range of parties, engaging with the NHS commissioners and speaking to the union representatives of NUH staff, the Committee wrote to the Secretary of State in March 2022 to raise concerns that NUH had been unable to demonstrate that the necessary improvements were taking place at sufficient pace to provide assurance on the safety and quality of services provided.

In September 2022, the independent Ockenden Maternity Review was established at the national level, in light of the significant concerns raised regarding the quality and safety of maternity services at NUH. The Ockenden Review intends to seek information and recommend actions to help improve the safety, quality and equity of maternity care and the handling of concerns at NUH when they are raised by women and/or their families and staff members. A separate Police inquiry into NUH's maternity services was also begun.

The issues identified by the CQC were significant and reports on NUH maternity services came to ten meetings of the Committee prior to 2023/24. The CQC carried out further inspections in April 2023 and June 2023 and the Committee scrutinised the key findings in relation to maternity services, NUH's leadership, governance and culture, NUH's performance in addressing its 'must-do' and 'should-do' actions, and the intended outcomes of NUH's new Workforce Inclusion Strategy as part of driving improvements within the organisation's leadership and workplace culture.

The Committee recommended that further support was provided to staff to ensure that they had the skills and capacity to engage effectively with patients in writing in relation to any problems or complaints following their discharge from hospital, and that the learning and improvement within maternity services in terms of the duty of candour, addressing complaints, workplace culture, and equality, diversity and inclusion were applied effectively to all other services provided by NUH, as appropriate. The Committee also recommended that the effectiveness of standard operating processes should not be overlooked as part of the wider improvement journey, and that the cultural improvements achieved in engaging internally with staff must also be replicated in the engagement with patients, to ensure that they feel safe and able to speak out if needed.

The Committee reviewed how NUH had carried out a 'People First' review exercise, leading to a new Workforce Inclusion Strategy being adopted on January 2024 as an overarching part of the seven NUH Board priorities for 2024/25. The Strategy incorporated four objectives with 23 high-impact actions for identifying and addressing key barriers to inclusion to ensure that this is integrated within NUH's organisational culture to create a safe and inclusive work environment where every voice is heard, valued and actioned to improve patient care.

The Committee welcomed the Strategy and recommended that it should make clearer reference to the importance of intersectionality and the detail of the particular communities from which NUH staff are drawn, and how overcoming barriers to full inclusivity and belonging would be approached on an appropriately individualised basis, as well as drawing out what inclusivity and belonging means to NUH in terms of gender identity. The Committee also recommend that appropriate positive action should continue to be developed with disadvantaged communities in Nottingham to show that NUH was an accessible and inclusive local employer, with employment opportunities available across a wide range of areas.

Ultimately, the Committee considered that NUH still faced significant challenges, but that it had moved forward towards a good culture of honesty. The Committee's view was that NUH would need to continue the work that has been done over the last year to address the longstanding challenges that remained and implement the improvement activity still required, while the Committee would continue to engage with NUH closely as its transformation journey moves forward to ensure good, safe and accessible services for Nottingham people.

Mental Healthcare Services

The Committee scrutinised the outcomes of the CQC's series of inspections between June and December 2023 of the Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's (NHT's) mental healthcare service provision, as the CQC had received information that raised concerns about the safety and quality of these services. The CQC published its reports in early 2024 alongside a rapid 'Section 48' review that had been commissioned by the Secretary of State, with the ratings levels going down from the 'requires improvement' assessment given previously in 2022 to 'inadequate'. As a result, NHT was placed within Segment 4 of the NHS National Oversight Framework, which is for NHS Trusts where there are very serious and complex issues in relation to service quality and/or finance concerns that require intensive support.

The Committee had engaged with NHT on a number of previous occasions in relation to both its overall service delivery and individual provision, including the transformation work carried out in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic, future mental health service commissioning, psychological services, eating disorder services, the support available to people with co-existing substance misuse and mental health needs and the support offer to people in mental health crisis. A number of the concerns that the Committee had raised with NHT previously were demonstrated in the findings of the CQC reports.

The Committee examined how NHT was working to develop an integrated plan to address the actions and recommendations arising from the CQC reports, and also from associated Prevention of Future Death notices issued by the Coroner and other external reviews. The Committee had substantial concerns about the position at NHT and questioned why it had taken such a long time for it to be recognised that there were significant issues within the organisation, and what elements of the organisational culture had enabled problems to continue for such a period. The Committee considered that ensuring the basic safety of all patients, particularly the most vulnerable, was vital – particularly in the context of supporting them when waiting for assessment and access to services.

The Committee recommended that NHT considered the provision of a local women-only ward for acute mental health emergency care (as the current provision options were either private or out of area), developed effective key performance indicators (fed into by both quantitative data and direct input from patients on their experiences of care, to ensure that the planned improvement outcomes were specific, relevant and measurable), and that feedback from patients on their experiences of care was fully publicised to demonstrate how it has informed improvement planning and delivery.

The Committee also recommended that everything possible was done to ensure that a diverse and representative range of voices of both patients and frontline staff were heard, amplified and listened to as a vital component in improving services through effective co-production, and that past complaints from patients were fully reviewed as part of this process. The Committee considered that an effective communications strategy needed to be delivered in partnership to ensure that people were aware of what was being done by NHT as part of its improvement process, to seek to rebuild trust with both current and past patients and with future service users – particularly in the context of reaching past patients who might be reluctant to re-engage with NHT due to their past experiences.

In terms of specific mental healthcare services, the Committee scrutinised the progress and outcomes of the transformation of NHT's mental health crisis service offer. The NHS Long Term Plan set out an ambition for there to be 24/7, age-appropriate crisis care available via NHS 111. This included a Crisis Resolution Home Treatment service for all adults, integrated crisis provision for children and young people under 18 and their families, the development of local crisis services in addition to those offered within hospital Emergency Departments, a programme for mental health and ambulance services to work together to deliver services, and all general hospitals to have mental health liaison services.

The Committee reviewed how an assessment of NHT crisis services by the ICB identified 19 areas where improvement was needed. NHT commissioned Healthwatch Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to undertake a project that aimed to understand the experiences of people accessing local clinical mental health services and was working together with the ICB to develop an action plan with both service users and partners to address the key recommendations for improvement.

The Committee considered that it was vital to ensure early support to help prevent people from reaching a position of crisis (particularly in the context of preventable

suicide), to enable ease and equality of access to services from wherever a person enters the system, to reduce waiting times and help people to 'wait well', to ensure that transformation is developed through effective co-production with service users, and to ensure proper resourcing of services to meet the required demand.

The Committee recommended that full consideration was given to developing a whole-system approach to the provision of joined-up mental health services, to ensure that a person presenting to one service in the system was not directed to another service simply to then be directed on again. The Committee also recommended that there should be connectivity between different services in delivering the right support centred around the specific needs of the individual, and that NHT worked as closely as possible with other partners both regionally and nationally to generate and apply learning in a systematic and planned way to improve the delivery of effective mental health crisis services for people in Nottingham and improve their care outcomes.

The Committee also scrutinised how psychological therapies were delivered through a stepped care approach, where NHT was responsible for the delivery of Step 4 psychology and psychotherapy interventions for people with severe and recurrent mental health needs and serious mental illness. The Committee considered that there was a clear service gap for people who were in need of longer-term therapy, as the Centre for Trauma, Resilience and Growth that had offered therapies for a period of two years had been closed in May 2023 on the grounds that the services it provided could be moved into the wider Secondary Care Psychological Therapies Pathway for delivery in substantively the same way.

The Committee raised a substantial concern that the longer-term therapeutic support that had been delivered by the Trauma Centre was now not replicated via the thirty sessions available through Step 4. The Committee was also deeply concerned that, if services had been reduced to a significant degree (or even decommissioned), it did not appear to have been consulted by the ICB on this service change, as is required – and that it would raise this matter with the Secretary of State, if necessary.

As a result, the Committee recommended that the service need for longer-term psychological therapy beyond the current Step 4 offer should be assessed and considered for further support provision within existing services where possible, or through additional services commissioned by the ICB. The Committee also recommended that more information was published on the Step 4 service offer and the pathways to it (particularly on NHT's website), and that the ICB gave very careful consideration to how a parity of esteem between the resourcing of physical and mental healthcare needs could be achieved.

Ultimately, the Committee will continue to engage with NHT closely as its significant improvement programme moves forward, and it will be vital to understand how NHT's final Integrated Improvement Plan will be delivered.

Ambulance Waiting Times

The Committee scrutinised the local position in relation to the waiting times for an ambulance, which had seen a significant downturn in performance across the winter

of 2023, and the system-wide approaches that had been put in place by the ICB, the East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EMAS) and NUH to improve performance.

The Committee examined EMAS' response to achieving general service recovery following the Coronavirus pandemic as part of the NHS' national Urgent and Emergency Care Recovery Plan, which included objectives to address the increasing response times to emergency incidents across all ambulance services. EMAS had been asked to produce plans to increase capacity and manage demand to achieve a national emergency incident response time of 30 minutes for 2023/24. The Committee reviewed EMAS' plan, which had been developed around three main focuses to improve the response time to emergency incidents (increasing capacity, managing demand and supporting staff) to deliver an average response time target of 39 minutes 49 seconds for the year. However, a quarter of patients still met with prolonged waits during January 2024 – though the proportion of patient safety incidents and serious incidents remained stable.

The Committee considered the collaborative improvement plan that had been put in place between EMAS and NUH to support ambulance and hospital staff in handing over patients in a timely and effective way, so that ambulances could be freed to respond to new incidents more quickly. NHS England's 'Getting It Right First Time' team had visited NUH and produced a report identifying six areas of focus for improvement, and EMAS, NUH and the ICB were working closely together in order to track and refine the collaborative improvement plan in response.

The Committee welcomed the actions being taken by partners to improve the position, but noted that there was still much more work to be done to deliver an average wait time for an ambulance of under 30 minutes. The Committee recommended that all possible partnership action must be taken to ensure that patients were handed over from ambulances to hospital Accident and Emergency Departments quickly and safely, and then transferred on to the right department within the hospital swiftly and effectively. The Committee also recommend that all appropriate methods were developed to ensure that people who called for an ambulance accessed the right pathway for the appropriate urgent and emergency care for their needs from the triage stage – particularly in the context of someone experiencing mental health crisis.

NHS Provider Quality Accounts

The Committee scrutinised the 2023/24 NHS Quality Accounts, which represent an annual report by healthcare providers on the standard of the services that they provided over the last year. Quality Accounts are published, so they are an important way for local NHS services to highlight their performance and demonstrate the improvements being carried out to the services that they deliver to Nottingham people. The quality of services is assessed by measuring patient safety, the effectiveness of treatments that patients receive and the feedback from patients on their experiences of care.

The Committee received the draft Quality Accounts for NUH, NHT, EMAS and the Nottingham CityCare Partnership Community Interest Company. These were

considered by working groups of Committee members, which met directly with representatives of NHT and NUH in particular to discuss their draft documents.

Although the Committee took assurance from the majority of the Quality Accounts that it reviewed, fundamentally, it was not reassured that NHT's document represented a full and balanced reflection of the significant challenges currently faced by the provider, or that the complete range of patient experiences were reflected. Whilst the Committee recognised that there were examples of good quality care provided by NHT, it had now become widely acknowledged that this was not the universal experience for all patients.

The Committee's ultimate view was that NHT must learn from its past mistakes and, to begin to rebuild trust with patients, it must be honest and transparent about the patient experience. The Committee did not consider that this was properly reflected in the current Quality Account, but it hoped to be able to continue to engage with NHT as it established and developed its transformation journey to ensure the delivery of good, safe and accessible mental healthcare services for Nottingham people.

Adult Social Care Transformation

The Committee scrutinised the ongoing transformation of Adult Social Care services as a key priority for the Council in terms of improving outcomes and delivering savings integral to the Medium-Term Financial Plan. The Committee reviewed the establishment of an online Adult Social Care Portal to act as a quick access point for Social Care advice and support. Online practitioner-facing forms developed as part of the Portal included a Contact and Action Tool, a Strength and Needs Assessment and an Outcome-Focused Care and Support Plan, supported by a tool to provide an Indicative Personal Budget for the Care and Support Plan that was sensitive to the particular care needs.

The Committee also considered the development of the Mental Health Reablement project, which aimed to implement a service that maximised independence, provided more short-term mental health interventions and reduced the need for longer-term care following hospital discharge. The primary objectives were that more citizens with mental health support needs were engaged with and supported with outcome-focussed interventions that delivered financial efficiencies, that more citizens with mental health support needs had strength-based conversations that place the person at the centre of the service to increase choice, control and independence, and that 375 people with mental health needs were engaged with and supported by the Council each year. The Reablement Service was intended to be preventative, with support being offered up to a 12-week period, in advance of any assessment of long-term need being carried out under the Care Act – with the reablement needs of the majority of people to be met within the 12-week period, with only 30% then requiring a Care Act assessment.

The Committee advised that care must be taken to ensure that the proposed 12-week mental health reablement process did not result in unnecessary delays for people with clear, long-term needs from receiving an appropriate Care Act Assessment. The Committee was concerned that ease of access to services

remained an issue and considered that a clear plan of action was required to reduce the current waiting times to reach the Nottingham Health and Care Point.

More broadly, the Committee reviewed the findings of the CQC's pilot assessment of how the Council was meeting its Adult Social Care duties under the Care Act 2014, and scrutinised the work planned to address the overall indicative rating of 'requires improvement'. The CQC inspection focused on the 2022/23 period to a framework that used nine quality statements mapped across four overall themes of 'Working with people', 'Providing support', 'How the Local Authority ensures safety within the system' and 'Leadership'.

The Committee considered the strengths and areas for development within Adult Social Care set out in the CQC report, with areas for improvement including caseload pressures in some teams, confusing or duplicate pathways between some teams and partners, the need to enhance co-production and participation, delays caused by sourcing and availability of suitable accommodation, and the accessibility of information and support for a diverse population. Particular reference was made to how advocacy support could be improved, in addition to access to mental health services. The Committee noted that, nevertheless, the CQC had found that senior staff showed a good awareness of areas that required improvement, and that there was evidence both of progress made to date and plans to achieve further development. However, the CQC considered that there was still work to be done, with this being demonstrated in the mixed feedback from staff and the number of areas identified where transformation work was required.

The Committee sought assurance that work was being developed to move the Council's assessment rating from 'requires improvement' to 'good' in all areas, and that services were fully accessible to the people who needed them. The Committee noted that the results of the CQC inspection would be factored into the development of the Adult Social Care Transformation Single Integrated Delivery Plan (SIDP), and recommended that full consideration was given to how the work with partners across the system could be developed and expanded to ensure that 'every contact counts' for the delivery of Adult Social Care support to vulnerable people at the community level.

The Committee will continue to scrutinise the delivery of transformation within Adult Social Care as it moves forward, particularly through the development of the SIDP.

Winter Preparedness

The Committee scrutinised how lessons learned from the 2022/23 winter period were being used to inform the Winter Plan for 2023/24 and the extent to which services were prepared to manage pressures and respond to need. There are national challenges for winter pressures, including consistently high levels of hospital admissions and demand for social care services. The Committee examined how Adult Social Care worked with the ICB to meet people's care needs at home in winter as much as possible, and to ensure that patients discharged from hospital had appropriate places to go, supported through the Transfer of Care Hub as part of a full system approach to take people from discharge to their preferred care pathway within 24 hours.

The Committee considered how Adult Social Care worked as part of a full system partnership approach to maintaining a good flow into the community from hospital as part of a resilient and responsive process. As part of transformation work within the Council, online projects have been developed as part of a 'reduce, prevent, delay' approach to health and social care intervention. Processes are underway to accredit more homecare providers, with support provided to people being discharged from hospital by booking times for discharge, booking transport and enabling homecare access to their property at the right time.

The Committee considered that the Council and the ICB were taking good steps in partnership to support vulnerable adults during the winter, but advised that careful note should be taken of the feedback from service users on the outcomes they experienced following the changes being made to the processes for the transfer of care.

The Nottingham City Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB)

The Committee scrutinised the work that the SAB had undertaken to safeguard adults in Nottingham through a partnership approach, to what extent it had achieved its Strategic Priorities, and how the experiences and learning arising from 2022/23 influenced the development of the SAB's strategic priorities for 2023/24.

The Committee reviewed the SAB's annual report for 2023/24 to seek assurance that it was discharging its three core duties effectively, being to publish a Strategic Plan to set how had meet its primary objective and what the SAB members did to achieve this, to publish an annual report detailing what the SAB had done during the year to achieve its primary objective and implement its Strategic Plan (and what each SAB member had done to implement it), and the conducting of Safeguarding Adults Reviews.

The Committee welcomed the oversight activity carried out by the SAB, but encouraged it to further develop engagement with under-represented communities and use their feedback to improve outcomes, and strengthen the involvement of service users in safeguarding arrangements. The Committee recommended that close partnership working across the whole system was vital so that victims of domestic abuse did not fall between services. The Committee considered that it should be ensured that the service pathways for support are fully clear to the people who need them, and that all partners are able to signpost people to the right service pathway from wherever in the system they first make contact. The Committee also recommended that all partners across the system should be as consistent and clear as possible in the ways in which they define categories of vulnerability and abuse, so that communities are supported in identifying potential victims and vulnerable people at risk effectively.

6. Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee

The Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee held six meetings during 2023/24 to review a range of issues, including:

- The Nottingham Economic Plan for Growth
- The Nottingham Housing Strategy and the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan
- The East Midlands Combined County Authority
- Social Housing
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping
- Asset Rationalisation

The Nottingham Economic Plan for Growth

The Committee reviewed and provided input into the refresh of the Council's Economic Plan for Growth. This Plan followed on from the Post-Covid Recovery Plan and was a requirement of the Council's Improvement and Assurance Board. Most Core Cities have a clear economic growth strategy, so there is a recognised responsibility within the Council to renew the Economic Plan regularly based on the current economic situation faced by the city – particularly in the context of the establishment of East Midlands Combined County Authority.

The draft Plan contained vision statements for how interventions would be delivered in the areas of Infrastructure and Regeneration, Enterprise and Investment, People and Skills, and City Centres and Neighbourhoods. The Committee explored how the draft Plan considered the urban area of Nottingham as a whole, with neighbouring Local Authorities consulted alongside business partners, Nottingham's universities and other identified stakeholders. The Committee reviewed the emphasis of the Plan on growing and improving the economic activities that Nottingham did well while focusing on areas in need of improvement, and its aim to be inclusive and consider the impact upon identified groups and communities.

The Committee welcomed being consulted on the Economic Plan for Growth in its development stage, recommending that the Executive did everything possible to engage all City Councillors in the production of the document so that their detailed knowledge of the needs and opportunities of their individual wards could be taken into account. Following public consultation, the Economic Plan for Growth 2024-30 was adopted in May 2024.

The Nottingham Housing Strategy and the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan (GNSP)

The Committee reviewed and provided input into the development process for both the new Nottingham Housing Strategy and the GNSP for the future delivery of housing across the wider area. The draft GNSP represents a voluntary partnership between the Greater Nottingham Local Authorities and sets out the strategic planning policies for the area in the context of a consistent policy framework established on a common evidence base to meet the fully assessed need for housing and other developments.

The Committee explored how Nottingham's population was projected to increase by over 15,000 during the next 10 years and the Council's target was for the delivery of an additional 1,170 homes annually until 2028. However, the Government also instructed England's 20 largest cities and towns to increase their housing targets by 35% on top of the base housing need calculation, so the Council's latest Housing Needs Assessment had identified a net requirement for over 1,100 additional rented affordable homes to be delivered each year until 2038.

The Committee reviewed how, as a result, a new Housing Strategy for Nottingham was being developed as a partnership document with input from a range of organisations to set out how the Council and its partners could tackle the housing challenges faced in the city, the vision for housing in Nottingham and the priorities for delivering homes and related services. The Committee examined how the Strategy was intended to set out how a framework to underpin the work being undertaken in the housing sector; establish the relevant national, regional and local context and challenges; aid local decision-making founded on robust evidence; target activity and the investment of limited resources; support actions that best meet citizen needs and expectations; and encourage partnership working to address Nottingham's housing issues.

There have been several rounds of consultation on the content of the GNSP over a long period, and the Committee was able to review the position to date ahead of the publication of the draft GNSP for final consultation. The Committee was also able to provide input before the formal public consultation on the draft Nottingham Housing Strategy took place.

The Committee welcomed the development of these two strategic documents to address future housing needs in the city, and considered that the local Housing Strategy should set out a clear definition of what represents affordable housing for Nottingham communities and embed this within the wider strategic planning for the delivery of genuinely affordable homes. The Committee also recommended that effective business cases for the strategic housing developments identified within the GNSP were put in place so that the upfront funding required to commence these projects could be sought from the new East Midlands Combined County Authority as soon as possible.

The East Midlands Combined County Authority (CCA)

The Committee considered the Council's preparedness for engaging effectively with the new CCA ahead of the election the first Mayor in May 2024. Following the Government's publication of the Levelling Up White Paper in February 2022, the Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire County, Derby City, and Derbyshire County Councils agreed to develop a local devolution deal to improve investment in the area, expand local decision-making, improve living standards and deliver better opportunities and outcomes for residents, businesses and communities. As a result, a devolution deal was agreed between the four Councils and the Government in August 2022. The investment package for the deal was worth more than £4 billion, including a £1.14 billion investment fund and a new City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement of £1.5 billion.

The Committee explored how, working closely in partnership with the CCA's constituent Councils, other public service providers and the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire District and Borough Councils to deliver on local priorities, the Mayor and the CCA would focus on the strategic issues that affected the whole region, including transport, carbon net-zero initiatives and housing provision. The Committee reviewed the Council's preparations for the CCA coming into effect, including the key priority areas of housing and land, skills, transport infrastructure and carbon net zero ambitions. An evidence base had been developed for both strategic-level and delivery workstreams, and there was activity underway to establish a regional investment strategy for the CCA.

The Committee considered that it was vital for the Council to do as much as possible to help local people understand the purpose behind the CCA and its importance for both Nottingham and the wider area, and that the Council continued to work to identify the future workforce skills needs in the city to develop a vision for how investment in these at all ages could be supported through the CCA.

Social Housing

The Committee carried out a great deal of work in relation to the Council's provision of Social Housing, in the context of maintenance and repairs, tenant engagement and consumer standards. The new Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 has strengthened the role and rights of tenants in terms of their influence over the services provided by their landlords. The national Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) now also has new powers to inspect all landlords proactively and regularly, and observe both how landlords makes decisions and how they take account of the tenants' perspective as part of this process.

The Committee reviewed how, since the arm's-length Nottingham City Homes (NCH) was brought back in-house in April 2023, the Council had taken on direct responsibility for housing management and maintenance services, as well as operating the tenant and leaseholder involvement function. With the Council now acting as a corporate landlord, the Committee examined how a new Housing Assurance Board (HAB) was being established so that tenants were empowered to have a meaningful influence on Council decision-making within a formal process.

The Committee considered the Council's response to the RSH's new Consumer Standards for all social housing providers, which came into effect from April 2024. Four Standards, alongside further Tenant Satisfaction Measures, will form the basis of the new regulatory regime, which constitutes a stronger and more proactive approach to improving standards in the sector and holding landlords to account for the service that they provide to their tenants. Given that the RSH inspects larger landlords around every four years and would give around six weeks' notice before an inspection, the Committee sought assurance on the Council's preparedness for inspection, where an internal review of the Standards had been undertaken and been used to develop an Action Plan that was being embedded into each relevant Service Plan.

Repairs and housing maintenance are the most important satisfaction measure for tenants, so performance in this area was examined closely by the Committee, which

reviewed how the Council was aiming to invest around £149 million to improve its social housing stock over the next 4 years, with funding for improvements to make homes warmer and more energy-efficient by installing new kitchens and bathrooms, windows, solar panels and external wall insulation. The Committee sought assurance on how the housing maintenance and repairs service was on an improvement journey and, following NCH being brought in-house, how the Council was developing its understanding of the needed processes following its assuming a corporate landlord function.

The Committee was grateful for the wide range of detail provided in relation to the Council's delivery of social housing and its support for tenants, and intends to keep performance in relation to repairs and maintenance under regular review. The Committee recommended that complaints and resolution statistics were fed into the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Structure at the appropriate point, and that particular consideration was given to how younger and working tenants could be supported in participating effectively within it. The Committee advised that tenants should be able to engage with Housing Patch Managers easily and accessibly, and that the Patch Managers should be trained and supported in delivering the proposed Involvement Structure effectively at the local level.

The Committee recommended that work was carried out as rapidly as possible to ensure that the Council's first inspection assessment rating from the RSH was not adversely affected by 'technical failures' arising from the recent transition for responsibility from NCH, and that investment was made in the development of an enhanced IT system to enable the integrated management of issues raised by Council tenants and the efficient planning of work at their homes.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

The Committee carried out detailed investigations into how the Council responded to its statutory duties in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping, as this was a significant national issue. Specific features of the local housing market, economy and other circumstances had led to the city having a particularly acute problem, so a restructure of the Council's Housing Solutions service was underway as one of the key interventions needed to help address the current need.

The Committee considered the Council's existing Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which was developed in 2019 and was currently in the process of being updated, and how the Strategy draws upon a cross-sector partnership of organisations that have committed to take actions to help prevent and respond to homelessness and its causes. The Committee reviewed how most of the factors leading to increased homelessness often also impact on the number of people rough sleeping, while many people sleeping rough had multiple complex issues and, if housing was provided without appropriate wrap-around support, this would often result in the person sleeping rough again.

The Committee recommended that all possible steps should be taken to engage with both the Home Office and the Probation Service to seek viable advance notice of upcoming evictions and releases of people who could be at risk of homelessness, and that partnership work was progressed with other local Councils both on where

temporary accommodation could be provided effectively and in supporting refugees and asylum seekers to present for housing support within the right Local Authority area. The Committee considered that appropriate steps should be taken to ensure an effective communications campaign at the community level so that people at risk of homelessness were aware of the Housing Solutions support offer, and that all appropriate steps should be taken with partners to ensure the safety of rough sleepers, prioritise support effectively, provide appropriate refuges and combat exploitation.

Asset Rationalisation

The Committee scrutinised the policy, processes and delivery of the Council's Asset Management Programme to identify surplus property assets that could be sold to generate capital receipts, to seek assurance that appropriate assets were being identified for disposal in a way that was timely and transparent.

The Council is a major owner of property assets, which are used to deliver services and support the priorities of the Council Plan. The Committee examined how property assets owned by the Council were used as public resources and how the Council demonstrated a clear benefit to holding them – such as for the direct delivery of services, supporting service delivery, generating a financial return to help fund service delivery or otherwise contribute to the Council's wider economic and strategic objectives. The Committee reviewed how the delivery of capital receipts through property disposals had a direct impact on the Council's cashflow and borrowing requirements and the presumption that, when a property asset became surplus to requirements, it should be disposed of unless there was a strong business case for an alternative use.

The Committee considered the development of the Asset Management Strategy to govern how the Council's significant operational and non-operational buildings would be managed, prioritised for investment or ultimately disposed of if surplus to requirements, and the operation of the interim Asset Disposals Policy to ensure that property decisions were made with clarity, transparency and integrity.

The Committee recommend that it was vital for a formal framework to be completed as soon as possible for considering the balance of community benefit, wider service impact and best value when assessing the potential disposal of a property asset, to inform and support effective decision-making. The Committee considered that a clear, strategic vision for the development opportunities of surplus property assets should be set out so that developers could be engaged with proactively to achieve the best possible returns. The Committee also advised that clear management plans and effective risk assessments should be in place for all void property assets, to reduce the costs incurred during the disposal process as much as possible.

7. Scrutiny Development and the Forward View

The Chairs of the Children and Young People, Communities and Environment, Health and Adult Social Care, and Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committees are also members of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, to seek to ensure that the whole Overview and Scrutiny function delivers a joined-up approach to addressing the major and cross-cutting issues affecting the Council and Nottingham people. Periodic catch-up sessions were held between the Chairs of the five Scrutiny Committees and the Chair of the Audit Committee outside of the formal meetings, to further enhance their visibility of the wider issues. The Scrutiny Committee Chairs also worked to engage with Executive and senior officer colleagues on a regular basis for the purposes of informed horizon scanning.

Starting from early 2024, all of the Scrutiny Committees began to consider what their priority and focus topics could be for the 2024/25 municipal year, producing initial Work Programmes. To support this process, full Action and Recommendation Tracker documents were maintained for each Committee, to help identify and highlight business that Scrutiny would need to focus on, return to or progress further in the future. Appropriate training for new and returning Committee members was also planned to take place from June 2024.

Looking forward, a major focus for all Scrutiny Committees in the 2024/25 municipal year will be to review the delivery and impacts of the extremely challenging 2024/25 Council Budget, and the development of the following 2025/26 Budget. Given the expansion of the Overview and Scrutiny function to constitute five Committees rather than the previous three, Scrutiny is now able to cover a larger field of topics in more detail. As a result, the Committees have been working hard to bring added value to a wider range of issues in the context of how the Council provides its services and the outcomes that they have for Nottingham people – and the Committees will continue to do so during the 2024/25 municipal year and beyond.