

Annual Scrutiny Report

2014/2015



Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Annual Scrutiny Report. The Report highlights key pieces of work each of the Scrutiny Panels and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have completed over the past year.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the three Panels (Education and Children's Services, Neighbourhoods and Community Services and Health) have, once again, had a busy year. This report highlights the key achievements of the Panels and the Committee, so that this report gives a good picture of the big issues that Scrutiny has looked at during the 2014/15 municipal year.

Issues I would like to highlight, in particular, are: the focus of the Health Scrutiny Panel on the recent acquisition of Heatherwood and Wexham Park by Frimley Park NHS Foundation Trust; the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel continued work on Children's Services in Slough and negotiations with the Department for Education and the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel advising the Cabinet to implement changes in street cleaning arrangements at the time of contract retendering. In addition, this year the Overview and Scrutiny Panel commissioned a Task and Finish Group to investigate car parking in the town centre. Scrutiny plays a vital role in providing effective challenge, bringing transparency and examples of best practice into the services we provide to the public, and these issues demonstrate the value that the scrutiny process can bring.

The 2015/16 municipal year promises to be a challenging and rewarding year for Overview and Scrutiny with a review of Neighbourhood Action Groups already agreed and proposals to increase the level of task and finish work being put forward. I look forward to working with all members to ensure that Overview and Scrutiny adds value to the work of the Cabinet and officers across all issues.

I would like to thank my own Vice Chair, as well as the Chairs and Vice Chairs of all the Panels for their support and leadership throughout the year. And on behalf of the all the Chairs and Vice Chairs I would also like to thank all members, officers and partners who have contributed to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny function over the past year.



**Councillor Mohammed Nazir
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

The Overview and Scrutiny Function, established by the Local Government Act 2000, plays the role of critical friend to the Cabinet and other key decision makers.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees were created to:

- hold decision-makers to account;
- challenge performance and help improve services;
- ensure policies are working as intended and, where there are gaps, to help develop policy (through its own policy development work and making recommendations to decision-makers);
- bring a wider perspective, from citizens and stakeholders; and
- examine broader issues affecting local communities.

Through requesting information and questioning decision-makers an Overview Scrutiny Committee can review the quality of local services, hold decision-makers to account (whether the Cabinet or other statutory bodies such as NHS Trusts), and put forward ideas for developing and improving services.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny has set out the four principles for effective scrutiny as:

- critical friendship to decision-makers
- engaging the public, enabling the voice of the public and communities to be heard in the process
- owning the process with non-Executive Members driving the scrutiny process
- making an impact through driving forward improvements in public services

To achieve the desired quality of effective scrutiny, an Overview and Scrutiny function must:

- be independent
- be robust, rigorous and challenging
- fully engage all non-Executive Members
- come from a positive culture that supports and promotes the process
- involve local citizens and service users
- ensure that its purpose is clear and widely understood
- demonstrate the value added
- be creative in its ways of monitoring service performance
- have dedicated resources
- bring the conclusions of its Reviews to the attention of Full Council
- have a comprehensive Member Development programme

The questions an Overview and Scrutiny Function must ask itself in terms of its own effectiveness are:

- Is it effectively holding decision-makers to account?
- Is it helping to improve services?
- Is it building links between the Council, its partners and the community?
- Is it helping to improve the quality of life for local people?
- Is it adding value?

The Annual Report looks to assess the effectiveness of the work done by the Overview and Scrutiny Function at Slough Borough Council in the 2014/15 municipal year, as well as reviewing the changes to the role of scrutiny that have taken place following the passing of the Localism Act, the Health Reforms and the changes in the education landscape, and looking towards the year ahead.

Overview and Scrutiny at Slough Borough Council

The Overview and Scrutiny Function at Slough Borough Council is made up of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and three standing Panels: Health Scrutiny Panel, Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel, and Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel. In addition, each of these three groups can commission task and finish groups to undertake time-limited reviews of specific policy issues.

The Panels enable greater focus on specific subject matter, while the overarching Overview and Scrutiny Committee focuses on cross-cutting issues, corporate, financial and performance management of the Council. The Committee and Panels look to work closely together, using joint meetings where appropriate, to develop their work programmes and effectively scrutinise the work of the Council and its partners.

Members on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and three Panels receive research and administrative support from a dedicated Scrutiny Officer; with Democratic Services also providing committee administration to the main Committee and Health Scrutiny Panel.

Getting Involved

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and all three Panels meet in public, and welcome members of the public who wish to observe proceedings. Task & Finish Groups hold their meetings either in public or closed session as appropriate.

The agendas and related papers are published on the Slough Borough Council website five clear working days in advance of any meeting and are available to download for free.

Member Development

2014/15 saw a series of events held to assist members of scrutiny panels in undertaking their work. The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel held two meetings in the autumn of 2014 to provide information on Ofsted and the responsibilities of local Councillors regarding Ofsted and local schools. In addition, an event was held with head teachers from Slough schools to share information on local provision, and the Chair of the Panel (Cllr Joginder Bal) attended an event organised by the Centre for Public Scrutiny regarding education scrutiny.

The Health Scrutiny Panel undertook a guided tour of facilities at Frimley Park Hospital followed by discussions with senior management on their proposals for Heatherwood and Wexham Park. The Chair of the Panel has also discussed matters with the new board of Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals.

The feedback from these sessions was extremely positive, and has helped build relationships with key organisations and individuals as well as offering advice on skills and overall approach.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Membership:



Councillor Mohammed Nazir (Chair)



Councillor Dexter Smith (Vice Chair)

- Councillor Joginder Bal
- Councillor Wal Chahal (until 20th February 2015)
- Councillor Diana Coad (from 20th February 2015)
- Councillor Nora Holledge
- Councillor Sandra Malik
- Councillor Natasa Pantelic
- Councillor Mandeep Rana
- Councillor Khaula Usmani

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met seven times during the 2014/15 municipal year.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee primarily focuses its attention on the particular Cabinet Portfolios of Finance and Strategy, and Performance and Accountability in planning its work programme for the year.

During the year the Committee considered a range of issues:

- The leisure services strategy
- The work of Aspire For You
- The contract with arvato and partnership working
- Car parking in Slough town centre
- Treasury management and the Slough Borough Council budget
- Estate services
- Capital strategy
- The Five Year Plan
- Children's Services and working with the Department for Education
- Crime and Disorder – Chief Constable
- Quarterly finance and performance monitoring
- Abandoned vehicles and Slough Borough Council's responsibilities

Scrutiny Reviews

Town Centre Car Parking Task and Finish Group

The Committee undertook an in-depth review of parking facilities in the town centre. The Task and Finish Group comprised of Councillors Plenty (Chair), Bal, Mellor, Nazir and Strutton and met in the autumn/winter of 2014/15 to discuss existing policy with officers and observe traffic patterns in Slough town centre.

This Review led to the following recommendations being made:

- 1) that the current policy of zero parking be reviewed, with a future ratio to be specified subject to further research by Slough Borough Council (SBC) and justification;
- 2) that the potential hire of, or use of parking permits with time restrictions in neighbouring parking facilities (e.g. Tesco car park) be researched;
- 3) that the time restrictions on areas with single yellow lines be reduced to 6pm in suitable areas (subject to research by SBC);
- 4) that land adoption be used to increase SBC's control of parking (e.g. Kittiwake House, the area in Mill Street outside Foundry Court);
- 5) that the current limit of 5,000 parking spaces be reviewed, using the justification for it at the time of its creation and variations in the situation since this time (e.g. parking at Tesco's, Crossrail) to reappraise the figure;
- 6) that the parking at Slough railway station be removed from SBC's allocation of parking spaces;
- 7) that the potential expansion of car parking facilities at Slough railway station be investigated;
- 8) that the size of loading and unloading bays be reviewed to facilitate their use by larger vehicles; and
- 9) that further research be conducted into the continuation of free parking after 3pm, or cheaper parking through the use of a 'Slough Card', with a view to a potential increase in high street trade.

These recommendations will be considered by the Cabinet in the 2015/16 Municipal Year.

Health Scrutiny Panel

Membership:



Councillor Natasa Pantelic (Chair)



Councillor Wayne Strutton (Vice Chair)

- Councillor Rayman Bains
- Councillor Avtar Cheema
- Councillor Nimrit Chohan
- Councillor Roger Davis
- Councillor Antreev Dhillon
- Councillor Michael Holledge
- Councillor Mandeep Rana

Non-Voting Co-opted Member:

- Colin Pill (Slough Healthwatch)

The Health Scrutiny Panel met six times during the 2014/15 municipal year.

Taking on responsibility for the Cabinet portfolio of health and wellbeing, as well as holding the statutory responsibility for scrutinising the provision local health services across the Local Authority area. In doing this, the Panel covered a range of issues during the municipal year, including:

- The acquisition of Heatherwood and Wexham Park NHS Foundation Trust
- The joint autism strategy
- The Care Commissioning Group's commissioning strategy
- The Prime Minister's Access Challenge and local access to GPs
- GP out of hours service
- The work of Healthwatch Slough
- Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health Service
- The Better Care Fund
- Adult Safeguarding Annual Report and Strategy
- The Care Act 2014
- Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account 2014 / 15
- Mental Health Care Crisis Concordat

The Panel also reviewed the progress made against the recommendations from the Childhood Obesity Review completed in January 2014.

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Membership:



Councillor Ted Plenty (Chair)



Councillor Anna Wright (Vice Chair)

- Councillor Wal Chahal (from 20th February 2015)
- Councillor Diana Coad (until 20th February 2015)
- Councillor Nora Holledge
- Councillor Sandra Malik
- Councillor Fatima Mansoor
- Councillor Ishrat Shah
- Councillor Karnail Sidhu
- Councillor Paul Sohal

The Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel met seven times during the 2014/15 municipal year.

Taking on responsibility for the Cabinet portfolios of neighbourhoods and renewal, community and leisure, and environment and open spaces, the Panel covered a range of issues during the municipal year, including:

- Performance on the contract for void properties
- Neighbourhood policing and Neighbourhood Action Groups
- Waste collection performance
- Water metering
- Littering and fly-tipping
- Facilities for the disabled at Slough bus station
- The contract for street cleaning and its retendering
- Slough sheds and their use as accommodation
- The Real Time Passenger Information service on buses in Slough
- The policy for allocation of Slough Borough Council housing stock
- Management of garages at Slough Borough Council properties
- The survey of resident satisfaction

Recommendations were made to the Cabinet in March 2015 on improving the monitoring of street cleaning and to review the accuracy of real time passenger information. These were agreed.

The Panel met once as the Crime and Disorder Committee, taking evidence from representatives of the Safer Slough Partnership and commenting on the effective management of the Partnership and looking in detail at the issues of prostitution and the impact of Neighbourhood Action Groups.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

Membership:



Councillor Joginder Bal (Chair)



Councillor Frank Abe (Vice Chair)

- Councillor Preston Brooker
- Councillor Wal Chahal
- Councillor Roger Davis
- Councillor Michael Holledge
- Councillor Sandra Malik
- Councillor Fiza Matloob
- Councillor Paul Sohal

Education Voting Co-opted Members:

- Oxford Diocese Representative (Vacant)
- Northampton Diocese Representative (James Walsh)
- Parent Governor Representative (Vacant)

Education Non-Voting Co-opted Members:

- Maggie Stacey (Head Teacher Representative)
- Lynda Bussley (Primary School Teacher Representative)
- Jo Rockall (Secondary School Teacher Representative)

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel met six times during the 2014/15 municipal year (its sixth meeting will take place on the 15th April 2015).

Taking on responsibility for the Cabinet portfolios of education and children, and opportunities and skills, the Panel covered a range of issues during the municipal year, including:

- Cambridge Education Review of Services
- Children's Centres Inspection and Improvement Programme
- Schools' results
- Children's Services Improvement Programme
- Slough Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2013 – 14
- Cambridge Education Annual Review
- Raising pupil achievement
- School transport
- Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health Services
- The 'Team Around You' initiative
- School places planning
- Information on plans to improve education at Churchmead School and Burnham Park Academy

- Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report
- Schools' exclusion policy