

Annual Scrutiny Report

2012/2013



Foreword

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

The main Overview and Scrutiny Committee and all three Panels have, once again, had a busy year. This report highlights the key achievements of the Panels and the main Committee, so that this report gives a good picture of the big issues that Scrutiny has looked at during the 2012/13 municipal year.

Issues I would like to highlight, in particular, are: the detailed discussions of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel on the measures being put in place to combat the issue of Sheds with Beds in Slough, and the recent Review the Panel held on the problem of traffic congestion on the strategic route network in the Borough and what could be done to improve the situation now and in the future; the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel has continued to provide a key challenge to the work being done under the Improvement Plan as well as specific issues around safeguarding such as Child Sexual Exploitation. In addition, this year the ECS Panel has also focused on education issues around school attainment and places, and recently held a meeting to review the improvement plans being put in place following Churchmead School's inadequate rating from an Ofsted Inspection. 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 2013/14 municipal year promises to be a challenging and rewarding year for Overview and Scrutiny with two full Reviews already in the planning to look at childhood obesity and the effectiveness of our local Accident and Emergency provision. 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 Mewa Mann
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 2012/13 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.

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.

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

Changes in role of scrutiny

Over the course of the past two-three years there have been a number of changes nationally, whose impact has started to be felt in the role of scrutiny this year. Four areas in particular have involved careful consideration of their impact on how the process of scrutiny is undertaken:

- Localism Act
- Health Reforms
- Police Reforms
- Education Landscape

Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act was given Royal Assent in November 2011, and the Slough Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an indepth briefing paper on its implications at its final meeting of the 2011-12 municipal year.

The Act contained provisions on a wide range of service areas, with the broad policy intention of devolving power over a range of services to local communities. In relation to scrutiny, the Act brought increased powers for local government scrutiny in a number of key areas, in particular in its powers over partners. Previous legislation had given Overview and Scrutiny Committees powers to look at the work of partners as long as it linked with local improvement targets under the Local Area Agreement. With these targets abolished, and the Localism Act linking scrutiny's powers to any activities carried out by a named partner as listed in Section 104 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the scope of scrutiny was

opened to take a view of public services as they are delivered across an area, not just those the Council has direct responsibility for.

Health Reforms

The passage of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, which will formally come into force in April 2013, has had a major impact on the governance structure of health care provision across the UK, and subsequently impacts on the role of Health Scrutiny.

There are three elements to the reforms:

- the abolition of Primary Care Trusts (PCT – NHS Berkshire locally) and the establishment of Clinical Commissioning Groups led by GPs to commission health services locally;
- the transfer of public health responsibilities to local government authorities; and
- the creation of Health and Wellbeing Boards to help the integration of commissioning across the NHS, public health and social care services.

Previously health scrutiny bodies had been able to scrutinise decisions taken by the PCT, specifically where it involved a substantial variation to service provision. With the PCT being abolished this alters the governance arrangements and the Health Scrutiny Panel will have to develop suitable relationships with the new bodies being established.

Police Reforms

The Police and Social Responsibility Act received Royal Assent in September 2011. The Act abolished Police Authorities, replacing them with a directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners elected in November 2012. The reforms also called for the setting up of Police and Crime Panels, as the scrutiny challenge to the Police and Crime Commissioners.

Education Landscape

The changes in the provision of education have been coming along for the past two years. Two elements in particular impact on how scrutiny is undertaken going forward: the increasing numbers of academies and free schools; and the changes in the provision of support services to schools. With the increasing independence of schools, and official oversight scrutiny moving away from local authority scrutiny bodies, changes in how traditional scrutiny interacts with schools will have to adapt.

Member Development

2012/13 saw the procurement of three in-depth scrutiny skill set member development sessions, looking specifically at: chairing skills, questioning skills, and forming conclusions and recommendations skills.

These sessions took place between October and December 2012, and were attended by 20 different members of scrutiny (across the three sessions, with five councillors attending all three).

The feedback from these sessions was extremely positive, and changes in approach have been seen following the sessions.

September 2012 also saw the Right Honourable Margaret Hodge MP speak to members of Slough Borough Council on the role of scrutiny at the national level, and

the similarities and differences between the national and local. This was an opportunity to consider how scrutiny is approach in central government and what skills/approaches might be transferrable to the local theatre.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Membership:



Councillor Mewa Mann (Chair)



Councillor Dexter Smith (Vice Chair)

- Councillor Harpreet Aujla
- Councillor Joginder Bal
- Councillor Harjinder Minhas
- Councillor Mohammed Nazir
- Councillor Patricia O'Connor
- Councillor Amrit Sandhu
- Councillor Ishrat Shah

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met ten times during the 2012/13 municipal year.

Taking overall responsibility for the consideration of all scrutiny matters within the Council, the Committee appointed the three standing Panels at its first meeting in May 2012, delegating specific Cabinet Portfolios to each to ensure a comprehensive review of all public services in Slough. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee then primarily focused 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:

- Final proposals for Road Scheme in Chalvey
- Setting of Care Fees
- Outcome of changes to Employment and Disabilities Services
- Establishment of a Local Asset Backed Vehicle (LABV)
- Reviewing first six months of a new Transactional Services contract
- Progress on Britwell Regeneration
- Council Tax Benefits and Budget proposals
- Bus Route Improvements
- Youth Services Review
- Tenancy Strategy
- Crime and Disorder – Chief Constable
- Quarterly finance and performance monitoring

Call-ins

- Cabinet Decision – regarding the disposal of assets on Parlant Road, Slough

The Committee reviewed the call-in on the Cabinet's decision to dispose of assets on Parlant Road at its meeting on the 4 December 2012. The Committee concluded that the decision made by the Cabinet on 19 November 2012 had been reasonable, but did make a recommendation to Cabinet regarding the potential method of disposal.

- Significant Officer Decision – regarding experimental road closure of Northampton Avenue, Slough

The Committee reviewed the call-in of a Significant Officer Decision relating to an experimental road closure on Northampton Avenue at its meeting on the 7 February 2013. The Committee reviewed how the decision had been taken, and in commenting, requested that the consultation and final decision be expedited with a view to concluding it well before expiry of the 18 month period allowed by the traffic order.

Scrutiny Reviews

Foxborough Task and Finish Group

The Committee undertook an in-depth review into the findings of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010, focusing on the Foxborough Ward in Slough, as an area that ranked badly in terms of relative deprivation. The Task and Finish Group made up of Councillors Shah (Chair), Minhas and Plenty met throughout the 2012/13 year investigating how these rankings were put together, what more recent data could tell us about the situation in Foxborough and what we, as a council, could use this information for.

This Review led to the following recommendations being made:

- 1) that the Slough Borough Council representative on the Police and Crime Panel and members of the Safer Slough Partnership ensure that the levels of crime in Slough are accurately articulated through their work to ensure adequate weight is given to the issues affecting the area;
- 2) with a number of gating requests for Foxborough unable to progress due to the activity taking place on a public right of way, that the Cabinet direct the Community Safety Team to develop an alternative option for tackling anti-social behaviour in Foxborough (which could also be used in other areas where similar issues have arisen in terms of anti-social behaviour taking place on a public rights of way);
- 3) that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertake a review of Neighbourhood Action Groups in Slough, looking at how many are in operation, their levels of activity, and what support is available to them;
- 4) that the Cabinet direct the Employability Development Team to investigate the options for increasing the number of Job Clubs in the East of the Borough, currently only served by the once a week club at Langley Library;
- 5) that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the effectiveness of Job Clubs in Slough in the spring 2014, an in particular review the impact of opening the Langley Job Club to more than just Lone Parents from 2013; and
- 6) that the Slough Wellbeing Board consider reviewing levels of health deprivation in Lower Super Output Area EO1016490 and that its findings are provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Childhood Obesity

The Committee approved the Terms of Reference for a review of childhood obesity in January 2013, following motion from Council requesting an investigation of options around allowing A5 (Hot Food Takeaway) Premises within 300-500m of schools in the Borough. This Review is due to take place during the 2013/14 municipal year.

Health Scrutiny Panel

Membership:



Councillor Sukhjit Dhaliwal (Chair)



Councillor Wayne Strutton (Vice Chair)

- Councillor Nimrit Chohan
- Councillor Roger Davis
- Councillor Bharat Mittal
- Councillor Robert Plimmer
- Councillor Mohammed Rasib
- Councillor Amrit Sandhu
- Councillor Mohammed Sharif

Non-Voting Co-opted Member:

- Colin Pill (Slough Local Involvement Network, LINK)

The Health Scrutiny Panel met six times during the 2012/13 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:

- Heatherwood and Wexham Park NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account
- Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account
- Strategy for residential and nursing care
- Shaping the Future (see below for more details)
- Development of the new Clinical Commissioning Group's priorities
- Public Local Account – Adult Social Care
- Mental Health In-patient Provision – action against agreed conditions
- Development of the Slough Wellbeing Strategy
- Governance arrangements for Slough Wellbeing Board
- Adult Safeguarding Annual Report and Strategy
- Transition of Public Health services
- Accident and Emergency provision at Wexham Park Hospital

The Panel also reviewed the progress made against the recommendations from the Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review of car parking at NHS sites across East Berkshire.

Shaping the Future

The proposals put forward by NHS Berkshire constituted a major reorganisation of primary health provision in East Berkshire. The Committee reviewed and responded

to the pre-consultation document published by NHS Berkshire in the summer of 2012. Members then met with the Commissioner for Health and Wellbeing, Councillor James Walsh, to input into Slough's response to the full consultation in the autumn.

This response included some general concerns around:

- the financial viability of the proposals, especially in relation to the future of the Heatherwood and Wexham Park NHS Foundation Trust;
- the apparent strategic gaps in the proposals, which did not include Upton Hospital, while referring to community hospitals in Windsor and Maidenhead;
- the impact of the transition from the PCT to the CCGs in April 2013; and
- the effectiveness of the public engagement events, which in Slough were held on Friday evenings during the winter months.

On the specific proposals, the following comments were made:

- the closure of Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) at Heatherwood Hospital, to be replaced by an Urgent Care Centre (UCC) – no serious concerns were raised but it was felt this did not address pressures at the Accident and Emergency Department at Wexham Park Hospital, and the need for extensive publicity and patient engagement so that the public understood how the provision of services was organised. Slough's response also called for a review of opening hours at the MIU at St Marks Hospital in Maidenhead;
- the move towards stroke and general rehabilitation services in the community, with the closure of Ward 8 at Heatherwood Hospital – serious concerns were raised about this proposal and the potential pressures on community-based services that could follow implementation, and could be passed on to local authorities Adult Social Care budgets in the future; and
- the permanent closure of the Ascot Birth Centre at Heatherwood Hospital – recognising that this would be the formalisation of the current temporary arrangement, there were no concerns raised relating to this proposal; although comment was made about the need to ensure adequate investment would be made in the facilities at Wexham Park Hospital.

Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JEBHOSC)

Membership:

- Councillor Sukhjit Dhaliwal (Chair) – Slough Borough Council
- Councillor Sayonara Luxton (Vice Chair) – Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- Councillor Tony Virgo (Vice Chair) – Bracknell Forest Council
- Councillor Mohammed Sharif – Slough Borough Council
- Councillor Wayne Strutton – Slough Borough Council
- Councillor Sue Evans – Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- Councillor John Lenton – Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (replaced Councillor Endacott during the year)
- Councillor Chas Baily – Bracknell Forest Council
- Councillor Jan Angell – Bracknell Forest Council

In 2012/13 Slough chaired and provided administrative support to the JEBHOSC. The Committee met formally three times in 2012/13 to discuss the proposals put forward by NHS Berkshire under the banner Shaping the Future, and formally responded to the proposals in January 2013.

Whilst full agreement could not be reached within the Committee membership on the proposals relating to the closure of the MIU at Heatherwood Hospital, there was a high level of consensus across all the Local Authorities involved on concerns around patient understanding of what services would be provided at the new UCC in Bracknell, the potential future pressures on social care services following the implementation of rehabilitation in the community, and the appropriateness of the maternity services proposal. Across all of this was also a high level of concern around the financial viability of the proposals being put forward.

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Membership:



Councillor Harjinder Minhas (Chair) Councillor Anna Wright (Vice Chair)

- Councillor Balvinder Bains
- Councillor Joginder Bal
- Councillor Martin Carter
- Councillor Haqeeq Dar
- Councillor Patricia O'Connor
- Councillor Ted Plenty
- Councillor Paul Sohal

Non-Voting Co-opted Members:

- Terry Conroy (Slough Federation of Tenants and Residents)
- Vivianne Royal (Customer Senate) replaced Darren Morris as the Customer Senate Co-optee during the year
- Leaseholder Forum Representative (Vacant)

The Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel met five times during the 2012/13 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:

- Council's draft tenancy agreement
- Extension of dog control orders
- Proposals on re-allocation of specialist appliances by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Housing Services performance
- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
- Review of lessons learned in hosting the Olympics
- Slough Sheds

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 issue of Anti-Social Behaviour across Slough.

Call-in:

- Reviewing – communications around the Bus Station project

The Panel considered the call-in at its meeting on the 10 January 2013. There were three areas of focus: public consultation; the use of the Slough Citizen; and how elected Members were communicated with. The basis for each of these was why there had been surprise from some members of the public about the outside nature of the bus station design. The conclusion of this was that lessons had been learnt from the bus station project, which would be taken forward with other regeneration projects and particularly when dealing with other elements that make up the Heart of Slough project.

Scrutiny Reviews

Traffic Congestion on Slough's Strategic Route Network

The Panel held a meeting dedicated to the issue of traffic congestion on the strategic route network in Slough in March 2013.

With concerns around the capacity of Slough's strategic route network to cope with the current level of traffic, the review focused on three elements which could impact on it going forward: strategic planning, future education provision, and network management.

This Review led to the following recommendations being made to the Cabinet:

- 1) the formation of a Working Group to investigate possible solutions and report back on its findings;
- 2) that this Group include the relevant Cabinet Members (identifying those responsible for Transport and Education specifically) and a Representative from the Scrutiny Function (to be named at a later date); and
- 3) that the Group's Terms of Reference are published, for information, in the next agenda of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

Membership:



Councillor Paul Sohal (Chair)



Councillor Frank Abe (Vice Chair)

- Councillor Preston Brooker
- Councillor Roger Davis
- Councillor Antreev Dhillon
- Councillor Sabia Hussain
- Councillor Sandra Malik
- Councillor Fiza Matloob
- Councillor Ishrat Shah

Education Voting Co-opted Members:

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

Education Non-Voting Co-opted Members:

- Charlie McGeachie (Head Teacher Representative)
- Lynda Bussley (Primary School Teacher Representative)
- Secondary School Teacher Representative (Vacant)

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel met six times during the 2012/13 municipal year (its sixth meeting will take place on the 16 April 2013).

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:

- Safeguarding Improvement Plan (see below for details)
- Child trafficking and sexual exploitation
- School results
- Schools Services Review
- Post-16 School Transport provision
- Annual Report of Independent Reviewing Officers
- Slough Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report
- Governance arrangements for academies
- School places planning
- Churchmead School – Special Measures

The Safeguarding Improvement Plan has, once again, dominated the work of the Panel. However, there has been a strong element of education scrutiny as well during the year.

Safeguarding Improvement Plan

The Safeguarding Improvement Plan underpins so much of the work that the Panel has done this year. With a membership that was relatively new to the subject, it was important to start the year with a full review of where we were in terms of the improvement process and then set out the road ahead. Some members of the Panel, past and present, were involved in the Peer Review that took place in November 2012.

Having received regular updates on the progress of the Plan, as a whole, towards the end of the year, the Panel began to look at individual elements of the process, beginning with Early Intervention. It is expected that this approach will continue into the new municipal year.

Scrutiny Review

School Admissions Information

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel to review the clarity of information provided to parents going through the school admissions process, at both reception and secondary level.

The Panel set up a Task and Finish Group, chaired by Charlie McGeachie, with a membership made up of Councillors Abe, Davis and Shah (replaced by Councillor Malik at the Panel meeting on the 5 February 2013).

The T&F Group reviewed the content of information provided for those going through the admissions process, and considered what needed to be included statutorily, and to assist with applications. The aim was to strip away anything that was not specifically needed to complete the application process so that parents could review just the information that they needed rather than try to work out which parts were relevant to them.

The other part of the review looked at the formats that the information was provided in, and whether better use could be made of electronic formats.

With the Review still to be completed at the time of writing, it is anticipated that the following draft recommendations will be made to the Assistant Director for Achievement and Inclusion, following endorsement by Cabinet:

- 1) that the Assistant Director for Achievement and Inclusion approve the creation of a pamphlet to provide the basic information required to complete the CAF at the primary application level, with details of where more information could be located online;
- 2) that the Assistant Director for Achievement and Inclusion direct the relevant officers to develop a web-based version of the parents guide to admissions, as a detailed support document to the pamphlet. Specific thought should be given to how applicants can navigate through the relevant information for them, a Frequently Asked Questions format could prove the most effective;
- 3) that the Assistant Director for Achievement and Inclusion approve the creation of a pamphlet to provide the basic information required to complete the CAF at the secondary application level, with details of where more information could be located online;
- 4) that the Assistant Director for Achievement and Inclusion approve the production of a FAQ leaflet based on the General Information section of the main admissions booklet; and

- 5) that the Assistant Director for Achievement and Inclusion direct the relevant officers to conduct a Focus Group exercise to test the new pamphlets in advance of them being published.