

# Annual Scrutiny Report

2015/2016



## **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 & Children's Services, Neighbourhoods & Community Services and Health) have played an important role in Slough Borough Council's drive to improve services for residents. 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 2015/16 municipal year as well as anticipating the likely work for 2016/17.

Issues I would like to highlight, in particular, are:

- The joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel regarding the work of the Slough Children's Services Trust. This has subsequently been taken forward by the Panel in its subsequent meetings of 2015/16.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's discussion of the traffic scheme for Burnham Station, which has since been monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel.
- The Health Scrutiny Panel's work on the provision of GP services in Slough, which has led to Councillors discussing local needs with the Care Commissioning Group on an ongoing basis.
- The Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel's work on improving the flow of transport, road safety and enforcement of road regulations in conjunction with the Transport Team.

In addition, this year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a Task & Finish Group to investigate the system of reporting casework for residents. This made a series of recommendations which Cabinet has now requested it to research further. A similar project has now been commissioned on contract management.

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 2016/17 Municipal Year will see further work to bolster this role and provide Members with a forum for genuine policy debate and impact. Initial Member training will provide Councillors with an overview of the major policy areas facing Slough in the coming year, and will allow Members to scope appropriate reviews and meetings for this. This will help ensure that Overview and Scrutiny adds value to the work of the Cabinet and officers.

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 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 and 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 2015/16 municipal year, as well as reviewing the changes to the role of scrutiny that have taken place following the Comprehensive Spending Review, the transfer of services to Slough Children's Services Trust and the launch of the Five Year Plan as Slough Borough Council's overall strategic framework.

## **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 four committees 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 as well as the corporate, financial and performance management aspects of the Council's work. 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 Overview and Scrutiny 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**

2015/16 saw a series of events held to assist members of scrutiny panels in undertaking their work. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee received training on the role of Task and Finish Groups within the scrutiny system; one of the Groups which was discussed at this meeting concerned housing, which is likely to be an important issue in 2016/17.

The Education and Children's Service Scrutiny Panel are also currently scoping the support they will require for 2016/17. During the transition from previous arrangements to the creation of the Slough Children's Services Trust, members of the Panel received regular briefings on the new arrangements. For 2016/17, additional opportunities for mentoring of the Chair, as well as training on the responsibilities of members and the skills required will be provided.

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel has also been provided with support in understanding the overall landscape of healthcare provision. To this end, he has been invited to events run by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, South East Employers and the Thames Valley Health Scrutiny Network covering a range of subjects in the area.

The feedback from these sessions was extremely positive. Training events have also 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 Wayne Strutton (Vice Chair)

- Councillor Zaffar Ajaib
- Councillor Rayman Bains
- Councillor Joginder Bal
- Councillor Nora Holledge
- Councillor Sandra Malik
- Councillor Mandeep Rana
- Councillor Khaula Usmani

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met nine times during the 2015/16 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 call-in of the decision made regarding the road network around Burnham Railway Station and ongoing monitoring of the scheme
- The establishment of Slough Children's Services Trust – project management issues and governance arrangements
- Five Year Plan – themes 1 (Changing, Retaining and Growing) and 3 (Using Resources Wisely)
- The contract with arvato and partnership working
- Local authority partnership purchases
- The initial findings and recommendations of Slough Children's Services Trust (joint meeting with the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel)
- Treasury management and the Slough Borough Council budget
- Council houses rents and charges
- Procurement of the Environmental Services contract
- Universal Credit and the implications for local residents
- Slough Urban Renewal
- Crime and Disorder – Chief Constable
- Quarterly finance and performance monitoring
- Commissioning the Casework Task & Finish Group and Contract Management Task & Finish Group
- Monitoring the progress of recommendations made by the Town Centre Car Parking Task & Finish Group

## Scrutiny Reviews

### Casework Task and Finish Group

The Committee undertook an in-depth review of the system used by Slough Borough Council to record and track the progress made in casework received from residents and Councillors. The Task and Finish Group comprised of Councillors Ajaib (Chair), Chahal, Davis, Matloob and Plenty and met in the autumn of 2015 to discuss the existing system and the potential requirements for any replacement.

This Review led to the following recommendations being made:

- 1) That the possibility of a system upgrade be investigated, with the system requiring the following elements to justify its procurement;
  - The ability to act as a central repository for casework, from submission to completion or final decision;
  - The ability to be interrogated by officers, allowing previous cases on the same policy matters to be found and used in decision making;
  - The ability to be accessed via Councillors' iPads; and
  - The ability to be accessed by residents via the Slough Borough Council (SBC) website to track the progress of their cases.
- 2) For any such system to include automated escalation points, whereby inaction by an established deadline would cause responsible officers to receive an alert;
- 3) SBC officers be asked to establish previous decisions made in comparable cases where applicable, in order to avoid any inconsistencies in decisions made, actions taken or advice given to residents;
- 4) SBC officers to ensure that final responses are sent to residents, with the relevant Councillor copied into the response. Councillors are to be made aware that this is the standard procedure and should not act as spokespeople for decisions made by officers; and
- 5) In cases where the decision made or the action taken has an impact across their ward, Councillors are to inform other Councillors in that ward.

On 8<sup>th</sup> February 2016, Cabinet welcomed the report and endorsed its recommendations in principle. Further to this, it asked the Group to work alongside the Commissioner for Performance and Accountability to take forward the recommendations above.

Officers are currently scoping the issues and options in response to these recommendations.

## **Health Scrutiny Panel**

### **Membership:**



Councillor Zaffar Ajaib (Chair)



Councillor Wayne Strutton (Vice Chair)

- Councillor Wal Chahal
- Councillor Shafiq Chaudhry
- Councillor Avtar Cheema
- Councillor Nimrit Chohan
- Councillor Michael Holledge
- Councillor Natasa Pantelic
- Councillor Ishrat Shah

### **Non-Voting Co-opted Member:**

- Colin Pill (Slough Healthwatch)

The Health Scrutiny Panel met seven times during the 2015/16 municipal year. Taking on responsibility for the cabinet portfolio of health and wellbeing, the Panel also holds the statutory responsibility for scrutinising the provision of local health services across the Local Authority area. In doing this, the Panel covered a range of issues during the municipal year, including:

- The provision of GP services across Slough
- The Better Care Fund
- The impact of the acquisition of Heatherwood and Wexham Park NHS Foundation Trust and the CQC inspection of October 2015
- The Care Act 2014
- The Voluntary Sector Partnership Strategy
- 'Slough Caring for Our Carers' – the Joint Commissioning Strategy
- Adult Social Care – budget, reform and the local account
- The Public Health Grant and the Comprehensive Spending Review
- Mental Health Care Crisis Concordat
- Alcohol abuse and substance misuse
- Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health Services
- Slough Safeguarding Adults – Annual Report 2014 – 15
- Leisure Strategy
- The Slough Walk-in Centre
- Slough Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2015 – 16
- Five Year Plan – Outcome 6 (more people will take responsibility and manage their own health, care and support)
- Transfer of health visitor services
- Measurable outcomes from formal co-operation between Slough Borough Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group
- Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account 2015 – 16

## **Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel**

### **Membership:**



Councillor Ted Plenty (Chair)



Councillor Darren Morris (Vice Chair)

- Councillor Haqeeq Dar
- Councillor Roger Davis
- Councillor Nora Holledge
- Councillor Sandra Malik
- Councillor Fatima Mansoor
- Councillor Paul Sohal
- Councillor Anna Wright

The Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel met six times during the 2015/16 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:

- The subletting fraud amnesty campaign
- Road safety on the A4 in the Brands Hill area
- Real time passenger information for the bus service
- Littering, fly tipping and enviro-crime
- Garages Strategy
- The Environmental Services Contract – bulky waste collection, the service scorecard
- Housing – regulation, key performance indicators, residents' satisfaction, loft insulation and performance management
- The Violence Multi-Agency Panel
- Allotment Service
- Civil enforcement beat coverage for parking offences
- Street lighting
- The work of the Safer Slough Partnership
- Support from Slough Borough Council for Neighbourhood Action Groups
- Prostitution
- Five Year Plan – outcome 4 (Slough will be one of the safest places in the Thames Valley)
- Transport – the Parking Strategy, yellow line enforcement, parking facilities, vehicle activated signs and taxis for schools

The Panel met once as the Crime and Disorder Committee, discussing issues such as cyber crime, engagement with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and intra-family violence. It also appraised the recent work on enviro-crime, with specific reference to the anti-littering project that had been conducted on Slough High Street.

## **Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel**

### **Membership:**



Councillor Natasa Pantelic (Chair from 28<sup>th</sup> January 2016)



Councillor Frank Abe (Vice Chair)

- Councillor Joginder Bal (Chair until 28<sup>th</sup> January 2016)
- Councillor Preston Brooker
- Councillor Avtar Cheema
- Councillor Antreev Dhillon
- Councillor Fiza Matloob
- Councillor Darren Morris
- Councillor Mandeep Rana

### **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 2015/16 municipal year (its sixth meeting will take place on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2016). It also held a joint meeting with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

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:

- School places
- Special Educational Needs – reforms
- Teacher recruitment
- The findings of the 'Team Around You' pilot project
- Slough Local Safeguarding Children Board – Annual Report 2014 – 15
- Children's Services and the transfer of services to Slough Children's Services Trust
- Private Finance Initiative - contract for schools
- Assessment and examination results for 2014 – 15
- Five Year Plan – outcome 5 (children and young people in Slough will be healthy, resilient and have positive life chances)
- Ofsted – inspection of children's services and Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Child sexual exploitation
- Looked after children
- Cambridge Education – annual report and future contractual arrangements
- Corporate parenting

## **References to Cabinet**

The following references to Cabinet have been made by scrutiny in 2015/16. The responses are also recorded.

### **22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015:**

The Town Centre Car Parking Task & Finish Group made the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- That land adoption be used to increase SBC's control of parking (e.g. Kittiwake House, the area in Mill Street outside Foundry Court).

Recommendation approved.

- That the size of loading and unloading bays be reviewed to facilitate their use by larger vehicles.

Recommendation approved.

- 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.

No further immediate action to be taken.

### **19<sup>th</sup> October 2015:**

The Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel made the following references to Cabinet:

- The Panel wished to refer their dissatisfaction on the road lay out for the A4 Brands Hill area to Cabinet, on the grounds of planning, design and implementation. This had led to outstanding safety issues, which rendered the highway as not fit for purpose.

The concerns of the Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel regarding the planning, design and implementation of highway changes on the A4 at Brands Hill were noted. The Cabinet were satisfied that the proper processes had been followed to assess the safety of the scheme, including an independent safety audit, and that the design met all relevant Department for Transport standards and requirements.

Cabinet requested that all outstanding planned works such as the loading ban be implemented as soon as possible.

Cabinet also requested that Officers investigate, and if appropriate implement, further measures including speed reductions, road markings and / or temporary signage, public information and enforcement and report to the Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel in six months. This report was included in the agenda for the Panel's meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

- The matter of the real time passenger information for buses should be referred to Cabinet, with specific reference to the issue of 'ghost buses'.

Cabinet requested that the reference from the Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel, and the response of Officers, in relation to continued concerns about the performance of Real Time Passenger Information for buses be noted.

Cabinet requested that a letter be sent to First stating that the Cabinet considered current performance and detection rates to be unacceptable, and sought further commitment from First to take all necessary practical steps to move towards the 100% target.

Cabinet requested that the data now being received by the Council from other bus operators in Slough be transmitted to the RTPi system at bus stops as soon as possible, and that the Commissioner for Social & Economic Inclusion be informed of the date of implementation.

Cabinet requested that in addition to the steps to maximise the performance of the existing system, Officers undertake a fundamental review of the longer term technological options for Real Time Passenger Information in Slough.

#### **18<sup>th</sup> January 2016:**

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel made the following recommendation to Cabinet:

- All contracts with outsourced service providers must stipulate that they conduct a safeguarding audit to Section 11 (Children's Act 2004) standards to underpin Slough Borough Council's responsibilities in the area.

The Cabinet noted the Panel's endorsement of this policy.

#### **8<sup>th</sup> February 2016:**

The Casework Task & Finish Group made its recommendations to Cabinet. The recommendations and Cabinet response can be found on page 6.