

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Council

DATE: 26 April 2022

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WARDS: All

PART I **FOR ENDORSEMENT**

RECOMMENDATION OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM ITS MEETING HELD ON 7th APRIL 2022

DRAFT ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2021/22

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 That Council is asked to receive and endorse the Annual Scrutiny Report 2021/22, which the Overview & Committee agreed to recommend at its meeting on 7th April 2022 (attached at Appendix A).

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Council is requested to resolve that the Annual Scrutiny Report 2021/22 be endorsed.

Commissioners Review:

“Commissioners note that the annual report recognises that the Improvement and Recovery Plan required by the Directions will include specific proposals to improve the scrutiny function

The budget agreed by the Council for the current financial year will ensure that early action can be taken to support this vital component of a well-run Council.”

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

- 3.1 Overview & Scrutiny plays an important role in scrutinising the progress made in the delivery of all aspects of the SJWS.
- 3.2 Overview & Scrutiny is central to ensuring accountability in the delivery of strategic priorities, including those in the emerging Recovery Plan.

4. Other Implications

(a) Financial

The work of the scrutiny function is included within existing SBC budgets.

(b) Risk Management

Recommendation	Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation(s)
Endorse the Annual Report	The opportunity is to use the Annual Report process to drive forward the improvements that are recognised to be needed to the scrutiny process in Slough.	The report was reviewed by the Committee on 7 th April and presenting the report to Council fulfils the Constitutional requirement.

(c) Legal Implications

The Council has a leader and executive model of governance under the Local Government Act 2000. Under this model, there is a requirement for the executive arrangements of the Council to include provision for the appointment of one or more committees known as overview and scrutiny committees. The arrangements must ensure that this committee has the power to do the following under s.9F(2) of the aforementioned Act:

- (a) to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive,
- (b) to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive,
- (c) to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive,
- (d) to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive,
- (e) to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area

The power of an overview and scrutiny committee under (a) above relates to a power to review or scrutinise a decision made but not implemented and provides the power to recommend reconsideration or to arrange for its function to be exercised by the Council. This power is referred to as call in and the procedure is covered by the terms of reference governing overview and scrutiny.

The overview and scrutiny committee may require members of the executive and officers of the authority to attend to answer questions and may invite other persons to attend meetings of the committee.

The statutory guidance on the role and function of overview and scrutiny committees emphasises the importance of the scrutiny process being led and owned by elected members, as part of their role in creating an organisational culture, behaviour and attitudes that can ensure the scrutiny function succeeds.

Effective scrutiny can and should lead to improved policy-making and the efficient delivery of public services. Low level of support for and engagement with the scrutiny function can lead to poor quality and ill-focused work that serves to reinforce the perception that it is of little worth or relevance. The guidance emphasises the importance of the following in creating a strong organisational culture for effective scrutiny:

- a) Recognising scrutiny's legal and democratic legitimacy.
- b) Identifying a clear role and focus - this should include clear prioritisation to ensure that work is of genuine value and relevance and a clear division of responsibility between the scrutiny function and the audit function.
- c) Ensuring early and regular engagement between the executive and scrutiny.
- d) Managing disagreement - whilst scrutiny has the power to "call in" decisions, this should not be a substitute for early involvement in the decision-making process.
- e) Providing the necessary support.
- f) Ensuring impartial advice from officers - the statutory governance officers and scrutiny officer have a particular role in ensuring that timely, relevant and high-quality advice is provided to scrutiny.
- g) Communicating scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider authority.
- h) Maintaining the interest of full Council in the work of the scrutiny committee - the annual report being presented to full Council is a requirement, but consideration should be given to regular reports that supplement this annual report.
- i) Communicating scrutiny's role to the public.
- j) Ensuring scrutiny members are supported in having an independent mindset.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There are no Equality Impact Assessments required as a result of this report.

5. **Supporting Information**

- 5.1 At the last meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee for each municipal year the committee receives the draft Annual Scrutiny Report.
- 5.2 Annual reports are an opportunity to review the scrutiny work programme for the past year and assess the impact scrutiny has had on influencing policy. Looking at an annual report can help us to understand the nature of the work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny and to assess its effectiveness. It also gives an opportunity to reflect on any lessons learned during the year to help guide future work.
- 5.3 The production of an annual report is a constitutional requirement and in addition the committee "must report annually to the full council on future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate." The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is provided with a draft of the Annual Scrutiny Report which highlights some key achievements from the year where scrutiny has made a difference.
- 5.4 This year the structure of the report has been altered to try to focus on particular examples of effective scrutiny by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the three scrutiny panels, specifically the comprehensive scrutiny of budget savings across 8 dedicated meetings of scrutiny over the year.

5.5 As part of its review of the draft Annual Report, the Committee discussed the improvements councillors wished to make in the next year, which will be included in the Scrutiny Improvement Plan to be produced in accordance with the Directions to the Council.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

6.1 The Annual Scrutiny Report was considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 7th April 2022 and it was agreed to recommend that Council endorse the document as at Appendix A to the report.

7. **Conclusion**

7.1 The Local Authority, through its Overview and Scrutiny Function, has an influential, as well as statutory, role in scrutinising the activities and performance of the Cabinet and External Bodies (e.g. Thames Valley Police). The Annual Scrutiny Report provides an opportunity to communicate the work the committee and its panels have undertaken, challenges faced and the improvements made as a result of scrutiny.

8. **Appendices Attached**

A Draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2021/22