

REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

This Annual Report reviews Overview and Scrutiny activities in 2013/14.

Introduction

- 1.1. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has a number of roles in its terms of reference:
 - scrutiny of the decision making process;
 - monitoring the Council's performance;
 - operating as the "Audit Committee" of the Council;
 - operating as the "Crime and Disorder 'Scrutiny' Committee";
 - supporting the strategic development of policy proposed by the Executive;
 - review of specific services;
 - reviewing issues of concern to local people;
 - "Call in" of Executive decisions;
 - participating in Joint Scrutiny arrangements in Surrey;
 - monitoring and scrutinising the activities of others;
 - considering 'Councillor Calls for Action';
 - considering petitions (removed during 2013/14).
- 1.2. The Committee consists of 15 Members and establishes Review Panels to undertake detailed work on a 'task and finish' basis. These Panels mostly consist of five members. Panel recommendations are presented to the Committee; the Executive and/or Council.
- 1.3. In 2013/14 the advance questioning procedure was utilised for a number of the Committee's activities.
- 1.4. The Committee continued the arrangement of holding Portfolio Holders to account for their responsibility areas by inviting them to present their objectives, recent achievements, current challenges and future priorities to the Committee.
- 1.5. The eMembers Room (Members' extranet) continued to provide Members with access to information to support its role and includes:
 - performance information including Internal Audit review reports;
 - responses to Member questions raised at its meetings;
 - Scrutiny Panel reports.
- 1.6. The Membership, Terms of Reference of the Committee and attendance at the Committee and its Panels are given in Annex 1.

2. Holding the Executive to Account

- 2.1. The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, together with Executive Members and/or Management Team representatives, supported our scrutiny activities and attended meetings of the Committee and Scrutiny Panels.
- 2.2. The Committee held the Leader and Executive Members to account through:
 - the attendance of the Deputy Leader and Executive Members at the Committee or its Panels to explain how the Executive proposed to deliver its plans and strategies; and
 - Executive Members presenting their objectives to the Committee.

3. Executive Member Objectives

- 3.1. The following Executive Members presented their objectives to the Committee:
 - Councillor Mrs R. Renton, Executive Member for Health, who gave an update on the Council's work to support and improve Health (September 2013);
 - Councillor A.J. Kay, Executive Member for Recycling and Street Services, who provided an update on the performance of the recycling and street services (December 2013);
 - Councillor R.C. Newstead, Executive Member for Economy and Jobs, who informed the Committee about the Council's work to support the local economy and businesses (January 2014);
- 3.2. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to examine in detail the work of portfolio holders, to test the relationship of this work to the Council's corporate objectives and to scrutinise the performance of the Council's services.
- 3.3. Councillor V.W. Broad, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance, also attended the Budget Scrutiny Panel to support the Panel's work.

4. "Crime and Disorder 'Scrutiny' Committee"

- 4.1. The Committee again held an annual meeting as part of its 'Crime and Disorder' responsibility and scrutinised the activities and decisions of the Community Safety Partnership, as well as considering the Community Safety Partnership Plan for 2014/15.
- 4.2. Representatives from Surrey Police and Surrey County Council, as key community safety partners, were invited to attend the meeting and supported the Committee in its scrutiny activity.

5. Work with Housing Partners: Housing Associations

- 5.1. The Committee received a report on the performance of the Housing Associations (Registered Providers) that provide affordable housing in the Borough. There was a particular focus on Raven Housing Trust as the largest provider of social housing in the area, and the Committee met with the Chief Executive of Raven Housing Trust to discuss their performance and the current issues they are facing. The Committee also examined the impact of recent welfare reforms on tenants and the Trust, and the likely impact of the delayed introduction of Universal Credit.

6. Welfare Benefits Reform Briefing

- 6.1. At the request of the Chairman, the Committee was briefed by Simon Rosser, Revenues and Benefits Manager, about the effects of the Welfare Benefits Reform that came into effect in April 2013. The briefing covered the local Council Tax Support scheme, Housing Benefit implications and an overview of the work being done to prepare for the Universal Credit proposals.

7. Sutton and East Surrey Water

- 7.1. Anthony Ferrar (Managing Director), Lester Sonden (Engineering Director) and Stuart Hyslop (PR and Communications Consultant) from Sutton and East Surrey Water (SESW) presented to the Committee a summary of recent performance as well as their draft 5 year business plan, which they were to submit to OFWAT.
- 7.2. Members were invited to submit advanced questions for consideration by SESW in their presentation, and further questions and comments were raised by the Committee, at the conclusion of which it was able to provide clear feedback regarding the elements of SESW's 5 year plan that they did and did not support.
- 7.3. The Committee found this exercise extremely informative and requested that representatives from Thames Water be invited in 2014/15 so that their proposals for the next 5 year plan period may be understood alongside those of SESW. The Committee hopes through this activity to achieve comprehensive scrutiny of the work of the water companies that serve the Council's residents.

8. Performance Monitoring

- 8.1. The Committee monitored the Council's performance on a quarterly basis. This included reviewing the following information:
- financial, service and risk management performance; and
 - wider economic indicators and issues that affect public services.
- 8.2. The detailed information on performance variances and responses to Member questions was provided in the eMembers Room in support of this activity. More detailed information on service performance was available from the eMembers Room.

9. Audit

A Internal Audit

- 9.1. There were 9 Internal Audit reviews undertaken by Baker Tilly (the Council's Internal Audit contractor) in the 2013-14 period up to the end of March. Each report was provided on the eMembers Room and Members were encouraged to submit advance questions to Committee meetings on a quarterly basis.
- 9.2. As delegated in the Council's Constitution, the Committee considered the Internal Audit Strategy and Audit Plan for 2013/14 at the end of 2012/13, and this year considered the Internal Audit Strategy and Audit Plan for 2014/15. The Internal Audit Strategy and Audit Plan identifies key risks facing the Authority, and the risks identified for 2013-14 were monitored throughout the year via the Internal Audit reviews.

- 9.3. The Committee noted that overall the Auditors indicated that adequate and effective risk management, control and governance processes were in place to manage the organisation's objectives.

B External Audit

- 9.4. The Committee received the annual report for the 2012/13 financial year from the External Auditors (KPMG). The report was very positive regarding the Council's processes and confirmed that the Council had proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

10. Joint Scrutiny Arrangements in Surrey

- 10.1. Though the Committee has the facility to undertake joint scrutiny, no such reviews took place in 2013/14. The facility will be utilised in the future should a topic be identified that meets the criteria for collaborative scrutiny.

11. Strategy and Policy Development

- 11.1. The Committee commented on the following draft strategies and policies:
- Treasury Management Strategy
 - Update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (through the budget scrutiny process)
 - Community Safety Partnership Plan

12. Operational arrangements

- 12.1. As the Chairman of the Committee I had regular meetings with the Chief Executive which focussed on delivering the Committee's work programme. I am particularly appreciative of this involvement and for the support of the Chief Executive at our meetings.

13. Review Panels

- 13.1. The Committee had one Review Panel this year as detailed below.

Budget Scrutiny Review Panel (Chairman: Cllr. N.D. Harrison)

- 13.2. The Budget Scrutiny Review Panel had one meeting and reviewed the Service & Financial Planning (Provisional Budget) 2014/15 report.
- 13.3. The Panel undertook a very robust review and considered over 80 advance questions along with further questions and comments that were raised within the meeting.
- 13.4. The Panel recognised and appreciated the significant amount of work that had gone into preparing the service and financial plans for 2014/15 and concluded that the proposals were both positive and strong. They highlighted a number of key risks to be monitored throughout the year but considered that these risks were presently being well managed.

14. 'Call-in' of Executive Decisions and Petitions

- 14.1. No Call-in's or Petitions were received during 2013/14. During 2013/14, Petitions were removed from the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

15. Conclusion

- 15.1. The Committee has worked on behalf of the community in scrutinising the decision making process, hearing Executive Member reports, and monitoring the Council's performance, as well as contributing to strategic policy development. All of this activity is of great value in assisting the Council to uphold a consistently high level of service.
- 15.2. The Council continues to respond well to current financial pressures and to manage its processes in an efficient manner. The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has maintained a streamlined approach in 2013/14, and in developing its work programme for 2014/15, in order to remain in alignment with this.
- 15.3. In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Terms of Reference, the Council is requested to note this Annual Report.

**COUNCILLOR B.A. STEAD
CHAIRMAN,
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP 2013/14

All Councillors, except Members of the Executive, may be Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Panels appointed by it. However, no Member may be involved in scrutinising a decision in which he/she has been directly involved.

For information, the Membership of the Committee during 2013/14 was as follows:-

Councillor B.A. Stead (Chairman)

Councillors	M.A. Brunt	Councillors	S. Parnall
	J. Durrant		D.J. Pay
	J.C.S. Essex		D.T. Powell
	K. Foreman		S. Rickman
	N.D. Harrison		Mrs D.A. Ross-Tomlin
	E.J. Humphreys		J.M. Stephenson
	G.L. Norman		M.A. Vivona

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are set out below:-

(a) **Scrutiny**

- Review and scrutinise decisions made by, and the performance of the Leader / Executive decision maker, Committees and Council Officers excluding decisions on individual applications/cases;
- Review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets or particular service areas;
- Make recommendations to the Leader / Executive decision maker, Committees or the Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process;
- Review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies.

(b) **Policy Review and Development**

- Assist the Council [and the Executive] in the development of its budget and policy framework;
- Conduct research, community and other consultation on policy issues and possible options.

In relation to (a) and (b) above:

- Question the Leader / Executive decision maker, Committees, Directors, Chief Officers or Service Managers;
- Liaise as necessary with external organisations;

- Question and obtain confirmation/advice from any other person/organisation.

(c) Budget/Resources

- To exercise responsibility for resources allocated to support the work of the Committee.

(d) Audit Responsibilities

- To consider the effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements.
- Approve the Council's internal audit strategy and monitor performance.
- Review summary internal audit reports and the main issues arising, and seek assurance that appropriate action has been taken where necessary.
- Receive the annual report of the Chief Internal Auditor.
- Be consulted upon reports received from External Audit and other inspection agencies.

(e) Crime and Disorder

- That for the purposes of the Police and Justice Act 2006 that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be designated as the Crime and Disorder Committee with the following remit:
 - (a) To review or scrutinise decisions made, or action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions;
 - (b) To make reports or recommendations to the responsible authority(s) with respect to the discharge of those functions.

(f) Joint Scrutiny

- The scrutiny and reporting functions set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Local Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees) (England) Regulations 2009 and any amendments made thereto, and in particular:
 - (a) The scrutiny of the improvement targets contained in the Surrey Local Area Agreement; and
 - (b) To make reports or recommendations to the LAA partners with respect to the matters that relate to a relevant LAA target.

(g) Petitions

- That for the purposes of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be responsible for considering petitions received under the Petition Scheme that fall into the following categories:

- Petitions requiring a senior officer to give evidence to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
- Appeals from Petitioners who are not satisfied with the response to a petition.

(h) Generally

- To report annually to the Council on the Committee's work and (following consultation with the Executive) upon the future Work Programme for the Committee.
- To appoint panels as necessary to carry out and report upon the work of the Committee.
- To consider any valid Councillor Call for Action.
- To ensure effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and procedures.

ATTENDANCE 2013/14

Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
No. of Meetings Held	Members	No. of Meetings Attended Not including 5 March or 26 March
7 Up to 5 March	Councillors B.A. Stead (Chairman) M.A. Vivona (Vice Chairman) M.A. Brunt J. Durrant J.C.S. Essex K. Foreman N.D. Harrison E. Humphreys G.L. Norman S. Parnall D.J. Pay D. Powell S. Rickman Mrs D.A. Ross-Tomlin J. Stephenson	4 2 3 4 4 4 3 4 4 4 3 4 4 3 2

REVIEW PANELS 2013/14: ATTENDANCE

Panel	No. of Meetings Held	Members	No. of Meetings Attended
Budget Scrutiny Review	1	Councillors N.D. Harrison (Chairman) J.C.S. Essex K. Foreman S. Parnall B.A. Stead J. Stephenson M.A. Vivona Note: Councillor V.W. Broad, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance, also attended	1 1 1 1 - - 1