

REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

This Annual Report reviews Overview and Scrutiny activities in 2014/15.

1. 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'.
- 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 2014/15 the advance questioning procedure was utilised for a number of the Committee's activities, to the benefit of both the Committee and those attending at its request. This procedure has worked well as it provides Members more time to research issues and prepare questions in advance. It also enables Officers, Members and external guests to prepare more detailed responses.
- 1.4. The Committee continued the arrangement of holding Executive Members 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;
 - presentations received 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 Leader, 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.
- 2.3. The Leader, Deputy Leader and Councillor G.J. Knight, Executive Member for Finance, attended the Budget Scrutiny Panel to support the Panel's scrutiny.
- 2.4. Councillor T. Schofield, Executive Member for Planning and Development, attended the Local Development Framework Scrutiny Panel and supported the Panel's work.
- 2.5. Councillor J. Durrant, Executive Member for Licensing & Enforcement, attended the Committee's annual 'Crime and Disorder' meeting to support the scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership.

3. Executive Member Objectives

- 3.1. The following Executive Members presented their objectives to the Committee (in chronological order):
 - Councillor A.J. Kay, Deputy Leader, who provided a briefing on the new Executive's aims, objectives and methods of working (October 2014);
 - Councillor Mrs R. Renton, Executive Member for Housing & Welfare, who gave an update on the Council's work to address rising levels of homelessness (January 2015);
 - Councillor V.W. Broad, Leader of the Council, who informed the Committee about the work of the Executive during 2014/15 (March 2015).
- 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.

4. "Crime and Disorder 'Scrutiny' Committee"

- 4.1. The Committee again held an annual meeting as part of its 'Crime and Disorder' responsibility. The Committee scrutinised the activities of the Community Safety Partnership and performance against the Reigate and Banstead Community Safety Plan in 2014/15, as well as considering the priorities of the East Surrey Community Safety Partnership for 2015/16.
- 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 Registered Providers (previously known as Housing Associations) that provide affordable housing in the Borough.

- 5.2. 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 service performance and the issues they were currently facing.
- 5.3. The Committee explored the impact of recent welfare reforms on tenants and the Trust, and the likely impact of the delayed roll out of Universal Credit. The Committee also considered the challenges around the provision of temporary and permanent accommodation to meet present demand, the appropriateness of rent increases, and the complexities surrounding the eviction of tenants.

6. Thames Water

- 6.1. Following a productive meeting with representatives of Sutton and East Surrey Water (SESW) in 2013, the Committee welcomed representatives of Thames Water in October 2014. Rob Nason (Water Network Regional Performance Manager) and Hilary Murgatroyd (Local/Regional Government Liaison) gave a presentation to the Committee which covered Thames Water's responsibilities within the borough, their response to the adverse weather of the previous winter and lessons learned from this, and their level of involvement in local planning matters.
- 6.2. Members were invited to submit advance questions for consideration by Thames Water in their presentation, and further questions and comments were raised by the Committee regarding localised network issues and the company's spending proposals for the 2015-20 period.
- 6.3. The Committee found this process extremely informative and, alongside its previous scrutiny of SESW, considers that it has achieved comprehensive scrutiny of the work of the water companies that serve the Borough.
- 6.4. The Committee has requested that a similar exercise in external scrutiny be undertaken in 2015/16 with local health service providers, in order to understand how health and social care are integrating locally in response to national legislation and initiatives.

7. Performance Monitoring

- 7.1. The Committee continued to monitor 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.
- 7.2. 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 also available from the eMembers Room.

8. Audit

A Internal Audit

- 8.1. There were 11 Internal Audit reviews undertaken by Baker Tilly (the Council's Internal Audit contractor) in the 2014-15 period up to the end of March, of which 7 had final reports available. One further review is underway and will be reported in 2015/16. Each final report was provided in full on the eMembers Room and Members were encouraged to submit advance questions to Committee meetings on a quarterly basis. These were generally positive, and no reports required the attention of the Committee by exception.

- 8.2. As delegated in the Council's Constitution, the Committee considered the Internal Audit Strategy and Audit Plan for 2014/15 at the end of 2013/14. The Internal Audit Strategy and Audit Plan for 2015/16 will be considered by the Committee at its first meeting of that Municipal Year. The Internal Audit Strategy and Audit Plan identify key risks facing the Authority, and the risks identified for 2014-15 were monitored throughout the year via the Internal Audit reviews.
- 8.3. In March 2015, the Committee considered and agreed the strategic and operational risk registers for 2015/16.
- 8.4. 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

- 8.5. The Committee received the annual report for the 2013/14 financial year from the External Auditors (KPMG) in October 2014. The report was unprecedented in that not a single recommendation had been given, and the Auditors had issued an unqualified Value for Money conclusion, confirming that the Council had proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

9. Joint Scrutiny Arrangements in Surrey

- 9.1. Though the Committee has the facility to undertake joint scrutiny, no such reviews took place in 2014/15. The facility will be utilised in the future should a topic be identified that meets the criteria for collaborative scrutiny.

10. Strategy and Policy Development

- 10.1. The Committee commented on the following draft strategies and policies:
 - Treasury Management Strategy 2015/16;
 - Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015-20 (through the budget scrutiny process);
 - 5 Year Plan 2015-20;
 - Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (through the LDF Panel process);
 - Community Safety Partnership Plan;
 - Schedule of meetings 2015/16.

11. Operational arrangements

- 11.1. 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.
- 11.2. I am equally grateful for the support provided by the Leader of the Council, with whom I met on a 6-monthly basis to discuss the work of the Executive and the work of the Committee, and how these could continue to support and complement each other. In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Procedure Rules, the Committee's work programme for 2015/16 was discussed with the Leader.

12. Review Panels

- 12.1. The Committee had two Review Panels this year, as detailed below.

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

- 12.2. The Budget Scrutiny Review Panel had one meeting and reviewed the Service & Financial Planning (Provisional Budget) 2015/16 report, which incorporated the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015-20.
- 12.3. The Panel undertook a very robust review and considered over 70 advance questions along with further questions and comments that were raised within the meeting.
- 12.4. The Panel recognised and appreciated the significant amount of work that had gone into preparing the service and financial plans for 2015/16 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 being well managed.

B Local Development Framework Scrutiny Review Panel (Chairman: Cllr M.A. Brunt)

- 12.5. The Local Development Framework Scrutiny Review Panel had one meeting and reviewed the Community Infrastructure Levy Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule as part of the formal consultation process on this document.
- 12.6. The Panel undertook a thorough review of the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule proposals and made a number of comments for submission to the Executive and for consideration in the production of the Draft Charging Schedule.

13. 'Call-in' of Executive Decisions

- 13.1. No Call-in's were received during 2014/15.

14. Conclusion

- 14.1. The Committee has worked on behalf of the Council and community in scrutinising the Council's decision making process, holding Executive Members to account, and monitoring the Council's performance, as well as contributing to strategic policy development. All of this activity adds great value to the Council's processes and assists the Council to uphold a consistently high level of service.
- 14.2. The Committee recognises that 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 2014/15, and in developing its work programme for 2015/16, in order to remain in alignment with this.
- 14.3. 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 2014/15

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 2014/15 was as follows:-

Councillor B.A. Stead (Chairman)

Councillors	M. Blacker	Councillors	S. Parnall
	J.C.S. Essex		D.T. Powell
	S. Farrer		S. Rickman
	K. Foreman		Mrs D.A. Ross-Tomlin
	N.D. Harrison		P. Shillinglaw
	R.S. Mantle		J.M. Stephenson
	G.L. Norman		Mrs R. Turner

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) 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 2014/15

Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
No. of Meetings Held	Members	No. of Meetings Attended Not including 25 March
5 Up to 25 March	Councillors B.A. Stead (Chairman) J. Stephenson (Vice Chairman) M. Blacker J.C.S. Essex S. Farrer K. Foreman N.D. Harrison R. Mantle G.L. Norman S. Parnall D. Powell S. Rickman Mrs D. Ross-Tomlin P. Shillinglaw Mrs R. Turner	5 5 5 3 2 5 4 1 4 4 4 3 4 2 3 3

REVIEW PANELS 2014/15: ATTENDANCE

Panel	No. of Meetings Held	Members	No. of Meetings Attended
Budget Scrutiny Review	1	<p>Councillors N.D. Harrison (Chairman) J.C.S. Essex R. Mantle D. Powell B.A. Stead J. Stephenson* M.A. Vivona</p> <p>* Substituted by Councillor Mrs C.E. Poulter</p> <p>Note: Councillors V.W. Broad, Leader of the Council, A.J. Kay, Deputy Leader, G.J. Knight, Executive Member for Finance, and K. Foreman, also attended</p>	<p>1 1 1 1 1 - 1 1</p>
Local Development Framework Scrutiny Review Panel	1	<p>Councillors M.A. Brunt (Chairman) M. Blacker K. Foreman G.L. Norman M.J. Selby</p> <p>Note: Councillor T. Schofield, Executive Member for Planning & Development, also attended</p>	<p>1 1 1 1 1</p>