

**REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16**

**This Annual Report reviews Overview and Scrutiny activities in 2015/16.**

**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 2015/16 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. Councillor G.J. Knight, Executive Member for Finance and Councillor Mrs R. Renton, Executive Member for Housing & Welfare, attended the Budget Scrutiny Panel to support the Panel's scrutiny.
- 2.4. The Leader, Deputy Leader, and Executive Members for Finance (Councillor G. Knight), Housing & Welfare (Councillor Mrs R. Renton), Property & Regeneration (Councillor Mrs N. Bramhall), Planning & Development (Councillor T. Schofield), and Health & Ageing Well (Councillor Dr L. Hack) attended the Committee meeting at which the report of the Budget Scrutiny Panel was received and considered, to further support this process.
- 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 E. Humphreys, Executive Member for Economy & Jobs, who provided a briefing on progress against the Council's Economic Prosperity Action Plan (September 2015);
  - Councillor Dr. L. Hack, Executive Member for Health & Ageing Well, who gave a presentation on the Council's work to progress its Health and Ageing Well Action Plans, and supported the Committee at two meetings with Local Health Service partners (October 2015 and February 2016);
  - Councillor Mrs R. Renton, Executive Member for Housing & Welfare, who gave an update on the Council's ongoing work to address high levels of homelessness (January 2016).
- 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 East Surrey Community Safety Partnership (ESCSP) in 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, as did the Chair of the ESCSP.

- 4.3. The Committee investigated in questioning a wide range of community safety issues, and explored the working arrangements, successes and future plans and priority setting processes of the ESCSP, noting that the formal priority setting process for 2016/17 was underway and due to be considered further at a Partnership meeting in June 2016.

## **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. The Committee welcomed Councillor Mrs R. Renton, Executive Member for Housing & Welfare, and Councillor Mrs J. Bray, one of the Council's representatives on the Board of Raven Housing Trust, to support their consideration of the report.
- 5.3. The Committee considered how the social housing sector was changing, particularly with the introduction of welfare reforms (including the roll-out of Universal Credit) and new legislation such as the Housing & Planning Bill, all of which was placing additional pressure on housing associations and contributing to increasing levels of homelessness. The Committee had particular regard to the necessity of housing associations and the Council working together in a way that was mutually beneficial and provided the best outcomes for residents of the borough.

## **6. Local Health Services**

- 6.1. Following productive meetings with local utility providers in 2013/14 and 2014/15, the Committee continued seeking to add value to the work of the Council through engagement with external bodies in 2015/16. The Committee chose to focus particularly on those partners whose work supported the priorities set out in the Council's 5 Year Plan 2015-20.
- 6.2. As such, the Committee welcomed representatives of Epsom & St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust and Surrey & Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust in October 2015, and representatives of East Surrey CCG and Surrey Downs CCG in February 2016. Representatives of Surrey County Council's Adult Social Care unit were also invited but were unable to attend in February 2016.
- 6.3. Presentations to the Committee and the subsequent discussions were both wide-ranging and thorough, but in summary they covered recent performance, successes, current challenges faced, projections for the future, engagement with patients and stakeholders, and strategies for improvement. There was a recurrent theme to the discussions that focused on the need and shared desire for greater joint working between all agencies to ensure an efficient flow of patients through hospitals and the wider health and social care system.
- 6.4. The Committee found this process to be an extremely positive and constructive one and considers that it has achieved a comprehensive scrutiny of the work of key healthcare providers serving the Borough. Invited partners were also positive about the process, and this exercise has supported well the Council's wider drive towards increasing dialogue and productive engagement with partner agencies.
- 6.5. The Committee has requested that a similar approach to external scrutiny be undertaken in 2016/17, focusing again on partner bodies whose work contributes to the achievement of the Council's 5 Year Plan priorities. These are likely to include

the Council's community centre and leisure centre operators, and the Reigate & Banstead Voluntary Service, all of which have strong links to 5 Year Plan objectives around encouraging healthy lifestyles, supporting older people to stay healthy and independent, and encouraging community volunteering.

## **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;
- wider economic indicators and issues that affect public services; and
- performance against the 5 Year Plan 2015-20.

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.

7.3. The advance questioning procedure was utilised to support each quarterly performance report, and the Chief Executive, in regularly supporting meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, was able to answer additional questions on performance. Where the Chief Executive was unable to attend, the Deputy Chief Executive or appropriate Management Team representative attended to provide continuity of support to the Committee.

7.4. The quarterly reports showed that the Council continued to perform well. Any comments from the Committee on performance were reported to the Executive for their consideration.

## **8. Audit**

### **A Internal Audit**

8.1. There were 12 Internal Audit reviews undertaken by Baker Tilly (the Council's Internal Audit contractor) in the 2015/16 period up to the end of February, of which 6 had final reports available. The remainder are underway and will be reported in 2016/17. 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. In June 2015 the Committee considered Baker Tilly's Annual Internal Audit Report for the year ended 31 March 2015, which provided a positive opinion on the overall adequacy of and effectiveness of the organisation's risk management, control and governance processes.

8.3. As delegated in the Council's Constitution, the Committee considered the Internal Audit Strategy and Audit Plan for 2015/16 at the end of 2014/15. The Internal Audit Strategy and Audit Plan for 2016/17 are on the Agenda for consideration by the Committee at this meeting. The Internal Audit Strategy and Audit Plan identify key risks facing the Authority, and the risks identified for 2015/16 were monitored throughout the year via the Internal Audit reviews.

8.4. In March 2016, the Committee considered the strategic risk register for 2016/17 and had the opportunity to make any comments to the Executive.

## **B External Audit**

- 8.5. The Committee received the annual report for the 2014/15 financial year from the External Auditors (KPMG) in September 2015.
- 8.6. The Committee were pleased to note that KPMG had been extremely positive regarding the quality of the Annual Financial Report, and the Auditors had issued an unqualified audit opinion as well as an unqualified Value For Money conclusion. This confirmed 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 2015/16. 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 2016/17;
  - Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17-20/21 (through the budget scrutiny process).
- 10.2. In December 2015, the Committee received and considered the report of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken in September 2015. The Committee had the opportunity to make comments on the feedback from and recommendations of the Peer Challenge, which were considered in the development of the resulting Action Plan (approved by the Executive in January 2016).
- 10.3. The Committee also received and contributed observations to the Executive on the Schedule of Meetings for 2016/17.

## **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 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 2016/17 was discussed with the Leader.

## **12. Review Panels**

- 12.1. The Committee had one 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) 2016/17 report.
- 12.3. The Panel undertook a very robust review and considered over 90 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 2016/17 and concluded that the budget proposals were sound, balanced and achievable. This also applied to the updated Capital Programme, Medium Term Financial Plan, and to the proposed creation of an Income Equalisation revenue reserve.
- 12.5. The Committee highlighted a number of key risks to be monitored throughout the year but considered that these risks were being closely and well managed.

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

- 12.6. The Local Development Framework Scrutiny Review Panel was constituted in October 2014 on an ongoing basis, with a remit to consider emerging planning policy documents, in particular the Development Management Plan (DMP) and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Whilst it had been anticipated that the Panel would meet to consider emerging DMP consultation documents in 2015/16, a lengthening of the timetable for progression of the DMP, approved by the Executive in November, meant that no further documents were made available within this Municipal Year.

**13. 'Call-in' of Executive Decisions**

- 13.1. No Call-in's were received during 2015/16.

**14. Conclusion**

- 14.1. The Committee recognises that the Council continues to respond well to 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 2015/16, and in developing its work programme for 2016/17 has sought to continue this.
- 14.2. Nevertheless, the Committee has worked hard 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.
- 14.3. The Committee has in 2015/16 continued to expand its approach to external scrutiny as a means of adding additional value to the work of the Council, and through taking a positive approach to engagement with partner bodies has conducted a thorough and productive investigation of local health services.
- 14.4. 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 2015/16

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 2015/16 was as follows:-

Councillor B.A. Stead (Chairman)

Councillors	D. Allcard	Councillors	N.D. Harrison
	M. Blacker		S. Kulka
	J. Clarke		R.S. Mantle
	R.Coad		S. Parnall
	J.C.S. Essex		D.T. Powell
	K. Foreman		Mrs D.A. Ross-Tomlin
	Dr Z. Grant-Duff		J.M. Stephenson

### 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 Heads of Service;
- 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 2015/16**

<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>No. of Meetings Held</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>No. of Meetings Attended</b> Not including 13 April
7 Up to 13 April*	Councillors B. Stead (Chairman)	6
	S. Parnall (Vice Chairman)	6
	D. Allcard	6
	M. Blacker	6
	J. Clarke	6
	R. Coad	7
	J. Essex	6
	K. Foreman	7
	Z. Grant-Duff	6
	N. Harrison	7
	S. Kulka	6
	R. Mantle	5
	D. Powell	3
D. Ross-Tomlin	5	
J. Stephenson	5	

**REVIEW PANELS 2015/16: ATTENDANCE**

Panel	No. of Meetings Held	Members	No. of Meetings Attended
Budget Scrutiny Review	1	Councillors N.D. Harrison (Chairman) M.S. Blacker R.W. Coad J.C.S. Essex J.S. Godden B.A. Stead J. Stephenson  Note: Councillors G.J. Knight, Executive Member for Finance, and Mrs R. Renton, Executive Member for Housing & Welfare, also attended	1 1 1 1 1 - 1