



SIGNED OFF BY	Head of Legal and Governance
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TO	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE	Thursday, 18 March 2021
MEMBER	Chair of Overview & Scrutiny, Councillor N. Harrison

KEY DECISION REQUIRED	N
WARDS AFFECTED	(All Wards);

SUBJECT	2020/21 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report
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RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for this year be noted and recommended to Council.
- (ii) That any additional observations be made to Council on 8 April 2021.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee serves as a critical friend to the Council and Executive. Being able to hold an authority's decision-makers to account is important to the successful functioning of local democracy, governance and leadership. Effective scrutiny helps secure the efficient delivery of public services and drives improvements. The Annual Report of the Committee provides a summary of the work of the Committee during 2020/21 to Full Council for approval at its meeting on 8 April 2021.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Scrutiny Panels examine whether Council services and policies are being delivered in the most efficient and effective way possible, and whether they are meeting the needs of local residents, businesses and users of Council services.

There are strong performance management arrangements in place and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives management information quarterly.

The Annual Report of the Committee provides a summary of the work of the Committee in 2020/21 to the Council. This report therefore supports awareness of the role and actions of the Committee by the Council.

The above recommendations are subject to approval by Full Council.

STATUTORY POWERS

1. The requirement for local authorities in England to establish overview and scrutiny committees is set out in sections 9F to 9FI of the Local Government Act 2000, as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The functions of the Committee are set out in the Council's Constitution and in the terms of reference of the Committee.

BACKGROUND

2. This Annual Report 2020/21 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee sets out the work of the Committee in 2020/21. Membership and attendance information for the year is set out in Annex 1. The Committee's Annual Work Programme 2021/22 is set out in a separate report to the Committee for consideration by Executive in March and approval by Full Council in April.

ANNUAL REPORT

3. This report reflects the work of the Committee during an unprecedented year for the Council, as Members and Officers responded to the continuing COVID-19 global pandemic emergency to support its residents, keep services operating and plan the recovery work. The Committee scrutinised this fast-changing programme of work through its Recovery Scrutiny Panel reports to Committee meetings throughout the year.
4. In line with all Council meetings, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continued its scrutiny online with virtual Committee meetings held remotely from June 2020. No planned meetings were cancelled, and the full Committee met 7 times on 11 June 2020, 10 September 2020, 22 October 2020, 9 December 2020, 21 January 2021, 18 February 2021 and 18 March 2021. Three Scrutiny Panels were constituted and completed their work and recommendations in 2020/21: Budget Scrutiny Panel, Recovery Scrutiny Panel and Evaluating O&S Panel. An additional meeting was arranged for a Call-In of the Executive decision on Environmental Sustainability on 27 August 2020.

Holding the Executive to Account

5. Executive Members, the Interim Head of Paid Service, Directors and Officers supported the Committee's scrutiny activities and attended meetings of the Committee throughout the year. Executive Portfolio Holders and Officers attended and supported three Scrutiny Panels.

6. The Committee held the Leader and Executive Members to account through:

- The attendance of the Leader, the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holders at the Committee or its Panels to explain how the Executive proposed to deliver its plans and strategies; Portfolio Holders presenting and reporting on their work and objectives for each of their service areas and responding to questions from the Committee.
- Considering a number of proposed Executive decisions and providing commentary and recommendations to the Executive where judged appropriate.

Leader's Updates

7. Councillor Brunt, Leader of the Council, provided briefings on the work of the Council at the Committee meetings in September 2020 and January 2021. This included leadership updates on the COVID-19 emergency responses during 2020, the Council's Recovery programme and the planning for the second wave of the coronavirus which came in December 2020 and January 2021. The Leader briefed the Committee on Council initiatives and projects, future challenges and engagement between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Executive Member Objectives and Updates

8. Executive Members presented the work and objectives of their service areas to the Committee under the three corporate themes of Organisation, People and Place.

Organisation Executive Updates – 9 December 2020

9. Councillor Schofield, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance, gave an overview of Finance and Governance service areas. This included updates on Service and Financial Planning, Treasury Management and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2023/24 and Legal and Governance areas.

10. Councillor Archer, Portfolio Holder for Investment and Companies, gave an oversight of the Council's commercial agenda, investments and companies, and other work overseen by the Commercial Ventures Executive Sub-Committee.

11. Councillor Lewanski, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Policy and Resources, provided a briefing on Council's Performance Management, Corporate Policy, ICT, Legal and Customer Contact areas.

People Executive Member Updates – January 2021

12. In January, the Committee received a briefing from the People Portfolio Holders on the People service areas.

13. Councillor Knight, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Support, gave an overview of the work on the Housing Delivery Strategy, housing support, homelessness as well as the work of Family Support and Money Support teams during the pandemic and the work of Housing Benefits and Fraud.

14. Councillor Horwood, Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Culture gave an overview of Leisure Centres and Leisure Strategy as well as the role of the Harlequin during the emergency response.

15. Councillor Ashford, Portfolio Holder for Community Partnerships, gave an update of the voluntary work during the pandemic as well as an update on the future strategy of the three Community Centres in Banstead, Woodhatch and Horley.

Place Executive Member Updates – March 2021

16. In March, the Committee received briefings from the three Place Portfolio Holders on the Place service areas.

17. Councillor Biggs, Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy, provided an update to the Committee, on the Council's work within the Planning Policy and Local Plan, CIL, Transport, Building Control and Place Projects & Delivery.

18. Councillor Humphreys, Portfolio Holder for Economic Prosperity, provided a briefing on the Council's ongoing work to support local businesses with government grants and employment support during a year of lockdown for local businesses, including closure of retail and hospitality, employee furlough schemes and support for self-employed residents.

19. Councillor Bramhall, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, gave an update on her portfolio areas which included Environmental Health Licensing, Waste and Recycling, Greenspaces and Fleet and Cleansing services.

20. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to examine in detail the work of Executive 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.

Annual Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny – 'Crime and Disorder'

21. On 18 February 2021, the Committee held an annual meeting as part of its scrutiny responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Reduction Act 1998 and the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 on 18 February 2021. Councillor Ashford, Portfolio Holder for Community Partnerships, gave an overview of the Council's work with Surrey Police and Surrey County Council over the last year.

22. The Surrey Police Borough Commander for Reigate and Banstead, Inspector Alex Macguire, and the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner, David Munro, attended as key community safety partners.

23. The Committee questioned the speakers on a wide range of community safety issues such as tackling domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, cannabis community protection notices, domestic abuse, serious organised crime response and explored the current activity areas and priority concerns.

Performance Monitoring

24. The Committee continued to monitor the Council's performance. This included reviewing the following information:

- Service Performance Management (quarterly)
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (quarterly)
- Revenue and Capital Management (quarterly)
- Budget Monitoring (quarterly)
- Performance and achievements during the final year of the Corporate Plan 2015-20 and update on the Corporate Plan 2020-25
- Annual Internal Audit report for 2019/20 (in June 2020)
- Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

25. The quarterly performance reports and KPIs showed that the Council continued to respond well to the pandemic with officers across the organisation redeployed to assist critical services where required and to continue to work remotely to maintain 'business as usual' services for residents. Any comments from the Committee on performance were reported to the Executive for their consideration.
26. An updated reporting template ensured the indicators included enhanced narrative about each indicator. More detailed reporting information on the performance of Council services was provided via programme dashboards.

Advance Questions

27. The Advance Questioning procedure was used to support Member questions on quarterly performance reports as well as advance questions on published reports and presentations in advance of formal Committee meetings (such as Portfolio Holder briefings).
28. The Interim Head of Paid Service, Directors, Monitoring Officer and relevant Heads of Service supported meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to answer additional questions on the Council's performance or via written answers.

Strategy and Policy Development

29. The Committee commented on the following draft strategies and policies:
- Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21
 - Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21-23/24 (through the budget scrutiny process)
 - Commercial Strategy Part 1
 - Environmental Sustainability Strategy

The Committee also received information on the Corporate Five-Year Plan 2020-25 and Housing Strategy 2020-25 as part of briefings provided by Executive Members

Companies performance

30. The Committee received two Companies Performance Update reports into the progress of companies owned and part-owned by the Borough Council.

Calendar of Meetings for 2021/22

31. The Committee received and considered the Calendar of Meetings for 2021/22.

Scrutiny Review Panels

32. The Committee constituted three Scrutiny Review Panels this year, as detailed below.

Budget Scrutiny Review Panel (Chair: Councillor N. Harrison)

33. Councillor Brunt, Leader of the Council, and Councillor Schofield, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance, attended the Budget Scrutiny Panel in December, to support the Panel's scrutiny of the Council's Service and Financial Planning for 2021/22. These councillors also attended the Committee meeting at which the report of the Budget Scrutiny Panel was received and considered, to further support this process, and respond to questions from the Committee.
34. The Budget Scrutiny Review Panel reviewed the Service & Financial Planning (Provisional Budget) 2021/22 report. The Panel undertook a robust review and considered 80 advance questions along with further questions and comments that were raised within the meeting.
35. The Panel recognised and appreciated the significant amount of work that had gone into preparing the service and financial plans for 2021/22 and concluded that the budget proposals were sound, balanced and achievable.
36. The Panel considered that the potential negative impact of the savings and growth proposals on service delivery to be minimal and concluded that the Council was managing its finances well on behalf of its residents. It noted that the Council expects to balance the books through drawings on specific and general reserves, about £800,000 in total. The major cause is the loss of revenue from services such as car parking and leisure services, which will only recover as the country moves out of lock down. The degree of continuing coronavirus funding from Government will be a key factor in the amount to be drawn from reserves. Going forward, implementation of the Council's Commercial Strategy is vital to meeting the budget gaps in future years, as government funding is further reduced. On this basis, it recommended that the Committee was supportive of this realistic approach to budget planning.

Recovery Scrutiny Panel (Chair: Councillor Harrison)

37. The Panel met three times on 15 July and 14 October 2020, and 14 January 2021 and reported after each meeting to the Committee. The Panel was set up to scrutinise the Council's recovery work following the March 2020 lockdown due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and the Council's ensuing emergency response. Councillor Schofield, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance and Governance, attended each Panel meeting and responded to Member questions on the recovery programme with support from the Head of Corporate Policy, Cath Rose.
38. The Panel completed its work and agreed that future oversight of this activity takes place with regular updates to the Committee. It sought assurance that work will continue to ensure that the Council's communications strategy to residents is effective on Covid messaging. Members recognised that new ways of working established during the pandemic would become business as usual including remote ICT arrangements.

Evaluating Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Chair: Councillor Walsh)

39. Members considered and discussed the findings and recommendations from the Evaluating Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Minutes from the Panel meetings that took place on 14 July and 20 August 2020. The Panel set out eight recommendations which included the use of time-limited scrutiny panels, actively

reviewing the current work programme at Committee meetings, focused meetings with the use of the Advance Questioning procedure as an efficient way of giving officers and Executive Members a steer on areas of interest so they could prepare a full response at each meeting.

Commercial Strategy Scrutiny Panel

40. This was constituted at 18 February 2021 Committee (with meetings to be scheduled) to support the ongoing development of the Council's Commercial Strategy.

Call-in of Executive Decisions

41. There was one Call-In of Executive Decisions during 2020/21 on the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. The commitment to produce a new Environmental Sustainability Strategy was included in the Reigate & Banstead 2025 corporate plan in January and the strategy, action plan and performance measures were approved by the Executive on 28 July 2020. Strategy themes and priority areas of focus included energy and carbon use, low impact consumption and natural environment and biodiversity. The action plan set out the 24 objectives and 100 plus activities with a timeframe for delivery. An Overview and Scrutiny Committee call-in took place on 27 August 2020 and the Committee resolved that the strategy should be implemented without delay. A report came back to the Committee in December for further scrutiny.

Operational arrangements

42. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, had regular meetings with the Interim Head of Paid Service and Director of People (Mari Roberts-Wood), Director of Commercial and Investments and Monitoring Officer (Caroline Waterworth), Director of Place (Luci Mould), Interim Finance Manager (Pat Main), and relevant Heads of Service. This focused the planning and delivering of the Committee's work programme. In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Procedure Rules, the Committee's work programme for 2020/21 was discussed with the Leader.

Conclusion

43. The Committee recognises that the Council continues to focus on outcomes for residents and businesses and is responding well to continuing financial pressures and managing its processes in an efficient manner. The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has maintained a streamlined approach in 2020/21 and in developing its annual work programme for the coming year 2021/22 has sought to continue this.
44. 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 such as the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. All this activity, with the support of the Leader and Deputy Leader, adds great value to the Council's processes and assists the Council to uphold a consistently high level of service.

OPTIONS

45. The Committee has the option to support the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2020/21 and make any additional observations.

46. The Committee has the option not to support the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2020/21. This is not the recommended course of action.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

47. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is a strategic function of the authority and central to the organisation's corporate governance.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

48. There are no direct financial implications arising from the annual report.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

49. The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

50. The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy/maternity; race; religion/faith; sex and sexual orientation. In addition, marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

51. The Committee should ensure that it has regard for these duties by considering them through the course of its work. This should include considering:

- How policy issues impact on different groups within the community, particularly those that share the nine protected characteristics;
- Whether the impact on particular groups is fair and proportionate;
- Whether there is equality of access to service and fair representation of all groups within the Borough;
- Whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people, are being realised.

COMMUNICATION IMPLICATIONS

52. There are no significant communications implications arising from this report.

CONSULTATION

53. In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny arrangements contained in the Council's constitution, the Committee's Annual Report was discussed with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

ANNEXES

54. Annex 1 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2020/21 - Membership and Member Attendance