



<b>SIGNED OFF BY</b>	Head of Legal and Governance
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<b>TO</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>DATE</b>	Thursday, 17 March 2022
<b>MEMBER</b>	Chair of Overview & Scrutiny, Councillor N. Harrison

<b>KEY DECISION REQUIRED</b>	N
<b>WARDS AFFECTED</b>	(All Wards);

<b>SUBJECT</b>	2021/22 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 7 April 2022.

**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 2021/22 to Full Council for approval at its meeting on 7 April 2022.

**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 2021/22 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 2021/22 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee sets out the work of the Committee in 2021/22. Membership and attendance information for the year is set out in Annex 1. The Committee's Annual Work Programme 2022/23 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 continued to respond and to plan the recovery work from the COVID-19 global pandemic emergency to support the borough's residents and keep services operating. The Committee scrutinised this fast-changing programme of work through updates to Committee meetings throughout the year.
4. Overview and Scrutiny Committee held a mix of meetings – either in the New Council Chamber, Town Hall, or continued its scrutiny online with virtual Committee meetings. No planned meetings were cancelled, and the full Committee met eight times on 17 June 2021, 15 July 2021, 9 September 2021, 21 October 2021, 9 December 2021, 20 January 2022, 24 February 2022 and 17 March 2022. Four Scrutiny Panels were constituted and completed their work and recommendations in 2021/22: Budget Scrutiny Panel, Commercial Strategy Scrutiny Panel, Hybrid Working Scrutiny Panel and Local Plan Scrutiny Panel.

## **Holding the Executive to Account**

5. Executive Members, the 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 four 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 July 2021 and January 2022. This included leadership updates on the COVID-19 emergency responses and the recovery work during 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 – 21 October**

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, COVID-19 budget impacts, Medium-Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25 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, commercial strategy 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, Organisational Development and HR, Legal and Customer Contact areas.

### **People Executive Member Updates – January 2022**

12. In January, the Committee received a briefing from the People Portfolio Holders on the People service areas.
13. Councillor Neame, Portfolio Holder for Housing & 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 Sachdeva, Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Culture gave an overview of Leisure Centres and Leisure Strategy as well as the Harlequin as it recovers from the pandemic.

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

### **Place Executive Member Updates – March 2022**

*(Clerk's note - will be updated after 17 March O&S)*

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 24 February 2022, 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. 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 attended as key community safety partners.
23. The Committee questioned the speakers on a wide range of community safety issues such as *to be added after the meeting eg 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)
  - Update on the Corporate Plan 2020-25 (Reigate and Banstead 2025 Annual Report 2020/21).
  - Environmental Sustainability Strategy – Progress Report 2021
25. The quarterly performance reports and KPIs showed that the Council continued to respond well to the pandemic and the recovery work with officers across the organisation redeployed to assist critical services where still 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. More detailed reporting information on the work of Council services was provided via programme dashboards available on the Members’ area of the ModGov intranet.

### **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 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:
- Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 - 2026/27 (through the budget scrutiny process)
  - Commercial Strategy Part 2
  - Capital Investment Strategy 2022/23
  - Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027

### **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 2022/23**

31. The Committee received and considered the Calendar of Meetings for 2022/23.

### **Work of Raven Housing Trust**

32. The Committee received a presentation from directors of Raven Housing Trust Directors at their meeting on 9 September 2021. Director of Customers and Partners, Amy Cheswick, and Jo Hills, Director of Assets & Services, gave an update to Members which included service delivery and challenges, performance, future development, joint venture between Raven and RBBC, Regeneration, investment and repairs and its net carbon zero programme.

### **Community Centres**

33. At its meeting on 15 July 2021, the Committee considered the future transformation of the three community centres in Banstead, Woodhatch and Horley. The report to

the Committee set out the progress made and public surveys that had been carried out. The new multi-use community centres will continue to welcome existing users but plan to offer services for more residents of different age groups. The survey showed there was huge interest from people who wanted a place to meet and connect with others. Members asked a range of questions from learning and development to remit with older people.

### **Scrutiny Review Panels**

34. The Committee constituted four Scrutiny Review Panels this year, as detailed below.

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

35. Councillor Brunt, Leader of the Council, and Councillor Schofield, Deputy Leader and 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 2022/23. 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.
36. The Budget Scrutiny Review Panel reviewed the Service & Financial Planning (Provisional Budget) 2022/23 report. The Panel undertook a robust review and considered 60 advance questions along with further questions and comments that were raised within the meeting.
37. The Panel recognised and appreciated the significant amount of work that had gone into preparing the service and financial plans for 2022/23 and concluded that the budget proposals were achievable and realistic and based on sound financial practices and reasonable assumptions.
38. The Panel noted the national and local policy context and significant uncertainties at that stage of the budget-setting process. It noted that the Service and Financial Planning 2022/23 report forecast a budget gap of over £700k. The Panel reviewed savings proposals in service delivery: to pause the Medium Grants and Small Grants scheme, to withdraw the taxi voucher scheme and to reduce the Borough News publication to a single issue a year, and asked they be reconsidered. It expressed concerns about recent inflationary pressures with short-term inflation well above the Bank of England 2% target which would put unbudgeted upward pressure on the cost of goods and services and on staff costs/pay demands. It supported initiatives to look at potential future cost savings. The Panel also noted that no substantial additional commercial income from investments was included in the current 2022/23 budget.
39. The Budget Scrutiny Panel report and recommendations was reported to the main Committee at its meeting on 9 December 2021. The Committee debated the findings such as budget savings, taxi vouchers, Medium Grants and Small Grants and Environmental Sustainability funding. The Committee resolved to support the recommendations of the Budget Scrutiny Panel report which went to Executive for consideration at its meeting in December.

40. At Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 20 January 2021, an update for the Committee on the Budget and Capital Programme 2022/23 was given to Members. It was reported to the Committee that the gap of £700k had been closed through a number of further savings initiatives. However, there was still a substantial £1.8m call on reserves, primarily because of the overhang of Covid in some services, especially parking. The Committee was pleased to note that £10k that is spent each year within the taxi voucher scheme would be retained which the Committee had asked the Executive to consider. Members asked questions on inflation and the impact on Council services, income expectation, fuel prices, public consultation, parking income loss, Banstead Commons Conservators and flats recycling. The Committee noted the updated elements of the Budget and provided observations to Executive on 27 January.

#### **Hybrid Working Scrutiny Panel (Chair: Councillor Walsh)**

41. The Panel met on 19 August 2021 to discuss the hybrid working plans for the Council as the organisation moved out of the emergency pandemic response to the post-pandemic world of work. The Panel meeting was attended by Councillor Lewanski, Executive Member for Corporate Policy & Resources and lead on Hybrid Working responded to Member questions. Members asked questions and made observations on areas such as Member participation in remote meetings, organisational culture, inclusivity for Members and officers with family or caring responsibilities, environmental sustainability and staff recruitment. The Panel reported back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9 September 2021.

#### **Local Plan Scrutiny Panel (Chair: Councillor Parnall)**

42. Members considered and discussed the Climate Change and Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) public consultation and feedback. The Panel met on 25 August 2021 and was attended by the Planning Policy Manager and Planning Policy Officer. Members gave feedback on issues such as building regulations, electric vehicle charging points, construction management statements, battery charging and storage facilities to gas boilers and solar panels on roofs. The Panel reported back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 September 2021.

#### **Commercial Strategy Scrutiny Panel (Chair: Councillor Walsh)**

43. This Panel met on 2 November 2021 to support the ongoing development of the Council's Commercial Strategy. The Panel received an overview of the development and work on the Commercial Strategy Part 2 from Portfolio Holder for Investment and Companies, Councillor Archer. Members asked questions on areas from balancing cost base and raising income, learning from best practice and past mistakes to commercial governance and commercial skills and experience. The final strategy was considered at the full Committee on 9 December with the Panel's observations and comments brought to the full Committee.

#### **Call-in of Executive Decisions**

44. There were no Call-Ins of Executive Decisions during 2021/22.

#### **Operational Arrangements**

45. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee had regular meetings with the Head of Paid Service and Director of People (Mari Roberts-Wood), Director of Place (Luci

Mould), Interim Head of Finance (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 2021/22 was discussed with the Leader.

### **Conclusion**

46. 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 2021/22 and in developing its annual work programme for the coming year 2022/23 has sought to continue this.
47. 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 Capital Investment Strategy 2022/23 and the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027.
48. 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**

49. The Committee has the option to support the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22 and make any additional observations.
50. The Committee has the option not to support the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22. This is not the recommended course of action.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

51. 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**

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

### **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

53. 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.

54. 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.

55. 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**

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

#### **CONSULTATION**

57. 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**

58. Annex 1 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22 - Membership and Member Attendance