

Chichester District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Annual Report 2015/16

Introduction by the Chairman

This year has been an interesting one from the Overview and Scrutiny point of view.

We started with a new committee some of whom may not have had much to do with local government scrutiny. I hope they have found it useful and interesting.

We also had a call in. It has been a long time since we had dealt with a call in so from the committee's point of view it was an interesting exercise. We also had a further report from Hyde. As members can see from what follows we have covered a great deal of ground over the past year.

As chair I am always aware of time constraints. I hope that by starting a little earlier, it will give us more time for in depth questioning where the issues need real scrutiny. I hope the committee have found the pre meetings useful insofar as it should make the meetings run more smoothly.

I think members feel we need more time for cabinet members to attend meetings where the issues being looked at refer to their portfolios. Once again I want to thank Steve, Bambi and Lisa for all the help they give us.

Clare Apel
Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny at Chichester District Council

Scrutiny is the way in which non-executive members of the council hold the Cabinet to account. They do this by reviewing existing council policy or decisions and by inputting into the development of new policies before the Cabinet approves these. In some cases they may ask for a decision (made by the Cabinet) to be re-considered before it is implemented to make sure all possible outcomes are thought through. These are called call-ins.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) or its task and finish groups may require any member of the Cabinet, any chief officer, and/or any head of service to attend before it to explain in relation to matters within their remit. Other public sector or public service officials, external partners and/or residents and stakeholders may also be invited to address the committee, discuss issues of local concern and/or answer questions. Recommendations may be made to the Cabinet or directly to Council. In scrutinising an external partner or partnership, the recommendations may be made directly to that body. The views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may be reported to the Cabinet or the Council, and the chairman of the committee shall be entitled to address the meeting on the committee's views.

Setting the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2015/16

The 2015/16 OSC work programme was developed taking into account:

- the Corporate Plan projects agreed by Cabinet
- the Forward Plan of Cabinet key decisions over the next few months
- projects identified from individual Service Plans
- items proposed or raised by Members
- topics included in last year's work programme which were delayed
- topics requiring members' involvement suggested by the Business Routeing Panel

A number of Task and Finish Groups were set up to carry out reviews in more depth and to report back to the main committee. These task and finish group reviews are detailed later in the report. Space was left in the work programme for topical issues that often arise during the year.

All Members were consulted in the development of this work programme through a member workshop held on 17 March 2015.

The impact and influence of scrutiny

OSC met six times in 2015/16 including a special meeting on Tuesday 19 January 2016 to discuss the Leisure Services Review process. The Chairman meets with the committee half an hour before each meeting to enable discussion about the agenda items and to agree the key issues to be explored on each topic.

Task and Finish Groups are used to take the issue offline in order to maximise the volume and depth of the review.

A total of 13 recommendations were made by the committee to the Cabinet or Leader during the year. Nine recommendations were agreed, with four yet to be considered.

There was one call-in this year regarding the sale of land at Church Road, Chichester. The decision was called in by seven members of the Council for the following reasons:

- Further debate of all valuations was needed
- Considering a delay would not cause harm to the Council
- A request for debate of relevant exempt information had been denied

The call-in was heard by the OSC on 2 July 2015. The OSC made a recommendation to Cabinet to reconsider the decision following which the decision was rescinded by Cabinet on 8 September 2015.

Of the 48 members on the council, 15 are on the OSC. With Cabinet Members and other interested members attending meetings or involved in task and finish groups this equates to 47.92% of all members being involved in scrutiny in some form or other during the year.

Mr M Cullen was nominated to sit on the corporate Leisure Contract Management Task and Finish Group.

Members' training and development

- Mrs N Graves attended a Charing Scrutiny Seminar at the University of Birmingham on 26 June 2015.

- Mrs C Apel attended a Scrutiny of Commissioning and Contracts Seminar at the University of Birmingham on 30 June 2015.
- Following the May 2015 elections all Chichester District Council members were invited to attend an OSC induction on 2 July 2015. 10 OSC members and six additional members attended.
- Mrs N Graves attended the Regional Networking Seminar on Overview and Scrutiny on 26 November 2015.
- Mrs N Graves attended a Leading and Chairing Overview and Scrutiny Workshop on 7 April 2016.

Main areas of work for OSC this year and outcomes/achievements

Areas of focus	Outcomes/achievements
Review of the Internal Lettings Agency (Homefinder)	The committee considered a review of the Internal Lettings Agency (Homefinder). The committee resolved that this Internal Lettings Agency provided good value for money and recommended to Cabinet that the service be continued. On 7 July 2015 Cabinet resolved to continue the service.
Homelessness Strategy	The committee considered and commented on the draft strategy and recommended to Cabinet that it be approved. On 7 July 2015 Cabinet approved the draft strategy.
The Grange Post Project Evaluation	The committee considered the Grange Post Project Evaluation following the centre's first year of operation, acknowledging the achievement of the project and how well it had been managed by the team. Actions and outcomes were being achieved and were on target.
Chichester in Partnership - Getting People into Work Strategy	The committee considered the progress made against the Getting People into Work Strategy 2012-2015 and its related action plan and the revised strategy for the following three years from 2015-2018. The positive impact of this project on local people and the savings this had made were noted. The revised strategy was noted for its future priorities.
Leisure Services Review	In November 2015 the committee received an update on the progress of the Leisure Services Review and decided to hold a special meeting on 19 January 2016 to consider the issue before a final option appraisal was taken by Cabinet. The committee considered a written report from the Leisure Task and Finish Group and resolved that due process had been followed in undertaking the procurement exercise to test the market for future management of leisure services.
Review of Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2016-2021	The committee considered the Review of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2016-2021 and provided comments and amendments to the draft strategy, approving it for consultation.
Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester update from the Grants and Concessions Panel	A performance update was considered on the Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester contract provided by the Grants and Concessions Panel. The committee agreed the panel should carry out a review of funding agreements. The committee recommended that the Leader of the Council write to the Leader

	of West Sussex County Council regarding unconfirmed funding. Mr A Dignum sent a letter to Mrs L Goldsmith on 23 November 2015 and a response was subsequently received from Mrs Goldsmith and provided to members.
Housing Strategy Review	The committee noted the Housing Strategy review and the progress achieved in delivering its milestones and targets and endorsed the new target dates. The committee recommended to Cabinet that options for future housing delivery, together with capital investment, be supported.
Review of Business Improvement District (BID)	The committee received a thorough review of performance and progress of the Chichester Business Improvement District (BID). The committee was pleased with progress to date against the BID's five year business plan.
Think Family Expansion Programme	The committee considered an update on the Think Family Expansion Programme and noted the work of the project and the changes to the project going into Phase 2.
Improving the Health of our Communities and Workforce	The committee considered a progress report on this work stream, acknowledging that priorities and outcomes were being achieved.
Novium - Business Plan & Commercial Services	The committee considered The Novium and TIC Business Strategy Progress Review. The committee noted the progress since the introduction of free admission in November 2014 and requested that the points of clarification raised be addressed in the Cabinet report. The committee recommended to Cabinet that if an Options Appraisal Task and Finish Group was established an OSC representative should be appointed.
Careline Business Plan	The committee considered the Chichester Careline Service Progress Review. The committee noted progress against the business plan for 2015/17 and the current financial and business planning position in 2016/17.

Task & Finish Groups

The work of the Task and Finish Groups is described below along with the outcomes achieved.

<p>Budget Task and Finish Group Overview and Scrutiny Members: Mrs C Apel and Mr J Ransley and Corporate Governance and Audit Committee Members: Mrs P Tull (Chairman) and Mr P Jarvis</p> <p>Areas of focus – This group has representatives from both OSC (performance and policy remit) and Corporate Governance and Audit Committee (governance and risk remit). The group considered the 5 Year Financial Model and Statement of Resources 2015-16 to 2020-21 and the projected revenue budget variations for 2015-16 and 2016-17.</p> <p>Outcomes – Members involvement with budget scrutiny prior to presentation of the Budget to Cabinet in February 2016. The group was satisfied with the explanation of projected variances on the 2015/16 budget and the further projected variances on the 2016-17 budget.</p>
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Community Safety Review Task and Finish Group

Mrs P Dignum, Mrs N Graves, Caroline Neville, Mrs P Plant and Mrs J Tassell

Areas of focus – OSC has a statutory duty in accordance with Sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 to review the district’s Community Safety Partnership (CSP) by holding the CSP to account for its decision making, scrutinising the performance of the CSP and undertaking policy reviews of specific community safety issues. The group held one meeting in February 2016. The Communities Interventions Manager gave members an update on the various projects and performance over the last year and the priorities of the partnership for next year.

Outcomes – The committee endorsed the key points concluded from the review and recommended to the CSP that their 2016/17 priorities be adjusted slightly and that the partnership consider methods for keeping members updated on their work on a regular basis. Response from the partnership was that all priorities are equally weighted and that methods of communicating progress and achievements were continually monitored.

Corporate Plan Task and Finish Group

Mrs P Dignum (Chairman), Mr N Galloway, Mrs D Knightley and Mrs P Plant

Areas of focus – To consider mid-year progress on actions and targets in the Corporate Plan and to identify any further action that needs to be taken to challenge poor performance and to reduce any risk to an acceptable level.

Outcomes – The council’s key projects were monitored for successful delivery. The group’s concerns regarding the Council’s underachievement of the recycling target were forwarded to the Cabinet Member for the Environment along with the request to reintroduce the Council’s Waste Minimisation Strategy Panel. As a result Cllr Barrow gave a presentation to members and agreed that a waste panel be established to consider how the Council could further develop waste and recycling initiatives. The Waste and Recycling Panel was established in February 2016.

Cultural Grants Task and Finish Group

Mr G Hicks (Chairman), Mrs C Apel, Mr N Galloway, Mrs N Graves and Mrs J Tassell

Areas of focus – The Council have a funding agreement in place with both Chichester Festival Theatre and Pallant House Gallery until 2018. The Council negotiates a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with both organisations annually to ensure that appropriate outcomes are achieved for the local community, schools, etc. The group carried out two reviews, one in early 2015 and one in early 2016. They considered progress against both organisations’ service level agreements as well as their proposed SLAs for the following year. In 2015 the two organisations met with the task and finish group who scrutinised their performance and future objectives and reported to the OSC. In early 2016 the two organisations were invited in to the OSC to present directly to the committee. Questions raised by the group were posed to both organisations to answer at a meeting of the OSC on 10 May 2016.

Outcomes – Representatives from the two organisations were held to account regarding their past performance and commitments and their future priorities. In both years the committee was satisfied that the SLAs for both organisations were complementary to the strategic aims of the Council and that the Council was achieving value for money from its grants, particularly the community work being carried out in both organisations which meets the authority’s corporate priorities of ‘supporting vulnerable people and communities’ and ‘contributing to the economic impact of the area’.

Hyde Task and Finish Group

Mrs C Apel, Mr N Galloway, Mr H Potter, Mrs P Plant, Caroline Neville, Mr A Shaxson (Chairman) and Portfolio Holder Mrs S Taylor

Areas of focus – To review the service charge assessment, its implementation and the processes available to mitigate the impact on individual tenants and receive clarification from Hyde as to the communication and consultation policy with tenants and future options to address issues raised by tenants. The group held two meetings, hearing evidence from Hyde tenants and from Ms C Brown (Director of Residents Services (Regions)) and Mr D Morrissey (Director of Core Operations) of the Hyde Group.

Outcomes – The group reported its outcomes to the OSC in September 2015. The committee made recommendations to the Cabinet to instruct the Head of Housing and Environment Services to write a letter to the Hyde Group Chichester setting out the Council's concerns and requesting a full report to the January 2016 OSC meeting. As a result Hyde returned to the January 2016 meeting with a full report detailing progress since September 2015 which was noted. The Hyde Group was subsequently kept members updated on their initiatives and performance results during the year.

WSSC Select Committee liaison

Mrs P Dignum is the council's representative on the Health and Adults Social Care Select Committee (HASC). She reported back to the committee on issues affecting the Chichester district and local residents. The Council can submit concerns regarding any health issue to the HASC for consideration via its Business Planning Group (BPG) which meets quarterly.

West Sussex Joint Scrutiny

Mrs C Apel is the Vice-Chairman on the West Sussex Joint Scrutiny Steering Group, a group of scrutiny members from the seven districts and boroughs of West Sussex who get together to suggest joint scrutiny reviews on issues of common interest to all authorities. Mrs C Apel has regularly provided an update to the committee on future proposals for joint scrutiny reviews.

Mr H Potter was the scrutiny representative on the Flooding review and provided feedback on the Flooding follow up review.

Mrs Norma Graves volunteered to be the scrutiny representative on a review of housing for care leavers. This review took place in March/April 2016 and the final report and recommendations are awaited.