

Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2015 -16

Welcome to the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report, which explains the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB), the three Scrutiny Review Groups (Finance, Health and Social Care and Children's Services) and its Task and Finish Groups during 2015-16.

Overview and Scrutiny is a vital part of Luton Borough Council's responsibility to its residents. All non-executive councillors are eligible to participate in the work of scrutiny, to hold the Council's Executive to account and help inform its decisions by reviewing and making recommendations to improve Council services.

Overview and Scrutiny also considers and makes recommendations on wider issues affecting the people of Luton. During the year it has worked closely with the Community Safety Partnership, Free Schools, Luton Cultural Services Trust, Luton and Dunstable Hospital, Luton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and other public and private sector partners, who have all contributed to the well-being of the people of Luton.

I take this opportunity to thank the great many officers from the Council, as well as partners organisations, who have contributed openly and positively to scrutiny.

Finally, thanks go to all the Council Members who have participated in

Scrutiny and put in substantial effort during the course of the year.

If you would like to contribute to overview and scrutiny, remember all scrutiny meetings are open to the public. If you want to find out more about overview and scrutiny, the Democracy Team will be pleased to supply you with more information. Contact details are listed at the end of this report.

Introduction

The last year has seen a continuation of challenges for local government. With a backdrop of reduced funding from Government this Council along with our partners are seeking ways to work more closely together. In this environment, the role of scrutiny is important and we have a clear responsibility to scrutinise the implementation of new approaches. In this report we have highlighted some of the significant activity that has taken place over the last year and considered the challenges to be faced over the next year.

The Chair of the Board in 2015-16 was Councillor Meryl Dolling (Liberal Democrat) and the Vice Chairs were Councillors John Baker (Conservative) and Councillor Nazia Rafiq (Labour).

Key Scrutiny Work in 2015-2016

Working with External Partners and Local Communities

- Corporate Performance Report
- Gypsies and Travellers
- Homelessness and Housing Strategy
- Enforcement Policy
- Street Drinker Project
- Gangs and Guns Strategy
- Child Poverty
- Luton Skills & Employment Strategy
- Equality Objectives and Equality Charter
- Domestic Abuse – Update

Throughout the year, the Board received a range of reports and presentations from organisations and individuals from outside the Council to assist with overview and scrutiny work; these included Community Safety Partnership, Free Schools, Luton Cultural Services Trust and the Luton and Dunstable Hospital

Of major concern to the Board were the savings proposals by both Active Luton and the Luton Cultural Services Trust in response to reductions in their funding.

Working with the Executive/Portfolio Holders

The Board has continued to be actively involved with the work of the Executive, regularly scrutinising the Executive's Forward Plan, which remains a standing item on the work programme. The Executive Members for Finance, Public Health

and Children's Services have standing invitations to attend the relevant Review Group for their area.

Special Meeting – Policing Matters

Following the policing item being withdrawn from the meeting of the Full Council (date), a special meeting of the OSB was arranged at the Mayor's request.

On the 20th February 2015, all Councillors were invited to a special meeting to consider the policing plan and budget implications and the neighbourhood policing model and crime statistics.

The Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner spoke, followed by questions from councillors. Further questions were then taken from the large public gathering in the gallery.

TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The Overview and Scrutiny Board has the power and responsibility to set up time limited task and finish groups that focus on a particular issue and consider it in greater detail than is possible at the Overview and Scrutiny Board. These reviews will typically last around six months and will include a mixture of interviews with relevant Council officers and expert witnesses, research of best practice elsewhere, meetings with service users and community groups and consultation with the wider

community. Membership of the task and finish group is drawn from all Members of the Council other than Executive Members and can be extended to include statutory and non-statutory co-optees and experts in the relevant subject area.

New Task & Finish Groups for 2015/16

Two new Task and Finish Groups were agreed by the OSB in relation to topics of Youth Anti-Social Behaviour and the Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers. Now underway, regular updates will be made to the CSRG (Youth Anti-Social Behaviour) and OSB (Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers).

Outlined below is a brief summary of the work of the three standing sub-committees – the Finance Review Group (FRG), the Health and Social Care Review Group (HSCRG) and the Children’s Services Review Group (CSRG).

FINANCE REVIEW GROUP

The Finance Review Group (FRG) continued in 2015/16 as a standing Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB). Its purpose includes:

- Enabling closer scrutiny of the Council’s finances;
- Enhancing decision-making process on spending priorities;
- Overseeing public involvement to improve accountability.

During the year, the FRG continued to focus on and made comments and recommendations to the Executive on key aspects of the Council’s Transformation Programme and budget performance around contingency reserves and risks, particularly on a number of high level capital projects. It also reviewed several key areas including the introduction of Children and Learning Zero Budgeting, the performance of the Council’s Property Investment Portfolio and funding provided by London Luton Airport Limited.

FRG also scrutinised the overarching impact of measures to address budget pressures facing the council.

The FRG reported and made comments and recommendations to the Executive on a number of occasions, which were mostly noted and/or accepted, to help them make well informed and transparent decisions. A further key area to be scrutinised is the long term financial sustainability of Luton Borough Council.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE REVIEW GROUP

The Health and Social Care Review Group (HSCRG), a Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, continued as the Council’s body for scrutinising health and social care services in Luton.

Its responsibilities include:

- Reviewing and scrutinising any matter relating to the planning,

provision and operation of health and social care services in Luton;

- Holding to account all commissioners and providers of publicly funded healthcare and social care services, requiring them to listen and respond;
- Undertaking health and social care related topical reviews;
- Dealing with consultation relating to proposals for substantial service variation or development by NHS organisations, ensuring they are in the interests of local health services.

HSCRG has continued to maintain constructive working relationships with partners in the health & social care system, including the Health and Well-Being Board (HWBB). As well as sharing working programmes, the HSCRG Chair also sits on the HWBB as an observer.

Over the last year, HSCRG continued to monitor and review, commenting and making recommendations on a range of health and social care topics, including the following:

Luton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) items, including:

- Mental Health and Community Health Services re-procurement;
- Update on the Repeat Medicines Management Systems changes;
- Integrated commissioning;

- Luton CCG Commissioning Intentions 2016-17;
- Primary Care Access;
- Local System Resilience;
- Non-Emergency Patients Transportation.

A number of adult social care items, including:

- Home Care and Support Services;
- The Learning Disabilities Joint Commissioning Strategy 2013-2017;
- Restructure and re-provision of services provided at the African Caribbean and Milan Day Centres.
- Monitoring the performance of the East of England Ambulance Service;
- Progress of the Coroner's non-invasive post-mortems pilot scheme;
- Re-Development of the Luton & Dunstable Hospital
- Luton Men's Health Self-Assessment and Response;
- Safeguarding Adults and Deprivation of Liberty;
- Petition relating to the Leagrave Dental Sedation Clinic;
- Luton Drugs and Alcohol Service;
- Year One update on performance of the Luton Mental Health and Wellbeing Services.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW GROUP (CSRG)

Newly established in 2015, the first meeting of the Children's Services Review Group took place in September 2015 at which Councillor Meryl Dolling was elected the Chair, and a work programme was agreed.

With the transfer of responsibility for scrutiny of children's services from OSB to the new Sub-Committee, the statutory co-optees have also moved location from OSB to form part of the membership of the CSRG.

During the year the CSRG monitored and reviewed the following:

- Traded Services School Meals
- Children's Services Performance Data
- Educational Outcomes KS1 to KS4
- Luton Safeguarding Children's Annual Report
- Tackling Child Obesity
- Ofsted Inspection

CALL-IN

Two decisions were called-in during 2015/16.

The first was in relation to the Relocation of the African Caribbean, Milan and St Monica's Day Centres. The reason given for the call-in was that the consultation leading up to the decision was not conducted widely enough. The Overview and Scrutiny Board was satisfied that the

consultation had been robust and the Executive endorsed that decision.

The second call-in was in relation to the Luton Cultural Services Trust's savings proposals. The reason for the call-in was to ensure that a thorough and robust consultation was undertaken in response to the notice issued by Luton Cultural Services to terminate their leases and return the Community Centres to the Council with effect from 31st July 2016.

This call-in resulted in the grant of an extension of time for Raynham Way and Bushmead Community Centres in order for them to investigate the possibility of producing a viable plan to keep the centres open.

CHALLENGES FOR 2016/17

The Overview and Scrutiny Board will continue to focus on the big issues affecting the town and to raise the profile and awareness of the Overview and Scrutiny process with our partners and Council Officers, to encourage participation and involvement. Scrutiny work programmes are developing well for 2016/17 and key issues have already been identified including:

Overview and Scrutiny Board:

- New Corporate Performance Reports
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy
- Complaints Report
- Air Quality Management

- Fixed Assets, Warden Park.

Children Services Scrutiny Review Group:

- Foster Care Placements
- Term Time Penalty Notices
- Proposed Re-organisation of the Youth Offending Service
- Future of Children Centres
- Ofsted

Finance Review Group

- Busway Construction Budget
- Business Transformation Updates
- Impact on Brexit to the Council
- Property Investment Performance

Health and Social Care Review Group

- Inequalities in Luton Men's Health
- East of England Ambulance Service – Update on Performance
- Update on Performance – L&D Hospital's catering and cleaning contract
- Repeat Medicines Management System

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

EXECUTIVE – 10 elected members with ‘portfolios’ of responsibility, who make decisions about the day-to-day running of the Council and the development of policy.

CALL-IN – the process by which 2 elected members can refer to the Overview and Scrutiny Board any Executive decision that is considered to have been inappropriately made.

TASK AND FINISH GROUPS – Time limited groups set up by the OSB to scrutinise a particular topic identified by members of the public and make recommendations to Executive for action.

CONTACT:

If you would like to know more, or have any suggestions for scrutiny, please contact the Democracy Team on 01582 546038.