



# Overview & Scrutiny

Annual Report 2014/15

# Introduction

## Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2014/15

### What *is* Overview and Scrutiny...?

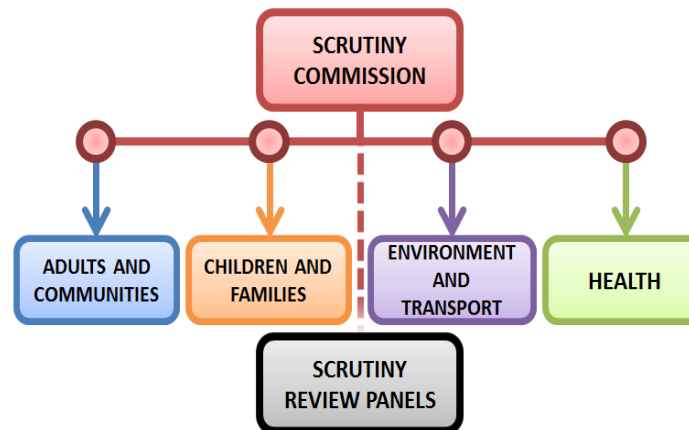
All local authorities operating a Cabinet and Scrutiny model have a Cabinet made up of the Leader of the Council and up to nine other members. All executive decisions (ie. those needed to implement the Policy Framework and Budget approved by the County Council) are taken by the Cabinet.

Overview and Scrutiny bodies are not “decision making” bodies but are bodies which monitor and influence those that are. The Overview and Scrutiny role, carried out by non-Cabinet members, is designed to support the work of the Council in the following ways:

- **Reviewing and scrutinising decisions taken by the Cabinet, also known as acting as a “critical friend”.**
- **Considering aspects of the Council’s performance.**
- **Assisting in research, policy review and development.**

- **Involving itself with external organisations operating in the County to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working.**
- **Providing a means of involving the community in the Council’s work.**

The structure of the Overview and Scrutiny’s Committee structure at Leicestershire County Council is set out below:



Each Committee has a role in performance monitoring, enabling members to scrutinise detailed performance reports and service delivery.

The Scrutiny Commission reviews and scrutinises decisions made or actions proposed in connection with the remaining Council functions which are not within the scope of any of the above Committees, including that of budget monitoring. It

oversees and co-ordinates the work of all Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSC) and co-ordinates a response to the Cabinet’s budget proposals.

The Adults and Communities OSC, the Children and Families OSC and the Environment and Transport OSC scrutinise the Council’s functions in relation to their relevant departments. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the activities of the Council’s Public Health function and NHS bodies, which have responsibility for commissioning and providing health care services.

Scrutiny Review Panels, made up of a small number of members (usually five), are appointed to look in depth at particular issues and their recommendations, which may suggest a change in policy or service provision, are submitted to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to consideration by the Cabinet.

#### Find out more...

...about the [Scrutiny Commission](#) and its [Chairman](#) and how Overview and Scrutiny works by accessing the [Overview and Scrutiny Guide](#).

## Key outcomes from work undertaken this past year in our Overview and Scrutiny Committees

### The Scrutiny Commission

**The Scrutiny Commission is the main Overview and Scrutiny body, looking at the Council's budget and performance as well as the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership (LLEP) which is responsible for the economy and strategic transport covering the County and Leicester City. The Commission also has a role to look at issues that cover the remits of more than one Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

### Communities Strategy

We have played an important role in the establishment of this Strategy, which aims to make the best use of the resources available to focus on helping communities to support individuals and families in most need, and enabling community groups to provide services for local people, including those that the Council can no longer afford to provide.

We were encouraged by the role "Community Champions" would play in bringing local communities together and helping in the recruitment of volunteers, though it would be particularly important to ensure that urban and

unparished areas received extra support in this area. Throughout the process we have continued to express the importance of engaging those communities that are considered to be the hardest to reach.

### Empowering Volunteers

In September last year we learned of the pressure the Council's reducing budgets were having on the voluntary sector at a time when we were looking to increase engagement and recruit more volunteers. This equated to a reduction in funding for support to the sector of over £500,000 per year, some of which would be met by a reduction in funding for the Council's county infrastructure organisation: Voluntary Action LeicesterShire (VAL). Despite the funding reduction, we were pleased to learn direct from VAL CEO Kevan Liles at a session in October last year that volunteer recruitment had increased from 200,000 to over 500,000 (an increase of over 130%). Notwithstanding this success, we stressed the importance of the ongoing monitoring of VAL's performance to ensure taxpayers were getting value for money and the provision of the best possible service to our volunteers at a time when we would increasingly be relying on them to deliver important services to communities.

### Enabling Growth in Leicestershire

In March, we were joined by the Cabinet Lead Member for Economic Development, Blake Pain CC for a discussion on how we could

support the LLEP in its delivery of investment projects aimed to improve prosperity and growth. We particularly welcomed the long term ambition to create 45,000 jobs in Leicester and Leicestershire.

The Council's Broadband Strategy would be key to ensuring local businesses were connected, even those in the most remote areas of the County. Some concern was expressed at the lack of profile being given to environmental issues and we therefore stressed the need for a focus to remain on projects being carbon efficient. We have asked for a report back in September 2016.



## The Budget

The process of agreeing the budget this year was set against the backdrop of the Cabinet's "Fairer Funding Campaign" which aimed to attract the attention of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and make a plea for Leicestershire to have financial parity with other local authorities of equivalent size.

In regard to the proposals brought forward by the Cabinet, we were keen to emphasise the role of traded services and how, with a more targeted approach towards potential customers, we could increase income and lessen the savings burden on the Council's valuable staff resource, thus hopefully providing a level of protection to some key services. Similarly, we stressed the importance ICT services could play in harnessing efficiencies. We were particularly keen to work with the Director of Corporate Resources on how the use of "cloud-based" technologies might be rolled out across the Council in the future to make remote working for staff simpler and therefore more efficient.

One significant area of concern we shared with the Cabinet was around the sustainability of Government funding for Universal Free Infant School Meals beyond the General Election. A loss in this funding would greatly impact the earnings of the School Food Service and this was acknowledged as a significant risk factor going forward and one which the Children and

Families OSC would need to continue to monitor.

More positive were plans for the County Hall campus, which aimed to reduce property running costs and through better consultation increase the space available for rental to external parties. An "out of hours" facility would enable staff to work at smaller buildings, achieving energy savings through the closure of the site's larger buildings.



## Adults and Communities

**This has been a difficult and challenging year for the Committee. The financial outlook for the County Council has been extremely**

**challenging and as a result some difficult and unpopular decisions have been referred to the Committee for consideration.**

### Snibston Museum

The Cabinet proposals for Snibston envisaged a revised offer focused on mining with a view to reducing the current subsidy of approximately £900,000. As part of the consultation the Cabinet invited other options, and as result, received a business plan from the "Friends of Snibston" (FOS).

We considered this matter in June, September and January of this year. This issue generated much local interest as well as extensive press coverage. We were keen to ensure that all parties, particularly the FOS, who had put a considerable amount of effort into producing a detailed business plan and the local MP and councillors were given the opportunity to put forward the case for Snibston. It was difficult to find a consensus on such a contentious issue but scrutiny enabled a more informed debate to take place. At the time of writing the decision of the Council was the subject of a Judicial Review.

### See Scrutiny in action...

...by attending our meetings. Please visit [this page](#) for further details and guidance. Alternatively, our meetings are [webcast](#) live.

## Libraries

The second major issue considered was the issue of the future of the Libraries Service. The proposals for the Libraries Service envisaged the County Council continuing to operate the 16 major libraries based in the market towns and shopping centres and inviting local communities and groups to operate the remaining 36 community libraries.

Scrutiny played a critical role in developing the offer to support local communities in taking over the management of their local libraries, the details of which are referred to in the box to the right.

Through the scrutiny process we were able to assess the rationale for selecting the 16 main libraries and to ensure that the engagement process with local communities recognised differences and that a “one-size-fits-all” approach was not appropriate.

It is pleasing to note that to date we have had positive engagement from 20 communities and that discussions are ongoing with the remainder. The challenge ahead is to ensure the successful transfer of all community libraries to local communities and to harness the enthusiasm within communities to work alongside the Council in taking control of services and tailoring them to suit their needs.

### Scrutiny Review: Infrastructure Support for Community Partnership Libraries

**With increased pressure on budgets and a greater emphasis on communities being empowered to run some of their local services, a consultation exercise was conducted between July and September on the future of the Leicestershire Library Service.**

The consultation proposed that if a local community organised itself to provide the staffing resource (presumed to be through volunteers) the Council would offer a support package including a contribution towards the other infrastructure costs for an initial period of up to five years.

The Cabinet asked that a Review Panel look in greater detail at this support package and report back with its findings. Our Panel met three times under tight timescales and heard evidence from a number of stakeholders to understand their views on how things could be changed in a way that would help their local library.

In coming back with a **revised package**, the Panel proposed that a “one size fits all” approach would simply not be feasible and that each community would require a tailored approach to suit their needs. The Panel felt strongly that the financial support given to communities to take this work on would need to be tapered over seven years rather than five and that

premises should be provided to communities for a peppercorn rent and these arrangements should also be reviewed after 10 years (in line with the property lease) rather than the five years originally suggested.

It was felt that the revised support package, which received Cabinet approval in November, would provide communities with a positive footing on which they could confidently take on the running of libraries in their local area.



## Services for the Homeless

The pressure on the Adult Social Care budget is well known and a key strategy for the Council is to develop services aimed at reducing demand by working with partners to address the root cause of problems. One such example was the decision to review our approach to services for homeless people. That approach was to recognise that the Council needed to work alongside its partners, particularly District Councils (who have statutory responsibilities for housing) so that the offer made to people who were homeless or at risk of being homeless was more joined up.



Change is always a difficult process and the proposals to target some of our limited resources away from building based provision to outreach caused some consternation. As a result of a ‘call-in’ a thorough review of the decisions was undertaken and this resulted in an amendment to the proposed balance of investment between building-based and outreach provision.

The financial challenges facing the Council and in particular Adult Social Care are recognised. As we move forward with implementing the Care Act, the Council will again be facing the challenge of not having sufficient resource to meet the demand of an ageing population. New and innovative ways of delivering services via close joint working with our health partners will be essential to ensure that we reduce demand.

## Children and Families

**The Committee has had a busy year not least with the ongoing active engagement of the public in our work, with a good amount of public questions answered and representations being made at our meetings.**

### Age Range Changes

Age range changes planned for schools in the Oadby area were felt by some to be likely to force local children into schools in other areas. Whilst hearing representations from interested parties, we were reassured that the Council would only support age range

changes when they presented an opportunity to improve outcomes for children. We were pleased that a consultation process was held giving local people the opportunity to submit their views.

The Committee has continued to improve its grasp of the Authority’s changing role in regard to educational performance. The Council now has to make “arrangements” for school and academy improvement, but not “deliver” these in isolation. This being the case, we were encouraged to learn that the Council continued to maintain a positive dialogue with academies to ensure they were performing to a good standard.

### Child Sexual Exploitation

With the publication of the “Jay” report in late 2014, highlighting the management failures that enabled child abuse to go unchallenged for years in Rotherham, we were quick to respond by requesting an update from the Director at our November meeting in regard to Leicestershire’s position. We were reassured that a number of actions had already been taken to learn more about the expertise and resource required to manage this issue on an ongoing basis. We were also greatly encouraged that close working continued with Leicestershire Police, who had also conducted their own enquiry into allegations of non-recent child abuse. This issue remains our highest priority going

forward and one which we expect to hear more about at our meeting in June.

### Transformation

We learned that the Council's programme of Transformation would require 30% of the departmental budget, currently spent on non-statutory early help services, to be the focus of future savings in order to meet budget targets. With this in mind, we were delighted to be made aware of £4.7 million of funding that had been awarded to the Council by the Department for Education to roll out a new programme aimed at embedding an internationally recognised methodology for those that worked closest with children and families. We look forward to hearing more in the future about how this new way of working – known as "Signs of Safety" – has led to improved outcomes for our service users.



## Environment and Transport

**It has been a busy and challenging year, with austerity measures continuing to dominate the local government agenda. Despite this, we have worked to ensure that the Department maintains its delivery of key priorities in Leicestershire with considerable focus being paid to the transport projects ongoing around the County.**

### Stimulating Development and Growth in Leicestershire

Throughout the year the Committee has welcomed the Department's commitment to stimulating economic growth in Leicestershire, such as the re-opening of Regent Street in Hinckley to through-traffic. This decision was made following consultation with local businesses and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and all parties agreed that this could provide vital income for the town, through better access to the street's many local businesses.

The Committee has continued to monitor the ongoing work of the Local Transport Plan 3 with a focus on the work being undertaken in the Hinckley area. At our meeting in February 2015 the Committee and local members highly commended the consultation undertaken by officers in the Department to ensure that local members and residents had an impact on the project.

The Committee played a vital role in ensuring that the North West Leicester Transport Plan was fit for all local residents, particularly those in Glenfield. The passionate views put forward by Committee members at our meeting and during the consultation process meant that officers went away and came back to the



Committee with a revised plan based on local concerns. Following the comments we made, and the Plan's subsequent approval by the Cabinet, the City and County Councils can jointly proceed to make the City more accessible, thus contributing to Leicestershire's economic growth.

### **Continuing to Deliver Savings and a High-Quality Service**

We have continued to support the financial and environmental commitments of the Council. At our meeting in September 2014 we recommended that the Department look into the conversion to LED street lighting, which would contribute to the long term financial savings required of the Department. It would also significantly reduce the County's carbon footprint.

In November 2014, the Committee was informed of the future options for the provision of recycling and household waste sites in the current financial climate, and is looking forward to receiving the outcome of the consultation and submitting its views later in the year.

## **Health**

**The challenges facing the health service, particularly performance of the urgent care system and hospital discharge, have been a constant theme for the Committee. These challenges, along with the ever increasing momentum behind the health and social care integration programme, have made it an**

**exciting year to be a part of the Committee's work.**

### **Urgent Care**

We have monitored performance across the urgent care system and were pleased to welcome the "whole system" approach to tackling the well-documented performance issues. A number of new initiatives such as the Older People's Unit at Loughborough Hospital and the Falls Service have emerged from the use of the Better Care Fund (a pooled budget across health and social care) and we look forward to seeing the impact of these as we continue to monitor performance of the urgent care system.

### **Learning Lessons to Improve Care**

This was a significant investigation into the quality of care received by a particular cohort of patients which enabled wider system level issues to be identified. The Committee welcomed the openness across the NHS in making their findings public as well as the willingness to learn from previous mistakes. We identified some particular issues which we have asked for further assurance on relating to the quality of end of life care and communication between different parts of the system.

## **Scrutiny Review: Help to Live at Home**

**The recent focus on the timeliness of hospitals discharge, along with the ageing population in Leicestershire, has led to an increased pressure on domiciliary care services and the recognition that the current model is not fit for purpose.**

Developing a new model of care, focused on improved outcomes for service users and a joined-up approach between health and social care, became a priority within the County Council's Transformation Programme. This was an ideal opportunity for Scrutiny to get involved and provide officers with a useful perspective to support them in writing the business case for the new service.

A Review Panel was established in the Autumn and has had a significant input in the development of the new Help to Live at Home service model, making recommendations which support the use of an outcomes-based model of care, stakeholder engagement, person-centred care and will ensure that the new service is commissioned from providers who are able to cater for people with a diverse range of needs.

The Final Report will be considered by the **Adults and Communities OSC** and the **Cabinet** in June.





### New Congenital Heart Disease Review

We responded to the consultation on the national standards for the new service and we welcomed the standards though we did have concerns about how they would be implemented. It is now up to University Hospitals Leicester to demonstrate that it can achieve the required standards and thereby secure the future of children's heart surgery in

Leicester.



### Healthwatch

Our relationship with Healthwatch Leicestershire has continued to improve over the past year. Rick Moore, the Chairman of Healthwatch Leicestershire, is a regular participating observer at our meetings and has recently started to have his own slot on the agenda where he can update us on the fantastic work Healthwatch has been doing. This has included their work to find out the views of patients on issues that matter to them, such as accident and emergency services, and represent them to the highest levels of the relevant organisations. It is of enormous value to have the views of patients directly represented to us at our meetings.



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## In Summary...

**This past year has been beset by ever reducing budgets and a refocusing of the way in which the Council conducts its business and provides its services to customers and this will continue in 2015/16.**

The change in emphasis has also been felt in Overview and Scrutiny and has meant that we have been required to focus our efforts on areas where we can most make a tangible difference to the people of Leicestershire, whilst providing a robust check and balance to ensure that the services provided to the most vulnerable in our society are safeguarded as much as is possible.

Going forward, our emphasis will increasingly be placed on the delivery of the Council's Transformation agenda: a programme of 24 projects across all Council departments and services, aimed at improving delivery and identifying efficiency savings. We will need to keep these projects under review to ensure they not only deliver the savings required but do so in a timely fashion. It will be our role to understand how the outcomes of these projects will benefit the taxpayer beyond financial savings. We hope to make a valuable contribution to this process by being consulted at an early stage and making our views known to the Cabinet on ways that projects might be improved or enhanced.

Health and social care integration issues will continue to dominate the Health agenda for the coming year, as both the Better Care Fund and the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland wide Better Care Together five year strategy for health and social care move into implementation phases.

We expect to look at some challenging items, such as shifting health services out of acute settings into the community. We will ensure that the Health OSC remains focused on patient experience and the quality of services they receive, so that Leicestershire residents will get the best possible outcomes across the health and social care system.

Whilst Child Sexual Exploitation has already featured on the Children and Families OSC agenda this past year, we will need to continue to receive regular updates on the Council's efforts to ensure good quality services in this area.

We hope you will have found this document a valuable précis of our work and an insight into where we feel our focus should be in the coming Council year. We would like to thank our fellow members and those officers of the Council who have provided support and guidance in the work of Overview and Scrutiny this past year.



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Kevin Feltham



*Simon Galton*  
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*Max Hunt*  
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**The Scrutiny Commissioners**