



**Leicestershire
County Council**

Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report

2016/17

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

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

- By reviewing and scrutinising decisions taken by the Cabinet, also known as acting as a “critical friend”
- By considering aspects of the Council’s performance
- By assisting in research, policy review and development
- By involving itself with external organisations operating in the County to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working
- By providing a means of involving the community in the Council’s work

In Leicestershire we have the Scrutiny Commission, the lead Overview and Scrutiny body, and four service-based Committees for Adults and Communities, Children and Families, Environment and Transport and Health. Each Committee has a role in performance monitoring, enabling members to scrutinise detailed performance information and service delivery.

In addition to the committee-based work they carry out, Overview and Scrutiny Committees can also initiate task and finish work to look at a particular issue in more detail. Scrutiny Review Panels, as they are known, are made up of usually five members and their recommendations, which may suggest a change in policy or service provision, are submitted to the relevant parent committee prior to consideration by the Cabinet.

All Overview and Scrutiny meetings are held in public session and webcast. Attendance and involvement of the public is actively encouraged either via questions or petitions to be put at our meetings or suggestions for our work programme.

For further information about the Overview and Scrutiny process and how you can get involved please visit our website: www.leicestershire.gov.uk/overview-and-scrutiny

Foreword by the Scrutiny Commissioners

This Annual Report marks the conclusion of the activities of Overview and Scrutiny over the last four years of this Council. It is therefore the appropriate time to thank our fellow members who have served on Committees and Review Panels during this time and for the crucial support of Council officers. We should also particularly wish to thank those members who have contributed to Overview and Scrutiny who did not stand in the County Council election this May or were not re-elected. This includes both Scrutiny members and members of the Cabinet who have attended our meetings, responded to our questions thereby supported our work.

This past year has seen us acting as a critical friend to our Cabinet colleagues on important issues that affect local residents such as bus services, adult social care and the Better Care Together programme. The new Council will clearly face further challenges around spending and service reductions and it is important that Overview and Scrutiny continues to act at the earliest opportunity in assessing these reductions and making suggestions, where appropriate, as to how savings could be mitigated by doing things differently, or even suggesting increases in investment in some services to see a long term benefit to both the Council's purse and service users.

Rather than a complete commentary of everything we have achieved this past year this Annual Report serves as a summary of the key highlights of the work we have been engaged in during 2016/17. We hope it reflects what we feel has been another productive year in Overview and Scrutiny and we hope you enjoy reading it. You can of course find out more about our meetings [here](#).



Kevin Feltham CC



Simon Galton CC



Robert Sharp CC



Richard Shepherd CC

The four Scrutiny Commissioners are responsible for leading the Overview and Scrutiny process, deciding on priority issues for Overview and Scrutiny committees and areas that merit review by a Scrutiny Panel.

The Scrutiny Commission

The Scrutiny Commission is the lead 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 remit of more than one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It also acts as the Council's Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Highlights

The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Police and Crime Panel

As part of our protocol with the Police and Crime Panel and in discharging our duties as the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Commission is the key point of contact for the Chairman of the Panel in ensuring that our arrangements for challenging and supporting the Police and Crime Commissioner are effective. 2016 saw a change with Conservative Commissioner Sir Clive Loader choosing not to stand for a second election which led to a victory for the Labour candidate Lord Willy Bach.

Having met with the Chairman of the Panel, Joe Orson JP CC, we were pleased to hear that the new Commissioner was settling in well to his new role and appeared keen to take on board the comments of partners and the Panel. The PCC had also given a commitment to "visible policing" which would no doubt please residents and increase public confidence. However, we raised concern with the Chairman in regard to where budgets were likely to be cut elsewhere in the Force to enable more officers to be put on the beat. We welcomed the Commissioner's commitment to "early prevention" work, such as the Supporting Leicestershire Families programme as a means of providing less of a strain on resources further down the line for all partners and improving outcomes for families. We look forward to hearing from the Panel's Chairman this summer on the Commissioner's first Police and Crime Plan and how he aims to drive down crime in the County against a national picture of increasing incidents.

Poverty

We were particularly interested in a report published by the Bishop's Poverty Commission which outlined some key actions for local partners in order to provide a better layer of protection for those at risk and in poverty. Given the austere times within which we now

live, and the resultant cuts to public services, we felt this to be a particularly pertinent issue. Having reviewed the full report entitled “How Do You Get By?” (available [here](#)) we felt it was important to consider the implications for the County Council and how services for those in poverty or hardship could be provided in a coherent way that avoids duplication. This is particularly challenging as there are a number of service providers in this area all doing very noble things, however people often aren’t simply aware of the services that are on offer and providers similarly aren’t always aware that other similar services exist.

Arising from a debate with officers we aim in the summer to hold a workshop on this issue and bring the key service providers round the table to devise a better way forward for poverty services and establish how the Council might be able to assist and perhaps better co-ordinate some of these services.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy

This year’s budget was the Council’s seventh “austerity” budget and, against the backdrop of further national cuts in public spending, it provided little in the way of reassurance that the days of service reductions look likely to draw to a close any time soon. The Council has an identified funding gap of £24 million and for this reason the campaign for “Fairer Funding” from the Government continued again this year with the Leader and Deputy Leader pressing their case for an entirely new funding model with ministers. Whilst we understood that ministers were taking notice of the Council’s unfair funding position, we have yet to see any indication that things may change.

The Council had opted for a 1.99% council tax increase and a further 2% increase via the Adult Social Care Levy. The Council could have opted to front-load the increases by having two 3% Levy rises followed by a 0% rise in the third year of the MTFs and this approach would have led to an increased resources of around £8 million, though it had been a political decision to phase the increases in more steadily over three years in an attempt to make it more manageable for council taxpayers.

In response to concerns raised by members of both the Environment and Transport OSC and the Commission, we were pleased to note that the planned £1.3 million saving on subsidies for local bus services was withdrawn by the Cabinet meaning that vital bus service links, particularly for those in isolated rural areas, would continue unaffected.



Adults and Communities

The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee looks at issues around adult social care and communities and wellbeing, including issues such as libraries and museums. It also has a role to monitor the work the Health and Wellbeing Board carries out in relation to integrated commissioning.

Highlights

Community Libraries

The transfer of libraries from being Council run to being placed in the hands of communities has been one of the Council's big success stories at a time when positive stories about public services can be hard to find. This process, which started in 2014 and was significantly boosted by a Scrutiny Review Panel which helped define the support package on offer to communities, has now seen nearly all County libraries transition in community ownership. This was a position that few members could have predicted prior to the commencement of the process.

We have been particularly impressed by the Cabinet's commitment to seeing this process through and, where there have occasionally been sticking points with some communities, the Lead Member has played an active role with officers in brokering agreements to ensure that communities do not lose out and are able to continue the running of their community facility. Members were also interested by an upcoming trial of extending access at Syston Library, enabling the building to be open for longer periods and books to be borrowed via an automated system. Members saw this approach as a key means of mitigating any future community capacity issues.

Community Life Choices (CLC)

As a result of a call-in by the Liberal Democrat and Labour groups, the Committee considered afresh proposals to reduce CLC services (often referred to as "day services") in order to achieve a financial saving of £750,000. The call-in of the decision had been made as a result of views from members that the consultation on the proposed savings had not made clear to parents and carers the full extent of the reduction in services.

We considered the evidence again and heard from officers, members responsible for the call-in and the Cabinet Lead Member. We also considered some additional evidence not available at the time of considering the matter originally which included an alternative

proposal put forward by a member of the public. Having heard the evidence the Committee elected not to pursue the matter further. We raised concern that those in receipt of care did not fully understand the proposals and were assured that where appropriate Council officers had talked through the changes with service users in an effort to aid their understanding.

Help to Live at Home

The Help to Live at Home process had a challenging start and it has been important for us as the lead Overview and Scrutiny Committee for this issue to take an active interest, challenging officers on the decisions made and what the future may hold. A new approach was taken to reduce the number of external providers for these services as a means of achieving a saving and providing better care for service users.

As recently as our March meeting, we considered an urgent item on the CQC's inspection report on the Hales Group, one of those external providers contracted to deliver these crucial services. With the inspection report having identified the Hales Group to be "inadequate" in several key areas of service delivery, we took the opportunity to ask robust questions of officers about the tendering process and what steps had been taken by the Council to ensure that service users were taken out of situations where they may find themselves at risk. The issues principally concerned the Group's difficulty in mobilising sufficient staff to ensure a good level of service was provided. We found that this is an issue facing the sector more widely where recruiting good staff is becoming increasingly more challenging, something of a national problem. Despite the CQC assessment, we were pleased to find that calls missed by Hales had dropped significantly after Christmas as a result of more staff being mobilised.

We sought further assurances that the relevant lead Overview and Scrutiny members would be kept informed should there be any further concerns with the Hales Group and where there were any other significant concerns about service delivery.



Children and Families

The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee looks at issues around social service provision for children and families, educational attainment at schools and academies and youth support services. It also monitors the work of the Children and Young People's Commissioning Board and the Supporting Leicestershire Families programme.

Highlights

Ofsted

The County Council's services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers were inspected by Ofsted in November 2016. The outcome of the inspection, that the services "required improvement to be good", was reported to us at our meeting in March 2017. We are pleased that the Department had undertaken a self-assessment in advance of the inspection and had already started to address some of the issues identified by Ofsted. We also welcome the £0.5million investment being made to support the improvement plan. We will work with the Department and Cabinet Lead member to develop a new performance management and monitoring framework so that the proposed actions are implemented and monitored to ensure that they are delivering the required improvements in services to children and young people.

Child Sexual Exploitation

We continue to receive regular updates on how the County Council is tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), an issue which has been of a particularly high profile in recent times. We welcomed the progress that has been made in developing a Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland multi-agency CSE team, including the police, nurses and a forensic psychologist. We are also pleased with the efforts that have been made to ensure information sharing and joint working across the East Midlands.

We had some concerns when the hub was in development that a sub-regional approach would divert resources away from Leicestershire residents. However, as work progressed we were reassured that, as staff from each authority managed their own cases, the rate of referrals from Leicester City did not affect Leicestershire cases. We will continue to monitor

progress and make sure that every effort is made to keep our children and young people safe.

Fostering

Throughout the year we are updated on the performance of the County Council's fostering service. We recognise that placements in family settings provide children and young people with better outcomes than residential placements and, given the financial constraints that the service is under, we are pleased that the most cost effective options are being taken forward. However, we had some concerns that the Department's Strategy to increase the number of in-house foster carers would prove to be too challenging to deliver, especially as the foster care market had not been fully tested and its capacity is therefore unknown. We asked for more details to assure ourselves that the strategy would be deliverable and we are pleased that a marketing campaign has been agreed to raise awareness and that targeted recruitments are underway; these have so far been successful. We will be kept updated on progress with the recruitment campaign as this is an important part of the future direction of travel for the Department.

20018/19 School and High Needs Funding Proposal

We have supported the Cabinet's response to the national consultation on the funding formula for schools and the formulaic basis for the distribution of the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant in the next financial year. The response reflects our concerns about the impact that these proposals will have on Leicestershire schools. We were advised by the Cabinet Lead Member that Leicestershire will see no overall benefit and that most schools will be adversely affected. Leicestershire schools are already amongst the lowest funded in the country and we are concerned about the potential risk to the viability of small schools. We await the outcome of the consultation and the Government's decision.



Environment and Transport

The Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee looks at issues around roads and road safety, public transport and waste and recycling. It also acts as the Council's Flood Risk Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Highlights

Dry Recycling Credits & Recycling and Household Waste Sites

In a lively debate at our September meeting, members considered the options for achieving significant savings in relation to the way in which the Council deals with dry recycling. The suggestion from officers to the Cabinet was to pursue the procurement of an outlet for all Waste Collection Authority (WCA) dry recycling which would enable the Council to cease paying dry recycling credits of around £3 million to the district councils. Despite this, the Committee elected to specify its preference that the Council pursue a different course of action which would mean reaching local agreements with each of the WCAs to reduce the value of dry recycling credits. It was expected that this option would still achieve the Department's initial savings target of £1 million and enable the district councils to acclimatise to the reduced funding position over time, rather than the immediate loss of funding via officers' preferred option. We made our comments to the Cabinet in this regard, but were disappointed that the Cabinet continued to pursue the preferred option of officers to achieve the larger up front saving.

In June, the Committee considered and supported the Department's plans to "insource" recycling and household waste services to enable further control over these services and enable more flexibility for the ever changing needs of service users. We were assured that job losses as a result of this approach would be minimised as many operational staff working for the current external provider, EWC would be TUPE transferred to the Council as part of the arrangements.

Major Commissioning Intentions

At our November 2016 meeting we were particularly pleased to see a very ambitious pipeline of schemes which the Department aims to achieve with the help of external funding bids. The Department had recently been successful in securing significant funding for transport projects and we were pleased that the prioritised and coherent list of schemes

would enable a quick response in the event that the necessary pots of national funding were acquired. We believe this organised approach, coupled with the Department's proven track record for success in gaining external funding, places the Council on a good footing to continue to make improvements to the County's already exceptional road network.

Road Casualties

The Committee has watched as road casualties have remained a "red" area of performance for the Environment and Transport Department over the past year. We were pleased in March to note that, whilst still a "red" area of performance, the situation appeared to have stabilised with reduced increases.

Having asked for a detailed report on the matter late in 2016 we noted that whilst no-one wants to see increases of road casualties it must be viewed within the huge overall rises in traffic and cars on the road. We were confident that the Department would continue to monitor the situation and make evidence-based changes to the road network where necessary to improve road safety.

This is a situation on which we are keen to keep a watching brief and this will certainly be the subject of further reports in the next Council year at which we hope the performance area can finally move from its "red" rating into a "green" area of performance going forward.



Health

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee looks at the planning and provision of health services in the County and the work of the Council's Public Health Department. It also scrutinises the activities of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Highlights

Better Care Fund

We have monitored progress with delivery of schemes within the Better Care Fund. We have submitted comments on the Better Care Fund Plan for 2017/18 – 2018/19. Where services were not being recommissioned we explored the reasons why and sought reassurances that those services that had been having a positive impact such as the "Lightbulb Project" (which integrates practical housing support into a single service across Leicestershire) would continue to receive funding. The Committee also raised technical issues regarding the web-based referral form for First Contact which was designed to help vulnerable adults get the appropriate support they need.

Care Quality Commission Reports

We have continued to look at reports from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) regarding health providers in Leicestershire and scrutinise actions taken by providers to address issues raised in those reports. The last year has seen CQC reports for University Hospitals Leicester NHS Trust, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) and East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) and we have sought reassurance on issues as wide ranging as the lack of privacy curtains, fridge temperatures and the management of sepsis. In addition to examining the issue of delays in Ambulance handover we have also explored some of the issues relating to recruitment and retention of staff at EMAS. This was an issue also identified with regard to LPT and we sought reassurances regarding their recruitment programme and the use of Bank and Agency staff. In connection with CQC findings that the leadership at LPT 'Requires Improvement' we sought reassurance that leadership issues would be addressed at all levels of the organisation. This was in the expectation that clear direction and instructions on good practice would cascade down the organisation and therefore improve the patient experience.

Falls

As a result of a question from a member we looked at work to develop a consistent approach to the prevention and treatment of falls in residents over the age of 65 in Leicestershire and we examined the approach from EMAS in dealing with falls and their response times which had not been satisfactory in some cases. The vision for falls is to offer a single falls prevention and treatment system across the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland region. By focussing on preventing falls, and increasing the information available, the pressure on emergency and health services will be reduced. The Committee very much supports this vision and was pleased to note that consideration was being given to training people in the voluntary sector who went into elderly persons' homes on how to prevent and deal with falls.

We also investigated procedures that were in place for the prioritisation of calls to EMAS and the triage process particularly with regard to the elderly and sought reassurances that in cases where the patient was alone the call would be escalated and the patient would be monitored over the phone until the ambulance was able to arrive. We were briefed on the new electronic Falls Risk Assessment Tool (eFRAT) which means that paramedics can use a mobile phone application to assess patients and decide where best they should be treated. In future the eFRAT will be used by Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service when they carry out home safety checks.

Emergency Care at Leicester Royal Infirmary and New Emergency Department

We received a presentation on Emergency Care at Leicester Royal Infirmary and the planned opening of the new Emergency Department. The Committee scrutinised the potential impact of the New Emergency Department on ambulance handovers and the flow of patients through the hospital. We also challenged UHL on how they dealt with periods of exceptionally high demand. It was reassuring to note that UHL were aware that the new Emergency Department in itself will not resolve all the problems with regard to flow through the hospital and other measures would need to be taken such as improving discharge times and availability of ongoing care packages. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

We suggested that the new Emergency Department should have space for the voluntary sector to dispense help and advice and it was pleasing that UHL agreed to give this idea consideration.

We also scrutinised arrangements for the paediatric short stay emergency unit and we felt it was important to point out that some children are physically developed enough to require equipment of appropriate size for an adult. We therefore asked UHL to ensure that the unit had the facilities and equipment to deal with children of all ages and sizes. We noted that the paediatric short stay unit would have an entrance separate to that of the adult

Emergency Department and therefore it was reassuring to note that the LRI site map was to be amended to reflect the new layout.

Glenfield Heart Unit

The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met during 2016/17 to consider the national consultation on Congenital Heart Services. NHS England has proposed that children's heart surgery should be decommissioned from the Glenfield Hospital, despite the service having excellent outcomes and being rated as 'outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission. That Committee has recognised the work undertaken to date by UHL to meet the national standards and that there is now only one area of dispute: surgical caseloads. We have been robust in holding NHS England to account and challenging the inconsistency of its approach, as Newcastle Hospital also does not meet this standard but will continue to be commissioned as it also provides a Heart Transplant Service. We have also asked NHS England difficult questions about access to services for young, vulnerable patients if the East Midlands becomes the only region in the country without a congenital heart centre. We will be meeting again to agree our final response to the consultation and will await the decision of NHS England on the future of this really important service.



Overview and Scrutiny Members

2016/17

The Scrutiny Commission

Ruth Camamile CC
 Jackie Dickinson CC
 Dr Kevin Feltham CC
 Simon Galton CC (Chairman)
 Dr Sarah Hill CC
 David Jennings CC
 Keith Lynch CC
 Christine Radford CC
 Robert Sharp CC
 Richard Shepherd CC
 Sean Sheahan CC

Children and Families

Mr. Gerard Hirst
 Jeffrey Kaufman CC
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 Canon Carolyn Lewis
 Ozzy O'Shea CC
 Alan Pearson CC
 Trevor Pendleton CC
 Mr. John Perry
 Christine Radford CC
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Adults and Communities

Ruth Camamile CC (Chairman)
 Michael Charlesworth CC
 Stephen Hampson CC
 David Jennings CC
 Tony Kershaw CC
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Democratic Services

Chief Executive's Department

Leicestershire County Council

For further details on the contents of this report please email: democracy@leics.gov.uk