

Overview & Scrutiny



We are pleased to present the Annual Report for 2011/12 which highlights some of the key achievements of Scrutiny.

Looking ahead to 2013 and beyond, the creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships, Clinical Commissioning Groups (in Health), clusters of academies and free schools, the election of a Police and Crime Commissioner and the establishment of themed commissioning boards will radically alter the landscape in which scrutiny operates.

Existing services will increasingly be delivered across organisational and even across geographical boundaries and the existing scrutiny structures may not be fit for purpose.

We believe that scrutiny will need to become more flexible if it is 'fit in' to this new landscape and it needs to do this in the context of reduced resources. Prioritisation of activity will be essential if scrutiny is to make a meaningful contribution.

Over the coming year we would hope to begin to address these challenges with a view to informing and assisting the new Council when it is elected in May 2013.



Tony Kershaw CC Simon Galton CC Kevin Feltham CC
The Scrutiny Commissioners

Introduction

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2011/12

What is Scrutiny?

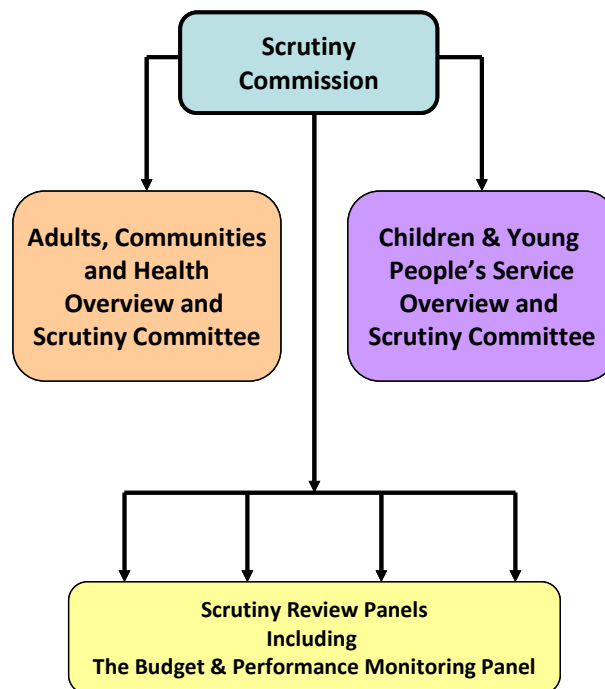
All local authorities operating an Cabinet and Scrutiny model have a Cabinet made up of the Leader of the Council and up to 9 members of his Group. All executive decisions (ie. those needed to implement the Policy Framework and Budget approved by the County Council) are taken by the Executive.

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 members who are not on the Cabinet, is designed to support the work of the Council in the following ways:-

- Reviewing and scrutinising decisions taken by the Cabinet (sometimes 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 system in Leicestershire is set out below:



The Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Adults, Communities and Health (ACH)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the Council's functions in relation to the relevant departments. The ACH Overview and Scrutiny Committee also scrutinises the activities of NHS bodies which has responsibility for commissioning and providing health care services.

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 either of the above Committees. It also oversees and co-ordinates the work of all Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The standing Budget and Performance Monitoring Panel receives and considers quarterly performance and budget reports. It also plays a role in the budget setting process. Review Panels 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 Cabinet for consideration.

Find out more...



By accessing the Overview and Scrutiny web pages at:

leics.gov.uk/overviewandscrutiny

Achievements

Major Reviews

Much of the focus of this year's Review work has been based around the reimagining of service provision, placing increased power in the hands of the public and providing more tailored services in an efficient way.

Special Educational Needs

Following publication of a Consultation (Green) Paper by the Coalition Government, a review was conducted to better understand the current arrangements and ensure the direction of travel for the Service is appropriate and affordable.

Big Society

With the recent significant shifts in national government policy to move services into the hands of the public, the Scrutiny Commission felt it was essential to have a Review focusing on this area – looking specifically at how:

- Social action could be promoted;
- Public services could be opened up; and
- Communities could be empowered.

95% Bus Panel Policy

Since 2002, the Council has had a policy of ensuring 95% of residents are within 800m of an hourly bus service during the daytime from Monday to Saturday. This policy meant that the cost to the Council of running some rural services was around £12 per person which was viewed as unsustainable. The Review aimed to devise a new, more tailored policy to meet the needs of users and at the same time identify significant efficiency savings for the Authority.

Safeguarding

Protecting children from harm is a key responsibility of the Council. A panel was established to ensure the systems in place were working efficiently and that where there were lapses, these were looked into and lessons were learnt. This arrangement for oversight of safeguarding was commented on favourably at a recent Ofsted inspection.

Personalisation of Adult Social Care

The personalisation of Adult Social Care has meant moving away from the traditional way social services are provided and offering opportunities for service users to take more choice and control of their care and support services. The Review sought to understand

any risks associated with this and ensure that, despite changes to the way services are provided, vulnerable people are safeguarded.

Light Touch Review

Communications between Councillors and the Environment and Transport Department

This Review was undertaken as a result of concerns raised by Councillors regarding the responses to complaints made to the Council's Employee Service Centre. Its aim was to identify a more efficient arrangement to ensure that queries raised from the public via their Councillor were dealt with in a more timely fashion and both members and the public were kept informed of progress made on issues raised.

Find out more...



Details of the latest Reviews can be found [here](#).

Key Outcomes of Major Reviews

By no means exhaustive, a sample of the key outcomes of Reviews and major reports is highlighted below.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The Panel supported the development of outreach and partnership work between Special Schools and surrounding mainstream schools. It also urged the Authority to raise the profile of SEN teaching in local teacher training agencies and with schools and governing bodies.

The Schools' Forum was asked to review the method of funding schools for SEN and will consider this request at its meeting in June.

Big Society

Communities in Leicestershire were already achieving a lot and there were many organisations able to offer help, guidance and training to those hoping to provide services. It was important to build on this good work by ensuring it was well publicised and information was made easily accessible to raise awareness and encourage others to get involved.

It found that the Council would have to look at new ways of providing services as there is a move away from the traditional assumption that local authorities will run all services.

Supporting the growth of social enterprises and other delivery models will help ensure that these are able to provide services which respond better to local needs, meet required standards and offer greater value for money.

Personalisation of Adult Social Care

Personal budgets are increasingly becoming the norm within the Adults and Communities Department which have improved outcomes as individuals can choose services they want rather than accept those traditionally presented by the Council and its partners. It has meant the Council needs to think differently about its services.

The 'Support with Confidence' accreditation scheme is an example of how the Council is responding to this agenda.

Children's Oral Health

There is a concern about the oral health of children in Leicestershire which is not as good as it should be. The Committee recommended that dental health should be promoted as widely as possible, including via Leicestershire Matters.

Academies

Whilst noting it is Government policy that all schools should move towards academy status, the CYPS Committee was keen to ensure that the high standards in

Leicestershire schools remained. It also raised concerns about high quality provision to less able students and those with SEN.

Case Study: 95% Bus Panel Policy

This Review took account of the importance of public transport to residents, especially given the current financial constraints facing everyone. With this in mind, the Review contributed to the shaping of a policy that helped residents make their essential journeys to the shops, the doctors and to their workplace, but with the assistance of a more tailored transport service known as DRT ("Demand Responsive Transport").

Though bus services will continue to be run alongside mainstream routes, there is now a more widely available DRT option which enables users to pre-book taxis and ride on minibuses to get to their destination – often being returned right to their front door, rather than a bus stop yards or miles away from their home.

The proposed solution will completely reshape the public transport service in Leicestershire and will save the Council in the region of £750,000. Following public consultation, the Panel will reconvene to make recommendations on a new policy.



Public Involvement & Publicity

It is important that the public feel able to contribute to the work of Scrutiny. There are number of avenues for this – be it asking questions at meetings, submitting petitions or inspecting papers. Please access [this](#) link to find out more.

During the last year, people have taken advantage of these opportunities to participate in local democracy by stimulating debate at Scrutiny - for example:

- A petition ‘Save Melton’s Museum’, along with other responses to a consultation on the Museums Service, resulted in the proposal for the seasonal closure of the Museum being changed from four months to one, with the museum opening when special events are held in Melton Mowbray to support tourism in the town.
- Questions about the Day Care Unit at St. Luke’s Hospital, Market Harborough, highlighted local concerns about how the Primary Care Trust had managed the process of procuring a new Unit.

Also, Scrutiny has specifically sought the views of the public and external experts, including:

- Bus users, rural businesses, rural communities, other local authorities,

community transport providers, Transport Academia and commercial bus operators during the Review of the 95% Bus Coverage Policy.

- An MEP, the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils, Sir John Moore Foundation, Vale of Belvoir Broadband Project, Parish Councils, Social Enterprise East Midlands and the Co-operative and Social Enterprise Development Agency during the Big Society Review.

A lively debate on the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in the City at a public meeting involving around 600 residents fed into a discussion at Commission about the location of these sites as they were close to County areas of Birstall and Bradgate.

The impact Scrutiny has made has resulted in a number of news stories in the local media over the last year, enabling it to reach further out into the community. Particular stories that caught the popular imagination included the future of the Children’s Heart Surgery at Glenfield Hospital, considered on a couple of occasions by ACH OSC. The Leicester Mercury quoted the Chairman, Ruth Camamile CC, as saying:

"We are not happy about the way the results of this public consultation have been analysed, or the presentation of the findings. They do seem to be biased against the option which includes Glenfield."

The meeting also featured on the BBC News – Leicester website on 27 September and was reported on BBC Radio Leicester on 26 September.

Bus services have been another hot topic and the Review Panel on the 95% Bus Coverage Policy was heralded with a story in the Mercury on 27 August, in which the Chairman, David Slater CC, explained that the Panel would be *“speaking to as many people as possible to get as many views on this issue as we can”*.

Back in November 2011, CYPS OSC contributed to the consultation on Outdoor Residential Learning Services and the future of Beaumanor and Quorn Halls and Aberglaslyn. This was reported in the Leicester Mercury on 21 November with the following quotes from members of the Committee:

“There are so many different uses for the buildings, it could be they have a wider future than what’s being offered in terms of outdoor education.” – **Simon Galton CC**



Holding the Cabinet to Account

It is often helpful to have the Cabinet Lead Member attend Overview and Scrutiny Committees to discuss a strategic plan or direction of travel on a key issue. This year, as the Council has been faced with increased budgetary pressures and some difficult decisions about where to identify efficiency savings, it has been more necessary than ever before to discuss these matters in detail with the relevant Lead Member.

Inviting Cabinet Lead Members to account

The Cabinet is the key decision making body and Scrutiny committees regularly invite Cabinet Lead Members to account for their decisions. Apart from questioning Cabinet Lead Members on their budget proposals, other examples of where Cabinet Lead members were invited to account for actions taken or proposed include:

- The Youth Justice Plan.
- The Local Transport Plan 3.
- The Environment Strategy.
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- The future of the CYPS.

The Leader of the Council was also invited to the Commission to discuss the Council's Review of Tourism Support Services, following on from

similar discussions held earlier the 2010/11 scrutiny year.

Pre Decision Scrutiny

Both the Cabinet and Scrutiny recognise the fact that they need to work together for the benefit of the Council and its residents and to improve decision making.

The Cabinet normally publishes a list of key decisions it is proposing to consider. Normally, its reports on such key decisions are referred to Scrutiny for consideration and comment. The comments of Scrutiny are fed into the Cabinet. A few examples of issues drawn to the attention of the Cabinet include:

The impact of new arrangement for home to school transport as a result of the establishment of academies;

The future of the CYPS department as a result of the transfer of schools away from local authority control;

The potential financial penalties of up to £900 per annum the Council would incur as a result of not delivering on its carbon emission targets and the need for greater focus on this area.

Monitoring of Performance

Scrutiny monitors the budget by consideration of quarterly reports and, through this is able to identify early those

areas of concern which may require closer analysis. This year these included the financial implications of schools converting to academies and for the future will cover progress against the County Council's Carbon Management Plan, with particular focus on the financial implications of penalties associated with the Carbon Reduction Commitment if targets are not achieved.

The abolition of national indicators and targets has meant that the County Council and its partners have had to develop a local performance framework. Scrutiny has contributed to this and continues to monitor performance on a quarterly basis across the each of the Commissioning Hubs which the County Council has formed with its partners.

Looking ahead, an effective scrutiny process can play an important role in looking at issues of local concern, as well as focusing on improvements and value for money in order that the Council and its partners provide better services.



Find out more...

About the Scrutiny Commissioners by visiting this page:

leics.gov.uk/scrutinycommissioners

Scrutiny of External Bodies

Scrutiny has, and will continue to have, an ever increasing role to maintain a check and balance on the performance of local external providers whose services impact the lives of local residents.

A key area of external scrutiny was undertaken by the ACH Overview and Scrutiny Committee and involved looking at the activities of local health bodies. This has been particularly important given the significant changes to health services made by the Health and Social Care Act.

The Committee has had a role to play in ensuring that, as commissioning power transfers from the Primary Care Trust to the GP led Clinical Commissioning Groups, the needs of patients remain at the heart of service provision.

Some examples of scrutiny of local health bodies this past year include:-

- Monitoring the impact that the financial difficulties of Leicester's Hospitals has had on the quality of patient care.
- Investigating the problems with the Day Care Unit at St. Luke's Hospital, Market Harborough and receiving assurance that the new Unit will be completed in the allocated timescale.

- Supporting the retention of children's congenital heart services at Glenfield Hospital.
- Supporting the proposal to move the Loughborough Walk-In Centre from Pinfold Gate to the site of the Community Hospital.



Looking to the future, Health Scrutiny will remain focused on ensuring that patients' needs are met in the most effective way. A key challenge for Health Scrutiny will be redefining the relationship with local providers of health care as they become Foundation Trusts and supporting the continuation of joint working across health and social care.

Officers to Contact

The following Democratic Services Officers are available to discuss specific scrutiny issues.

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