

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY



We have and will continue to face many challenges, as the shape of local government shifts amid continued reductions in public spending.

Recognising the reduced resources within which we operate, our focus has been on ensuring that, where savings are being made, the impact on frontline services is minimised and other areas of service where we feel we can make a valid contribution are improved to provide tangible outcomes for the people of Leicestershire.

The changes at national level have also impacted on the work of committees, where it has on occasion been difficult to keep pace with the speed of change.

This is the last Annual Report of this Council, with the local elections looming in May. When the next report is published, the personnel will no doubt have changed, though scrutiny's role in monitoring service standards will be ever more crucial, as we face a further squeeze on public finances.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our fellow members and officers for their support and guidance over the past four years.

Tony Kershaw CC

Simon Galton CC

Richard Shepherd CC

(L-R in image inset)

The Scrutiny Commissioners

Introduction

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13

What *is* Scrutiny?

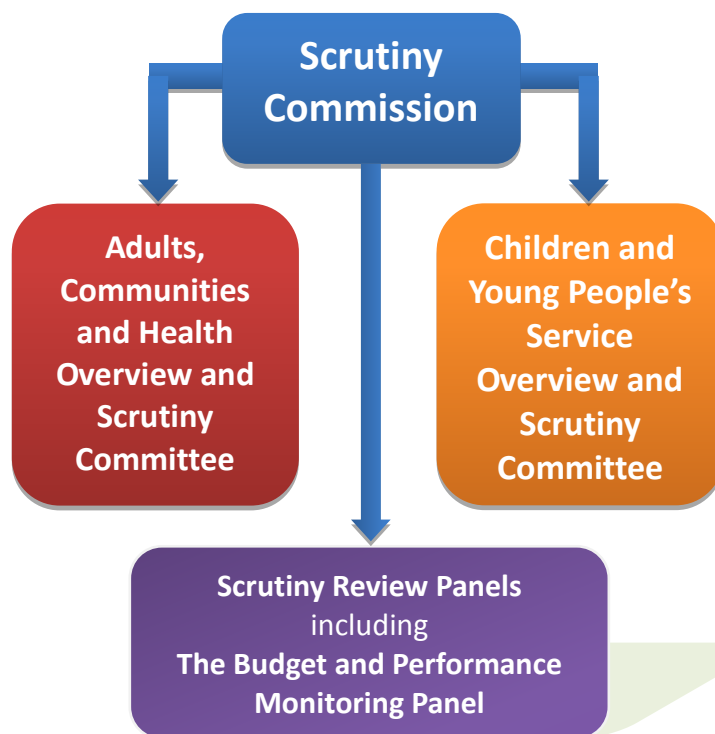
All local authorities operating a Cabinet and Scrutiny model have a Cabinet made up of the Leader of the Council and up to nine members of his Group. All executive decisions (ie. those needed to implement the Policy Framework and Budget approved by the County Council) are taken by the Cabinet.

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 (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 its consideration.

Find out more!

By accessing the Overview and Scrutiny web pages at:

leics.gov.uk/overviewandscrutiny



Key Outcomes from work undertaken this past year

The Scrutiny Commission

The establishment of Local Economic Partnerships or “LEPs” has brought about a change in the way economic growth is supported. The Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) was established in September 2010 and in December 2012, we felt that it would be helpful to hear what progress had been made. The LLEP’s Chairman, Andrew Bacon was invited to the Commission to report on the LLEP’s first year of activity. The headline findings were:

- **Five times the amount of private investment had been secured than under the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership arrangements**
- **The LLEP had committed to creating in the region of 25,000 jobs**
- **Greater collaboration with private businesses had led to a firmer commitment to sub-regional activity**

Since this meeting, the LLEP has been awarded the “City Deal” which will play an important role in promoting economic growth in the County and City. We will no doubt wish to monitor these plans closely over the coming years.

Following a change in Council leadership, the new Leader and his Deputy were also invited to the Commission to discuss their priorities going forward, the Council’s short to mid-term financial position and what they expected to be some of the key policy challenges.

At this session we were pleased to learn of the new Leader’s focus on Leicestershire and his willingness to share ideas with colleagues on a cross-party basis.

We were made aware of the administration’s intentions to minimise the impact of spending reductions on front-line services and the need to maintain a close check and balance on the quality of service delivery as we move towards increased commissioning of services.

Of particular note was the Leader’s willingness to negotiate a revised approach to the structure of Overview and Scrutiny, which we hope will have greater recognition of the increased workload of the Adults, Communities and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a result of the Council’s new public health functions.

Budget and Performance Monitoring Panel

As pressures on County Council budgets grow, we continue to play a key role in closely monitoring both the revenue budget and capital programme by consideration of quarterly reports and identifying areas of

concern for closer analysis. This year, particular attention was given to the level of reserves and contingencies, the purposes for which these are held and how frequently they are monitored. Improvements have been proposed to enhance future monitoring in this area.

The County Council continues to work closely with partners in areas relating to Children and Young People, Adults, Health and Wellbeing, Safer Communities, the Environment and the local economy. We contribute to this joint working by monitoring on a quarterly basis performance against joint priorities that have been agreed in each of these areas.

Partnership working will continue to be a growing area, as government funding reduces and new ways of working are adopted to ensure value for money is achieved in the delivery of local services. Scrutiny of performance and the budget will develop to reflect this changing environment.



Submit a Petition!

If you would like to submit a petition to any of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, please visit this page for further guidance:

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/StdDataDocs/5/2/4/5/SD00005425/PresentingaPetition.pdf>

The Planning Process



When a development is proposed, the County Council has various roles. As a planning body, it will be assessing the impact of any development and in doing so will ask for comments from various agencies. Included in this, will be the comments of the Council as the “Highways Authority”.

At the Scrutiny Commissioners’ instigation, a leaflet has now been produced setting out the Council’s role as the Highway Authority in planning applications and this is being made available to elected members and members of the public.

Planning applications are an iterative process with a dialogue taking place between the Council and developers in reshaping proposals to address any concerns. It was clear that members were not always being kept up to date on the progress of these discussions. Following discussion with officers, reporting mechanisms have now been improved and should ensure that members, and therefore residents, have access to the most up-to-date information on the progress of planning applications.

Adults, Communities and Health

The ACH Overview and Scrutiny Committee has had a busy year, with developments in both adult social care and communities and wellbeing services, as well as having to keep on top of the changing health agenda (for our review of external health bodies, please turn to page 6).

We have regularly reviewed progress with the delivery of the Extra Care Strategy, which aims to improve outcomes and choice for older people by providing an alternative to residential care. Whilst supporting the aim of the Strategy, we were concerned that issues affecting existing residents were not always dealt with sensitively and we have requested that, in future, the consequences of any changes are clearly communicated to residents.

We supported changes to housing related support services as they reflected our ambition to help people remain independently in their own homes for longer. We are keen to see a consistent and equitable service across the County.

In the light of the significant efficiency savings required from the Communities and Wellbeing Service, we have monitored progress with the delivery of the libraries, heritage and arts review. We are pleased that no libraries have been closed and welcome the principle of using libraries and museums as community spaces. However, some

concerns remain about the future of these services if further efficiency savings are required

A Review Panel was set up to look at the effectiveness of the arrangements for dealing with the transition of young people with disabilities as they become adults and responsibility for their support transfers from the Council’s CYPS Department to the Adults and Communities Department.

To support its investigation, the Panel met with stakeholders at an engagement event and met service users and parents at one of the County’s special schools.

The Panel concluded that, whilst it was broadly satisfied with the arrangements in place, some improvements could be made. These focused on tailoring services to meet individuals’ needs and included the active promotion of “Person Centred Approach” and identifying a key worker for each service user who would provide the necessary support and information throughout the process.

The Panel’s Final Report is available [here](#).



Find out more!

About the Scrutiny Commissioners by visiting this page:

leics.gov.uk/scrutinycommissioners

The Children and Young People's Service

We have again received several reports on education funding issues and the future of the Department whilst also maintaining a focus on children's social care issues.

The pace of change, particularly in the education field, as directed by Government, has been a particular challenge. Officers and Members came together in two workshops to consider the issues in more detail and develop a common understanding of the future direction for CYPS and its on-going relationship with schools.

During the year, we looked at fostering and adoption matters, including commenting on the Permanence Policy, before the Cabinet approved it. While considering the Government's Adoption Action Plan, we learned of the Lead Member's considerable concerns regarding the national direction and agreed with him that it is more important to secure the right placement for a child, that will not subsequently break down, rather than meeting arbitrary deadlines.

A special meeting was called over the summer to consider the Review of the Criteria for the Statutory Assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN), a policy that affects some of the County's most vulnerable children. At the meeting, the Lead Member and Director were rigorously questioned on the rationale and likely impact of the proposed changes and we were assured that parents had been consulted

and were broadly supportive, no student already assessed with SEN would be affected and that the relevant assessments had been carried out.

Alongside the committee work, a Review Panel was established to understand the existing Children's Centre model against the changing policy and inspection environment, the current quality assurance arrangements and to develop policies and strategies for improvement.

This Panel trialled a new format, with fewer meetings and a day-long session of children's centre visits and evidence gathering. We may wish to pursue this new approach in future years.

The key findings of the Panel were that partnership working is essential to ensure the best start in life for young children and to support families to achieve this. It is clear that this approach leads to long-term benefits across the public sector as individuals subsequently need fewer interventions and support. The key concern is around the continuance of funding for this work and the Panel has recommended that partner agencies, which also benefit from reduced demand because of this early intervention, should be asked if they can contribute additional resources.

The Panel's Final Report is available [here](#).



Scrutiny of Health Bodies

The ACH Scrutiny Committee has an important role maintaining a check and balance on the performance of local commissioners and providers whose services impact the lives of local residents.

University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL)

Having learnt that the Leicester Royal Infirmary (LRI) was not meeting the four hour waiting time target in its Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department we visited the LRI and reported back to the Committee and its Chief Executive. We learnt that a reconfiguration of A&E was planned to improve patient flow. During the visit, we became concerned about the transfer of patients brought to A&E because of mental health problems. As a direct result of this a new protocol for the transfer of these patients from the LRI to Glenfield Hospital has now been put in place.

In February, we met the new Chief Executive of UHL to discuss its strategic direction and in particular its plans for the reconfiguration of services at the Infirmary, Glenfield and General Hospital, as well as services in the community hospitals located in market towns. We raised issues with the financial viability and timescales and raised questions about access to services, particularly for people in the County. UHL have been asked to return to provide further information.

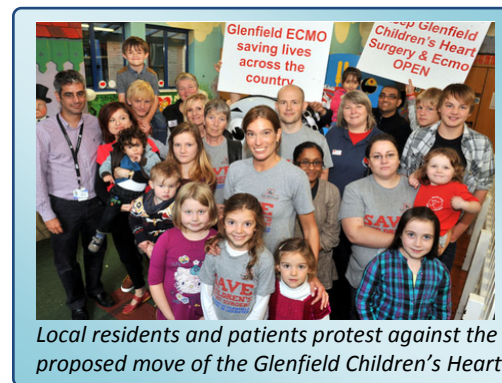
Joint Health Scrutiny:

Glenfield Children's Heart Unit

The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee met in the summer after the Government announced that the Glenfield Children's Heart Unit would be closed as a result of a national review and services would be moved to Birmingham. We felt this decision was not in the best interest of the local health service and the population it serves and for the first time we used our statutory power of referral to the Secretary of State for Health to ask for the decision to be reconsidered.

The Secretary of State responded by asking the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) to review the decision, in the light of our referral and those from Lincolnshire and Yorkshire.

Members of the LLR Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee gave evidence in support of our concerns to the IRP when it came to Leicester in November. We are now waiting for the formal announcement of the findings of the IRP, though at the time of writing this report the High Court ruled that the consultation process was flawed.



Local residents and patients protest against the proposed move of the Glenfield Children's Heart

East Midlands Ambulance Service

A visit to the new East Midlands Ambulance Service's Operations Centre helped us to understand the reasons behind its plan to change station locations. Whilst recognising the need for change we expressed concern at the original proposals and are pleased to see revisions which address the needs of rural communities.

Leicestershire Partnership Trust

In response to concerns identified in the media and by members about the safeguarding of mental health patients we queried LPT's risk management and the robustness of its record keeping. We were pleased with the positive response from the LPT and hope that it will remain vigilant. We have also emphasised the need for incidents of attempted suicide and lessons learnt to be reported publicly in order to give the public confidence in LPT's ability to keep people safe.

The Future...?

As the local government landscape continues to change at a rapid pace, Scrutiny will need to be more adaptable than ever before in order to maintain a robust check and balance on service delivery. We have encountered a number of challenges this year.

With the election of the new Police and Crime Commissioner in November 2012 came entirely new arrangements for Police accountability.

The Scrutiny Commission this year signed-off a protocol between it and the newly formed Police and Crime Panel (PCP) to ensure that effective working can take place and the Commission, as the "Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee" is able to keep a regular dialogue with the Council's representative on the PCP. It will be interesting to see how this relationship evolves over time.

Economic growth will continue to be a priority as we negotiate our way through a period of significant financial difficulty. The recently announced "City Deal" will undoubtedly give the LLEP more strength to its arm to attract private investment, close skills gaps and create jobs. It will remain for Scrutiny to ensure that the benefits of this work are felt in the County as well as the City.

With the transfer of public health functions into the Council, there will be new opportunities to ensure that the Council's activities reflect the

Health and Wellbeing Strategy and its aim to improve the quality of residents' lives.

Acting as a leader nationally, the County Council continues to drive forward the Supporting Leicestershire's Families Programme. This work brings together a number of agencies and organisations with the aim of providing a more joined-up and improved approach to the support of families with complex problems and reducing the associated costs. This new approach will ensure that agencies are committed to better data sharing which should equate to greater consistency and, ultimately, a better service for families. We recognise that this work is particularly challenging and, as it progresses, it will be important for Scrutiny to monitor the quality of the services delivered and ensure that nothing is lost in the transition.

The increasing importance of the Leicestershire Together Framework in setting the strategic direction for all partners represents a challenge for Scrutiny. Following the elections we will need to ensure our structure reflects this landscape.

We will need to also reflect the findings of the Francis Report in our approach to Health Scrutiny. This will include ensuring that we receive the appropriate information from partners and that our "critical friend" relationship remains sufficiently robust and challenging.

Get in Touch!

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