

Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report 2013/14



“Local Government continues to change at a dramatic rate, with ever increasing pressure on budgets.

We have worked hard this year to help safeguard the services that we feel matter the most to the public and the most vulnerable in our society, whilst recognising the drastically reduced finances within which the Council now has to operate.

It will be increasingly important as we continue to navigate our way through this period of financial austerity, that we focus our Scrutiny resource on areas that matter the most to the public and areas where we feel we can help the Council to work smarter and more efficiently.

We hope that you find this document a useful précis of the work carried out in Overview and Scrutiny over this past year. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our fellow members and officers for their support and guidance.”



Kevin Feltham
Kevin Feltham CC



Simon Galton
Simon Galton CC



Max Hunt
Max Hunt CC



Richard Shepherd
Richard Shepherd CC

The Scrutiny Commissioners

Introduction

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14

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 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.

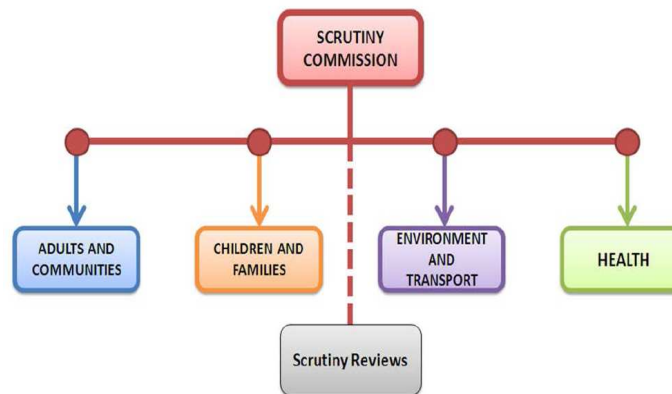
Overview and Scrutiny bodies are not “decision making” bodies but are bodies which monitor and influence those that are. The Overview and Scrutiny role, carried out by non-Cabinet members, is designed to support the work of the Council in the following ways:

- **Reviewing and scrutinising decisions taken by the Cabinet (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 at Leicestershire County Council is set out below:



It was agreed to change the structure of Overview and Scrutiny at the June 2013 Council meeting, with the Budget and Performance Monitoring Panel removed, and both a Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee added. The changes mean that each Committee now has a role in performance monitoring, also enabling a greater number of members to scrutinise performance and service delivery.

The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the Council’s functions in relation to their relevant departments. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the activities of NHS bodies which have 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 any of the above Committees, including that of budget monitoring. It also oversees and co-ordinates the work of all Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It also co-ordinates the response to the Cabinet’s budget proposals.

Scrutiny Reviews, made up of a small number of members, 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 Scrutiny Commission and the Cabinet for its consideration.

Find out more...

...about 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 and areas such as the economy and strategic transport including within the sub-region. It also has a role to look at issues that cover the remits of more than one Overview and Scrutiny Committee, such as School Transport.

Home to School Transport

One of the biggest issues we have looked at this year has been the changes to the Council's Home to School Transport Policy. We had noted with concern in mid-2012 that it was intended to introduce a policy which would mean that free transport would only be provided for children to their nearest school, regardless of whether the school was within the County or not and that this had not been made as clear as it could have been as part of the consultation process. Parents and head teachers alike expressed significant reservations about this approach at our meetings and how it could negatively affect the schooling of their children, and in some cases, even the future of some schools and academies. We were pleased when

the Cabinet Lead Member announced at the Commission's meeting in March this year that he planned to re-consult on a Policy which included free transport provision to the "nearest suitable Leicestershire school". We hope this goes some way to alleviating the anxiety that existed earlier in the year around these changes.



Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership

Economic Development

With the establishment of "Local Enterprise Partnerships", leading on economic development it was important that we kept a close eye on activity in this area, particularly the agreement to enter into one of the Government's "City Deals". We had the opportunity to input into this process at a workshop session in September. We were pleased to note that it secured £16 million of government funding and would enable the creation of some 1500 jobs. We look forward to a presentation by the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership (LLEP) in

June which will enable us to scrutinise the progress and ensure that the economic regeneration which is so badly needed is delivered.

Traded Activity

With the increased pressure on Council budgets as we continue through a period of austerity, there will be a growing focus on traded activity as a means of boosting Council resources. We noted in November that the Council had commenced work on a "Commercial Services Strategy" and were pleased when the Director of Corporate Resources welcomed the opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny to feed into this process and help the Council to think innovatively about the way in which it offers its services in an increasingly complex and transient open market. Accordingly a Scrutiny Review Panel into Traded Services will commence in summer 2014.



The Budget

In advance of our discussions, we were briefed about the results of one of the

largest scale consultation exercises by the Council engaging the public on where the Council should identify the significant savings it was required to make. Focus groups and community events had been held to try and engage the public on the issues and it seemed that this was a successful endeavour, with the results showing that the public were informed about the extent of the figure the Council is trying to save.

In regard to the proposals brought forward by the Cabinet, we were keen to act as a safeguard for those services we felt merited support at this difficult time, whilst recognising the pressure the Council was under to make savings. One area where we outlined concern to the Cabinet was the proposal to reduce grant funding to community groups at a time when we were increasingly asking them to consider taking on the delivery of services such as libraries and museums. Because of the difficult times facing tax payers, we were pleased that the Council opted to take the Government's Council Tax Freeze Grant this year. Similarly pleasing were progressive proposals for renewable energy generation at Council sites, including County Hall.

Get Involved in Scrutiny

If you would like to submit a **petition or ePetition** to, any of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, please visit our [website](#) for further guidance.

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. One area where we have asked that officers continue to be robust is in challenging carry forwards.

Adults and Communities

The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee focused much of its work this year on Adult Social Care as well as Communities and Wellbeing; health scrutiny now being undertaken by a separate scrutiny body.

We have continued to monitor progress in the delivery of the libraries, heritage and arts review, recognising the need for the Council to make significant savings from the communities and wellbeing service but also understanding how these services are highly valued local amenities, which are often hubs for a range of other local activities. As part of consultations, which commenced in April 2013, we shall be scrutinising proposals for Snibston Discovery Museum to be reconfigured around its mining heritage, together with the intention for the 16 most used libraries across Leicestershire to continue to be operated by the County Council and for communities to be offered the opportunity to run community libraries with Council support.

We have supported the Council's work in developing Extra Care Housing which enables vulnerable adults to live as independently as possible in their own homes with choice and control over the services they receive. Whilst the overall vision for Extra Care Housing was promising the Committee felt that progress in extending schemes could be improved. We recognised that the County Council needed to ensure that Extra Care housing was promoted with district councils to ensure it was given due consideration when developing core strategies or considering housing developments. Looking forward we want to see the development of new Extra Care Housing in partnership with the districts.



The provision of care services to the elderly and for vulnerable people has been a key local and national issue. The Committee has established a Scrutiny Review Panel which will focus on how aspects of domiciliary care and the delivery of services can be improved, allowing members to contribute

to the development of future Domiciliary Care Policy. This will help to ensure more cost effective solutions for the County Council and improved commissioning contracts with care providers.

A Peer Challenge Review was undertaken by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) within the Adults and Communities Department in November 2013. We were happy to see that feedback from the Peer Review has been positive, with praise for the culture and leadership within the Department being committed to improving performance at a time of significant change and reduced budgets.

Members commended the Department's openness and honesty. The Department has undergone significant change at a time when savings requirements are challenging. Nevertheless, we believe it is committed to continuous improvement in performance. Key priorities for improvement will be reflected in the Department's Business Plan.

Children and Families

2013/14 again proved to be a period of significant change, particularly in the field of education.

We were keen to assess how, through the newly established Leicestershire Education Excellence Partnership (LEEP), the Authority was managing its changing role which, with an increasing number of academies, has moved from a position of control to one of

collaboration and influence. The Authority continues to have a statutory role as champion for children and the Lead Member and Director were rigorously questioned about the operation of the partnership and the risks surrounding its effectiveness. We were assured that head teachers and other key partners had contributed to and were happy with the development of the LEEP. We were also encouraged by the outcome of an internal audit which gave significant reassurance that the LEEP was providing the necessary framework through which the Authority could fulfill its statutory duties. Leicestershire schools continue to perform well and, through the LEEP and our role in scrutinising its activities, we hope to ensure that these high standards are maintained.



During the year, particular focus was given to school place planning. The Authority retains a responsibility to ensure there is a sufficient supply of school places, but no longer has the same level of control to enable it to manage this directly. Having raised concerns about the need for a coordinated approach with schools, and in particular district councils as the local planning authority, we considered and supported the draft new Strategy "In the Right Place" which, subject to public consultation and Council approval, will help support future joint working in this area.

We have continued to look at the County Council's progress in implementing the Government's adoption reforms. We share the Government's concerns regarding reduced timescales, but agreed with the Cabinet Lead Member that it is more important to secure the right placement for a child that will not subsequently break down, than meet arbitrary deadlines in every case.

During 2013, the Children and Young People's Service took over responsibility for the Supporting Leicestershire Families (SLF) programme. We have continued to monitor its performance and welcome the outcomes achieved so far which put Leicestershire as one of the top performing authorities. We have, however, emphasised the need for more outcomes and cost benefits to be identified and measured, so that the success of the

programme can be fully measured over the longer term. Improvements to performance monitoring are planned for 2014/15.

With the introduction of a new inspection framework by Ofsted, we identified as a priority area the need to ensure the Authority was meeting its safeguarding responsibilities. We considered various reports on safeguarding assurance and have monitored the performance of the First Response Central Duty and Children's Social Care teams. In particular, we requested more information on the work being undertaken around "e-safety", raising awareness and providing training in schools, following high profile cases reported in the media.

A review of all bodies which monitor activities in relation to child protection and child welfare and wellbeing issues has been undertaken by the standing member panel on Safeguarding and Serious Case Reviews which involved the Lead Member, some members of the Committee, including the Chair and Spokesmen, and the Chair of the Scrutiny Commission. Arising from this, new arrangements are now being established to provide an improved governance structure that will meet the new Ofsted Inspection Framework.

We also considered the annual report of the Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board. A well established partnership body with an independent Chair, we were pleased to see the robust arrangements it had put in place to check that practitioners

understood and complied with their safeguarding responsibilities. In particular, we were assured by the work it undertook following a Serious Case Review to ensure lessons learned both locally and nationally were shared across all partner agencies.

Environment and Transport

Following agreement at the Annual Meeting of the County Council in May, the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee was established. The Committee scrutinises the executive functions of the County Council in respect of the Environment and Transport Department, which relate to waste and recycling; public transport; and roads and road safety. It has been a busy first year for the Committee with key developments in public transportation and environmental waste matters.

The Committee played a vital role in influencing the Cabinet's decision on the Loughborough Town Centre Bus Trial. After consultation and passionate representations to the Committee from local people, Councillors and other stakeholders, the Committee recommended to the Cabinet a trial for no buses in Loughborough Town Centre. This would create a pedestrianised area and new public space in the heart of the Town.

The Committee has considered the outcome of the public consultation on proposals to amend the opening times at recycling and household waste sites. We noted that public satisfaction with the sites was high and that

Review Panel: Bus Policy

Following the 2013 County Council elections a Panel was reconvened to consider the outcomes of the consultation with a view to making recommendations on revised service provision for consultation, having regard to the financial circumstances facing the County Council.



Our recommendations, accepted by the Cabinet not only delivered the required MTFs savings but ensured continuation of service provision to cater for the majority of bus users. The proposed introduction of Community Bus Partnerships was welcomed and members of the Panel hoped that those local communities that had lobbied hard during the consultation would now work with the Council and local bus companies to demonstrate the need, increase passenger usage and thereby make these services more financially viable and affordable.

there were concerns about proposals to close sites two hours earlier in the summer. The Committee supported revised proposals which were accepted by the Cabinet and which would result in all sites closing only one hour earlier than at present. Where sites were closed during the winter months, notification would be publicised beforehand with notices being put up advising users of the nearest available site which was open.

The Committee has continued to monitor the ongoing work of the Local Transport Plan 3 with a focus on work being undertaken in the Hinckley area. We particularly supported the work undertaken in promoting alternative means of transport such as cycling and walking.

Health

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

Integration of Health and Social Care

The Better Care Fund has provided an exciting new opportunity to integrate health and social care through a pooled budget and a number of specific projects. We are really pleased to note that, unlike elsewhere in the country, the County Council and health bodies are working well together to transform how care and support is provided to patients. We particularly welcome plans to move services out of UHL

hospitals and in to the community hospitals and other community settings.

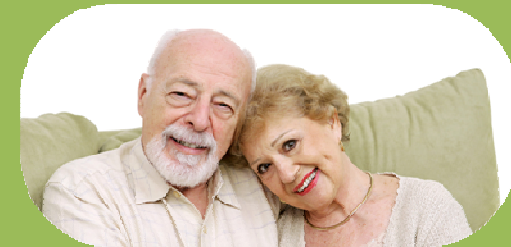
Emergency Care

We recognise the difficulty the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL) has in achieving its target of seeing people attending the Accident and Emergency Department within four hours and that this is a problem affecting the whole health and care system. We invited UHL and its commissioners to tell us how they planned to improve the system and have received regular updates on how the plans are working. Although we remained worried that improvement has not been achieved at the rate expected, we welcome the effort being put in by all partners to tackle this issue. We will continue to support the UHL in its efforts to obtain the necessary capital funding to improve facilities at the Leicester Royal Infirmary and hope that the plans identified through the Better Care Fund will reduce the level of admissions. We will continue to monitor performance in this area.



Review Panel: Referral Pathways

This Review considered the referral pathway for older people with anxiety and depression. The outcomes of our work will be reported to Scrutiny in June and the Cabinet in July. We were well supported by officers from Social Care, Public Health, the Clinical Commissioning Groups, Leicestershire Partnership Trust and the voluntary sector.



We were interested in the causes of anxiety and depression in older people and ways in which people could be prevented from getting ill. For those who are ill, we recommended ways to improve access to services and ways of supporting primary care to ensure that the majority of conditions could be treated by a GP or practice nurse. We identified people who already have one or more medical condition as a particular risk group and recommended ways of mitigating these risks.

Quality of Care

We have had particular concerns over the quality of care provided by the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) following a critical report by the Care Quality Commission of services at the Bradgate Mental Health Unit. We were pleased with the openness and transparency of LPT and welcomed the joined up approach between LPT and its commissioners in addressing the issues raised by the Care Quality Commission. We undertook a follow up visit to the Bradgate Unit where we could see firsthand the improvements made to patient care. Our outstanding concerns relating to the handling of complaints, not just by LPT but across the health sector, will be addressed through a Scrutiny Review Panel next year.



Consultations

We have responded to consultations on the future of health services in Ashby and the review of urgent care (minor illness and minor injury) services in East Leicestershire.

We support the proposal to move services out of Ashby and District Hospital, increase the range of community health services and provide more care in people's homes. However, we are keen for services in Ashby to be considered in the context of the whole of the West Leicestershire area.

We support the option in East Leicestershire which will introduce standardised opening hours for all services, except the Oadby Urgent Care Centre (which receives funding from NHS England to enable it to open from 8am – 9pm). We are really pleased with the commitment to training urgent care leads in GP surgeries and the requirement for practices to demonstrate competency before providing urgent care services. Both these measures will ensure that the service is of a good quality and consistent across GP surgeries in East Leicestershire.

See Scrutiny in action...

To **attend** any of our Overview and Scrutiny Committees meetings, please visit [this page](#) for further details and guidance. Alternatively, most of our meetings are now [webcast live](#).



The Future...

Next year, each of our committees will play a vital role in performance monitoring the County Council's new 'Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018' and scrutinising the annual budget, with the Scrutiny Commission providing a check on the delivery of departmental and corporate budgets through quarterly financial monitoring.

Beyond the transformation of the Council internally, a key deliverable we will focus on is the local economy and we look forward to the results of the LLEP's submission to Government for over £240 million of economic growth money, from the Government's £2 billion Local Growth Fund. With a response expected in summer 2014, the Scrutiny Commission and the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee will monitor the various programmes, timescales and use of resources to provide a check on delivery of the County's key development sites, development of transportation infrastructure, and support for business and employment.

Our Adults and Communities and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees will have a key role to play in monitoring the implementation of the 'Better Care Fund' proposals (now an Act of Parliament), in

advance of its launch in 2015/16. This will put into practice plans to improve the joining up of health and local care provision so that we provide the best possible care to our elderly population and to the most vulnerable in society.

A focus for Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny will be to monitor the early outcomes of the relatively new areas of work within its remit: the development of the Council's relationship with, and the performance monitoring of, schools through the Leicestershire Educational Excellence Partnership, the Supporting Leicestershire Families programme, and new governance structures to support Safeguarding and Serious Case Reviews.

In the face of declining budgets and the necessity of continued austerity for the County Council and its partners in local government and the wider public sector, Scrutiny's role in monitoring the Authority's transformation programme and partner integration will need to be undertaken in a way that provides a robust check and balance, delivered in both a critical and constructive fashion.

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