Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Panels

Annual Reports
2012-2013

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In 2012/13 the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny function was carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee supported by three panels covering:

- Corporate Services
- Children’s Services
- Community Partnerships

Each has received briefings and has undertaken a significant body of work covering important areas of Council business.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at each meeting conducts a review of Council performance against Key Performance Indicators and where it was felt necessary has monitored the implementation and completion of improvement plans. The Committee has challenged the make-up of these Indicators and is pleased that they will be updated for financial year 2013/14 with the aim of ensuring these are aligned to our priorities and are sufficiently challenging to drive continuous improvement.

The Committee and Panels have no delegated decision making powers however they influence by challenging and advising those shaping strategy and policy and during the year have made recommendations to the Executive. Details of the work of the Committee and of each panel are contained in this report.

I wish to record my thanks to all Councillors who have dedicated their time to the work of Overview and Scrutiny and to the witnesses who provided the information we needed to do our work. I also wish to thank Kevin Jacob, Madeleine Shopland, Susan Coulter, Tricia Harcourt, Anne Hunter and Ella Hutchings of the Democratic Services’ Team for their support and for producing our reports; often within very tight timescales.

Norman Jorgensen – Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
THE ROLE OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

What we do

Overview and Scrutiny was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 as part of a series of measures that saw the replacement of the Committee system. In Wokingham, the Leader and Cabinet model was chosen, whereby executive decision making powers are invested in a Leader and Cabinet, (referred to as the Executive) of up to ten members having power to take decisions either collectively or individually. To counterbalance these powers, local authorities were given Overview and Scrutiny functions which can only be exercised by councillors who are not members of the Executive.

The Local Government Act 2000, as amended by the Localism Act 2011 sets out the role of Overview and Scrutiny for Councils, the objectives of which are to:

- Holding the Executive to Account – which can involve scrutinising decisions of the Executive before they are made, before they are implemented or after they are implemented.
- Policy Development and Review – by using the unique insight of Members as representatives of their communities to look at issues facing local residents and/or to use that insight to challenge the effectiveness of existing policies.
- Performance Monitoring – by considering information on a regular basis setting out how the Council is performing and if necessary investigating where improvement is required.
- External Scrutiny by considering issues that are of importance to local people but are the responsibility of other agencies.

All councils operating Executive governance arrangements must have at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Wokingham Borough Council operates with one Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and three Overview and Scrutiny Panels, but either the Management Committee or Panels may create time limited task and finish groups if considered expedient.

The four principles of good scrutiny as identified by the Centre for Public Scrutiny are:

- To provide a ‘critical friend’ challenge to decision making in the Council as well as external authorities and agencies
- To reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
- To take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public
- To make an impact on the delivery of public services
What we do not do
Overview and Scrutiny is not a mechanism for the investigation or settling of individual complaints for which the Council has separate processes. Nor is it able to look at individual planning or licensing decisions. However, suggestions from residents as to wider issues that could be looked at by overview and scrutiny are welcome.
THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE TEAM

Members of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee – 2012-2013
The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee during 2012-2013 comprised 12 backbench Councillors appointed by the Council according to political balance.

Each political group is now entitled to a maximum of two Councillors who can, subject to an agreed process, substitute up to two members of the Committee or Panel and continue with a particular issue as it proceeds.

Councillors

Norman Jorgensen
Chairman

Michael Firmager
Vice-Chairman

Chris Bowring

Tim Holton

Ian Pittock

Malcolm Richards

Prue Bray

Pauline Helliar-Symons

Ken Miall

Stuart Munro

Dee Tomlin

Sue Smith
Overview and Scrutiny at Wokingham
Overview and Scrutiny at Wokingham Borough Council aims to provide constructive challenge by being a ‘critical friend’ to the Council and its partners. In practice this means using the unique insight that backbench Councillors have as representatives of their community to highlight possible areas of improvement, highlight and congratulate achievement and contribute to the development of future ideas.

Councillors sitting on the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or the Overview and Scrutiny Panels see themselves not as the adversary of the ruling Executive or the Officer core, but as being supportive of what is good and a robust and fair critic of anything that is not. This is important because whilst the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Panels do not have any decision making powers, they do have the ability to use the position of critical friend to influence decisions taken by the Council.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has developed a work programme for itself and the Overview and Scrutiny Panels over the past year which is considered, and if required, updated at each meeting. The aim is to address issues it considers to be of interest to the Council and the community.

The work programme has to remain flexible in order that any urgent pieces of work that have come to light, but which had not been planned for, or which must be undertaken because of legislation or because they are of sufficient importance, can be considered.

The current Terms of Reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Panels are set out in Chapter 6 of the Wokingham Borough Council Constitution.
OUR WORK

The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in 2012/2013

Meetings
The Committee has met on seven occasions against a programme of six scheduled meetings, and has considered/dealt with the following business:

Consideration of 'Call-Ins'
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the ability to look at decisions made by the Executive as a collective and those made by individual Executive Members. Under the Council’s Constitution five councillors who are not members of the Executive can request that decisions made, but not yet implemented be reviewed. This enables the Committee to consider whether the decision was taken appropriately.

- On 23 August 2012 the Committee considered a 'call-in' of the decision relating to the approval of remuneration in the sum of £6,095 per annum to Members appointed as non-Executive Directors (NEDs) on Council Local Authority Trading Companies made by the Executive on 26 July 2012.

- At the meeting it was agreed that the decision making process had been followed correctly in respect of the decision to approve remuneration for the Members appointed as non-Executive Members although it was felt that it could have been more open and transparent. It was also felt that Members should have been informed of a decision was to be made about remunerating NEDs and therefore communication could have been improved upon.

- The Committee agreed the following:
  - after consideration of the four call-in reasons, the Committee concurred with the decision made by the Executive to remunerate Members appointed as NEDs as set out in the decision notice published on Friday 27 July 2012;
  - that an agenda item be added to the next Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee meeting relating to how communication with the companies could be improved and what information Members would wish to be provided with;
  - a letter be written to the Executive on behalf of the Committee requesting that:
    - the IRP be asked to undertake a regular review of the amount of remuneration that was appropriate for Members to receive when acting in the capacity of a non-executive director and report back to the Executive; and
    - the Constitution Review Working Group be asked to consider the most appropriate process for appointing Member NEDs and report back to the Executive.

- The Committee discussion relating to how communication with the companies could be improved was held on 18 September 2012.
Performance Management

- Key Performance Indicator Updates - At each scheduled meeting the Committee has considered performance management information in relation to the performance of specific indicators regarded as being key to assessing the operation of the Council. The Committee receives the same information that is supplied to the Council’s Executive.

- The report includes information based upon a basket of indicators decided upon locally by senior managers and the Executive. Those indicators with performance below target are identified by a red traffic light and details of the action plan put in place to improve the performance of the indicator forms part of the report presented to the Committee.

- The Committee has identified specific Key Performance Indicators which have shown a trend of not meeting the target assigned; for example the timeliness of children’s safeguarding Core Assessments.

- In June 2012 the Committee noted that in light of the removal of the requirement to report on many national indicators a review of Key Performance Indicators was underway and that a new system was being designed with greater focus on measuring performance against local priorities. In November 2012 the Committee was updated on the development of the new process and framework by Heather Thwaites, Strategic Director of Development and Regeneration and were informed that it was expected that the new system would be in place for the beginning of the 2013/2014 financial year. The Committee welcomed these developments as a step forward towards a more dynamic system and looks forward to the opportunity to consider drafts of the revised reports. The Committee remains committed to the principle that it should consider information relating to the performance of the Council’s services if it is to adequately undertake its duty to hold the Executive to account.

- Whilst acknowledging that the existing performance management process and reports were to be replaced in April 2013, the Committee expressed concern regarding the information it was receiving under the present system on a number of occasions. This particularly related to areas of underperformance, where the Committee felt that the intended management actions as set out in the Performance Improvement Action Plans it considered were not detailed enough to provide the Committee with sufficient reassurance that appropriate and robust action was being put in place to improve performance in those areas. The Committee formally raised this with Officers and continues to monitor the situation.

Summary of One-Off Briefings/Topics

- Briefing Paper on Government Horizon Scanning and the Whitehall Business Plans 2011 to 2015 – at its meeting on 13 June 2012, the Committee was provided with a briefing paper which set out a summary of the Government’s business plan objectives which had been achieved to date. The purpose of bringing the report to the Committee was to seek to identify any potential issues that would impact upon the Council’s activities and for the Committee to decide whether any of the issue would warrant any further investigation.
• As a result of the consideration of the paper, the Committee requested that:
  o the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel look at the Government’s Communications Channel Strategy to look at how the Council was responding to the strategy and vulnerable groups were protected;
  o the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel look at the Government’s cross departmental work on a participation strategy for 16-24 year olds and to seek information from Officers on the take up and use of apprenticeships within the Borough and the Council;
  o briefing reports be brought back to the Committee setting out the background and implications for the Council of the Community Right to Challenge to run local public services and the right to bid for Assets of Community Value;
  o the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel look at the implications of the Council’s membership of the Thames Valley Enterprise Partnership.

• More information can be found on the outcome of the Panel’s consideration of these issues within the minutes of their meetings.

• **Update on the Performance of the Revenue and Benefits Service 2011/2012** – at its meeting on 18 July 2012 the Committee considered a report setting out details of the performance of the Revenue and Benefits Services. This followed on from the consideration of a similar report in 2011 whereby the Committee had requested an update after 12 months. The Committee was pleased to note that performance by the Council in the collection of council tax and business rates were both above 99% and that Wokingham Borough was the second best collection authority within England and Wales. The Committee was satisfied that no further report was required

• **The Operation of Shared Legal Solutions During the First Year** – at its meeting on 18 July 2012 the Committee considered a report which set out details of the operation and performance of the Shared Legal Solutions service established by Wokingham Borough Council in partnership with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. This followed on from an earlier interim report to the Committee. Susanne Nelson-Wehmeyer, Director of Legal and Electoral Services and Sean O’Connor Business Manager attended the meeting and presented the report to the Committee. The Committee information on the performance of the service in meeting its financial and quality targets and members of the Committee asked questions around some of the challenges in operating a shared service between two local authorities with different cultural differences and priorities. The Committee was satisfied that no further updates were required at the present time.

• **Briefing on the Council Budget Setting Process** – at its meeting on 18 July 2012 the Committee received a presentation from Graham Ebers, Strategic Director of Resources and Anthony Pollock, Executive Member for Finance on the budget setting process. The Committee was informed about the background context of the budgeting issues faced by the Council, in particular the continued reduction in central government funding. The Committee noted that whilst the Council had had considerable success in mitigating the effects of the reduction innovative policy solutions were required for the future that were
consistent with the Council’s priorities and values in order to bridge the expected gap between income and expenditure;

- The Committee was also informed of the process of and timelines for the drafting of the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan which set out the Council's budget planning cycle on a rolling three year basis and which was informed by the service planning process within the Council’s individual service areas.

- The Committee considered a number of possible areas for its involvement in the budget process as suggested by Graham Ebers and Anthony Pollock. It was felt that changes arising from the Localisation of Council Tax Support would be significant for the Council given that it was expected that income would drop as a result of the changes. The Committee decided to investigate this issue in more detail and received a further specific briefing at its September meeting.

- Review of Most Appropriate Decision Making Governance Arrangements for Wokingham Borough Council – at its meeting held on 18 September 2012 the Committee considered a request from the full Council that the Committee determine the most appropriate way to undertake an investigation into the options for changing the existing decision making arrangements. This followed on from the consideration and agreement of a Motion calling for a review of decision making processes in light of the options for change introduced by Localism Act 2011. The Committee agreed that a working party be constituted from the membership of the Constitution Review Working Group, two members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, a Member of the Executive and a member of the Independent political group. The Decision Making Review Working Group is currently undertaking its review and will report back to full Council on completion of its work.

- Welfare Benefit Changes – at its meeting held on 18 September 2012 the Committee considered a briefing paper which set out current and expected changes to Housing and Council Tax benefit. It was noted that whereas historically welfare benefit policy had been set nationally and administered locally the Government was putting in place measures to change this so that individual authorities would be responsible for setting policy as well as administering the system. The Committee considered the impact of the changes for the Council particularly with regard to the introduction of the new Universal Benefit in 2014.

- Localisation of Council Tax Support Proposals – Committee Response to Public Consultation - on the 18 September 2012 the Committee considered a briefing paper presented by Kevin Mercer, Head of Transactional Finance setting out changes to Council Tax Support and Empty Property Charges within Wokingham Borough following on from the localisation of Council Tax support. The Committee had decided to look at the issue on the basis that it was an issue which would affect the Council’s overall budget.

- The Committee was informed that as part of the Government’s localisation agenda, responsibility for setting policy on Council Tax support had passed from central government to local government and of particular importance for the Council, the arrangements for funding Council Tax Support had also changed. Instead of the Council
receiving an annual subsidy that was linked to the overall demand for Council Tax support it was noted that the Council would receive a fixed amount which amounted to a 10% reduction in funding.

- The Committee considered and supported the draft proposals to recoup 20% of the shortfall in funding by making changes to Council Tax Benefit and the 80% of the savings from changes to empty property charges and asked detailed questions around these changes.

- **Proposed Submission – Managing Development Delivery Plan Document and Policy on Night Time Deliveries** – on the 18 September 2012 the Committee considered a report on the Council’s proposed policy towards night time deliveries as set out in the Managing Development Delivery Plan Document. In response to a request from a Member that a full scrutiny review be undertaken into the Council's policies towards night time deliveries the Committee had decided that it should be supplied with a copy of the draft policy so that it could be satisfied as to its contents. The Committee concluded that the draft policy had gone as far as reasonably practical in seeking to protect the interests of residents affected by night time deliveries whilst recognising the commercial practicalities of deliveries.

- **Communication between the Council and Its Local Authority Trading Companies** – on the 18 September 2012 the Committee held a discussion on how communication and the flow of information could be improved between the Council’s Local Authority Trading Companies and Members, particularly Overview and Scrutiny Members. This followed on from the Committee’s consideration of a ‘call-in’ of the Council’s Executive decision to instruct the Council’s companies to pay remuneration to Members appointed to the boards of the companies as Non-Executive Directors.

- The Committee had concerns that given the importance and impact of Local Authority Trading Companies on the Council there needed to be greater transparency of information available to Members on their activities, notwithstanding the existing reporting arrangements in place at the time. The Committee did understand the need for some matters to remain exempt from publication on the grounds of legitimate commercial sensitivity.

- The Committee authorised the Chairman to raise the matter with the Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Audit Committee in order to seek to develop a mechanism whereby the amount of information available to non-Executive Members regarding the Council’s companies could be increased. At the Committee’s meeting on 21 November the Chairman updated the Committee and informed them that during a discussion he had had with the Leader of the Council, the Leader had indicated that he agreed that there was a need for non-Executive Member to receive more information such as high level profit and loss and performance information. It was noted that reports on the trading position of the Council’s companies would in future be presented to meetings of the Executive. The Committee may wish to continue to monitor this issue.

- **Community Right to Bid/Assets of Community Value Briefing** – on 21 November 2012 the Committee considered a briefing note on the introduction under the Localism Act 2011 of a ‘community right to bid’ for assets listed on a register maintained by Councils as being of community value. The Committee was informed that the introduction of the
provision reflected the Government’s view that within local neighbourhoods there were buildings that acted as lifelines to the communities that used them, (e.g. public houses, villages shops, community centres and so on). The Committee noted that the Council was responsible for developing a process for considering requests for properties to be listed as assets of community value and the consequence of listing whereby local communities had to be given the opportunity to bid to buy the asset. The Committee was also informed that there were no guarantees such bids would be accepted by the vendor.

- The Committee whilst supporting the intention behind the introduction of the provision did have a number of concerns as set out in the minutes, but particularly that listing might have possible negative effects on the value of a property listed and that it was questionable whether linking a particular building to a particular function was necessarily a good idea when it was often the activity undertaken at the building that was the asset and not the physical building.

- **Community Right to Challenge – Briefing Note** – on 21 November the Committee considered a briefing note setting out the provisions of the ‘Community Right to Bid’ introduced by the Localism Act 2011 whereby various community groups as defined in the legislation would be able to express an interest in running certain services on behalf of the local authority. It was noted that expressing an interest for a service did not automatically mean that the running of the service would be granted to the organisation making the request, but that it would trigger a formal procurement exercise. It was noted that the Council needed to develop a process for considering such requests.

- In considering the briefing note the Committee felt that as a consequence of the provisions the Council would need to take account of the possibility of an expression of interest being received particularly in relation to the timetabling of any procurement exercise.

- **Proposed Park and Ride Strategy** – on 23 January 2013 the Committee considered a draft of the Executive Report and attached draft strategy on Park and Ride. Members had requested to look at the strategy as a result of their consideration of the Executive Forward Programme in November 2012. Councillor Keith Baker, Executive Member for Highways and Planning and Matt Davey, Head of Highways and Transport attended the meeting and answered the Committee’s questions.

- In considering the report and strategy, the Committee sought reassurance that the proposals to expand on Park and Ride provision would be financially neutral to the Council unless there were exceptional circumstances and asked a series of detailed questions the details of which are set out in the minutes of the meeting. The Committee was satisfied with the responses it received and decided it did not wish to make any formal comments to the Executive.

- **Update on the Council’s Financial Position and 2013/2014 Budget** – at its meeting on 23 January 2013 the Committee received a presentation from Graham Ebers, Strategic Director of Resources on the headline issues affecting the Council’s financial position and the impact of these issues on the 2013/2014 and future budgets.
The Committee noted the severe constraints on the Council’s budget within the context of a settlement from central Government that was reducing year on year to the extent that Wokingham Borough Council was the worst funded unitary in the country whilst demand for council services increased year on year. In comparison to other local authorities the Council received a low level of support from central Government which was felt to be unfair given that the cost of providing services was the same, if not more, than in areas that received higher levels of support.

Standard Work Programme Items
In addition to individual items of business the Committee has as part of its Work Programme discussed a number of regular business items:

- **Consideration of the Work Programme** – at each meeting the work programme of the Management Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Panels is examined and requests for additions to the work programme, such as a review request, are considered. In addition, the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels have an opportunity to feedback to the Management Committee on the operation of their panels.

- **Consideration of the Current Executive Forward Programme** – at each meeting the current Executive Forward Programme is considered. If felt necessary, the Committee can ask for further information or request the attendance of witnesses in order to seek further information on a particular forthcoming Executive decision. An issue of continuing concern for the Committee has been the accuracy of the Council’s Executive Forward Programme in setting out a list of expected decisions requiring Executive approval within a four month period. The Committee has had concerns that too many items were being considered by the Executive without first appearing in the Forward Programme or that too great a number of expected decisions were being listed in the Forward Programme, but subsequently withdrawn without in the Committee’s view, sufficient explanation. It was felt that this had impacted upon the Committee’s ability to enquire into forthcoming items of Executive business and through such enquires hold the Executive to account.

- At the Committee meeting held on 18 September 2012, the Committee was updated by on changes to Forward Programme to include reference to items that had been withdrawn from the programme and other changes that were to be made in light of revised Access to Information Regulations published by the Government. The Committee remains concerned that improvements should be made to the project management of decisions requiring Executive approval so that there was more assurance around the accuracy of decision dates.

Task and Finish Groups – Waste Collection Task and Finish Group
Under the Terms of the Constitution there is provision for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to establish Task and Finish Groups in order to undertake reviews into specific subjects.

- During 2012/2013 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee established the Waste Collection Task and Finish Group;

- The Task and Finish Group had the following Terms of Reference:
a) To identify areas of success in the implementation of the new Waste Collection Scheme, problems that arose and how those problems were addressed;

b) To examine the performance of the new Waste Collection Scheme in relation to meeting the Council’s underpinning principles of offering Excellent Value for Money for your Council Tax, Looking After Vulnerable People; and Delivering Quality;

c) To examine the performance of the new Waste Collection Scheme in relation to meeting the Council’s underpinning principles of maintaining and improving Waste Collection, Recycling and Fuel Efficiency;

d) To identify any wider corporate implications and risks arising from the introduction of the waste scheme for the introduction/renewal of other key Council projects and contracts involving significant change;

e) To identify possible extensions to the scheme to include other waste streams including their viability;

f) For any changes recommended by the review to be implemented for the start of the 2013/2014 financial year, subject to any contractual constraints; and

g) To examine the consultation process that was followed to ascertain if lessons could be learned for future projects.

• The Task and Finish Group decided to undertake its review in two parts, initially focussing on what it felt were urgent changes to be made to the waste collection scheme so that any recommendations could be considered as part of the waste procurement arrangements for 2013/2014 which were considered by the Executive in November 2012. The second part of the review dealt with communication issues and the problems encountered by residents when trying to communicate with the Council and Veolia, with the final report being issued in October 2012 and considered by the Executive in January 2013. Full details of the review can be found within the Task and Finish Group’s final report;

• In the opinion of the Task and Finish Group, there had been significant problems with the implementation of the new waste collection scheme and the Council’s ability to respond to the number of questions and concerns from the public about the scheme. The Group set out to see if any improvements could be identified that could be implemented in time for the beginning of the second year of the scheme and the contract amended if necessary. It was felt that it was important to identify any learning points from the introduction of a project of the size and complexity of the waste scheme so that they could be avoided in the implementation of future major projects. This was in line with the Group’s key objectives. The Group felt that on the basis of early performance data, the Council’s new waste collection service was working well. However, the Group acknowledged that there have been some teething problems in the first few months of the scheme’s operation and concluded that improvements could be made in respect of the quality of the blue bags used in the scheme and in relation to how residents are communicated with in the future.
The Task and Finish Group made recommendations around:
  o increasing the number of outlets selling blue bags;
  o monitoring the quality of blue bags;
  o the purchase of additional blue bags at no additional cost for families with babies;
  o the threshold of the number of people constituting a family;
  o more efficient ways of communicating with residents regarding waste collection days;
  o methods of advertising changes to the scheme;
  o costs of additional blue bags;
  o monitoring of Veolia, the Council’s chosen Waste Collection contractor on the delivery of the service;
  o the level of charges for the collection of green waste for vulnerable people;
  o possible extension of the scheme to include other materials;
  o circulation of Veolia’s and Council Officer’s report prior to their regular meetings;
  o training for waste collection operatives on collection routes;
  o encouragement for greater home composting;
  o testing of information leaflets prior to distribution.

The majority of the Task and Finish Group’s recommendation were accepted by the Executive.

The following Task and Finish Groups were established by one of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels during 2012/2013 or continued reviews started in the previous municipal year:
  o Adult Social Care Task and Finish Group – Community Partnerships Task and Finish Group;
  o Effectiveness of Governing Bodies Task and Finish Group;

Further details can be found within the reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels attached below.

Overview and Scrutiny Support
Support to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Panels is provided by Officers within the Democratic Services Team as part of its wider role in supporting the democratic core of the Council. The objective of this support is to provide an efficient, independent, evidence based function that enhances the democratic accountability of the Council to its residents.

The function involves working closely with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Panels, the Executive, Senior Officers and other members of the Council.
Further information or answers to any queries relating to the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny functions or this report can be obtained from Kevin Jacob, Principal Democratic Services Officer and Statutory Scrutiny Officer. Contact details are set out below:

Democratic Services  
Wokingham Borough Council  
Shute End  
Wokingham  
RG40 1BN  
Tel: 0118 974 6058  
Fax: 0118 919 7757  
Email: democratic.services@wokingham.gov.uk

Dates for Meetings in 2013/2014
The following dates have been agreed, but could be subject to change. Please see the Council’s website or contact the Democratic Services Team to double check a particular meeting is taking place as it can be subject to change.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
28 May 2013  
9 July 2013  
10 September 2013  
12 November 2013  
21 January 2014  
12 March 2014

Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel
3 June 2013  
4 September 2013  
4 November 2013  
15 January 2014  
3 March 2014

Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel
25 June 2013  
2 September 2013  
28 October 2013  
14 January 2014  
27 February 2014
Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel
19 June 2013
29 August 2013
30 October 2013
6 January 2014
25 February 2014

Work Programme for 2013-2014
It is important that the Management Committee takes continued ownership and control of its work programme and that of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels by deciding what topics are important and what should and should not be included.

The Committee has previously agreed six review topic selection criteria to assist in this process:

- the issue should be local, and preferably of current concern.
- the issue has a bearing and is linked to the Council corporate objectives
- the issue is not being reviewed elsewhere
- the issue is capable of being influenced by Overview and Scrutiny
- the issue is of manageable scope and is not too wide ranging and yet of sufficient size to warrant a scrutiny review
- there are sufficient resources to support the scrutiny review.

In April 2013 the Committee will seek suggestions from Members, the Corporate Leadership Team and the public for possible review items for inclusion into the work programme for 2013-2014. It is anticipated that topics will be allocated to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels at the meeting on 28 May 2013 so the Committee and Panels can continue their work as soon as possible in the new municipal year.

The Management Committee will also consider other topics for inclusion and the following section sets out how local residents can become involved in Overview and Scrutiny.

In addition, the Overview and Scrutiny Panels have themselves developed on-going work programmes which are referred to in individual panel reports.

Community Involvement and Engagement in Overview and Scrutiny
Wokingham Borough Council wants Overview and Scrutiny to be open and accessible to as many residents as possible. A central aim of the process is to seek to improve outcomes for residents through the scrutiny process. Residents can become involved by:

- Attending Overview and Scrutiny meetings – All meetings are open to the public to attend and are held in the evening to seek to encourage wider participation.
• Copies of Agendas and Minutes relating to Overview and Scrutiny can be accessed via the Council Offices, Libraries and on-line at http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/council/meetings/minutes/ Residents can opt to receive automatic notification when new Agendas and minutes are added to the Council’s website.

• Members of the public have the right to ask questions on general matters relating to Overview and Scrutiny and on specific agenda items.

• Members of local organisations or individual local residents may be asked to contribute to a review by supplying information, advice or views and/or attend meetings as a witness.

• Request that an issue be considered by overview and scrutiny as a review item. It is now possible for local residents to use the Council’s website to complete an on-line scrutiny review suggestion form. This is available at http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/council/decisions/scrutiny/

• During 2012/2013 the public and wider community has been engaged with the scrutiny process by attending to observe meetings and as witnesses and/or by providing written evidence. This has taken place through the course of a number of the scrutiny reviews including the Effectiveness of Governing Bodies and Local Authority Support Task and Finish Group. However, it is accepted that levels of public participation could be improved further and consideration is being given to the proactive use of press releases regarding scrutiny activity and the appropriate use of social media.

Possible Changes to Overview and Scrutiny in 2013/2014
On 1 April 2013 the Council will establish a Health and Wellbeing Board in response to the requirements of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Whilst the impact of the creation of the Health Wellbeing Boards and the transfer of public health and well-being functions back to local authorities principally affects health overview and scrutiny, the implications of the changes have wider overall implications for overview and scrutiny looking forward. It is also considered timely to review whether the current committee structure, workload and Terms of Reference so as to ensure they continue to support and compliment the Council’s Vision and Priorities.

A Member working group is to examine whether or not any changes are required and if required proposals for change brought back to the various Committees and Panels prior to full Council consideration.
CORPORATE SERVICES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

ANNUAL REPORT

MARCH 2013

BY

COUNCILLOR NORMAN JORGENSEN

CHAIRMAN
Introduction

1. The role of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel is to scrutinise, review and assist with the policy development of:

   a) the Council’s budget and policy framework;

   b) services that support the Council’s vision and corporate priorities, excluding matters relating to Children and services which are covered by other scrutiny bodies.

2. The work of the Panel is overseen by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, of which the Panel’s Chairman is a Member. At each Management Committee meeting the Panel Chairmen report back on the work of their particular Panel. The Panel can create time limited; subject specific, Task and Finish Groups to review particular issues should they wish to.

3. The Panel is made up of six Members, five Conservative and one Liberal Democrat. Each party also appointed two substitutes. Four meetings were scheduled this year.

   Norman Jorgensen  
   Chairman

   Michael Firmager  
   Vice-Chairman

   Parry Batth

   Chris Bowring

   Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

   Ken Miall
Substitute Councillors

Prue Bray  Kate Haines  David Sleight  Lesley Hayward

2012/13 Work Programme

1. The Panel established the Consultation Task and Finish Group, which reviewed the Council’s consultation process.

2. The Panel received briefings on a number of issues including an update on the burial review and an initial item on the Government’s channel strategy consultation response – interaction with vulnerable customers.

3. The Panel is also considering items relating to Planning Enforcement to establish if there are any areas of concern to warrant further investigation;

4. A further item outlining the Council’s response to the Government’s Channel Strategy and the work of the joint working group of members and officers will be presented to the next meeting of the Panel.

5. An item giving Members a verbal update on the Borough Design Guide will be considered elsewhere on this agenda.

6. The Panel also established a Waste Collection Task and Finish Group which reviewed the introduction of the Council’s new waste collection scheme and the viability of future expansion.

2013/14 Work Programme

8. The Panel will:

   a) Continue to monitor the implementation and progress of the recommendations of the Burial Task and Finish Group;

   b) Monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Waste Collection Task and Finish Group;

   d) Undertake any other scrutiny reviews referred to it by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or requested by Council; and
e) Monitor the implementation of the recommendations of previous reviews, as appropriate.

Norman Jorgensen
Chairman of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel
CHILDREN’S SERVICES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

ANNUAL REPORT

MARCH 2013

BY

COUNCILLOR PAULINE HELLiar-SYMONS

CHAIRMAN
UPDATE REPORT OF CHILDREN’S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

1. The Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel was established by Council in May 2010.

2. The role of the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel is to scrutinise, review and assist with the policy development of:
   
   a) those matters relating to the Children’s Act 2004, “Every Child Matters” and any subsequent legislation relating to the delivery of Children’s Services by the Council;
   
   b) those matters set out in Section 499 of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by Section 9 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) and all other legislation such as the Children Act 1989;
   
   c) services that support the Council’s vision and corporate priorities for children and young people including, amongst others, the following areas:
      
      i) Schools;
      ii) Early Years Settings and Children’s Centres;
      iii) Safeguarding and Child Protection;
      iv) Looked After Children and Young People;
      v) Family Support Services for Children and Young People;
      vi) Services for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities;
      vii) Inclusion and Attendance;
      viii) School Transport; and
      ix) Youth Services.

3. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee oversees the work of the Panel, as well as that of the other two Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The Chairman of the Panel is a Member of the Management Committee and reports back on the work programme of the Panel at each meeting. The Panel may create time limited task and finish groups if expedient.

4. The Panel has six Members, five Conservative and one Liberal Democrat, with two substitutes for each group; two Parent Governor Representatives; and a representative from the Church of England Diocese, and the Roman Catholic Diocese. During the year there has been no representation from either of the Dioceses.
Councillors 2011/2012

Pauline Helliar-Symons - Chairman
Shahid Younis - Vice-Chairman
Parry Batth
Andrew Bradley

Ian Pittock
Lesley Hayward

Substitute Councillors

Kay Gilder
Abdul Loyes
Sam Rahmouni
Bob Wyatt

The Panel Members in 2012/13 were:
Councillors Pauline Helliar-Symons (Chairman), Shahid Younis (Vice Chairman), Parry Batth, Andrew Bradley, Lesley Hayward, and Ian Pittock; with Kay Gilder, Abdul Loyes, Sam Rahmouni and Bob Wyatt as substitutes; Parent Governor Representatives – Emma Wells and Duncan Arrowsmith (term of office ended July), Karen Knight and Colin Wood (appointed October).
2012/2013 Work Programme

6. At every meeting, the Panel monitors the Key Performance Indicators for Children’s Services relating to: Looked After Children; children’s safeguarding and social care generally; and information on NEETs and the Youth Offending Service. The Panel also receives regular information on School Performance data, with an annual report on the overall results for Wokingham schools across the whole age range of assessments, tests and examinations from Early Years to Key Stage 5 (A levels). Recently published School OFSTED reports are reviewed at each meeting and since March 2012 the Panel has monitored 17 schools. This is in the context of our work on scrutiny of School Improvement.

7. The Panel has scrutinised a range of issues during 2012/13 at the five meetings since the last report, including:

- Academies, Free Schools, and Local Authorities – a report on the relationship between the schools and the Authority;
- Annual report of the work of the Wokingham Safeguarding Children’s Board;
- Report from the Task and Finish Group on its Review of the Effectiveness of Governing Bodies Task and Local Authority Support, agreed and forwarded to Executive;
- Oakbank Free School – relationship and financial arrangements;
- Apprenticeships for young people aged 16 to 19 years;
- Children’s Services Scrutiny input into the Health and Wellbeing Strategy;
- Wokingham Borough Council’s Vision – a review of the Panel’s work to establish whether it was in line with the Council’s priorities;
- Looked After Children Review – update from the Corporate Parenting Board on implementation of the review recommendations as reported in the draft of the Board’s Annual Report, and a report on the delivery of the Children in Care Pledge;
- Report of the outcomes of the Ofsted Inspection into the Local Authority’s services for Safeguarding Children;
- Ofsted Inspection of Children’s Services Safeguarding - Action Plan to address the recommendations of the review;
- Children and Young People’s Plan – update on the implementation of the Plan twelve months from its approval;
- Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy – review the priorities identified for children and young people in the Strategy/
- Secondary School Place Commissioning Strategy – review the draft Strategy and the process of its development.

Task and Finish Groups

8. Effectiveness of Governing Bodies and Local Authority Support

The Task and Finish Group set up to look into the effectiveness of governing bodies and what the Local Authority could do to support their development finished its review in
August 2012. The purpose of the review was to identify: good practice in school governance that promotes improved pupil outcomes; areas where the Local Authority’s Governor Services Team can effectively support the development of good practice; governors’ responsibilities in relation to maximising the potential of all pupils and to address various issues raised in Ofsted reports. To assist with information gathering a questionnaire was sent to the Governing Bodies of all schools in the Borough. Governors and Headteachers also attended meetings of the Task and Finish Group. In addition Members of the Group attended Borough wide Governor briefing and development meetings.

The Members of the Task and Finish Group were:

Councillors Kate Haines (Chairman), Kay Gilder, Jenny Lissaman, Shahid Younis and Parent Governor Representative, Emma Wells

9. The final report was presented to Executive in October when the recommendations were agreed.

2013/2014 Work Programme

10. However, since the review of Key Performance Indicators is now happening regularly and the overall improvement of Children’s Services has improved, there will be less of a focus on these areas, (although they will continue to be monitored). It is intended that in 2013/14 the Panel will step up a gear and will review just a small number of areas in greater depth, which will help the Service to develop its strategies. At the moment two of these are likely to be associated with recommendations from the recent Ofsted report:- Listening to the Children’s Voice, and Narrowing the Gap between high and low attainers. The third will come from work being done on Special Educational Needs, focusing in the SEN review which is already taking place, and to see

11. The Panel’s work programme for 2013/14 will include:
   - update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Effective Governing Bodies Review;
   - Annual report of the Wokingham Safeguarding Children Board;
   - update on implementation of the Children and Young People’s Plan,
   - update from Corporate Parenting Board on the progress of the implementation of the recommendations from the Review of Services for Looked After Children.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons
Chairman of the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

ANNUAL REPORT
MARCH 2013

BY
COUNCILLOR TIM HOLTON
CHAIRMAN
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

ANNUAL REVIEW

Introduction

1. The role of the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel is to:

   a) scrutinise, review and assist with the policy development relating to delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy, including associated Partnership Plans and the Local Area Agreement or similar arrangements as may be established by legislation;

   b) scrutinise and review the work of the Wokingham Borough Strategic Partnership and its sub groups;

   c) exercise the Council’s crime and disorder responsibilities as set out in Section 19 of the Police Justice Act 2006.

2. The Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel also exercises the Council’s responsibilities relating to the review and scrutiny of flood risk management which may affect the Council’s area as set out in the Localism Act 2011 Schedule 2, Part 1, 9FH.

3. The work of the Panel is overseen by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, which also monitors the work of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Chairman of the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel is a member of the Management Committee and reports back at each meeting on the work programme of the Panel.

The Panel may create time limited task and finish groups if required.

The Panel is made up of six Members and held five scheduled meetings this year.

Tim Holton
Chairman

David Sleight
Vice-Chairman

Lindsay Ferris

Mike Gore
4. During 2012/13 the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel scrutinised and received an update on a number of issues including:

- the Panel’s terms of reference and role;
- the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Police Crime Panel;
- the implications of the Council’s membership of the Thames Valley Enterprise Partnership;
- young people and the workplace;
- the strategy and implementation of the Community Forums.
- the Flooding and Sustainable Planning Bi-Annual Report.

5. The Panel established the Adult Social Care Task and Finish Group to scrutinise the outcome of Putting People First and the effectiveness of Optalis.

2013/2014 Work Programme

6. The Panel’s work programme for 2013/14 will be populated further over the next couple of months and will be an evolving document. We will continue to scrutinise the key areas which come under the Panel’s remit such as:

a) Update on the Police Crime Commissioner and the work of the Police Crime Panel;
b) Update on the work of the Community Forums;
c) Flooding and Sustainable Planning Bi-Annual Report;
d) Reviewing the implementation of recommendations of the Adult Social Care Task and Finish Group.

Tim Holton  
Chairman of the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Panel
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – WORK PROGRAMME SUGGESTION FORM

I would like to suggest a Scrutiny or Policy Review item for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee’s next work programme.

Name:

I would like to suggest that the following matter is reviewed:

(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Reasons for suggestion, (including any linkages with the Council’s Vision, Priorities and Underpinning Principles):

(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Are there any specific aspects of the issue you would like scrutiny to focus upon?
What would you like to see coming out of the review in terms of outcomes?

Would you like to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to make a statement in support of your request?

Yes ☐ No ☐
Please return this form to:
Kevin Jacob
Principal Democratic Services Officer
Democratic Services
Wokingham Borough Council
Tel: 0118 974 6058/Fax 0118 919 7757
kevin.jacob@wokingham.gov.uk