

Council Forum, 25th January 2024

Overview and Scrutiny Committees Update

Purpose of the Report

To update the Council Forum on the latest meetings of the Policy and Corporate Resources, Health and Social Care, Children and Young People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committees, plus the recent Call-In Committee Meetings held.

Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At the meeting on 9th October 2023, the meeting was dedicated to scrutiny of the CQC Self-Assessment process, and Mark Warren presented a report and delivered a supporting presentation which provided an update on the key changes relating to the Regulation of Local Authorities by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and to provide an update on the local authority's preparations. The Committee noted the progress made to date in preparation for the inspection, also noting that the local authority had a good story to tell, but there needed to be a very good evidence base to support this. The Committee hoped a reasonable score would be achieved, with continuing work on producing a sound evidence base for future inspections. The Committee agreed that an update on the inspection at a future meeting was required, but not whilst any inspection and action planning was in progress in order that Officers could focus on the inspection and its outcomes.

The next meeting will focus on scrutiny of Care Homes in the Borough, and Members will receive a report from the Task and Finish Group who have been looking at this, as well as receiving an update on the progress of the Integrated Care Board, following the information received at the August meeting.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At the meeting on 6th November 2023 the Committee received an update from the Youth MP and Youth Forum on their recent events and activities, as well as receiving information on changes to Corporate Parenting Meetings, to strengthen governance arrangements, following an internal review, which also took account of recommendations from the recent Peer Review.

The main agenda item was an update on the Local Safeguarding Assurance Partnership, following the update at the June meeting, with much of the last six months focussed on the JTAI and Action Plan and embedding of the new arrangements. Members commented on the improvements already been seen of the move to a place-based approach, which gave more assurance.

Additionally, following on from the recent LGA training, the Committee have requested that key performance dashboards should be attached to reports wherever possible, and also that reports be circulated in good time to ensure that Members can digest all the information and prepare questions.

At the next meeting, on 12th February 2024, Members will scrutinise the School Improvement Strategy, and there will also be an agenda item on Academic Outcomes.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee received a report and presentation on at its meeting on 13th November 2023 on Highways Infrastructure in the Borough, and Members made a number of comments and observations relating to issues with traffic lights, contacting the Highways team, the funding and quality of road repairs, issues with road marking and line painting, and street signage.

At the next meeting on 4th March, the Committee will receive a report containing responses from the Highways Team to the issues raised, and the report will also contain the responses relating to Environmental Crime from the previous meeting, and the Committee will consider potential recommendations relating to both Work Programme items.

Also at the next meeting, the Committee will focus on that scrutiny of plans to purchase electric & alternative fuel vehicles and develop a fleet strategy for alternative fuels.

Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At the Meeting held on 8th January 2024, the Committee received an update on the recent meetings of the Call-In Committee (see below) and received an update on Finance, with an overview of the latest budgetary position.

Significant costs in Children's Services were reported, which was a demand led budget, and the issues raised in the recent MacAllister report into the Children's Social Care system, which highlighted the problems within the sector nationally, with local authorities being unable to compete with independent agencies, who could pay staff more and charge local authorities higher prices. Similar issues existed with Adult Social Care, which led to higher costs and demand and made budget forecasting difficult.

The Executive Member highlighted a reduction in debts, and a focus on no new borrowing. Members asked a number of questions and made observations to the Executive Member and Strategic Director for Resources.

At the next meeting, the Committee will receive an update on Digital Management at the Council.

Call-In Committee

Two Meetings of the Call-In Committee have recently been held - on 21st December (Burial and Cremations Fees) and 4th January 2024 (Car Park Fees).

Both meetings were chaired by Councillor Kevin Connor, and following debate and discussion, the original decisions by the Executive Members were upheld.

Following an update at the Policy and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8th January 2024, the Committee agreed that training should be arranged that would cover the Scrutiny and Call-in process, highlighting the different roles of both for existing and new Members.

Councillor Tony Humphrys, Chair of the Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Jacqueline Slater, Chair of the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Sylvia Liddle, Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Brian Taylor, Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Kevin Connor, Chair of the Call-In Committee.