

Agenda Item No: 10
Report To: Council
Date: 21 July 2016
Report Title: Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report - 2015/16
Report Author: Corporate Director (Law and Governance)



Summary:

The Council's Constitution requires the O&S Committee to make an annual report to full Council. This is the report for the Municipal Year May 2015 – March 2016. The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24 May 2016.

Key Decision: No
Affected Wards: None
Recommendations: **The report be received and noted.**
Policy Overview: None
Financial Implications: None
Risk Assessment No
Background Papers: None
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Report Title: Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

Purpose of the Report

1. The Council's constitution requires the O&S Committee to make an annual report to full Council on the work they have undertaken during the year.
2. This report will give an overview of the work the O&S Committee and its Task Groups have been involved in during 2015/16.

Background

3. Under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has power to make reports and/or recommendations either to the Cabinet or to the Authority on any aspect of Council business. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also has the power to make reports and/or recommendations about other matters which affect the authority's area or its population.
4. In the Municipal Year 2015/16 the O&S Committee had 12 members, representing all political groups on the Council. Members of the Committee work together to ensure that the Council and its Services are acting effectively and efficiently. Reviews may be undertaken by the whole Committee or a Task Group.

Issues Scrutinised by the Committee since June 2015

5. Since June 2015 items considered by the main O&S Committee have included: -
 - ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report
 - Sickness absence figures and information for 2015/16
 - Annual Report of the Housing Framework 2013-2018
 - Quality Bus Partnership
 - Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012
 - Emergency Planning Response to Oak Tree Road Gas Explosion and lessons learned in response
 - International House – Report on Full Years Trading
 - Disabled Adaptions to Council Homes
 - Review of Changes Made to the Mayoralty following the O&S Review in 2010
 - Presentations from Southern Water and Southeast Water
 - Medium Term Financial Plan
 - Flood Prevention on ABC Land
 - Community Safety Partnership update
 - The Council's draft 2016/17 budget

Further information about some issues reviewed by the main Committee/Task Groups (to read the full reports please see www.ashford.gov.uk/committees for agendas, reports and minutes of O&S meetings).

Budget Scrutiny

6. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a duty to scrutinise the Council's draft Capital and Revenue budget. The Budget Scrutiny Task Group's remit was to ensure that the draft 2016/17 budget was achievable and in line with the Council's 5 year Medium Term Financial Plan and the priorities in the 'The Next Five Years' Corporate Plan 2015-2020 adopted by Cabinet in October 2015.
7. By the end of the scrutiny process the Task Group were confident that the Budget was legal and achievable.
8. The Task Group made four recommendations which the main committee supported and relayed to the Cabinet.
9. The Cabinet supported the recommendations which are set out below-
 - (i) it be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regards the Council's draft 2016/17 Budget as legal and achievable.
 - (ii) the Risk Matrix and the risks identified within, especially those that fell within the shaded part of the matrix be endorsed.
 - (iii) it be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would consider it inappropriate for any amendments to be made to the Budget following scrutiny as it would potentially make the Budget insecure (subject to any unexpected announcements on Central Government funding).
 - (iv) it be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee intend to scrutinise the MTFP document at its April meeting and test the assumptions made as a starting point for scrutiny of the following year's Budget.

Annual update from the Community Safety Partnership

10. At least once a year the O&S Committee operates as the designated Committee responsible for Crime and Disorder issues (under the Police and Justice Act 2006). The annual update report from the Community Safety Partnership about CSP activity in the Borough comes under this designation.
11. In February 2016, the Borough Council's Head of Health, Parking and Community Safety along with Chief Inspector Fox, and the Council's Health Parking and Community Safety Manager, presented the annual report.
12. There was a lot of good news in the report including:
 - The number of incidents of Anti -Social Behaviour decreased by 643 compared to 2014/15.

- The number of incidents of fly tipping had decreased by 184 when comparing 2013/14 and 2014/15.
- Drug offences had decreased from 214 to 149 which represented a 30.4% reduction.

Reviews on the Forward Plan

13. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee sets its own work programme. Future reviews/other items on the Forward Plan include:-

- Quarterly Updates on the ABC Business Plan performance
- Annual report on Housing Framework
- Three year review of Mayoralty
- Council play parks
- Community Safety Partnership annual update
- Disabled Adaptations

14. In October 2015, following a discussion with the Chief Executive, the Committee agreed to take a more strategic approach to Overview and Scrutiny. At their November meeting the following topics for potential review were added to the Future Reviews and Report Tracker:-

- Education and how Free schools sat within the education plans for the Borough.
- Local Council's and Public Health
- Houses in Multiple Occupation
- HS1 and Eurostar Services
- Update on Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme
- Water Supply and Waste Water disposal
- Power Supply and IT Disaster Recovery at the Civic Centre and the robustness of Council policies in respect of flooding (added at the January 2016 meeting).

The Future

15. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work is aimed at ensuring the effective and efficient provision of Council services for the residents of the Borough. However the O&S Committee can also act as a 'critical friend' in reviewing the services of other 'partner' organisations e.g. KCC. From May 2016 the support and management of the O&S Function will move from Member Services to the Policy and Performance Team.

16. With the agreement of the Chairman, items can be put on the O&S agenda following a request from Cabinet or another Committee (e.g. Audit). Members of the O&S Committee are also able to submit suggested items in writing to the Chairman – such items must represent a Borough wide perspective and provide the opportunity to influence, to improve services or contribute to policy development. The Chairman will then decide if the item is appropriate for O&S to consider and, if so, is there room on the work programme.

Conclusion

17. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has received reports, commented on and made recommendations to Cabinet on a variety of issues which directly affect the Council or residents of the borough. Should the Committee consider that a decision made by the Cabinet is unwise then Members are always able to Call-in that decision.
18. The management and support of the Overview and Scrutiny function moved from Member Services to the Policy and Performance Team in May 2016.

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