



Ashford Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny 2017/18 Annual Report

And

2018/19 Work Programme

Foreword from the Chairman

Can I begin my apologizing to full council for my absence at this Full Council meeting to deliver the Annual Report of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. I am presently visiting my partner who is away on a sabbatical in the Far East.

I am pleased to present to the Council the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2017-2018.

Can I begin by thanking Officers and the Scrutiny Team for their work in supporting our Committee in fulfilling its functions and responsibilities this year. Can I also thank all Officers who have given evidence to our Committee.

I would like to thank my Vice Chairman, Cllr Noel Ovenden and all members of the Committee who have worked for the committee this year.

Contained within this report is a summary of the extensive work undertaken by the Committee this year. Members will note sheer variety of investigations, reports and hearings we have undertaken in providing our overview role to this Council.

We have fulfilled our statutory requirements this year in our scrutiny of the Councils Budget. We have also undertaken our statutory safeguarding and community safety reviews.

I am also pleased to present the proposed work programme for 2018-2019. Members of Overview and Scrutiny have all been involved in determining the schedule. Other items may arise as the year progresses.

Overview and Scrutiny continues to improve its work at every meeting. Considerable training has been completed by a number of members and officers this year that has better enabled us to improve our scrutiny function.

I look forward to welcoming all new members who will be joining Overview and Scrutiny for 2018-2019 and working with them in the interests of the Borough.

I ask that the Council note and accept the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Cllr Brendan Chilton
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Overview and Scrutiny at Ashford

The Local Government Act 2000 (the Act) introduced a requirement that councils with a 'Leader and Executive' arrangement must include the provision of one or more Overview and Scrutiny Committees within their council structure.

Under section 21 of the Act, the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has power to submit reports and make recommendations to the Cabinet or full Council on any aspect of council business or any matter affecting the Borough or its residents.

The constitution of Ashford Borough Council contains provisions for a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee to carry out the functions detailed in the Act, although the Committee may assemble task groups from its membership for specific reviews.

In the 2017/18 municipal year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had 12 members, appointed in line with the broad political balance of the council. The roles of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee were appointed to opposition members, although the Committee operates apolitically in its discussions, with all members of the Committee working together to ensure that the council and its services are acting effectively and efficiently.

Issues Scrutinised by the Committee

Since May 2017 the Committee has considered a number of items related to the council's operations and wider issues affecting the Borough and its populations, including:

- Quarterly updates on the council's performance against its corporate objectives

- Sickness absence figures for 2016/17
- Proposed revisions to the council's Housing Framework
- Presentations from the Ashford CCG
- Youth services and engagement in the borough
- Infrastructure planning related to health services
- Priority health issues for the Borough
- Commercial Investment by the council
- The findings of the Air Quality Task Group

The Committee considers several standing items per year. These items are:

1. Scrutiny of the council's Budget, carried out by a Committee Task Group

2. The annual report of the Ashford Community Safety Partnership

3. The council's annual report on Safeguarding Adults and Children at Risk

In addition, the Committee engaged the Centre for Public Scrutiny to provide a Budget Scrutiny training session for Members in advance of carrying out scrutiny of the 2018/19 draft budget.

Budget Scrutiny Task Group

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a duty to scrutinise the council's draft Capital and Revenue budget. The Committee assembled a task group whose remit included ensuring that the draft 2018/19 budget was achievable and delivered in line with the council's 5 year Medium Term

Financial Plan (MTPF) and the council's adopted corporate priorities.

A number of changes were made to the budget scrutiny process for the 2018/19 draft budget. These included aligning scrutiny sessions on a directorate basis in line with the council's current structure and the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Economy providing the Budget Scrutiny Task Group with overviews of the council's corporate plan progress and medium term financial plan at the start of the budget scrutiny process to allow the task group to identify key risks to the delivery of the council's budget.

From these initial presentations, the Task Group identified a number of key risks to the budget and requested that officers speak to these risks in subsequent sessions. The risks identified were:

- A potential reset of the National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) system
- Resourcing for Planning appeal and enforcement
- Resourcing for the Homelessness Reduction Act
- Delays to income generating projects
- The feasibility of achieving identified savings with an assumed service expenditure decrease.

The task group held sessions covering each Directorate within the council and were grateful for the attendance and contributions of Portfolio Holders, Directors, Heads of Service and the council's Accountancy team.

Directors presented information on the aims of the services within their directorate for the coming municipal year alongside up to date risk

information and reports on the overarching risks that the Task Group membership had identified during its first session.

On the basis of these reports and the budget documents the task group made two recommendations which the main Committee supported and relayed to the Cabinet. The Cabinet supported the recommendations, which were that that it:

- (i) Be advised that the O&S Committee regards the council's draft 2018/19 budget as sound and achievable.
- (ii) Be advised that the O&S Committee regards the council's reserves position as suitable to cover identified contingencies and risks.

The Task Group also identified a number of topics where it was felt that scrutiny by the full Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be beneficial and with the agreement of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee these have been included in the committee's work programme for 2018/19 (appended to his report).

Annual Report of the Community Safety Partnership

At least once a year the O&S Committee operates as the designated Committee responsible for Crime and Disorder issues (as required under the Police and Justice Act 2006). In line with this designation the Community Safety Partnership for Ashford present an annual report on their work within the Borough and set out their priorities for the coming year.

In March 2018 The Committee received a presentation on the Community Safety Partnership's work from the council's Portfolio Holder for Highways,

Wellbeing and Safety; Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager and Community Safety Team Leader along with Chief Inspector Andy Somerville, Inspector Andrew Bidmead and Inspector Jason Atkinson of Kent Police.

The update outlined developments with regard to pursuit of the Partnership's objectives during 2017, including:

- A slight increase in anti-social behaviour (ASB) in 2017. Ashford was the only district in Kent where an increase in Police reported ASB was seen in 2017, however Kent Police explained that this increase in ASB was largely attributable to a single group.
- The implementation of three Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) in Ashford.
- A single Community Trigger (ASB case review) in the borough, which resulted in a positive outcome, with ASB reduced and the affected resident's quality of life improving.

An overview of key projects supported by funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner was also provided. These projects included OP Beacon, which aims to deter youth offending; a community garden project in Stanhope; financial support to the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum and the Ashford Winter Night Shelter.

The Community Safety Partnership representatives also outlined the priorities for the coming year, which the Committee endorsed. These are:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Domestic Abuse
- Safeguarding children and young persons
- Safeguarding adults
- Serious and organised crime

The Community Safety Team Leader also presented a report on the multi-agency work completed over the course of 2017 by the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators in conjunction with the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum. Members were supportive of the approach and work being undertaken by the council and the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum.

Safeguarding Adults and Children at Risk

In 2015 the audit partnership assessed the council's safeguarding activities, procedures and policies, and recommended that safeguarding should be the subject of an annual report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In March 2018 the Committee received a presentation from the council's Safeguarding Champion and Portfolio Holder for Highways, Wellbeing and Safety highlighting work carried out since March 2017.

The Committee were pleased to note that progress had been made on the recommendations it had made in respect of safeguarding when considering the annual report in 2017, in particular the planned safeguarding training session for Councillors and recommended that all Councillors complete the safeguarding training arranged by officers.

Air Quality Task Group

During scrutiny of the council's draft 2017/18 budget, the assistance of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in preparing an Air Quality Strategy was requested by the council's Health, Parking and Community Safety service.

In response to this request and existing Member concerns over the state of air quality in the Borough, the Committee established a task group to research the causes and impacts of poor air quality and explore possible measures to reduce air pollution in the Borough.

The Task Group conducted a number of sessions to analyse evidence and best practice guidance from Public Health England and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence; and to put questions to officers.

Following the completion of its work, the task group submitted a total of 29 recommendations to the Committee, who endorsed the group's findings and made the recommendations in full to Cabinet. Cabinet agreed the recommendations in full in February 2018 and work is ongoing to prepare a strategy and action plan to put into effect the adopted recommendations. An update on implementation of the agreed recommendations will be reported to the Committee in September 2018.

2017/18 work programme

A draft timetable for the year's meetings is included below. This gives an indication of how the work programme can be incorporated alongside the Committee's standing item reports and other requirements.

Getting involved in Overview and Scrutiny

You can get involved in the Committee's work by:

- Making a suggestion for scrutiny
- Coming to a Committee meeting to hear the debate
- Putting forward your views as part of a scrutiny review

For more information about how to get involved you can email the scrutiny team at:

overviewandscrutiny@ashford.gov.uk

or go to:

www.ashford.gov.uk/overview-and-scrutiny.

2018/19 municipal year work programme

Month	Agenda items	Details
May	ABC prop co. & TEB	Budget Scrutiny Task Group request for an overview of TEB and the governance arrangements of the Property Company.
	O&S annual report	Statutory requirement. To include work programme for 2018/19.
	Q4 performance	Quarterly and annual performance update for 2017/18 and noting new performance framework.
June	Universal Credit roll-out preparation	A report on preparations made by the council for the wider rollout of UC in Ashford.
	Annual Sickness Report 2018/19	An annual update on sickness absenteeism for the council's employees.
	Credit Unions	Kent Savers (Tenterden Branch) to be asked to update the Committee on the role and promotion of credit unions in the Borough.
July	RMCs and the CMO	Budget Scrutiny Task Group request for an overview of the CMO model compared to standard resident management company practices and the wider potential application of the CMO model.
	Q1 performance	Quarterly performance update.
September	BSTG kick off (MTFP)	A summary of the Medium Term Financial Plan following presentation to Cabinet.
	Air Quality strategy	An update on the implementation of the Air Quality strategy.
October	Housing Statement	An Overview of the council's Housing Statement following consultation.
	Q2 performance	Quarterly performance update.
November	Kent Fire and Rescue	KFRS to be asked to attend and present on their capacity and resources in light of a lack of voluntary support.
January	Universal Credit roll-out progress	An update report on the early impacts of the wider UC rollout in Ashford.
	BSTG final report	Findings of the Task Group for Committee approval and submission to Cabinet.
February	CSP update & Safeguarding	Annual updates to the Committee on the work of the Community Safety Partnership and the council's work on safeguarding adults and children at risk.

2018/19 municipal year work programme

Month	Agenda items	Details
	Q3 performance	Quarterly performance update.
March	Town Centre framework	Budget Scrutiny Task Group request for an overview of the town centre placemaking framework.
April	Void properties	Budget Scrutiny Task Group request for an overview of work undertaken to address void properties within the PSL sector.
	Broadband provision and planning	Committee request for an overview of the council's work on delivering high-speed broadband to new and existing properties within the Borough.
May	O&S annual report	Constitutional requirement. To include work programme for 2019/20.
	Q4 performance	Quarterly and annual performance update.

O&S reporting flowchart

