APPENDIX

Overview & Scrutiny

Annual Report 2013-14

A message from Councillor Doris Hinkley, Chair Overview and Scrutiny Board

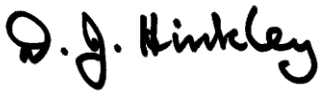
"Welcome to the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report, which explains the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB) and its Task and Finish Groups during 2013-14.

Overview and Scrutiny is a vital part of Luton Borough Council's responsibility to its residents. All non-executive councillors are eligible to participate in the work of scrutiny, to hold the Council's Executive to account and help inform its decisions by reviewing and making recommendations to improve Council services.

Overview and Scrutiny also considers and makes recommendations on wider issues affecting the people of Luton. During the year it has worked closely with Community Safety Partnership, Free Schools, Luton Cultural Services Trust, Luton and Dunstable Hospital and other public and private sector partners, who have all contributed to the well-being of the people of Luton. I take this opportunity to thank the great many officers from the Council, as well as partners organisations, who have, contributed openly and positively to scrutiny.

Finally, I also thank all my fellow Members who have participated in Scrutiny and put in substantial effort during the course of the year.

If you would like to contribute to overview and scrutiny, remember all scrutiny meetings are open to the public. If you want to find out more about overview and scrutiny, the Democracy Team will be pleased to supply you with more information. Contact details are listed at the end of this report."



Councillor Doris Hinkley

Introduction

The last year has seen a continuation of challenges for local government. With a backdrop of reduced funding from Government this Council along with our partners are seeking ways to work more closely together. In this environment, the role of scrutiny is important and we have a clear responsibility to scrutinise the implementation of new approaches. In this report we have highlighted some of the significant activity that has taken place over the last year and considered the challenges to be faced over the next year.

The Chair of the Board in 2013-14 was Councillor Doris Hinkley (Liberal

Democrat) and the Vice Chairs were Councillors Michael Garrett (Conservative) and Councillor Amy O'Callaghan (Labour).

Key Scrutiny Work in 2013-2014

- **Working with External Partners and Local Communities**

  Throughout the year, the Board received a range of reports and presentations from organisations and individuals from outside the Council to assist with overview and scrutiny work; these included Community Safety Partnership, Free Schools, Luton Cultural Services Trust, Luton and Dunstable Hospital
- **Working with the Executive/Portfolio Holders**

  The Board has continued to be actively involved with the work of the Executive, regularly scrutinising the Executive's Forward Plan, which remains a standing item on the work programme. Monthly meetings are also held with the Chair and Vice Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Board. The Chair also has the opportunity to meet on a regular basis with the Leader of the Council, to discuss corporate issues facing the Council. The Executive Member Finance has a standing invitation to attend the Finance Review Group.

TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The Overview and Scrutiny Board has the power and responsibility to set up time limited task and finish groups that focus on a particular issue and consider it in greater detail than is possible at the Overview and Scrutiny Board. These reviews will typically last around six months and will include a mixture of interviews with relevant Council officers and expert witnesses, research of best practice elsewhere, meetings with service users and community groups and consultation with the wider community. Membership of the task and finish group is drawn from all Members of the Council other than Executive Members and can be extended to include statutory and non-statutory co-optees and experts in the relevant subject area.

Outlined below is a brief summary of the work of the two standing sub-committees – the Finance Review Group and the Health and Social Care Review Group and the latest position in respect of current task and finish groups.

FINANCE REVIEW GROUP

The Finance Review Group (FRG) continued to sit in 2013/14 as a standing sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB). Its purpose includes:

- Enabling closer scrutiny of the Council's finances;
- Enhancing decision-making process on spending priorities;

- Overseeing public involvement to improve accountability.

During the year, the FRG continued to focus on and made comments and recommendations to the Executive on key aspects of the Council's Transformation Programme and budget performance around contingency reserves and risks, particularly on a number of high level capital projects. It also reviewed Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) funding, funding options for affordable housing and the overarching impact of measures to address budget pressures facing the council

The FRG reported and made comments and recommendations to the Executive on a number of occasions, which was mostly noted and/ or accepted, to help them make well informed and transparent decisions. A further key area to be scrutinised was the public accounts of various organisations receiving funding from London Luton Airport Limited (LLAL)

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE REVIEW GROUP

The Health and Social Care Review Group (HSCRG) continued to sit in 2013/14, as a standing sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Board. It was the Council's arrangement for scrutinising how health and social care services were provided and developed for the community, holding NHS organisations to account and requiring them to listen and respond.

Its responsibilities include:

- Overseeing NHS and social care reforms in Luton;
- Holding decision-makers to account for commissioning decisions;
- Undertaking health and social care topical reviews and making recommendations for improvement;
- Dealing with consultation by NHS organisations, to ensure proposals for substantial service variation or development were in the interests of local health services.

In the last year, the HSCRG reviewed and commented on diverse matters, including the following:

- Performance of Mental Health Services in Luton;
- Progress of its recommendations relating to the procedures and practices of the Coroner's and associated services;
- Safeguarding adults and children in Luton
- A number of Adult Social Care items including Day Services, Carers Strategy, Home Care Services and the Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Strategy;
- A number of Luton Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) commissioning activities, including re-procurement of Mental Health and Community Health Services and intentions for Long Term Conditions;

- The cessation of the South Beds Dial-a-Ride provision for Luton residents;
- 'Better Together' the Health and Social Care integration programme;
- Implications for Luton of the East of England Ambulance Service Strategic Plan;

- **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

Luton's Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed to set up the group in order to:

• gain an understanding of the issues and impact of domestic violence in Luton and to raise awareness about it and to increase community confidence in reporting domestic violence

• identify the Council's priority objectives for addressing this issue and whether these have been achieved

• identify resources and funding available to tackle this problem

• look at best practice in dealing with domestic abuse and make recommendations for improvements.

The task and finish group, made up of six councillors, will also examine the Council's policies, procedures and practices; access to provisions; prevention measures; reporting procedures and safeguarding arrangements for children and vulnerable adults. In addition, the review will include information from voluntary organisations and Bedfordshire Police who will be invited to give evidence on their response to victims of domestic violence.

The review is currently at the evidence gathering stage and has already received information from a variety of sources including the Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA's); Luton Borough Council's adult and children safeguarding teams; Jo Neale from the University of Bedfordshire who gave a presentation to members on the professional response to women in abusive relationships; Children Centres; Women's Aid and Luton Women's All Women's Centre.

Consultation with service users, agencies and young people is due to start in September and the outcomes will be included in the final report together with conclusions and recommendations which will be published in the autumn.

INFANT MORTALITY

- The Infant Mortality Task and Finish Group commenced in March 2013 and concluded in November 2013.
- The Infant Mortality Task and Finish Group's final report on

recommendations highlighted concerns around high infant deaths in Luton which were linked to consanguinity along with a number of other lifestyle factors and tasked the Director of Public Health (DPH) with coordinating a response to the recommendations including real focus on awareness of the causes of the high rate of infant mortality in Luton.

- All 16 recommendations were agreed by the Executive who commended the report for onward transmission by the DPH,Luton CCG and other key health partners.
- In line with its recommendations, a coordinated response by the DPH Gerry Taylor was reported to the Health and Social Care Review Group at its meeting on 2nd April 2014 with assurance that the programme of work to reduce infant mortality in Luton was actively in progress.
- Outcomes since the report was published includes: (i) Progress on consultation with community groups commissioned by public health with expected outcome due later this year to inform and update of the action plan; (ii) Real focus on reducing the number of pregnant women smoking, raising awareness of the importance of early booking for pregnant women, the inclusion of Infant Mortality in the CCG's 2014/15 work programme, etc.
- HSCRG continues to monitor progress of work and implementation and further reports are expected on the following; Public Health work on Genetics; Audit of gender imbalance findings; Links between the family poverty strategy and infant mortality.

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Following cessation of the South Beds Dial-a-Ride provision in Luton in late 2013, a small HSCRG task group conducted a short light touch review of the situation and made a number of recommendations for consideration in developing a permanent replacement community transport service. The Executive decided on proposals for the new servce on 28th July 2014. This matter remains under review by the HSCRG.

DISCHARGE FROM HOSPITAL

- As reported last year, a Discharge from Hospital Task and Finish Group reviewed partnership strategy and performance issues relating to hospitalisation and discharges from hospital
- so as to understand Luton patients' needs and identify policy and practice issues and concerns and their effects primarily on patients' experience and to advise/ make recommendations for improvements.

- The Task and Finish Group concluded its work in July 2013.
- Its final report and recommendations were received and commended by the Executive;
- All recommendations were accepted by NHS partners and the Council's Adult Social Care and all the service based ones are now being taken forward as part of the integration 'Better Together' programme, led jointly by Luton CCG and Luton Borough Council;
- HSCRG continue to monitor progress.

CALL-INS

There was one call-in during 2013-14, which was considered and dealt with by the Overview and Scrutiny Board relating to the Response to the North Herts New Local Plan Consultation.

CHALLENGES FOR 2014/15

The Overview and Scrutiny Board will continue to focus on the big issues affecting the town and to raise the profile and awareness of the Overview and Scrutiny process with our partners and Council Officers, to encourage participation and involvement. Scrutiny work programmes are developing well for 2014/15 and key issues have already been identified including:

- The role of school governors in Luton Schools;
- The provision of school meals;
- Housing related issues including housing allocations and sheltered housing;
- Provision of playing fields;
- Business transformation within the Council;
- Community Transport;
- Impact of the Care Act and the Luton Carers Strategy.

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

EXECUTIVE - The Executive is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Council and the development of policy. Executive Members have specific areas of responsibility eg: Housing, Environment, Adult Social Care.

CALL-IN - this is the process by which the Overview and Scrutiny Board considers whether a decision has been properly taken or is the right decision.

TASK AND FINISH GROUPS – Time limited groups set up by the OSB to focus on a particular issue, either Council responsibility or other partner agencies such as Health Trusts, and to make recommendations to Executive. Whilst the Executive is not obliged to support the recommendations, it has been shown that effective consultation has been proven to lead to consensus and to Executive support for reviews undertaken.

CONTACT

If you want to know more, or have any suggestions for scrutiny, contact us in the Democracy Team on 01582 546041 or email scrutiny@luton.gov.uk.