

**BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**FULL COUNCIL – 20 JULY 2016**

**REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This is Bedford Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2015/16 as required by the Council's Constitution. It is a summary of the work of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees which are:-
- Adult Services and Health
  - Children's Services
  - Corporate Services
  - Environment and Sustainable Communities
  - Budget Scrutiny Committee
  - Bedfordshire Strategic Health Services Review Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 1.2. We have been fortunate to have had considerable contributions to our work this year from partners and the local community. Members have been heavily involved in evidence gathering and in events such as public forums and site visits as well as Committee meetings. We would like to thank everyone who has played a part in the Scrutiny and Overview process this year including the Mayor, all Members of the Council, Council officers, partners and the public.

**2. Adult Services and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 2.1. The Committee's terms of reference cover all Adult Services in the Children's and Adult Services Directorate, as well as carrying out the health scrutiny role. This covers a wide range of services and the Committee's work programme has been varied.
- 2.2. At the start of the year the Committee agreed to continue with two major pieces of work begun in 2014/15. These were the Water Fluoridation Health Scrutiny Review and the Yarl's Wood Health Services Scrutiny Review. A sub-committee was re-appointed for the Yarl's Wood Review. The Water Fluoridation Review was established to consider the health benefits and/or disbenefits of the water fluoridation scheme in the

Borough. Through the year the Committee received evidence including the results of a Public Health England local dental survey of children's dental health, financial information on the costs of fluoridation and other dental health schemes, and an update on the legal framework. Members heard evidence from local dentists on the Bedfordshire Local Dental Committee, the Bedfordshire and Luton Community Dental Service, a local holistic dental practice, and a report from Fluoride Free Bedford.

- 2.3. The Committee recommended to the Executive "to terminate the part of the water fluoridation scheme at Manton Lane in Bedford, subject to the consultation and decision-making process required by The Water Fluoridation (Proposals and Consultation) (England) Regulations 2013" and not fluoridate the water in the Borough.
- 2.4. The Executive has considered the Committee's recommendation and resolved that the views of Full Council are sought before final consideration of the recommendation.
- 2.5. Second, the Committee considered the final report and recommendations from the Yarl's Wood Health Services Review sub-committee. The sub-committee's membership changed between 2014/15 and 2015/16, and therefore a second site visit was arranged. The sub-committee also met with the NHS commissioners and the service provider, G4S Healthcare, at a committee meeting. The sub-committee's recommendations were endorsed by the Committee and sent out to NHS England, SERCO, G4S Healthcare and the Home Office. The Committee has agreed to invite the commissioner and provider to a future meeting for an update on changes and improvements.
- 2.6. The Committee was also able to contribute to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of Bedford Hospital NHS Trust, carried out in December 2015. The CQC inspection team attended a Committee meeting where the Committee reported to the CQC that it supported the hospital and, whilst there were concerns about waiting times at A&E, most feedback was positive, that appointment waiting times were much better not that block booking was not used, and that any complaints were dealt with promptly. The hospital attended the first meeting of the 2016/17 year to report on its action plan to address any issues raised by the CQC.
- 2.7. The Committee also did follow-up work on progress with services for people with neurological conditions, on Mental Health Services, and on homelessness. Additional items included:-
  - Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group – financial turnaround plans;
  - Bedford Hospital Quality Account;
  - Care Act 2014;
  - Dementia Services;
  - Adult Safeguarding Annual Report 14/15;
  - Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group – commissioning intentions for 16/17.

### **3. Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

3.1. This year the Committee decided to carry out a review on Education Performance in the Borough. This involved seeing education in action by visiting a variety of schools, as well as inviting Head teachers and partner organisations to participate in the Committee's work. The resultant recommendations from the final report were accepted by the Executive.

3.2. During the remainder of the year the topics looked at by the Committee included:

- The 0 to 5 Healthy Child Programme: The arrangements for the Council's delivery of the 0 to 5 Healthy Child Programme from 1 October 2015;
- Young people who are "Not in Education, Employment, or Training": A report on how the Borough assists "NEETs" including outcomes;
- Youth Provision: A report on service provisions in the Borough, and the Council's involvement;
- Care Leavers: A report on children leaving care;
- Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities: A report on children with SEN and disabilities and the outcomes involved in moving from Children's to Adult Services;
- Performance Indicators: The latest performance indicators for Children's Services;
- Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Report 2014/15;
- Child obesity in the Borough compared to the national situation;
- Mental Health Services provision in schools;
- Pupil Premium: An update report on the use of pupil premium in schools including progress of the Committee's recommendations and details of the level of funding received by the schools;
- Children's Services Improvement Plan: Scrutinising the progress of the Children's Services Improvement Plan;
- Bedford Borough's Early Help Strategy 2015 – 2018;
- Early Years Strategy;
- Children's Centres: Performance of the Children's Centres including how they are reaching their target audiences and levels of public awareness.

### **4. Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

4.1. The Committee continued to look at the wide range of services provided by the Corporate Services Directorate. This included receiving reports on:

- Town Centre regeneration: The Council's empty shop strategy and markets;
- Procurement: The Council's procurement of products and services from external suppliers;

- Scrutiny development: The provision of external scrutiny training and exploring best practice. This resulted in the use of external professionals to conduct training sessions for all Members;
- Bedfordshire and Luton Archives Service: The progress towards accreditation;
- Sharing services with other local authorities: The potential for shared services, taking into consideration the various models available;
- National Institute for Research into Aquatic Habits (NIRAH);
- Improving links between businesses and schools: What qualifications and subjects businesses would require from young people searching for employment;
- The Council's Corporate Plan;
- Council's Property Portfolio: The Council's property portfolio, following up on a Member property tour around the Borough;
- Marketing and Promotion of Bedford: The current policy of marketing and promoting Bedford, with particular reference to the options and cost of signage on motorways and trunk roads;
- Income Generation: The opportunities that have been explored and realised from the Service Areas within the Chief Executive's Directorate;
- Octagon Farm: Plans for this site;
- Council Website: The progress of developing the Council's new website;
- Delivering Good Governance – Anti Fraud Strategy;
- Corporate Asset Plan Update: An update position in respect of the Corporate Asset Plan and Action Plan;
- Tourist Information Centre (TIC): A presentation on the operation and services provided by the TIC;
- Review of Discretionary Rate Relief Policy: The proposed changes.

## **5. Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 5.1. This year the Committee decided to carry out a review of on-street car parking, particularly parking on pavements. This involved touring the Borough to see first-hand various issues associated the evaluation installation and enforcement of yellow lines, and the issues around verge and pavement parking in the Borough. The Committee will receive the “on street parking strategy” when developed by Officers.
- 5.2. During the rest of the year members looked at a wide variety of service areas under their remit:
- Wixams Railway Station and timetable for delivery: Gallagher Estates and Network Rail were invited to discuss the delivery of the Wixams Railway Station;
  - Street Lighting: Details of how the Council is planning to spend the Government grant to improve street lighting in the Borough;
  - Parking arrangements at Norse Road Crematorium;
  - Longholme Boating Lake: Maintenance of the environment at the boating lake;
  - Priory Country Park Café: An update of the tendering process including the open day at Priory Country Park Café. At a later meeting a further update was received;
  - Free car parking: The impact of the introduction of free car parking in the town centre at weekends;

- Ampthill Road/ Cow Bridge road network: Traffic issues at the Ampthill Road/Cow Bridge road junction;
- Controlled Parking Zone: Areas covered, principles of operation, and current use;
- Fusion: An update on operation of the Leisure Services Contract from the provider;
- Local bus operators: A presentation to provide an overview on Public Bus Services in the Borough of Bedford;
- Community Safety Plan 2014-17: An update on the progress of the plan;
- Draft Library Strategy and Public Consultation on the Future Provision of Library Services in the Borough;
- Public Spaces Protection Order: Consideration of the introduction of a Public Spaces Protection Order for Bedford town centre;
- Camera vans: A briefing on how the recent Government legislation has changed the way the Council's vehicles operate;
- Bulky waste collection service and recycling rates: How can the Council divert more of its waste from landfill and increase recycling levels?

## **6. Budget Scrutiny Committee**

- 6.1. The Budget Scrutiny Committee's role is to consider the Executive's budget proposals for the forthcoming year. In 2015/16 the Committee met three times at key points in the budget setting process in June, October and January.
- 6.2. At the Committee's first meeting in June it considered the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Capital Investment Strategy. Members asked questions about options relating to Council Tax and Business Rates, the impact of the Spending Review later in the year, changes in the Base Budget, and how inflation was factored in to future planning. The Committee also agreed its work programme for the year.
- 6.3. The Committee met again in November to consider the Executive's budget proposals. As in previous years, Committee members submitted questions in advance and responses were provided. The Committee considered issues relating to the budget proposals out for consultation and noted that the Council had reached a position where it needed to stop providing services that it wanted to provide in order to ensure that it could provide services where it was legally obliged to do so. The Committee also considered the Executive's proposed Capital Investment Programme.
- 6.4. The third meeting of the year in January was to consider the Executive's proposed budget for 16/17 to Full Council, as well as the Capital Programme. Members again took up the opportunity to submit questions in advance. Members asked questions in relation to bringing empty homes back in to use, the restoration plan and costs for Elstow Landfill, temporary school accommodation, income from the Corn Exchange, The Committee received the reports and noted that, having considered the Revenue and Capital Budgets recommended by the Executive, the Committee recognised the challenges faced in setting a balanced budget and wished to advise Full Council that the Committee was assured that everything possible had been done to protect frontline services and the vulnerable in our community in setting this budget. It also acknowledged the continuing and accelerating level of demand for services and that the Council will face further difficult decisions in order to meet obligations within its funding limitations.

## **7. Bedfordshire Strategic Health Services Review Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)**

- 7.1. This is a joint Committee with Central Bedfordshire comprised of four Members from each authority. Over 2015/16 the Committee met five times with representatives of the Strategic Health Review Programme. Over the year the NHS commissioners have formalised their joint working arrangements and now have a Programme Board and Joint Committee to oversee the Bedford and Milton Keynes Strategic Health Services Review.
- 7.2. Through the year the Committee considered the following:-
- The evolving options for services and models at the two acute hospitals;
  - The published timetable and concerns about ongoing delays;
  - Progress and outcomes from engagement work, including suggestions from the Committee of additional stakeholders;
  - The work of the new Programme Board and met with the new Programme Director;
  - The emerging outcomes from the clinical working groups and met with the Clinical Lead;
  - Any impact on staff and morale whilst the review continued;
  - Any impact on people if services move, and the access issues regarding public transport, car travel and parking;
  - The need for maternity and obstetric services at Bedford Hospital;
  - How other hospitals, such as the Luton and Dunstable Hospital, were involved with the review, and the impact of mergers in neighbouring areas such as Cambridgeshire;
  - The need to continue to provide training for GPs in Bedford;
  - The impact of the Sustainability and Transformation Plans;
  - Whether other local HOSCs in neighbouring areas were being consulted.
- 7.3. The Committee recommended to NHS England, Monitor and the Trust Development Authority that full consideration should be given to the 'Modern District General Hospital' model developed by Bedford Hospital.

## **8. Overview and Scrutiny Development**

- 8.1. This year, following work done by the Corporate Services OSC, a new training and development programme for Overview and Scrutiny was started. In November and December 2015 Members of the OSCs attended two training sessions which covered key topics for O&S such as work programme development, carrying out reviews, and developing recommendations. Going forward, Members agreed to hold an Annual Review meeting to consider how the Committees had worked over the past year and identify any areas for development. A Member Survey was carried out to gather some initial feedback. This year the Review was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2016 and Members agreed the following outcomes:

- 8.1.1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) consider using different scrutiny methods, especially for cross-cutting items, such as working groups using the 'task and finish' approach.
- 8.1.2. That Chairs of OSCs ensure that the committee captures and agrees its comments and, where appropriate, evidence-based recommendations at the end of items.
- 8.1.3. That the OSCs make use of the Notice of Forthcoming Decisions for pre-decision scrutiny.
- 8.1.4. That the OSCs develop their relationship with the Executive, including asking the Executive for suggested items for the work programmes and inviting portfolio holders to present reports and answer questions at OSC meetings.
- 8.1.5. That the OSCs provide report authors and portfolio holders with information on the key issues underlying the OSC's request for the item.
- 8.1.6. That the Executive's response to OSC recommendations will be included on the next available OSC agenda and, where appropriate, updates to be provided after 6 or 12 months.
- 8.1.7. That the OSCs look at ways to raise the profile of Overview and Scrutiny both internally within the authority, with partners and with the public and to highlight the positive impact and benefits of the OSCs' work.
- 8.1.8. That the OSCs will have a review each year to look at future development of the function and to also expand the annual survey to include those members not on the OSCs.

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*Minutes:*            *Adult Services and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

- *2 June 2015*
- *7 July 2015*
- *8 September 2015*
- *13 October 2015*
- *10 November 2015*
- *15 December 2015*
- *2 February 2016*
- *1 March 2016*
- *12 April 2016*

*Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

- *15 June 2015*
- *13 July 2015*
- *14 September 2015*
- *9 November 2015*
- *11 January 2016*
- *8 February 2016*
- *11 April 2016*

Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 11 June 2015
- 16 July 2015
- 10 September 2015
- 15 October 2015
- 3 December 2015
- 11 February 2016
- 24 March 2016
- 21 April 2016

Budget Scrutiny Committee

- 22 June 2015
- 2 November 2015
- 21 January 2016

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 4 June 2015
- 9 July 2015
- 3 September 2015
- 8 October 2015
- 26 November 2015
- 7 January 2016
- 4 February 2016
- 10 March 2016
- 14 April 2016

Bedfordshire Strategic Health Services Review Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2 July 2015
- 28 September 2015
- 24 November 2015
- 8 February 2016
- 22 March 2016

Background Papers: Nil