

BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL – 17 JULY 2013

REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

1. Introduction

1.1. This is Bedford Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2012/13, 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
- 'Healthier Together' 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 Adult Services and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference has widened from the previous PRD Committee, in line with changes to the Adult and Community Services Directorate. As well as adult social care and health, the Committee also considers matters relating to operational housing, leisure and culture.

- 2.2. The Adult Services and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has had a busy year, looking at issues from all subjects within its terms of reference which ranges from adult social care, operational housing, leisure and cultural services, and health.
- 2.3. The Committee continued its work on the 'Fountains Court' review, established by NHS Bedfordshire following a committee item in the previous municipal year. Two committee members were part of the review group which also included NHS commissioners, officers from Bedford Borough Council's Adult Social Care services, and representatives from Age UK and the Alzheimer's Society. The review focused on the dementia commissioned beds in Fountains Court, not the two assessment wards. The group looked at the original reasons for the commissioned beds, how dementia care needed to develop over the next few years as the older population grows in number, and also visited both Fountains Court and an alternative provider at Orchid Lawns, Steppingley. The review's conclusions were reported to the Committee in March and will be incorporated into the work being done by the Dementia Steering Group. The Committee agreed to follow up on the outcomes from the Steering Group once complete.
- 2.4. Following concerns raised by Committee members, the Committee invited the East of England Ambulance Service to a meeting to talk about response times and care delivered by ambulance crews. The Sector Lead and Clinical Lead from the Trust spoke to the Committee about local performance issues, noting that in Bedfordshire the trust was meeting its key targets for response times. The Committee was invited to visit the Health and Emergency Operations Centre in Bedford and to shadow ambulance crews on shift.
- 2.5. The Committee also kept up to date with changes to the National Health Service, which are due to come in to force on 1st April 2013. The new Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group attended several meetings and reported to the Committee on its strategic priorities and commissioning intentions going forward.
- 2.6. Outside the meeting room, the Committee had two site visits this year. First, members were able to look round the Higgins Gallery and Museum during the development works, prior to the fitting out of the displays. Second, Members were able to visit extra-care housing in Bedford, in the private and social housing sectors, before going to the new Independent Living Centre in Gadsby Street. Looking at the Council's Adult Services, the Committee received updates on personalisation, support and respite for carers, and the Re-ablement service.
- 2.7. Other items this year included:-
- South Essex University Partnership NHS Trust – Quality Account
 - Bedford Borough Council Dementia Strategy
 - Housing and Homelessness
 - Private Sector Loans
 - Bedfordshire Community Health Services
 - Adult Services – Customer Feedback Report
 - Adult Social Care Local Account
 - Adult Safeguarding Annual Report

- Bedford Hospital – Foundation Trust application
- NHS Continuing Healthcare
- Adult Services – Performance Indicators
- Bedford HealthWatch
- Stroke Services Review – NHS Midlands and East
- Men’s Health – public health campaigns
- Bedford Hospital – process for discharging patients
- Supporting People Strategy
- Adult Services Eligibility Criteria
- Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity – ‘Just Ask’ project
- Joint Commissioning Strategies for Carers, Older People, Dementia, Autism, Mental Health, Learning Disability, Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment
- Adult Social Care Charging Policy
- Dignity and Nutrition in the care home sector
- ME/CFS Services in Bedford Borough
- Francis Report
- Winterbourne View Report
- Bedford Hospital Quality Account
- Healthier Together – update on the work of the JHOSC.

3. Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 3.1. This Committee has a pivotal role in the review and development of policies of the Council which play a significant part in the education and care of young people in the Borough. Its terms of reference include all the services delivered by the Children’s Services Directorate.
- 3.2. At the beginning of the year, members decided to conduct a major review into Corporate Parenting at Bedford Borough Council. Members put together a detailed scope for the review, and agreed that one of the best ways to gather evidence was to experience the services at first hand. As a result, members left the Committee rooms to visit two Children’s homes in the Borough.

In addition, members gathered further evidence at various Committee meetings throughout the year by engaging with:

- Looked After Children;
- The Children’s Services Portfolio Holder, and other Members of the Council;
- Bedford Borough Council Officers;
- Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel;
- Foster Carers.

The review is ongoing into the next municipal year.

- 3.3. This year the Committee continued to use a tried and tested way of interfacing with service areas and partner organisations in an informal environment, by having a pre-meeting exhibition which was staged in the foyer area outside the Committee Room during the hour before the start of the formal meeting. This gave the Youth Parliament the opportunity to engage with members in a less formal way than the usual method of receiving a report in the Committee environment.
- 3.4. Members continued their interest in the school meals service and sampled the meals on offer at several of the schools served by Caterlink, the Council's contractor. The results of the Members' experiences were collated into a report from which the Committee decided to make various recommendations to those involved in provision of the service. The Executive of the Council noted the recommendations and the Chair of the Committee has written, on behalf of the Committee, to all of the Head teachers of schools within the Caterlink contract making various recommendations directly to the schools.
- 3.5. During the year, members looked at a wide variety of service areas under their remit including:
 - 14-19 Developments: The economic well-being of young people;
 - Prejudice Related and Bullying Incidents in Bedford Borough Schools;
 - Sure Start/Childrens' Centres;
 - Police Involvement in the Safeguarding of Children;
 - The Education Vision for the Borough: This involved talking to the Portfolio holder and inviting serving Head teachers to talk to the Committee;
 - The Youth Offending Service (YOS) Inspection;
 - Special Needs Education: This involved receiving a presentation from an interested member of the public;
 - The Service Level Agreement offered by the Diocese to Church Schools;
 - Education Performance;
 - The Troubled Families Programme;
 - Child Health-Obesity and Anorexia;
 - Child Health-Teenage Pregnancy.
- 3.6. The Committee also keeps a watching brief on performance and regularly received reports on Performance Exceptions and Key Indicators.
- 3.7. Due to the large number of service areas included in the Committee's remit, the use of off agenda briefings was continued. This enabled the Committee meetings to be more focussed. Off agenda briefings were received on:
 - The Fostering Annual Report;
 - The Adoption Annual Report;
 - 20 mph speed limits outside schools;

- The Problem of Environmental Offences by young people under the age of 18;
- The Schools Funding Formula;
- The Youth Innovation Zone Project;
- The Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Annual Report 2011/12.

4. Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 4.1. The Corporate Services OSC's terms of reference include the full range of services covered by the Chief Executive's Directorate and the Directorate of Finance and Corporate Services.
- 4.2. The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference include all the services in the Chief Executive's Directorate (Governance, HR and Corporate Policy, Economic Development) and the Finance and Corporate Services Directorate.
- 4.3. The Committee has had a varied work programme this year, and followed up on work begun in 2011/12.
- 4.4. In the autumn, the Committee was fortunate to receive a presentation from the National Apprenticeships Service. Members heard about the variety and number of apprenticeships available, the different skills levels including to the equivalent of degree, and how it was hoped that there would be a greater number of the higher level apprenticeships created in the future. Locally, there had been improved performance in the number of apprenticeships and in the completion rate through a multi-agency approach.
- 4.5. The Committee undertook one site visit during the year, following the opening of the Council's new Customer Service Centre in the town centre. Members met with staff and learned more about the systems in place to help ensure that people visiting the centre were able to get the help they needed. The Centre includes self-service points with telephone and internet access, three counters for short queries, and a bank of desks for longer queries. The Committee was very impressed with the new facility.
- 4.6. Members also continued to follow the progress of the 'Accelerating Bedford' scheme, which is a joint project with Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes, to improve broadband access and speeds across the Borough. This is part of a national programme known as BDUK. The Committee was particularly keen to hear about how services could be improved in those areas with very slow broadband speeds or no broadband access.
- 4.7. Last year the Committee carried out a review of the Council's policy on Fair Debt Collection and Recovery. A new policy was introduced in May 2012, and the Committee received a report on how it was working. The Committee heard that performance had improved from the previous year, and congratulated the staff on implementing the new policy and acting to detect fraud and respond quickly to recover debt.
- 4.8. Throughout the year the Committee has also received a number of reports to keep up to date with budget issues, including the Medium Term Financial Strategy, the regular Revenue and Capital Budget Trends report, and the Budget Out-turn.

4.9. Other items this year included:-

- Town Centre Regeneration
- Riverside North
- Council Communications
- Troubled Families Programme
- Localisation of Council Tax Support
- Blue Badges – application process
- Performance Indicators
- Value for Money Strategy
- Hardship Rate Relief Policy
- Welfare Reform
- Local Welfare Provision Policy
- Community Right to Bid

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

- 5.1. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference include all the services in the Environment and Community Services Directorate and it is also the Council's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee. It decided to concentrate its efforts this year on the many topics which come under the Community Safety umbrella. This subject is always of great public interest. In addition, Members decided that this was a very valid subject to scrutinise, being in line with one of the Council's four major strategic themes: "Protecting and Preserving the Local Environment."
- 5.2. During the year members looked at a wide variety of service areas under their remit, including:
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Policing: This involved organising a meeting in the community, and inviting the Police to attend. The meeting was extensively publicised to the general public with the assistance of members carrying out door to door leafleting;
 - Facilities for young people in parks and open spaces;
 - Trading Standards Enforcement;
 - Council promotion of driver awareness/advanced driving courses: This resulted in the Committee writing to the Chairs of Governing Bodies of schools encouraging them to take advantage of the Council driver awareness presentations;
 - Collaborative Working with the Beds and Luton Fire Authority;
 - Introduction of Additional Licensing for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO): The Committee commented as part of the public consultation process;

- Alcohol Strategy: Members of the Committee visited the night time economy on a weekend night prior to commenting on the strategy from a community safety viewpoint. They provided feedback to the meeting on their experiences, and a recommendation was made to the Licensing Committee regarding the introduction of Late Night Levies and Early Morning Restriction Orders in the Borough;
- Waste and recycling services: This involved visiting the highly successful Household Waste Recycling Centre;
- Cycling and the promotion of sustainable forms of transport;
- Environmental Offences by young people under the age of 18;
- Flood Defences: The Environment Agency and Anglian Water were invited to discuss plans in place to combat the effects of flooding.

5.3. Towards the middle of the year, Members demonstrated their willingness to modify their work programme in order to react to issues raised by the public.

A petition of 1,592 signatures was submitted to the Council over the closure of public conveniences. At Full Council on 17 October 2012 it was recommended to this Committee that it review the running costs of the toilets and consider a recommendation to re-open the public conveniences at Riverside Square and Lurke Street, Bedford.

As a result the Committee embarked on a review of public convenience provision in the town centre and over the course of several meetings engaged with the following parties:

- Bedford BID representatives;
- The Portfolio Holder of Bedford Borough Council;
- Bedford Borough Council Officers;
- Users of the services;
- Taxi and Hackney Carriage Drivers;
- Bedford Link;
- The organiser of the petition referred to above;
- A neighbouring Local Authority where an established Community Toilet Scheme is in operation.

The review is ongoing into the next municipal year.

5.4. The Committee has also kept a watching brief on several areas and as a result received update reports on:

- Performance Indicators;
- Parking in the Urban area including enforcement action and parking on verges;
- Speeding: Implementation of speed restrictions in the Borough;
- Integrated Offender Management (IOM).

5.5. Due to the large number of service areas included in the Committee's remit, the use of off agenda briefings was continued. This enabled the Committee meetings to be more focussed. Off agenda briefings were received on:

- Seasonal planting of ornamental beds;
- Street cleansing;
- Residual Waste Treatment/Disposal;
- Community Infrastructure Levy;
- Road Safety Outside Schools.

6. Budget Scrutiny Committee

- 6.1. As well as the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees, there is a Budget Scrutiny Committee whose role is to consider the Executive's budget proposals for the forthcoming year.
- 6.2. The Committee followed the same procedure as last year, and held two meetings during the year at key points in the budget setting process. At its first meeting in October 2012 the Committee received two presentations, firstly on the changing financial landscape for local authorities, and secondly on how the proposed Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2013/14 had been planned. The Committee was also able to consider the Modernisation Proposals for 2013/14 that were out for public consultation at that point, as well as the proposed Capital Programme. The committee noted the proposals.
- 6.3. The Committee's second meeting in January 2013 was an opportunity to consider the Executive's proposed budget for 2013/14, prior to its consideration at Full Council. This included the outcome of the Modernisation Proposals consultation. The Committee asked a number of questions in relation to income generation, capital projects, procurement, partnership arrangements and external funding (including Growth Area Funding). The Committee resolved that it acknowledged the Budget and recognised the challenges faced by the Council.

7. 'Healthier Together' Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 7.1. In 2012, the NHS launched its review of Acute Services at the five hospitals in the South East Midlands area, Bedford, Luton & Dunstable, Milton Keynes, Northampton and Kettering, which is known as the 'Healthier Together' review. As a result, five of the local authorities in the area established a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC), which is a statutory consultee in the service review process. The member authorities are Northamptonshire County Council, Luton Borough Council, Milton Keynes Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council, which is also the lead authority for the committee. The JHOSC agreed to meet in each of the five authority areas on a rotation basis.
- 7.2. Established at the end of the last municipal year, the JHOSC has met four times in 2012/13. It has looked at four main topics throughout:-
- The 'case for change' put forward by Healthier Together;
 - Public engagement work by the Healthier Together team;
 - Emerging clinical models for service delivery;
 - Travel and transport issues.

7.3. In February 2013, the new Clinical Commissioning Groups in the area decided to change the approach to the review, which will now be more localised in three main areas; Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes and Bedford, and Luton. Going forward, the JHOSC will concentrate on any proposed service change that is planned by the five CCGs and NHS England which affects all five hospitals, most likely to be in specialist services.

*Contact: Jacqueline Gray
Principal Scrutiny & Overview Support Officer
Ext: 42486*

Minutes: Adult Services and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 29 May 2012
- 26 June 2012
- 11 Sept 2012
- 16 October 2012
- 13 November 2012
- 18 December 2012
- 5 February 2013
- 5 March 2013
- 16 April 2013

Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 14 June 2012
- 19 July 2012
- 13 September 2012
- 18 October 2012
- 6 December 2012
- 14 February 2013
- 21 March 2013
- 25 April 2013

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 22 Apr 2013
- 11 Feb 2013
- 14 Jan 2013
- 19 Nov 2012
- 8 Oct 2012
- 10 Sep 2012
- 18 Jun 2012
- 21 May 2012

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 18 Apr 2013
- 28 Feb 2013
- 17 Jan 2013
- 29 Nov 2012
- 11 Oct 2012
- Sep 2012
- 12 Jul 2012
- 24 May 2012

Budget Scrutiny Committee

- 15 October 2012
- 24 January 2013

'Healthier Together' Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 12 July 2012
- 10 September 2012
- 10 December 2012
- 11 March 2013.

Background Papers: Nil