



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Scrutiny Annual Report

2013 – 2014

Foreword

2013-14 has been a challenging year for scrutiny following the changes to the council's governance arrangements, which led to the establishment of three committees – Performance Scrutiny; Education Scrutiny and Health Overview Scrutiny. The biggest single challenge has been for each of the committees to take on broad remits while still delivering targeted and effective scrutiny. The successes of each of the committees as laid out in this report are due to the hard work of all involved, and we would like to thank all members for the support and enthusiasm they have shown at every step of the process.

The changed governance arrangements are still relatively new, and we look forward to all members' observations via the Governance Review process. However this scrutiny annual report is a good opportunity to look back at what has been achieved.

The broader remits of each of the committees has allowed for flexible and member-driven investigations into a wide variety of different issues, representing almost every area of work of the council. We are confident that the successes will speak for themselves in this report.

Scrutiny plays a vital role in delivering democracy as well as ensuring the council's services are delivered to the highest standards, and we look forward to the continued success of Oxfordshire's evolving scrutiny arrangements. We are confident that the Council's scrutiny function will continue to provide challenge and scrutiny to specific service areas, to ensure that the Council delivers effective services to the communities that live and work in Oxfordshire.

Cllr Liz Brighthouse – Chairman of the Performance Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Mark Gray – Chairman of the Education Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Lawrie Stratford – Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Introduction

Since the last Scrutiny Annual Report, the overview and scrutiny functions of the council have changed significantly. In 2012 a cross-party working group overseen by the Strategy and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee reviewed the council's governance arrangements and recommended that the 6 overview and scrutiny committees should be streamlined to 3. These three committees began their work under the new arrangements following the May 2013 election. They are:

- Performance Scrutiny Committee
- Education Scrutiny Committee
- Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The fewer number of committees has inevitably meant that the remits of each of the committees has been broad. This has necessitated close partnerships working between the scrutiny chairmen to manage any overlaps.

In addition to these scrutiny committees, the review also established a further set of 'task and finish' groups to support the scrutiny function. These are not formal meetings of the council, and nor do they have the status of an advisory committee under the Local Government Act 1972. They are chaired by the relevant cabinet portfolio holder and report directly to cabinet. These are:

- Cabinet Advisory Groups, of which there can be up to five
- Transport Advisory Panel

This Scrutiny Annual Report provides an overview of the work of the council's overview and scrutiny committees over the course of 2013/14. Given that the committees have been working this year under a new structure, this is also an opportunity to examine how the changed governance arrangements have been working as a whole.

This report is structured by committee. It explores some of the areas of work each of the committees have undertaken over the last year, highlighting in particular the approach each has taken to the new governance arrangements. The report is not intended to be comprehensive, but seeks to emphasise areas where scrutiny has had a tangible impact on decision-making, and therefore on the lives of the people of Oxfordshire.

When the new governance arrangements came into effect, it was agreed that a review would be carried out a year on. This scrutiny annual report is separate from the review, which will be undertaken by the Monitoring Officer under the auspices of the Audit and Governance Committee, and will be presented to council later this year.

Performance Scrutiny Committee

The Performance Scrutiny Committee has a membership of 11 county councillors. The county councillor membership is politically proportional to the membership of the Council. The Committee met 7 times in 2013/2014. Some of its key functions, as outlined in the Constitution, include:

- Responsible for scrutinising the performance of the council
- Providing a focused review of corporate performance, directorate performance
- Financial reporting and budget scrutiny
- Responsible for raising queries or issues of concern that may occur over decisions being taken in relation to adult social care, to provide a specific committee for addressing such queries.
- The committee that discharges the Council's scrutiny responsibilities under the Crime and Justice Act 2006, to review and scrutinise decisions made or actions taken by community safety partners.

Budget Process

When the Performance Scrutiny Committee started work it assumed overall responsibility for scrutinising budget proposals. The preparation of budget proposals for the period 2014/15 to 2017/18 was a much more significant challenge for the council than in previous years for two main reasons. Firstly, because the council needed to identify savings of £60 million, in addition to £31 million savings, that had already been identified for the same period, in previous years. Secondly, because of the very tight timescales that were being worked to that were caused by the timing of central government announcements about the local government settlement.

The Committee were clear that both member and public consultation were crucial to the budget approval process and were keen to ensure greater transparency in the process than had been the case in previous years. This was particularly relevant given the shift in the political balance of the Council. The Committee were central in influencing the introduction of a new challenge process, which involved members from both the Conservative Independent Alliance and Opposition members. The committee also instigated the implementation of a series of member budget briefings. These created an opportunity for members to meet with Directors from each service area to understand and question the budget proposals. Member feedback from these briefings was then considered by the Performance Scrutiny Committee as part of their scrutiny of the proposals and fed back to Cabinet for their consideration. Directors have welcomed this approach to budget scrutiny, and feel that members as a whole have had more of an insight into the challenges service areas face and that this has helped lead to a more informed debate and decision making.

The quality of budget scrutiny was further improved by the holistic approach taken by the committee. In previous years, the budget was considered in directorate related segments by different committees and only brought together at the end of the process. This year the elements were considered universally throughout, resulting in the early identification of common themes and interdependencies. The Committee were concerned that across all three Directorates, resources were being stretched

due to an increase in demand, which was not mirrored by funding streams. The overriding concern was that this would threaten the future performance of the Council. The improved quality and wider breadth of the scrutiny of the budget proposals meant that the Performance Scrutiny Committee was able to make detailed comments and raise evidenced concerns about specific budget proposals for Cabinet to consider.

Overall, this year, Performance Scrutiny Committee enhanced the level of challenge to the budget proposals, which provides a reasonable assurance of their robustness. Examination of the budget proposals through the service & resource planning process has led to a number of refinements and provides assurance about the robustness of the estimates. Scrutiny of the budget around revenue reductions has also been considered from an equalities perspective.

Performance Management

In their first year of operation, the Performance Scrutiny Committee has focused on understanding, monitoring and challenging the corporate performance of the Council. The Committee were instrumental in setting and agreeing the corporate indicators for the current year and have met each quarter to examine progress against those indicators across all areas of the council. At each meeting the Committee has held directors to account for the performance of their service areas, through detailed consideration of every indicator in the Council's balanced score card. The focus has been at a much more detailed level than in previous years and has resulted in a closer scrutiny of the approaches, contributing to an improvement in performance in a number of areas and also a much better understanding by members. For example, about the potential impact of increasing demand for services at a time when budgets have had to be scaled back.

The Committee have also undertaken more detailed exploratory work; for example, an afternoon focusing on adult social care performance issues; to increase understanding of the work in directorates that is measured through the indicators. This has led to more effective scrutiny of the reported performance and an improved understanding of the story behind the information presented. This enhanced level of understanding of the overall performance of the Council has not been achieved in previous years and opens the way for members to be able to identify key issues to focus on in the coming year.

More recently the Committee have provided helpful scrutiny of the Council's overarching strategy for the coming years, through considering and commenting back to Cabinet on the Corporate Plan and the indicators that will be used to assess delivery of key aspects. The Committee will now consider progress against the plan as performance against those indicators will be brought before the committee each quarter, next year.

The Property and Facilities Contract with Carillion

The Committee identified concerns with the effectiveness of the current property and facilities contract. The Committee took a new approach and invited Carillion into the scrutiny process, significantly improving transparency by making previously unavailable performance information public. The impact of this level of public scrutiny has been a measurable improvement in service delivery, with Carillion working more

closely with members to increase understanding about how they deliver services. The Committee now propose to use the model more widely to create further opportunities for similar in depth analysis of specific performance issues.

The Highways Contract with Skanska

The Committee also identified concerns with the effectiveness of both the highways contract. Members received a full briefing of current performance levels being achieved through the operation of the contract. Following the model used to investigate the Carillion contract, officers and representatives from Skanska were invited to attend a meeting of the committee to explore areas for improvement in more depth and answer challenging questions on current performance levels. Subsequently to this public investigation performance of the highways contract has shown an improvement.

Adult Social Care

Following scrutiny of adult social care performance measures, committee members were concerned about the quality of services delivered through the Council's contracts. The Committee examined the processes in place to ensure the on-going quality of a large number of contracts for home care and care homes for older people and were reassured by their findings. The Committee are now looking to develop their work in this area by identifying specific contracts that are not performing to the standards required and create more opportunity for more in depth scrutiny of these areas of business.

Children's Social Care

Committee members queried high numbers of repeated child protection referrals. The research revealed clear reasons behind the levels of performance, which have now led to enhancements to the services offered to support children and families in need.

Interdependencies with Other Committees

Throughout the year the Committee have considered the performance of delayed transfers of care as part of their quarterly performance reports. The Committee have focused on the areas of work which the Council can directly impact; particularly the interdependencies with the reablement service. Where the Committee have identified interdependencies with the performance of partner agencies they have referred the matter for consideration by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee have also received quarterly reports in relation to educational achievement and attainment. Members highlighted the importance of tackling absence from schools and queried the role and responsibilities of the Council in relation to academies. Where members identified concern around attainment levels, these were raised to the Education Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

The Performance Scrutiny Committee has also forged close working links with the Audit and Governance Committee. The Chairmen of both Committees have more recently been considering the Council's commissioned services and how the scrutiny and challenge of those services should be handled. The Performance Scrutiny Committee now lead on examining the performance, or outcomes, of contracts

awarded by the Council. The Audit and Governance committee have a key role to play in monitoring the frameworks in place for both overall governance of the commissioning programme, and for specific contracts, where required.

Forward Planning

The Performance Scrutiny Committee is committed to strengthening its role in providing robust challenge to the performance of the Council. Having spent the first year taking a very broad perspective across all service areas; so that members now have a very good general understanding of the work of the council; it is envisaged that next year the committee will spend more time focusing on holding detailed discussions about specific service areas, enabling a more in depth consideration and challenge. The Committee are also keen to build on the increased transparency that has already been achieved, by creating more opportunities for public scrutiny of the performance of commissioned services.

Education Scrutiny Committee

The Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a membership of 11 county councillors and 4 co-opted members. The county councillor membership is politically proportional to the membership of the Council. The Committee met 6 times in 2013/2014.

There is a standing working group chaired by Cllr John Howson, focusing on educational attainment. A Select Committee has been formed to look at the issue of Ofsted inspections and investigate how the Council would fare in the event of an Ofsted inspection of the Council's school improvement arrangements. In light of Ofsted's criticism of school support services in Norfolk and the Isle of Wight, the Committee found it essential to articulate a clear vision of the role of the Council in education and to ensure its responsibilities are fulfilled successfully.

The Committee provides a county wide view of the provision of all the schools in Oxfordshire. As stated in the Terms of Reference of the Committee, the key functions of the Committee include:

- To assist the Council in its role of championing good educational outcomes for Oxfordshire's children and young people;
- To provide a challenge to schools and academies and to hold them to account for their academic performance;
- To promote joined up working across organisations in the education sector within Oxfordshire;
- To review the bigger picture affecting academic achievement in the county so as to facilitate the achievement of good outcomes;
- To represent the community of Oxfordshire in the development of academic achievement across the county, including responding to formal consultations and participating in inter-agency discussions;
- To contribute to the development of educational policy in the county.

Ofsted Inspection Framework

In May 2013 Ofsted introduced a new performance framework which will consider how well a council is fulfilling its general duty to promote high standards of education and to enable every child to fulfil their educational potential. The Committee has been involved in this area in a number of ways:

- It examined the Ofsted framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement;
- It analysed evidence from CEF on how the Council addressed the requirements of the Ofsted framework;
- It considered practice and lessons to be learnt from the experience of other local authorities.

The Committee decided to constitute a select committee to focus specifically on the Ofsted Inspection Framework, reflecting the commitment of the Education Scrutiny Committee to play an active role in improving education in the county alongside the Cabinet Member and officers. To this purpose the Committee invited a Senior HMI to attend the July 2014 meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee for a discussion on the role of Oxfordshire County Council and local authorities generally in education. This will help the Council articulate a clear and compelling vision of its

role in education in an environment greatly influenced by the rise in the number of academies.

Academies

Oxfordshire County Council supports the Academies agenda, and a growing number of schools are opting to become academies, independent of the Council. This has raised some questions regarding the role the Council can play in relation to academies, especially in terms of holding academies accountable for performance. Monitoring and providing challenge and support remain clear roles for the Council as it seeks to raise pupil achievement across the whole area. The Education Scrutiny Committee plays a key role in enabling the Council to fulfil its duties as champion for all children in Oxfordshire. This has included taking an overarching look at the quality of education across Oxfordshire and asking questions about any poor attainment levels, regardless of school type.

The Committee heard from the Deputy Director for Education and Early Intervention that 2013 had seen a steady stream of conversion within Oxfordshire. It is anticipated that by April 2015 40-50% of existing schools will be academies. It was reported that officers have built new relationships, learning to work with academies in different ways, and that groups of schools converting at the same time were easier to deal with. With the introduction of academies, officers need to work differently and build partnership arrangements. The Scrutiny Committee challenges how this is working in practice across a number of streams, including attainment, admissions, and improvement support services.

A challenge was presented to CEF on the changing role of Local Authorities in relation to academies, with a paper to be presented at the next meeting of the Committee.

Use of the Pupil Premium

The pupil premium is additional funding given to publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap between them and their peers. Schools use pupil premium funding differently. Scrutiny challenged the use of pupil funding and sought to gain an understanding of local practices and what works best.

Through its work, the Committee has helped offer a holistic view in terms of the pupil premium, the selection of children who might benefit and the sharing of good practice from other authorities.

The Committee invited Cherwell School to give evidence about the school's use of pupil premium. The Committee looked at what works and noted the success of the school in making an impact through the pupil premium. By engaging in a dialogue with the Head Teacher and inviting him to share their experience of successfully using the pupil premium, the Committee identified best practice and challenged how this work can be disseminated to other schools. The committee acknowledged the excellent work of Cherwell School and challenged the School Improvement Services on how they plan to work with the schools that have large attainment gaps for vulnerable learners. In the future, members will invite schools from deprived areas to see how this funding is being utilised to improve attainment and close the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

Attainment

Oxfordshire is a world class academic and research centre. However it has a relatively weak education attainment performance. As such, the members of the Committee are keen to focus on understanding the causes for underperformance and exploring ways to improve achievement.

The Education Attainment Working Group led by Cllr Howson was set up to gather evidence on schools' performance, to review and challenge the existing school improvement and support services and to recommend practical measures to raise attainment. The Councillors worked closely with Children, Education and Families (CEF) officers to get an overview of school attainment across Oxfordshire, and compare results with similar councils and with wider national and international trends. The working group analysed Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 county and national attainment data released in December 2013, and was satisfied that the Council is tackling the issue of improving attainment and is taking appropriate action where needed.

This was followed on by an in-depth analysis of a case study comparing a high performing school and an underperforming school of similar size and make-up. This exercise revealed some of the key factors responsible for improving performance, such as strong and inclusive leadership, targeted intervention, commitment to raising aspiration among pupils, engaging parents, collaborative working among schools . The group continues to gather evidence on attainment in Oxfordshire and will detail its findings in a report to the Education Scrutiny Committee.

Further the group recommended that a School Improvement Framework Briefing meeting for Councillors is organised, which received the support of the full Committee. Moving forward, the members of the Education Attainment working group are keen to focus on attainment in primary schools and on establishing successful mechanisms to spread best practice. The group is also keen to explore this in relation to attendance.

Home to School Transport Policy Proposal

In July 2013 the Committee considered a report on the Proposed Home to School Transport Policy, together with a summary of the consultation responses received. Having assessed the policy document and the way the public consultation was carried out, the Committee raised a number of concerns. In particular, it was thought that the consultation had not been sufficiently clear about who was affected and how. There were also concerns about whether the consultation had targeted the right people and groups and whether enough time was allocated for the public to express their views.

While the initial policy was put on hold when the Department of Education withdrew its Guidance issued on March 2013, the Committee played a key role in pushing for thorough and extensive consultation with the public when the revised version of the Home to School Transport policy was published for consultation. By providing constructive challenge, the scrutiny helped develop and refine the proposed policy and it served as a forum for parents, Head teachers and other stakeholders to express their views regarding the draft policy.

This was particularly important when the revised draft policy was put before the Committee in February 2014. At that meeting the Committee listened to evidence from the officer involved in the drafting of the policy, County Councillors from across the political spectrum, education experts and local action groups. The Committee engaged extensively with the speakers who gave evidence, providing challenge and scrutiny. The Committee agreed a set of key recommendations, advising the Cabinet to accept change to free transport only to nearest school within Oxfordshire. The Committee's recommendations were then taken to Cabinet who voted in support of all the recommendations made by the Education Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee requested further work to be undertaken in regard to safe routes, admissions policies, and the taxi budget, and asked for the study of alternative transport arrangements and the dissemination of best practice to be included in this work. The Committee also expressed its interest to press the government to overhaul the principles of home to school transport in the light of the new Post 16 regulations.

Forward planning

As part of its role in reviewing governance agreements and resource allocation, the Committee has agreed to invite the Schools' Forum to address the Committee. It will also continue investigating ways to improve results in Science and will analyse the performance of primary schools. The Committee is committed to using its expertise to make recommendations and help disseminate information and best practice. The Committee will continue to provide challenge and scrutiny to ensure that the Council delivers on its role as champion of all children in Oxfordshire.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) has a membership of 7 county councillors, five district councillors and three co-opted members, The committee met five times in 2013/14. Some of the prime functions of the committee include:

- Reviewing and scrutinising any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in Oxfordshire.
- Reviewing and scrutinising services commissioned and provided by relevant NHS bodies and relevant health service providers.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 brought in major changes to the core structure of the NHS and this has meant significant impact on who makes decisions and how services are commissioned. The Committee has acted as the champion for patients and challenged organisations to ensure that the transition and implementation of the new arrangements have been carried out in an effective way.

During the past year there have been four substantive issues covered by the Committee.

Delayed Transfers of Care

Delayed Transfers of Care continues to be an area of poor performance for Oxfordshire. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee broke new ground last year by inviting all organisations involved in the pathway to explore the reasons for delays. This was the first time that the key organisations had discussed the entire pathway in public.

The Committee challenged the organisations on many aspects of the pathway where there has been poor performance. Members identified waiting times for medicines upon a patient's discharge from hospital as unacceptable. The Oxfordshire University Hospital NHS Trust committed to decreasing waiting times by employing pharmacists who could prescribe on the wards.

The Committee also uncovered reasons for some delays that members of the public had limited awareness of. Delays can occur where, due to patient choice, people have chosen to stay in hospital waiting for a care home bed closer to home. Others choose to go into a care home as a default option rather than consider 'care at home'. All organisations expressed commitment to work in partnership and use resources such as the Better Care Fund to help drive culture change deliver improvements in the pathway.

The issue of delayed transfers of care remain a major concern for the Committee and members will continue to challenge all partners to improve outcomes for patients.

Service Issues and Patient Concerns

In September 2012 the Oxfordshire University Hospital NHS Trust suspended births at the Cotswold Maternity Unit, due to concerns about the high transfer rates and lack of usage. At the start 2013 the suspension remained in place and the local community became increasingly concerned about the future of the Maternity Unit as limited information had been released by the hospital.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee raised concerns with the Trust about the length of time the investigation was taking and the apparent lack of communication with the local community. The Committee requested a strategy and action plan for reopening the service and to ensure its future viability. The strategy reassured the Committee and members of the local community that the issues were being addressed and that the Trust was committed to the future of the service. The service was reopened in July and, upon the Committee's recommendation, the Trust agreed to put significant resource into promoting the service locally and committed to not close the unit a year on if targets have not been met. This is something that the Committee will continue to monitor and will look at again if further issues arise.

Service Change

Another major challenge for the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been the cessation of emergency abdominal surgery at the Horton Hospital. This type of surgery ceased in January 2013 due to patient safety concerns arising from unforeseen circumstances. The cessation remained in place for a period of ten months while the Oxfordshire University Hospital NHS Trust undertook a review of the service. During this period the hospital engaged with key stakeholder groups, including the Committee, but there was limited communication with the wider community and this led to considerable local concern about the removal of the service and future of the Horton as a General Hospital.

Upon the Committee's request, the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and the Trust held a public meeting for the local community. Over 200 local residents attended the meeting to raise their concerns with both organisations. The meeting went some way to help residents understand the clinical reasons behind the proposal to cease emergency abdominal surgery, and perhaps more importantly, to explain the vision for new services for the Hospital.

Subsequently the Committee accepted the proposal to make the suspension of emergency abdominal surgery permanent at the Horton due to clinical safety reasons. Following recommendations made by the Committee, the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and the Oxfordshire University Hospital NHS Trust committed to undertake far more proactive communication with local residents. The committee will continue to review and monitor the progress made at the Horton.

Strategy Review

Members of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee have a key role in reviewing strategies to question if they meet the needs of local communities across Oxfordshire. The Committee broadly agreed with the priorities of the first statutory

Health and Wellbeing Strategy but challenged several proposed outcomes associated with each priority. The committee also proposed that some targets be more ambitious to ensure the NHS meets the needs of the local communities. The recommendations were taken on board in final version of the strategy. This is something that the Committee intends to make a regular part of its work programme as and when strategies are implemented.

Forward Planning

As part of its role in reviewing and scrutinising the planning, provision of health services in Oxfordshire, the Committee will be looking at the strategies of commissioners and providers in Oxfordshire. The Committee will also have a key role in scrutinising service reconfiguration as organisations aim to meet the needs of patients, improve the quality of care and achieve better value for society. In addition, the Committee will scrutinise performance and quality issues as they arise.

Cabinet Advisory Groups

Cabinet Advisory Groups were established to enable other members to help the Cabinet consider how to deal with specific issues. They are not formal meetings of the council, and nor do they have the status of an advisory committee under the Local Government Act 1972. They are chaired by the relevant cabinet portfolio holder and report directly to cabinet.

Since the new governance arrangements began in May 2013, there have been three Cabinet Advisory Groups:

- Children and Young People's Safeguarding Assurance Arrangements, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Families
- Minerals and Waste, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Environment
- Income Generation, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Finance

Membership details are provided in Annex 2.

A further Cabinet Advisory Group on Children and Young People's Early Intervention Services, which will be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Families, is also in the process of being set up and will meet in May 2014.

Children and Young People's Safeguarding Assurance Arrangements

The Cabinet Advisory Group was established to examine how councillors and senior managers have assurance about frontline safeguarding practice. The terms of reference were to consider the existing strategic assurance framework for safeguarding children and young people and make any recommendations to Cabinet for changes. Specifically this included:

- How do councillors and senior managers have assurance about front line practice and how safe things are in Oxfordshire? (the council's internal quality assurance framework)
- The current role of each of the groups below in the overall strategic framework:
 - Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Children and Young People's Board (including the children's plan)
 - Corporate Parenting Panel
 - Panels - adoptions and fostering
 - Cabinet
 - Audit and Governance Committee
 - Performance Scrutiny Committee
- The council's inter-relationship with the Local Safeguarding Children Board

The group has considered a wide range of issues:

- Partnerships and Governance in relation to children's safeguarding arrangements
- Role of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board
- Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures

- Existing Safeguarding Assurance Arrangements
- Role of the Corporate Parenting Panel in safeguarding assurance
- Statutory role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding
- Corporate parenting - duties and responsibilities of Councillors

A final report containing the group's recommendations will be considered by Cabinet on 13th May 2014. A further meeting of the group will be held subsequently to consider delivery plans.

Minerals and Waste

The role of the Minerals and Waste Cabinet Advisory Group is to provide guidance and feedback to officers on the preparation, monitoring and review of the Oxfordshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan. In particular it is to:

- Consider related technical reports including, but not limited to, the annual Oxfordshire Local Aggregates Assessment and the Annual Monitoring Report
- Consider any external feedback on the provision to be made for minerals and waste development in Oxfordshire from key stakeholders, including other Minerals Planning Authorities and Aggregates Working Parties
- Consider comments received from District, Parish and Town Councils, other organisations and the public on consultations related to the preparation of the plan
- Review and consider the implications of minerals and waste industry activity in Oxfordshire
- Review and consider the implications of changes in national planning policy and guidance related to minerals and waste development
- Help inform advice and recommendations to Cabinet and Full Council relating to the plan and any such plans produced by neighbouring Minerals Planning Authorities

The group has met four times since its inception in July 2013 and has had a significant impact in challenging officers on the content of the Local Aggregate Assessment, in particular around forecasts of future production numbers. The recommendations of the group have been incorporated into the Minerals and Waste Local Plan which was considered by Cabinet on 28th January 2014. The Minerals and Waste Cabinet Advisory Group will continue to report to Cabinet about its work at key milestones relating to minerals and waste activity until the Minerals and Waste Local Plan is finalised in December 2015.

Income Generation

The Income Generation Cabinet Advisory Group was set up in the face of the council's challenging financial horizon. Its remit is to review areas where the council has the potential to generate income, or where it can change/increase charges that are already in place.

The initial work of the group focused on updating the corporate charging policy. This was approved by Cabinet on 17th December 2013. The bulk of the group's work has been to identify a number of ideas for income generation and channels of enquiry to

pursue, building on suggestions by members of the public and councillors. This has included ideas as wide-ranging as the creation of an online donations facility, the use of crowd-funding to fund non-statutory projects and amending charges for film crews working in Oxfordshire.

The group has met six times since its inception in July 2013 and presented a set of recommendations to Cabinet on 28th January 2014, which were noted. It is envisaged the group will be reconvened, if required, during the 2014/15 service and resource planning period.

Early Intervention

The proposed Early Intervention Cabinet Advisory Group will focus on the future provision of early intervention services in Oxfordshire, including Children's Centre and Early Intervention Hubs. The draft terms of reference for this Cabinet Advisory Group will be agreed by the group at their first meeting in May 2014.

Conclusion

The council has faced a number of challenges this year, not least of which was passing a difficult budget in the face of dramatically reduced funding from central government. These challenges, combined with the fact that no party managed to secure a majority of seats in the May 2013 election, resulting in a Conservative-Independent Alliance, has made the role that scrutiny plays even more important.

The overview and scrutiny function is vital in getting backbench and opposition councillors more involved in the work of the council. To this end, the Performance Scrutiny Committee is chaired by the Leader of the Opposition and the Education Scrutiny Committee is chaired by an Independent councillor, arrangements which seek to ensure the impartiality and credibility of the committees. This has been particularly important in the face of a controversial budget process which attracted widespread public interest and participation.

A challenge for all three scrutiny committees has been their broad remits and therefore the scope for potential overlap between committees. This is an issue which has been identified during this review process and needs careful management to ensure that work is not being duplicated. To this end, regular meetings of the scrutiny chairmen have been set up to encourage joined-up thinking, discuss forward plans and to ensure that the scrutiny function as a whole is cohesive and efficient.

In spite of these difficulties, it is encouraging that there have been many successes for the scrutiny committees this year and that the changed governance arrangements appear to be having a positive impact. This follows from a period of dissatisfaction with the quality of the council's scrutiny in the past. All three of the committees have delivered tangible results and had a powerful influence over outcomes. The streamlined arrangements and broad remits have encouraged the scrutiny committees to 'get their teeth' into difficult issues and make the most of the opportunities they have to ensure the best outcomes.

However, as the current overview and scrutiny arrangements are so new, it is imperative to continue monitoring and reviewing outcomes. The review of the governance arrangements, which will be presented to cabinet in September, will be a key part of this. In the meantime, and going forward in the future, the current strong focus on scrutiny will continue. It is vital that scrutiny remains a powerful and effective force, and continues to have a positive impact on the work of the council.

Annex 1 Scrutiny Committee Membership

Education Scrutiny

Councillor Mark Gray (Chairman)
Councillor Michael Waine (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Yvonne Constance
Councillor Simon Hoare
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Richard Langridge
Councillor Sandy Lovatt
Councillor Neil Owen
Councillor Gill Sanders
Councillor Val Smith
Councillor Lawrie Stratford

Co-Optees

Mr Chris Bevan
Mrs Sue Matthew
Mrs Liz Smith

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Lawrie Stratford (Chairman)
District Councillor Alison Thomson (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Kevin Bulmer
Councillor Pete Handley
Councillor Mark Lygo
Councillor Laura Price
Councillor Alison Rooke
Councillor Les Sibley
District Councillor Martin Barrett
District Councillor Dr Christopher Hood
District Councillor Susanna Pressel
District Councillor Rose Stratford

Co-Optees

Dr Harry Dickinson
Dr Keith Ruddle
Mrs Anne Wilkinson

Performance

Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (Chairman)
Councillor Neil Fawcett (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Lynda Atkins
Councillor John Christie
Councillor Sam Coates
Councillor Yvonne Constance
Councillor Mark Gray
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Richard Langridge
Councillor Sandy Lovatt
Councillor Lawrie Stratford

Annex 2 Cabinet Advisory Group Membership

Children and Young People's Safeguarding Assurance Arrangements

Councillor Melinda Tilley (Chairman)
Councillor Val Smith (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Yvonne Constance
Councillor Janet Godden
Councillor Caroline Newton
Councillor Gill Sanders

Minerals and Waste

Councillor Nimmo-Smith (Chairman)
Councillor Anne Purse (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Lynda Atkins
Councillor Mark Gray
Councillor Patrick Greene
Councillor Nick Hards
Councillor Simon Hoare
Councillor Bob Johnston
Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale
Councillor Charles Mathew
Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor John Tanner

Income Generation

Councillor Arash Fatemian (Chairman)
Councillor Charles Mathew (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor David Bartholomew
Councillor Nick Hards
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Roz Smith