



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Scrutiny Annual Report

2020-2021

Foreword

The Overview and Scrutiny function forms an integral part of the Council's operations. Its influence can be seen in the budget setting process, policy development, performance monitoring and the drive for continuous service improvement.

This annual report highlights some of the work undertaken by our scrutiny committees to address current and emerging issues and to deliver improved services for the residents of Oxfordshire. Our aim has been to provide challenge and insight to ensure that activities proposed or undertaken by the Council or the NHS serve the residents of Oxfordshire as fully as possible.

The committees have completed a vast amount of work via formal meetings, working groups and visits. Through the information received, scrutiny committees have made recommendations to Cabinet and partners in the NHS for policy changes and service improvements.

The achievements through the committees could not have been realised without the input and dedication of all our colleagues and partners, and we express our sincerest thanks to all the participants in this work over the past year.

We are proud of the achievements that the scrutiny committees have made this year and look forward to building on this. We hope you find this report interesting and informative.



Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE
Chairman of the
Performance Scrutiny
Committee



Cllr Arash Fatemian
Chairman of the
Oxfordshire Joint Health
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee and
Chairman Horton Joint
Health Overview and
Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Michael Waine
Chairman of the
Education Scrutiny
Committee

Executive Summary

Overview and scrutiny play a crucial role in holding decision makers to account, bringing in the views and evidence of local people and service users and challenging and improving performance. The Council delegates scrutiny responsibilities to four committees; three of which are long standing committees, one (the Horton Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee) is a more recently established committee.

In 2020-21, the County Council's overview and scrutiny committees focused on areas where they could have the greatest influence on outcomes for the people of Oxfordshire including scrutinising significant service redesign across the Council.

The **Performance Scrutiny Committee** has met formally eight times in 2020/21. The work of the Committee has included a meeting with the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police to review the TVP Delivery Plan and considered the adoption of a revised Council budget, required due to the significant impact of the pandemic.

Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) has met formally four times in 2020/21. The work of the Committee has included the continued conduct of a Task and Finish Group to review the rollout of the Population Health and Care Needs Assessment Framework in the OX12 locality.

The Horton Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Horton HOSC) has had a revised Terms of Reference agreed to expand its scope and allow scrutiny of a Masterplan for the Horton General Hospital. The Committee met once during 2020/21, in November 2020.

The **Education Scrutiny Committee** has met formally 5 times in 2020/21. The work of the Committee has included reviewing the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities High Needs Top Up Funding Arrangements for 2020/21 and a dedicated meeting with the Regional School Commissioner and Ofsted in order to ask pertinent questions around academic performance on some schools.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Annual Report summarises the activities of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees between April 2020 and March 2021. Membership of the committees can be found in annex 1 of this report.
- 1.2 This report highlights key areas of work each committee has undertaken over the last year and where the influence of scrutiny has been greatest.
- 1.3 This year the scrutiny chairmen balanced the committees' time between the Covid-19 pandemic, performance monitoring, deep dives into specific areas, policy development and scrutiny of partnership arrangements.

2. The Role of Scrutiny

- 2.1 Overview and scrutiny arrangements were established under the Local Government Act 2000. They are a mechanism for non-executive Councillors to examine the policies and decisions of Cabinet and other executive decision makers, identify problem areas and issue reports. Overview and scrutiny also have a role in scrutinising crime and disorder issues, flood risk management and health.
- 2.2 Specifically, the powers and functions of overview and scrutiny committees include the ability to:
 - Hold inquiries and produce reports and recommendations to the Cabinet;
 - Require Cabinet members to appear before them; and
 - Require a response to its reports within two months.
- 2.3 Scrutiny provides the opportunity to challenge policy and decision makers through an evidence based investigative process that aims to resolve problems in the public interest and drive service improvements. It does this by holding the Cabinet to account but also through constructive dialogue between the public and councillors. The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) stated that scrutiny has four principles:
 - Provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy-makers and decision makers;
 - Enables the voice and concerns of the public to be heard;
 - Is carried out by 'independent minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny process;
 - Drives improvement in public service.
- 2.4 HOSC committees have specific health scrutiny powers governed by statute. Chief among these powers is the ability to:
 - Require officers of NHS bodies to attend committee meetings;
 - Require the local NHS to provide information about the planning, provision and operation of the health service in the area;

- Make reports and recommendations to NHS bodies;
- Refer proposals for substantial changes to health services to the Secretary of State for decision if the committee believes the consultation has been inadequate, if there were inadequate reasons for not consulting, or if the proposals would not be in the interests of the local health service;
- The NHS is obliged to consult the HOSC on any substantial changes it wishes to make to local health services, in addition to its wider responsibility to involve and consult the public. The Committee and local NHS have an agreed process to help both parties determine if a proposal constitutes a substantial change, known informally as 'the toolkit'.

3. PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3.1 The Performance Scrutiny Committee has a membership of 11 county councillors and is chaired by Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE. Cllr Jenny Hannaby is the Deputy Chairman. The committee met eight times during 2020-21.

3.2 The committee's key functions, as outlined in the constitution, include:

- Scrutinising the performance of the Council;
- Providing a focused review of corporate performance and directorate performance;
- Scrutinising financial reporting and budgets;
- Raising queries or issues of concern that may occur over decisions being taken in relation to adult social care, effectively providing a specific committee for addressing such queries;
- Discharging the Council's scrutiny responsibilities under the Police and Justice Act 2006; to review and scrutinise decisions made, or actions taken by community safety partners
- In addition, scrutiny has a role in developing and revising Council policies

Performance Management:

3.3 It was not possible to maintain the Council's monthly performance reporting due to the impact of the start of the pandemic and so the Committee in July and August reviewed reports for February-March and April-June before monthly reporting was restored.

3.4 The committee has continued to use the Business Management and Monitoring Report as a means for holding the Council to account for the pledges it makes in the Corporate Plan as well as assessing the revised budget discussed at the extra meeting in August. Through examining overall performance, the committee plays an important role in driving improvement across some of the Council's highest priority areas.

3.5 The committee also used the report to identify areas for closer scrutiny. Extra briefings were requested on Delayed Transfers of Care, School Transport costs

under Covid, the performance of CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service) and the timeliness of EHCPs (Education Health and Care Plans).

- 3.6 The committee's pre-meeting briefings were brought forward to be held a few days in advance of the main meeting which allowed questions to be identified in advance so that responses could be brought to the meeting and improve the effectiveness of the meetings. The Chairman brought the views of the committee to the Cabinet meeting that discussed the report.

Key Areas of Scrutiny in 2020-21:

- 3.7 **Covid-19** (July 2020): The meeting in July was the first 'virtual' committee meeting since the pandemic hit, preventing face-to-face meetings. This first meeting examined a number of key areas focused on response to the Covid-19 pandemic including:

- the response of the Customer Service Centre in supporting vulnerable residents who needed to shield. Councillors thanked the officers and praised the magnificent efforts of staff during the crisis and the way in which private businesses stepped up, for example restaurants providing meals;
- the increased demand on the homecare budget and continuing difficulties in recruitment. The Committee suggested encouraging providers in the social care sector to avail of the government scheme to employ young people;
- the partnership work in discharging patients from hospital when the first peak hit and the lessons to be learned to ensure that the numbers in Delayed Transfer of Care do not reach high levels again.

- 3.8 **Transport and Travel** (July 2020 & January 2021): An extra meeting was held following the allocation of Tranche 1 of the government's Emergency Active Travel Fund from which the Council was awarded 50% of the indicative allocation. Members wanted to ensure that the reasons for this were clearly understood before the Council made its submission for Tranche 2. When the second allocation was announced in November the Council was awarded 125% of the indicative allocation.

- 3.9 The discussion in January focussed on the Local Transport Connectivity Plan with an update on Active Travel funding. Much of the discussion focussed on equality issues, seeking to ensure that benefits are experienced across the county and in all communities. Members also recommended ways in which the views and knowledge of local members could better feed into developments.

- 3.10 **Safeguarding** (November 2020, January and March 2021): The committee discussed two Serious Case Reviews from the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board to examine the learning from the cases. The Committee considered what measures have been put in place to ensure that this does not happen again.

- 3.11 At the November meeting the committee received a presentation following the launch of Family Safeguarding Plus and the annual report on Safeguarding

Missing Children. Members congratulated the Cabinet and officers for their commitment to seeing the new safeguarding model implemented.

- 3.12 **Climate Change** (March 2021): The committee asked for an update on progress towards climate change targets. Apart from measures taken by the Council itself, the committee asked about the efforts to help schools, including academies, to reduce emissions and to encourage technological development through i-Hub.
- 3.13 **Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and the Thames Valley Police (TVP) Delivery Plan 2020-21** (November 2020): The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police attended to give a presentation of the TVP Delivery Plan and answer questions posed by the committee. The committee explored how the police service was going to increase recruitment while at the same time reducing its budget and how the service could strike a balance between protecting officers from attack while ensuring that they maintain their presence in the community.
- 3.14 **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Reports** (March 2021): The committee received two reports – an update on the action plan arising from the 2019 inspection report and the inspectors report on the service's response to the pandemic. The latter report acknowledged that having the fire and rescue service within the County Council had significant benefits. The committee recorded its thanks for all the work and leadership shown during the pandemic.
- 3.15 **Corporate Plan and Budget Planning** (August 2020, December 2020 & January 2021): The pandemic had a significant impact on the Council's budget which required the adoption of a revised budget which the committee considered at an extra meeting in August before the proposals went to Cabinet and then Full Council. Concern was expressed that the proposed savings might result in poorer delivery of services and committee members asked for an equalities impact assessment to be prepared on the budget proposals, to ensure any potential negative impacts on equalities had been fully considered.
- 3.16 The December meeting which is normally dedicated to service and resource planning for the following financial year was put back to ensure that the latest information was available following the government's Spending Review announced in late November. The committee considered the Budget Consultation report and was updated on the work to refresh the Corporate Plan. Members advised that there needs to be a closer alignment between the Corporate Plan and the budget proposals so that they can see how the budget is being used to meet the priorities. The January meeting considered the Capital and Investment Strategy and was generally supportive of the proposals.
- 3.17 **Education Health and Care Plans** (July 2020): An initial report had been requested by Cllr Brighouse and Cllr Waine to inform future reports to Education & Performance Scrutiny committees. It was agreed that the Performance Scrutiny Committee may need to look at later date at some of the wider children's mental health issues that have probably been exacerbated by the lockdown.

3.18 Other key matters considered by the committee during 2020-21:

- Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework
- Safeguarding Children Annual Report
- Safeguarding Adults Annual Report
- Community Safety Services Annual Report

3.19 Forward Plan:

The new committee to be formed after the local elections in May is recommended to prioritise the following issues:

- Transport, place setting and Section 106 funds
- Education Health and Care Plans and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- Home First
- Review the performance indicators, measures and targets to show the extent to which Corporate Plan outcomes are being achieved.
- Apprenticeships

4. EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.1 The Education Scrutiny Committee is Chaired by Councillor Michael Waine and the Deputy Chairman is Councillor John Howson. The Committee met six times during 2020-21.

4.2 The Committee's key functions, as outlined in the constitution, include:

- Constructive challenge on performance issues highlighting issues where the Committee can support the improvement dialogue;
- Reviewing the Council's education functions including early years, Special Educational Needs and school place planning;
- Reviewing the progress of, and any issues emanating from, the School Organisation Stakeholder Group regarding admissions patterns and arrangements;
- Reviewing issues raised by the Schools Forum;
- Assisting the Council in its role of championing good educational outcomes for Oxfordshire's children and young people;
- Providing challenge to schools and academies and to hold them to account for their academic performance;
- Promoting joined up working across organisations in the education sector within Oxfordshire;
- Reviewing the bigger picture affecting academic achievement in the county to facilitate the achievement of good outcomes;
- Representing the community of Oxfordshire in the development of academic achievement across the county, including responding to formal consultations and participating in inter-agency discussions; and
- Contributing to the development of educational policy in the county.

4.3 It was not possible to maintain the Scrutiny Committee's usual overview of Annual reports and examination results due to the impact of the pandemic and

so instead the Committee provided a high level of questioning and challenge on a number of important areas of Strategy and had a regular update at every meeting from the Director of Children's Services on the ongoing effect of the pandemic on schools, teachers, parents and governors. The Committee not only focused on term time, but also questioned in relation to the provision of free school meals during holidays. As part of this overview, the Committee requested that all county councillors donate any unspent monies from their Councillor Priority Fund to purchase laptops for disadvantaged children in Oxfordshire. £69,866.32 was given to schools to support the following:

- Purchase of laptops & chrome books (if all were purchased by schools @£300, then 233 devices would have been bought).
- Licensing fees (1 school only)
- Upgrade of broadband (1 school only)
- Subscription for online portals (1 school only)

35 schools benefitted from the donation (26 were LA schools; 8 were primary academies, 1 was a special-school academy).

Key highlights from 2020-21 Committee meetings:

4.4 A Learner Engagement Strategy for Oxfordshire (June 2020): The Committee received a briefing on the Learner Engagement Strategy which had been co-produced by key stakeholders and partners engaged in optimising the inclusion in education of all Oxfordshire's statutory school aged children. The purpose was to ensure that children access their full educational entitlement to enable them to thrive as adults and fully participate in the economic, learning, personal and social life of Oxfordshire. The Committee established:

- All Children's Education Services (Learner Engagement, Special Educational Needs, Access to Learning and School improvement and Learning) had been fully operational during the lockdown period.
- Staffing had been shared internally across the four service areas to enable the teams to continue to deliver and set up new work streams e.g. the 'School Places Brokering Service' and the Early Years Teams which had run the Early Years places brokering service mainly through the Family Information Service.
- A grant had been provided to early years providers for the purchase of PPE. All schools were provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff when their local supplies had limited access to PPE.
- The team had liaised with the Department for Education (DfE) on a weekly basis and Ofsted throughout the pandemic.
- There had been clear support and challenge for education officers from the Cabinet Member, the Interim Director of Children's Services and other councillors.
- Home to School Transport teams were working hard to ensure sufficient transport was in place for when more pupils return to school in accordance with government guidelines.
- The main admissions round for Reception Year, Year 7 and Year 10 in September 2021 had been completed on time.

- Early Years providers (childminders, preschools, day nurseries and nursery schools) had remained open for vulnerable children and children of Key Workers.
- All schools had remained open throughout the period to children of 'Critical workers' and those deemed vulnerable. During the lockdown, only 5% of schools had closed due to staffing shortages; mostly for less than two days. Where a school was closed for a brief period, all families requesting a place for their child in another school were placed by the newly formed 'School Places Brokering Service.'
- Weekly 'virtual' meetings had been held with Headteachers to support them through the phased expansion of places in schools and offer support and practical advice, with attendance from colleagues in Public Health.
- Practical written advice through documents, frameworks and Frequently Asked Questions sheets had been offered to all schools irrespective of status.
- Since 1 June 2020, primary schools had expanded their offer to include children in Years Reception, 1 and 6. From 16 June 2020 primary schools could, if they had the capacity (space and staffing, widen their offer to other Year groups.
- Children's Social Care and other Education service colleagues had worked together with schools to ensure that when children were not in school, the absence was followed up and appropriate safeguards were put in place. Attendance had been monitored daily.
- The Department for Education had offered to provide digital devices and internet access for disadvantaged families, children and young people who did not have access to them through another source, such as their school. Digital devices could be requested for:
 - care leavers
 - children and young people aged 0 to 19 with a social worker
 - disadvantaged year 10 pupils

4.5 Update on the Impact of work on Reducing Exclusions (June 2020)

Exclusions in Oxfordshire had been a cause for concern to Members, Officers, Parents, the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board and Children's Trust for several years. Education Scrutiny Committee commenced a deep dive investigation into the issues in 2018. The Committee heard that at the beginning of the academic year 2019/20, there was a rapid increase of permanent exclusions which was of great concern. Extensive work had been carried out at Senior Officer and Officer level, regarding the increase in trend and a new officer post had been funded out of existing funds to provide a response to schools when they required additional support. A multi-agency task and finish group had also been created which had created a behaviour pathway that schools are now expected to follow before they exclude a child which incorporates the need for an early help assessment that takes account of societal or family needs and assessment of any unmet Special Educational Needs (SEN). The Committee noted reasons cited by schools for exclusion included insufficient SEN provision in the County and a lack of affordable alternative provision and noted that a large piece of work was being undertaken to look at alternative provision, together with the joint commissioning work underway, and that the special school estate was also being expanded.

- 4.6 The Committee queried whether there was enough Continuing Professional Development available, that every possible alternative had been fully explored, and whether adequate training was provided for school staff on how to address persistent disruptive behaviour, particularly from an early age so that it did not escalate throughout school. The Committee requested trend data over the past two or three years, to support further conversations.
- 4.7 **Changes to SEND High Needs Top Up Funding Arrangements for 2020/21 (September 2020)** The Committee considered the report on SEND High Needs Funding prior to it being considered by Cabinet on 15 September 2020, Cabinet would consider a report on SEND High Needs Funding and would be recommended to approve a one-off change to the funding formula for top up payments for secondary schools for the academic year 2020/21.
- 4.8 The Committee heard from the Director of Children's Services that the report was to enact a decision of the Schools Forum and that work was ongoing regarding a wider SEND Strategy.
- 4.9 The Committee were in agreement with the recommendations and welcomed the approach in development of the SEND Strategy outlined by the Director of Children's Services which would ensure wider involvement by stakeholders and this Committee. The Committee asked that schools be notified as soon as possible about their allocations and the rationale behind them.
- 4.10 **Update on Alternative Provision (AP) commissioning arrangements (September 2020)** The Committee requested a progress update on commissioning arrangements for alternative provision for Oxfordshire's children. The committee had previously expressed concerns about the increase in permanent exclusions particularly the number of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) children who were excluded and the number of children who were excluded that had a Team Around the Family (TAF) in place. The Committee learnt that further discussions had been initiated to secure effective and affordable alternative provision through the Radcliffe Academy Trust at Meadowbrook College for the interim period to September 2021 and that there had been extensive engagement with children, young people, parents and other interested parties.
- 4.11 Discussion took place on greater funding required for SEND and how this would be difficult with future financial pressures. The report provided details of the ways to mitigate the risk of fixed and permanent exclusions and areas of focus which included:
- Clear outcomes that Alternative Provision should deliver;
 - Children and young people are safe and feel safe;
 - Improved emotional health and wellbeing including resilience;
 - Improved engagement in learning;
 - Successful pathway back to mainstream school or onto post-16 opportunities;
 - Progress in learning;

- Improved social skills including friendships, relationships and involvement with the community.
- 4.12 The Committee noted that there was still more to be done and that this needed to be managed effectively due to the financial implications. It was noted that from the consultation exercise that 53% of respondents had expressed dissatisfaction with Alternative Provision in Oxfordshire.
- 4.13 Members were informed that 'Lots' had been created based on the needs of children and parents. New or existing Alternative Providers had to apply for any of these lots by joining a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), which enabled the Council to purchase Alternative Provision from quality assured providers using a standard contract and a standard individual placement agreement. The Committee agreed to receive further updates.
- 4.14 **Performance Update on Education Health & Care Plans in Oxfordshire (September 2020):** The Committee received a report on the Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) process and performance, including a focus on Exclusions, Elective Home Education, part time timetabling and the Early Intervention Service. Members were informed that a SEND Performance Board meeting had taken place and that an accelerated progress plan had to be submitted to the DfE shortly. A formal monitoring meeting would then take place with the DfE.
- 4.15 The Committee noted that the number of EHCPs had increased in recent years; predominantly in the primary school age group. It was noted that work needed to take place with families early on to avoid huge costs as placements in Independent schools were costly. The Committee concluded that the performance of EHCPs needed to be kept under review.
- 4.16 **Update on Special Educational Needs in Oxfordshire (November 2020):** The Committee had requested an update on the analysis of SEND and provision in Oxfordshire, together with the emerging strategy for implementing a transformative approach to supporting our children and young people with SEND.
- 4.17 The Committee heard that the local area SEND inspection revisit in October 2019 had identified that there was still work to do as a partnership and stated that "Leaders had an aspirational vision for the work they were doing to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Oxfordshire. However, parents did not yet feel part of this vision and did not fully understand what work was being done to achieve it".
- 4.18 The Committee noted that a significant amount of work was ongoing with the co-production Board and at an individual officer level through virtual meetings with the parent carer forum representatives, with over 60 parents having signed up. Officers were also seeking to second an Oxfordshire Headteacher for an agreed period to lead the consultation and finalisation of the new SEND strategy with schools and settings. It was essential to use the opportunity to capture the

realities of the schools setting and develop insight that could help them work with schools on supporting children with SEND.

- 4.19 **Teacher Training Recruitment (November 2020):** The Committee had requested to receive a report from Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance on recruitment onto initial teacher training placements and the capacity of the workforce as a strong teacher force was fundamental for the Education Service. The Committee heard from SCITT Director of the Teaching School that the situation was slowly improving from the previous two years when it had been in crisis. The Committee noted that due to the pandemic, burnout amongst school leaders was a potential risk and agreed to monitor the situation, as Headteachers had not had a day off since the first lockdown.
- 4.20 **Elective Home Education (February 2021):** The Committee had kept an oversight of what was happening with Elective Home Education throughout the year in light of the pandemic and the Serious Case Review associated with this area. The Committee noted that extensive work had been undertaken in relation to Elective Home Education, with extensive systems and checks now in place. The Committee noted that numbers of parents who were knowingly home educating their child had gone up. From conversations held at the Performance Scrutiny Committee it was felt that there was work to be done with colleagues in other sectors like Health, to underline their understanding of what rights the Local Authority had in terms of entry into properties.
- 4.21 The Secretary of State had been written to, asking for a full review of Elective Home Education and the rights of local authorities, to ensure these matched in some way to the responsibilities.
- 4.22 **Zero Carbon Agenda for Schools Buildings (February 2021):** The Committee received an update on what was happening in relation to school buildings in light of the Council's agreed commitment to Climate Change, including the capital programme for new schools and the retro fitting of existing schools, and to receive an update on whether school transport vehicles were being looked at in terms of pollution. The Committee noted that the council renewed its terms and conditions in 2019 for awarded contracts and set a minimum standard of Euro 3 for its school buses and coaches, with longer-term ambitions of awarding carbon neutral contracts in 2031.
- 4.23 Working closely with the market and the council's own climate change team, environmental standards would be raised every four years as the Dynamic Purchasing System (through which contracts were awarded) was renewed. This would be in 2023, 2027 and then with the carbon neutral target in 2031. From September 2021 there was an ambition that tracking devices would be installed in all vehicles allowing detailed monitoring of emissions to inform a targeted action plan on how it might meet its 2031 ambitions and the standards it would need to set when the Dynamic Purchasing System was renewed in 2023.
- 4.24 The Committee heard that the Council was looking at the Carbon Neutral response in relation to building works in their existing schools and new schools. It noted that funding had been added to the Capital Programme, which would be

used to potentially top up and enhance some of the new build schemes that were subject to development agreements and had already been signed. It was noted that they could potentially use the fund to enhance expansion schemes and they were in the process of formulating a new policy for future negotiations, which would be making its way through the governance structure in due course.

4.25 Regional Schools Commissioner (November 2020): The Regional Schools Commissioner and her lead officers attended a private session of the Committee along with representatives of OFSTED and the Education For All (EFA) to answer questions from the Committee about their roles and responsibilities, and relationships with the Local Authority. The Commissioner was particularly pressed on how her office supports academies in Oxfordshire, including attainment and finance, and those operating in challenging circumstances. The Committee was very keen to continue the discussions in the future for the benefit of all the children in the County.

4.26 Forward Plan: At their last Meeting in April, the Committee looked back on the year to reflect upon the achievements and successes of the Committee, together with lessons to be learned for the future. As part of that process, the Committee identified the following suggestions and ideas for the new Education Scrutiny Committee:

- The Managing of School Roles – National Funding Formula and what is happening demographically;
- Education Attainment Gap;
- In-Year Fair Access Policy;
- Learner Engagement Strategy – what next;
- Special Educational Needs;
- Alternative Provisioning.

5. JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5.1 The Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) is a joint committee comprising 12 non-executive voting members (seven county councillors and five district/city councillors) and three co-opted non-voting members. During 2020/21 the committee has been chaired by Cllr Arash Fatemian, the Deputy Chairmanship rotates annually and in 2020/21, this was Cllr Nadine Bely-Summers (Oxford City Councillor).

5.2 HOSC has a statutory role in reviewing or scrutinising health services commissioned or delivered in Oxfordshire, or jointly with any other local authority where such services are commissioned outside Oxfordshire but are delivered to the inhabitants of the county. HOSC holds health scrutiny powers, which include the ability to request information and the attendance of health commissioners and providers to the committee. HOSC is also able to make referrals to the Secretary of State where it is not satisfied that:

- Consultation on any proposal for a substantial change or development has been adequate in relation to content or time allowed (NB. The referral power in these contexts only relates to the consultation with the local authority, and not consultation with other stakeholders).
- That the proposal would be in the interests of the health service in Oxfordshire.
- A decision has been taken without consultation and it is not satisfied that the reasons given for not carrying out consultation are adequate.

5.3 The committee met formally four times in 2020/21, where the work of the Committee focused on the local response to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the continued work of a Task and Finish Group to review the rollout of the Population Health and Care Needs Assessment Framework in the OX12 locality (Wantage and the surrounding communities). The following describes some of the detail of issues considered by the committee in 2020/21.

Covid-19 pandemic

5.4 HOSC's first meeting of the financial year was due to be held in April 2020. However, following the global outbreak of Covid-19 and the pressure it created in the health and care system, HOSC's first meeting was postponed so that resources could be focused on tackling the pandemic.

5.5 In June 2020, the committee posed numerous questions to the system to understand the statistics on coronavirus in Oxfordshire, its impact in care homes, and its impact on access to primary care, planned care, dentistry and mental health services.

5.6 At its meeting in September 2020, the committee received information on how services were being restarted, recovered and renewed following the lockdown of spring 2020. The committee sought additional assurances on the restarting of several specialist outpatient services where significant backlogs and waiting lists required work across boundaries and the independent sector; including out of county referrals. The committee delved deeper into the impact of Covid-19 on waiting times for services, when in November 2020 they scrutinised detailed figures on elective treatment as well as cancer waiting times.

5.7 On an annual basis, the committee scrutinises the system approach to planning for winter pressures. Given the unprecedented challenge created by Covid-19, the 2020/21 Winter Plan looked at Covid-19 alongside flu and the increased demand and workforce constraints.

5.8 By the time HOSC met again in February 2021, there was a third national lockdown in place due to the significant rise in Covid-19 cases and deaths which created more than double the pressure in the health and care system than the initial wave (in March/April 2020). Accordingly, HOSC agreed to a shortened agenda to ensure resources were focused on the response to the pandemic. During its meeting in February 2021, the committee heard responses to Members' questions on hospital pressures, the impact on the care sector, testing regimes and the roll out of the vaccination programme.

Covid-19 vaccine and treatments

- 5.9 In June 2020 HOSC members received a presentation from Professor Pollard at Oxford University who was developing the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine for Covid-19. Professor Pollard outlined the process and timeline for developing a vaccine and explained how the lengthy research undertaken at Oxford University had enabled a Covid-19 vaccine to be developed at pace. The committee extended its support for any future funding bids for further vaccine research.
- 5.10 In November 2020, the committee heard from the Chief Executive Officer of Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) about the collaborative research being undertaken to develop treatments and understanding of Covid-19. The committee were grateful for the work being done in OUH to tackle the virus and the Chairman offered to write on behalf of the Committee in support of any future application for funding.

Changes to health scrutiny

- 5.11 HOSC has considered two proposals to alter health scrutiny arrangements in Oxfordshire to allow scrutiny of issues at the most appropriate geography.
- 5.12 In June 2020, the committee considered proposals to change the scope of the Horton HOSC. The change sought expansion from a narrow focus on obstetrics at the Horton General Hospital in Banbury to scrutiny of an entire masterplan for the hospital. The committee agreed the change and supported a recommendation to Oxfordshire County Council that health scrutiny powers be delegated to allow the Horton HOSC to scrutinise the Horton's master plan. This was agreed by Council in July 2020.
- 5.13 Also, in June 2020, the introduction of a HOSC across a Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West footprint (BOB) was considered. The proposal came forward to allow scrutiny of issues across the BOB Integrated Care System. HOSC agreed principles of negotiation with the other local authorities involved which includes the authorities of Buckinghamshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council.
- 5.14 Following negotiations across the BOB geography, and with advice from the Centre for Public Scrutiny, a draft Terms of Reference for a BOB HOSC was considered by the Oxfordshire HOSC in November 2020. The committee voted on the Terms of Reference and supported a recommendation to Oxfordshire County Council to delegate health scrutiny powers on system-wide issues (subject to agreement by the other relevant local authorities). Council agreed the draft BOB HOSC Terms of Reference in December 2020 and a revised Terms of Reference were approved by Council in March 2021.

Population Health and Care Needs Assessment Framework in OX12

- 5.15 In April 2016 HOSC assessed the closure of Wantage Community Hospital as a substantial change in service. The hospital was temporarily closed in July 2016 on the ground of health and safety. In July 2018 the HOSC Chairman wrote to request greater clarity from Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) and Oxford Health Foundation Trust (OHFT) over the future options for Wantage Community Hospital.
- 5.16 A paper was presented to HOSC in September 2018 which set out how OCCG and OHFT intended to use a framework for determining health and care needs (and solutions) on a locality basis; this approach was termed the 'Local Health Needs Assessment Framework'. At the November 2018 HOSC it was agreed that a Task and Finish Group would be established to act as a 'critical friend' and provide more detailed scrutiny throughout the rollout of the framework in the Wantage, Grove and surrounding (OX12) locality.
- 5.17 The work of the OX12 Task and Finish Group began in March 2019 and a number of extensions (due to the project complexity and a general election) meant final reporting was delayed until February 2020. Although reports were presented by the Task Group and OCCG at that point, work remained to test the financial and clinical viability of solutions. HOSC members were concerned that no firm conclusions had been made on the status of the temporary closure of the beds within Wantage Community Hospital or the status of the hospital itself. It was agreed at the February 2020 HOSC meeting that the Task and Finish Group would continue.
- 5.18 The nature of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact on the health and care system has meant that the work to bring firm conclusions to the OX12 health and care needs assessment framework project and Wantage Community Hospital have not progressed. The OX12 Task Group has therefore not yet concluded its work.
- 5.19 However, at the HOSC meeting in September 2020, the new Chief Executive of OHFT committed to taking a strategic approach to reviewing community services in Oxfordshire. Greater details were set out to HOSC in November 2020 whereby the development of this strategic approach, would see simultaneous development of proposals to pilot new services in the OX12 area and Wantage Community Hospital. In response to the commitments made, HOSC agreed that it would establish a Task and Finish Group to provide detailed scrutiny of these issues.
- 5.20 Details are needed to understand how the OX12 work and the community services strategy work will be set out.

Other items considered by HOSC in 2020/21:

- 5.21 Alongside consideration of patient and public views through a report at each meeting from Healthwatch Oxfordshire, the following items have also been considered at HOSC throughout 2020/21:
- Annual report from the Director of Public Health
 - Annual report from the Health and Wellbeing Board

- Quality reports from Oxford Health Foundation Trust and Oxford University Hospitals Foundation Trust.

Forward Plan

5.22 During 2021-22, amongst other issues, the committee intends to scrutinise the following:

- Covid-19 update: including the continuing roll out of vaccinations and how the health and care system will plan recovery.
- A system-wide approach to developing a 'Strategic Development and Quality Improvement Plan for Community Services', whilst simultaneously developing new services to pilot in the OX12 post code area and Wantage Community Hospital.

6. HORTON JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 6.1 The Horton HOSC was established after a referral to the Secretary of State over closure of obstetrics at the Horton General Hospital. It formed in September 2018, and held all health scrutiny powers, specifically on the issue of consultant-led maternity services at the Horton General Hospital. It is a joint committee with seven Councillors from Oxfordshire, one from Northamptonshire, one from Warwickshire and one co-opted member.
- 6.2 The Horton Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) met once in 2020/21, on 27 November 2020. This was the first meeting since September 2019 and met to consider the committee's next steps following a referral to the Secretary of State. It was also the first meeting of the committee with an expanded scope to consider the development of a Masterplan for the Horton General Hospital (HGH).
- 6.3 In September 2019, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) took a decision to confirm an earlier Masterplan (from 2017) to have a single specialist obstetric unit for Oxfordshire (and its neighbouring areas) at the John Radcliffe Hospital. This also confirmed the establishment of a Midwife Led Unit (MLU) at the Horton General Hospital (HGH), for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, the Horton HOSC submitted a referral to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the 2nd of December 2019 on the OCCG decision. The Secretary of State replied on the 15th of September 2020 to say he did not consider the referral to be valid. The Chairman of the Horton HOSC then wrote an additional letter in reply. No response has been received to date.
- 6.4 On 27 November 2020, the Horton HOSC considered advice on the potential pursuit of a Judicial Review of the Secretary of State's decision. The committee voted in favour of supporting a request to the OCCG Board to undertake a review of their September 2019 decision.
- 6.5 The Horton HOSC also considered a report on changes to the HGH in

response to Covid-19, recent service improvements at HGH and a summary of the vision for HGH. The committee agreed that they would meet in the early months of 2021 to consider greater details on proposals for the HGH.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This report has outlined a comprehensive and robust programme of scrutiny which has been conducted through the Oxfordshire County Council scrutiny committees in 2020-21.

Annex 1 – Scrutiny Committees

This report covers the time period from April 2020 – March 2021 and the membership listed below corresponds to that time period

Performance Scrutiny Committee:

Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE (Chairman)

Cllr Jenny Hannaby (Deputy Chairman)

Cllr Nick Carter

Cllr Mike Fox-Davies

Cllr Tony Ilott

Cllr Liz Leffman

Cllr Charles Mathew

Cllr Glynis Phillips

Cllr Judy Roberts

Cllr Michael Waine

Cllr Jeannette Matelot served with the Committee until March 2021

Cllr Liam Walker served with the Committee from March 2021

Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Cllr Arash Fatemian (Chairman)

Cllr Nadine Bely-Summers represented Oxford City Council (Deputy Chairman)

Cllr Mark Cherry

Cllr Jeanette Matelot

Cllr Alison Rooke

Cllr Hilary Hibbert-Biles served with the committee until September 2020

Cllr Mike Fox-Davies served with the committee until November 2020

Cllr Kevin Bulmer served with the committee from November 2020

Cllr Laura Price served with the committee until November 2020

Cllr Susanna Pressel served with the committee from November 2020

Cllr Sean Gaul represented Cherwell District Council, until September 2020

Cllr Kieron Mallon represented Cherwell District Council, from September 2020

Cllr Paul Barrow represented Vale of White Horse

Cllr David Bretherton represented South Oxfordshire District Council until February 2021

Cllr Jo Robb represented South Oxfordshire District Council from February 2021

Cllr Neil Owen represented West Oxfordshire District Council, until September 2020

Cllr Jill Bull represented West Oxfordshire District Council, from September 2020

Dr Alan Cohen (non-voting co-optee)

Barbara Shaw (non-voting co-optee)

Jean Bradlow (non-voting co-optee) – from September 2020

Horton Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Councillor Arash Fatemian (Chairman)

Councillor Wallace Redford (Deputy Chairman, Warwickshire County Council)

Councillor Hannah Banfield

Councillor Rebecca Breese (Northamptonshire County Council)

Councillor Sean Gaul (District Councillor)

Councillor Kieron Mallon

Councillor Alison Rooke

Councillor Sean Woodcock (District Councillor)
Dr Keith Ruddle (non-voting co-optee)

Education Scrutiny Committee:

Cllr Michael Waine (Chairman)

Cllr John Howson (Deputy Chairman)

Cllr Ted Fenton

Cllr Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor

Cllr Jeannette Matelot

Cllr Gill Sanders

Cllr Emma Turnbull

Carole Thomson – Oxfordshire Governors Association (non-voting co-optee)

Donald McEwan - Council of Oxfordshire Teachers' Organisation (non-voting co-optee)