



**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

# **Scrutiny Annual Report**

**2015 – 2016**

## Foreword

The Council has continued to face a changing and difficult working environment this year. Budget pressures and the shifting local government landscape have meant that the role of the council is changing and this trend is likely to continue over the coming years.

In spite of these difficulties, Oxfordshire County Council's scrutiny committees have responded well, keeping a focus on priority issues where scrutiny can add real value and insight. They have strived to inform decision-making and challenged process and service delivery where they can make the most impact and effect on outcomes for Oxfordshire residents.

All scrutiny committee members are committed to ensuring that scrutiny is as effective as it can be. Part of this involves the different committees working closely together to ensure that there is agreement and coherence across the board. This year, we as Chairmen have been committed to meeting quarterly to discuss issues affecting all scrutiny committees and to ensure that scrutiny is smooth, efficient and effective.

We are proud of all that the scrutiny committees have achieved this year, and look forward to a challenging but effective 2016/17.



**Cllr Liz  
Brighthouse OBE**

Chairman of the  
Performance Scrutiny  
Committee



**Cllr Yvonne  
Constance OBE**

Chairman of the  
Oxfordshire Joint Health  
Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee



**Cllr Mark  
Gray**

Chairman of the  
Education Scrutiny  
Committee

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This Scrutiny Annual Report provides a summary of the work of the council's overview and scrutiny function in 2015/16. This function includes the council's three Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and any Cabinet Advisory Groups which have been appointed by Cabinet in this time.
- 1.2. This report is structured by committee. It explores some of the areas of work each of the committees has undertaken over the last year and highlights where influence has been greatest. It emphasises areas where scrutiny has had a tangible impact on decision-making, and therefore on the lives of the people of Oxfordshire.
- 1.3. Membership details for the Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet Advisory Groups are provided in Annexes 1 and 2 respectively.

## **2. Performance Scrutiny Committee**

2.1. The Performance Scrutiny Committee has a membership of 11 county councillors and is chaired by Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE. The county councillor membership is politically proportional to the membership of the Council. The committee met nine times in 2015/2016. Some of its key functions, as outlined in the constitution, include:

- Scrutinising the performance of the council;
- Providing a focused review of corporate performance, 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, to provide a specific committee for addressing such queries;
- Discharging 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.

2.2. In total this year, 14 members of the public have addressed the committee.

### **Service and Resource Planning**

2.3. The Performance Scrutiny Committee has overall responsibility for scrutinising budget proposals. The preparation of budget proposals for the period 2016/17 presented fundamental challenges for the council as the total savings required over a decade from 2010-20 rise towards £350m. Cuts to the grant the council receives from government continued, and the savings required increased beyond the planned "worst case" scenario at short notice with publication of the draft Local Government Settlement in December 2015.

2.4. The committee is committed to the principle of transparency in the budget setting process and worked to scrutinise the early proposals made for budget savings at its meeting in December 2015, prioritising those which were least acceptable - notably services to the most vulnerable and those caring for them - including through consideration of responses to the consultation, analysis of these, and representations made in person. However the increased savings target at late notice reduced the impact it was possible for this scrutiny process to have.

2.5. The committee has continued to ensure that there is effective challenge to proposals through improved briefing and engagement of all members, not just committee members, during the process of scrutinising major issues. In particular, all-member briefings have been organised on issues including finance and the restructure of the Early Intervention Service, with invitations extended to all Councillors not solely members of the committee.

2.6. A number of areas of investigation identified in last year's report by Performance Scrutiny during the service and resource planning process have

had high profile this year. These included the impact of the living wage on costs in social care, the reshaping of early intervention services, the frontline role and digital role of the libraries service, and the need to review performance targets. In working to shape policy on the future of the council the committee examined and commented on an emerging draft of the new corporate plan at its January meeting.

- 2.7. Next year the committee also expects to need to engage with proposals for significant savings and cuts. Given the greater certainty about the path for local government spending there may be an opportunity to scrutinise emerging proposals at an earlier stage.

### **Performance Management**

- 2.8. The committee has continued with the practice of examining the overall performance report quarterly but undertaking a more detailed examination of one directorate area per quarter, supported by the Director and other relevant staff. This has enabled more in-depth consideration and challenge of particular service issues.

<b>Meeting date</b>	<b>Directorate focus</b>
25 June 2015	Children, Education & Families
24 September 2015	Social & Community Services
7 January 2016	Children, Education & Families
24 March 2016	Environment & Economy

- 2.9. The Performance Scrutiny Committee is committed to scrutinising both direct delivery by the council, and the performance of contracts, commissioned services and partnerships, as the council increasingly commissions services rather than directly providing them.
- 2.10. More broadly, committee members and officers have continued to engage in the improvement of performance reporting structures throughout the year in order to ensure that performance management remains robust and fit for purpose in future.
- 2.11. In addition to examining overall performance the Performance Scrutiny Committee has played a vital role in the council's planning and delivery of some of its highest priority services. Safeguarding children, adult social care and community safety have featured strongly in the committee's scrutiny this year.
- 2.12. As well as regular scrutiny of individual service areas the committee frequently undertook more detailed examinations of specific areas of performance when necessary. For example, consideration of financial savings in relation to Environment and Economy activities prompted a more broad and thorough consideration of those activities at a subsequent meeting. Similarly, routine scrutiny of performance within Children, Education and Families activities raised concerns over attainment by absent or excluded children and prompted a more detailed session on looked after children at a subsequent meeting.

- 2.13. The committee has been actively involved in discussing future developments in performance monitoring across the council. At its February 2016 meeting, the committee gave unanimous support for a more streamlined, outcome-based approach to performance, with measure linked closely to the priorities in the Corporate Plan. Members also had the opportunity to shape the role of the committee in the performance reporting process and agreed that 'deep dives' will also be done at meetings, offering supplementary performance narrative (i.e. benchmarking, value for money, qualitative feedback). The committee suggested that these may trigger task-finish groups of 2-3 committee members, who would report back to the main committee and so potentially increase the committee's capacity for detailed scrutiny.

### **Crime and Community Safety**

- 2.14. In May 2015 the committee scrutinised an update of the Police & Crime Plan 2013-17, an account by Chief Constable Francis Habgood of the performance of Thames Valley Police against the Delivery Plan for 2014-15, and the equivalent Delivery Plan for 2015-16. The committee probed the balance between crime rates and the potential for budget cuts, and explored the complexity of forecasting and resourcing future policing activities in view of changing demographics and delivery technologies.
- 2.15. Related themes featured in the June 2015 meeting, in scrutiny of the countywide Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership's priorities for the coming year. The committee discussed the process for risk assessment and intervention, and the importance of working with all partners including at District and Parish levels. Discussion also touched on the council's approach to implementing the Government's PREVENT anti-extremism agenda.
- 2.16. In September 2015 the Chief Fire Officer presented the Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) Annual Report 2014-15 which informed the committee's scrutiny of the service's future work. Members considered the implications of the partnership between the Fire and Rescue Service and the South Central Ambulance Service and queried the potential for response targets to be stretched beyond current levels.
- 2.17. Reflecting the committee's increasingly strategic approach to scrutiny, the committee resolved in future to consider in parallel the annual Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership Business Plan, the annual Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner Police and Crime Plan and Annual Report, and the Thames Valley Police Delivery Plan.

### **Safeguarding Children**

- 2.18. The committee's scrutiny activities help to ensure the council is effectively safeguarding the most vulnerable people within our communities. Having explored the council's Thriving Families programme during the May 2015 meeting, the meeting in June 2015 went on to consider a range of children's issues alongside the quarterly performance monitoring report. Members' concerns over certain aspects of performance, particularly in light of

increasing demand and likely reductions of resources, prompted agreement to carry out a focused session on vulnerable and looked after children at a future meeting.

- 2.19. The November 2015 meeting considered the council's action plan following Ofsted's recent "good" assessment of all aspects of children's services. The committee made recommendations intended to improve even further on successes such as fostering services and governance arrangements for the interaction between the council and voluntary groups. The committee then considered a briefing by officers on missing children in Oxfordshire and tested the council's provision of adequate safeguarding measures.
- 2.20. The background to the increase in child protection cases was scrutinised, and although the situation was worrying it was noted that the council compared well with other good-performing authorities. Members expressed concern at high caseloads and asked that the Chairman be alerted to any changes between meetings. Members also received a briefing on the Child Sexual Exploitation stocktake report.
- 2.21. The annual reports of the Safeguarding Boards were presented to the committee in January 2016. The committee has requested in future that these are brought earlier in the financial year, in order to enable scrutiny in advance of council, and officers are working to enable this.

### **Adult Social Care**

- 2.22. Having touched on adult care issues in May 2015's discussion of Oxfordshire's Thriving Families report, in September 2015 the committee looked in more detail at adult social care issues. Time was devoted to understanding the nature and extent of performance information being collated by the council in response to national standards in this area, and it was recognised that overall Oxfordshire was in the top performance quartile of authorities nationally. Members explored three main areas of concern: delayed transfers of care, reablement and home care. Ultimately the committee recorded concerns over funding, sustainability of resources and recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce.
- 2.23. At its December 2015 meeting, focusing on the council's proposed budget reductions, the committee considered representations from Age UK, among others, concerning adult social care. Following detailed consideration the committee identified 12 savings proposals in this area as being among those that would be least acceptable. These predominantly related to support for the most vulnerable service users, and their carers. While this demonstrated the committee's determination to bring challenge where proposed changes might detrimentally affect council services, ultimately however the subsequent Local Government Settlement announcement required savings even beyond the magnitude under consideration.
- 2.24. Returning to adult social care at their January 2016 meeting, the committee heard from the Independent Chair of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults

Board, and assessed progress towards implementing the Oxfordshire Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy, including the council's proposed delivery plan and governance arrangements. Members noted concerns over severe pressure points in relation to the increased complexity of cases and activity in the system, particularly in light of tightening budgets.

### **Other Issues**

- 2.25. The committee undertook scrutiny on a range of other issues during the year, many of which had broader strategic relevance to the areas noted above. This included looking at the outcomes of consultation. In addition to the budget consultation, a major scrutiny exercise was undertaken at the November 2015 meeting to analyse public feedback to the council's Supported Transport consultation, and the potential impact of the proposals on areas such as adult care and rural deprivation. A list of concerns over the consultation exercise and its conclusions was subsequently put to Cabinet. Rural deprivation was also a feature of the committee's September meeting, where the council's Community Information Networks were considered.
- 2.26. The committee also scrutinised the proposed changes to early intervention services at their February 2016 meeting in advance of a Cabinet decision. Performance Scrutiny recognised the financial and demand imperatives facing children's social care, and made recommendations around the use of the additional funding protected by Council to maintain as many services as possible in appropriate locations, with as much open access provision as possible, requesting this be delivered through the undertaking of a "service and geography gap analysis".
- 2.27. The committee supported the ambition of any local areas, voluntary groups, district, town, and parish councils, and independent providers who wish to operate a children's centre which would otherwise close with no, or significantly reduced, council funding, and was keen to see an emphasis on the full age range of children and young people being supported by the service, in order that 'early help' is delivered across the 0-19 age range and youth engagement could be maintained.
- 2.28. In addition to a discussion focused around changes to the public-facing service Performance Scrutiny also discussed the council's role in education, and action on safeguarding. On these issues Performance Scrutiny expressed concern that Oxfordshire may "lose out" as a result of a weakened relationship with schools, and asked that education-related policy form part of devolution discussions.

### **Call In**

- 2.29. The call-in procedure allows the Performance Scrutiny Committee to compel the Cabinet to reconsider a decision made by its members, but not yet implemented. There must be compelling grounds for review. The committee considered one call in request this year at a special meeting in February 2016.



- 2.30. This request was in response to a councillor petition meeting the requisite number of signatures, and related to a Cabinet Member decision titled "Proposed Bus Lane & Parking/Waiting Restrictions – Orchard Centre (Phase 2), Didcot", particularly pertaining to traffic regulation orders consequential to a planning decision by South Oxfordshire District Council. The committee agreed that this decision should be referred back to Cabinet.
- 2.31. Following representations from members of the community, the Chairman agreed that the committee should scrutinise the process for granting licenses relating to road closures for the delivery of the Hospital Energy Project around Headington, and extended an invitation to the OUHNFT to discuss the adequacy of public consultation. This took place in February and the committee recommended a review of the protocol on Member Engagement with regard to petitions and its general effectiveness, and asked audit and governance committee to consider a review of key decisions in the next constitutional review.

### **Forward Planning**

- 2.32. The council continues to face severe challenges around both funding and demand. This will bring significant changes both in terms of how the council itself operates, and how services are delivered. Both of these will be themes for the Performance Scrutiny Committee in 2016-17, as well as continuing the ongoing scrutiny of performance, and the management of any call-ins.
- 2.33. Recognising the increasing importance of working in partnership and effective commissioning the committee is likely to wish to look at these in more detail in the coming year, including scrutiny of the council's commissioning framework, and examination of the annual 'partnerships report' in addition to the standing item at full council.

### **3. Education Scrutiny Committee**

- 3.1. The Education Scrutiny Committee has a membership of 11 county councillors, 3 co-opted members (including non-voting members) and is chaired by Cllr Mark Gray. The county councillor membership is politically proportional to the membership of the Council. The committee met five times in 2015/2016.
- 3.2. The Education Scrutiny 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.
- 3.3. In 2015/16 there was a standing working group chaired by Cllr Peter Handley, focusing on issues around Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs). The group concluded its work in December 2015 when it presented its key findings and recommendations to the committee.

#### **System Diversity & Relationship with Academies**

- 3.4. The academies programme has transformed England's educational landscape, and so in 2015-16 the committee was keen to consolidate its understanding of the changing educational landscape in Oxfordshire so that it could champion excellent educational outcomes for children in the county in an effective way.
- 3.5. By looking at national and local trends in education, members considered the complex education system in the county and the main responsibilities of the council in relation to academies. The committee was clear that the council must continue its role as a community leader and work together with all its education partners in the county, stressing that they all have a moral duty to cooperate to enable children and young people in Oxfordshire schools to achieve their potential.
- 3.6. One key question for the committee was around how to scrutinise and challenge academies in the absence of formal powers. Martin Post, the Regional Schools Commissioner, was invited to address the committee on

this issue at the July 2015 meeting. The discussion helped send an important message in terms of the need to ensure that no school – council maintained or academy – remains un-scrutinised so that the best outcomes are achieved for all the children in the county.

- 3.7. The committee warned against over reliance on local authorities for local intelligence when there is increasing pressure on the council's resources, and stressed that there is a need for more clarity in relation to the Regional Schools Commissioner's role in relation to the free school policy and pupil place planning. The committee used the discussion as an opportunity to raise local concerns and make sure the Regional Schools Commissioner was aware of local challenges and issues. It was agreed that the Regional Schools' Commissioner will return to speak to the committee in a year's time.

### **Ofsted Framework for the Inspection of Local Authority Arrangements for Supporting School Improvement (LAASSI)**

- 3.8. In November 2014 the government introduced a new statutory framework for inspections of local authority arrangements for supporting improvement in schools. The aim of these inspections is to assist local authorities in their duty to promote high standards and fulfilment of potential so that all children and young people benefit from a food education.
- 3.9. Over a number of meetings, the committee looked into detail at the focus areas for inspection, the national context, the risk assessment for the local authority and the steps taken to date by the county council to prepare for an inspection under this framework. The committee's forward plan of items for future consideration was amended to reflect the priority areas identified. This has helped ensure that the work of the committee is targeted on the most important areas so that the council is fully prepared in the event of an inspection of its school improvement services.
- 3.10. To further consolidate the committee's work in this area, Sir Robin Boshier, Ofsted Regional Director, was invited to address the committee in October 2015 on the work of Ofsted and its current priorities. In discussion with Sir Robin, the committee sought to clarify its role in providing a constructive challenge to schools and academies and in assisting the council in its role of championing good educational outcomes for children and young people in Oxfordshire. Sir Robin provided examples of best practice in terms of the scrutiny function in different local authorities across the country and explained that despite education being an evolving landscape, there is a clear role for elected members to play in scrutiny. Members reiterated their commitment to learning from best practice in other local authorities and to working with Her Majesty's Inspectors.

### **Educational Attainment of Vulnerable Groups**

- 3.11. Last year the committee identified educational attainment of vulnerable children as a priority area. In 2015-16 the committee continued to scrutinise the council's work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

- 3.12. At the July 2015 meeting, the Deputy Director for Education & Learning presented a report on the steps being taken to narrow the gap in achievement between vulnerable learners and other pupils. During discussion members considered the particular problems of small rural schools, and highlighted the fact that yet more work is required around supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The committee stressed that role models in schools were important and careers advice must start at primary school level to be effective.
- 3.13. The committee also scrutinised the arrangements for supporting children on the edge of care and looked after children, and the Chairman of the committee paid a visit to the Virtual School for Looked After Children to see first-hand the support provided.
- 3.14. The committee will continue to monitor this issue and hold officers to account.

### **Use of Schools Revenue Balances**

- 3.15. Following up on last year's work, the committee continued to scrutinise the use of schools' revenue balance. Last year the committee was keen to understand current levels of reserves held by schools and academies in Oxfordshire, and raised concerns over schools keeping large reserves. The committee firmly championed the principle of spending today's funding for today's children.
- 3.16. Acting on the committee's recommendation, meetings were held with maintained schools in Spring 2015 to challenge plans for use of balances, where schools had consistently retained surplus revenue balances at the end of the last four financial years. The Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Families and the Chairman of the Education Scrutiny Committee attended the meetings along with the Interim Deputy Director for Education & Learning and the Finance Business Partner for Children, Education & Families. The Headteacher and Chair of Governors or Finance Governor attended from each school. At these meetings, schools were:
- questioned about differences between projected year balances and actual outturn
  - asked to explain how the balances had arisen, what the plans were for use of balances, and the reasons for any delays in implementing plans
  - challenged about any areas where performance appeared low
  - asked whether they thought they had any gaps in expertise on their Governing Body, particularly in relation to finance
  - if governors received sufficient financial information and in a clear format, to allow them to effectively fulfil their responsibilities for overseeing the management of the resources available.
- 3.17. The meetings helped uncover the various reasons behind each school's surplus balances, and overall the panel concluded that the schools were

managing their budget effectively, especially in light of the challenges facing small schools and the uncertainty around rapid expansion.

- 3.18. The committee also received an update on the 2014-15 Year End Balances in its October 2015 meeting, which showed that overall the level of balances for the 41 schools previously identified as having consistently held surplus balances has reduced by £700,795, a reduction of nearly 15% on the 2013-14 balances, with 28 of the 41 schools showing a reduction.
- 3.19. The committee welcomed the overall reduction in balances, and urged officers to continue to scrutinise and challenge schools on their use of balances.

### **Breakfast Clubs**

- 3.20. At the recommendation of the Council, the committee considered the local provision of breakfast clubs in schools in its April 2015 meeting. There are 187 breakfast clubs in Oxfordshire, but less than 7% of 5- to 11-year-olds have access to them. For the 53,971 primary school children in this age range, there are only 3,581 places at breakfast clubs. Research shows that these clubs can play an important role in raising attainment, improving absence rate and lateness.
- 3.21. The committee heard that the most significant challenge to breakfast provision in schools is finance, as schools and academies have to either use their own resources or seek charitable or private business grants to set up and run breakfast clubs.
- 3.22. The committee noted the clear benefits linked to the provision of breakfast in schools including improved attendance, attention, behaviour and learning. Members were adamant that all schools and education partners should be encouraged to set up breakfast clubs and link up with schools or academies which do have breakfast clubs. As recommended by the committee, a letter was sent to all Headteachers and governing boards in Oxfordshire to ask them to consider setting up breakfast clubs. The committee's call for more schools to consider providing a breakfast club was covered in the local media, adding further weight to the recommendation of the committee.

### **Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)**

- 3.23. At the July 2015 meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee, it was agreed to set up a working group to consider in further detail the issue of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) in Oxfordshire. The group was chaired by Cllr Peter Handley, and membership consisted of the following Education Scrutiny Committee members: Cllr Mark Gray, Cllr Michael Waive, and Cllr Steve Curran.
- 3.24. The group looked at the overall numbers of NEETs in Oxfordshire and scrutinised the way the county council is meeting its statutory duties in relation to NEETs. Members heard that figures have improved significantly over the last few years and that Oxfordshire is in a strong position compared to its

statistical neighbours. The working group also discussed the employment and apprenticeship opportunities available to young people in Oxfordshire, and heard from officers that the county council is working closely with local employers and schools to match job opportunities with young people and to make sure young people have the right skills and training when they leave education.

- 3.25. Overall the working group were satisfied that the county council has robust systems in place to deal with NEETs and acknowledged that while individual cases of concern may occur, the county council provides appropriate support to young people not in education, employment or training in Oxfordshire and that the system used for updating children leaving education is working well.

### **Recruitment & Retention of Teachers**

- 3.26. As schools across the country are facing a teaching recruitment crisis, the committee was keen to understand the local picture in Oxfordshire and what the Council and other educational partners have done so far to support the recruitment and retention of teachers in the county, and what more needs to be done both locally and nationally. A range of educational experts were invited to address the committee including the Director of the Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance, Headteachers from schools in both rural and urban settings, and the Head of the School of Education at Oxford Brookes University.

### **Forward Planning**

- 3.27. The committee will continue to look at the attainment of vulnerable learners to ensure that the county council is taking effective steps to narrow the gap in attainment. It is envisaged that the committee will continue to develop its relationship with the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Ofsted Regional Director, as they are both due to address the committee again in 2016-17. In addition the committee will consider issues such as elective home education, the provision of school places in areas of growth, permanent exclusions and behaviour in schools.
- 3.28. There are planned visits of the committee to the Endeavour Academy in Oxford which provides specialist support for children and young people with autism and learning difficulties, and to the UTC Oxfordshire in Didcot, reflecting the members' keen interest to engage more with individual schools.
- 3.29. The committee will continue to use its knowledge and expertise to provide challenge and scrutiny to ensure that the county council fulfils its obligations as champion of children in Oxfordshire in an environment in which many of the county council's statutory powers and resources have diminished considerably.

#### **4. Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 4.1. The Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OJHOSC) is a joint committee that has a membership of 7 county councillors, five district councillors, and three co-opted members and is chaired by Cllr Yvonne Constance OBE. The committee met six times in 2015/16. The key functions of the committee include:
- To review any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in Oxfordshire
  - To review and scrutinise services commissioned and provided by relevant NHS bodies and relevant health service providers
- 4.2. In total this year, 7 members of the public have addressed the committee.
- 4.3. The committee looked at a variety of health related issues and services to ensure the best health care provision for the residents of Oxfordshire. This report provides a review of seven key areas of the committee activity over 2015/16:

#### **Delayed Transfers of Care**

- 4.4. Delayed transfers of care have been a significant area of poor performance in Oxfordshire's health and social care system and, as a well-publicised issue, have been on the committee's radar for some years. In 2015/16, it was reported that, at any time, there were around 150 patients whose clinical care had been completed but remained in hospital waiting to be discharged. Whilst over the past couple of years, health and social care providers have worked to solve this issue, delays have not been significantly reduced.
- 4.5. In December 2015, a new initiative was proposed by the incoming CEO and management of Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to reduce delays. The committee requested that health representatives attend an extraordinary committee meeting to outline their pilot scheme designed to transform patient discharge. The scheme, 'Rebalancing the System' proposed that OUH purchase 150 beds in care homes for three months and close 75 acute beds. This would deliver home and nursing-home based care by redeploying resources outside of hospital. The committee agreed to support the pilot requiring OUH to report on progress and to consult fully with the public if it was decided to make the scheme permanent.
- 4.6. The committee is well placed to take a whole system view. At the December 2015 meeting, members were able to scrutinise the design of the system and note the risks of availability of beds and staff to serve them and question how the pilot would be monitored. The December discussion ensured that HOSC provided an additional layer of public scrutiny throughout the pilot scheme. At the following OJHOSC meeting in February 2016, representatives from the key organisations provided a progress report update. In April 2016, the health partners are scheduled to attend a further meeting of OJHOSC, to provide a

detailed evaluation of the successes and challenges of 'Rebalancing the System' over the 2015/16 winter months.

### **Transformation of Healthcare in Oxfordshire**

- 4.7. The committee has long taken an interest in the integration of health and social care and the broader transformation of healthcare in Oxfordshire. In November 2015, Stuart Bell, Chief Executive of Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Chair of Oxfordshire's Transformation Board attended OJHOSC to discuss the challenges facing Oxfordshire's health and social care system, and the vision for whole system transformation. A key part of this vision relates to developing a more integrated health and social care system. Members were able to scrutinise all aspects of the transformation plans examining issues such as workforce planning, population growth and public engagement.
- 4.8. At the December 2015 meeting, representatives from key health partners attended the extraordinary meeting of OJHOSC to inform members of the health and wellbeing aspects of the devolution proposal being presented to central government. They described how the proposal is designed to reduce the complexity of the current system by creating one system that brings together budgets, commissioning and decision making. OJHOSC members were able to provide some of the first public scrutiny of Oxfordshire's devolution plans. It was agreed that HOSC would receive future updates to enable scrutiny of the scheme as it progressed.
- 4.9. OJHOSC's scrutiny of the transformation of healthcare in Oxfordshire in 2015/16 underlines that the committee is well placed to offer scrutiny of the whole system of health and social care in Oxfordshire and the strategic direction of travel as it progresses.

### **Future of Intermediate Care**

- 4.10. The committee has taken a close interest in intermediate care this year, particularly the provision of intermediate care in Chipping Norton. This item came to the July 2015 meeting of OJHOSC, where members were able to scrutinise the plans to deliver the intermediate care service in the Henry Cornish Centre, Chipping Norton through Order of St John. Members were provided with an update and full report on the public consultation at the September meeting of OJHOSC. Following County Cabinet approval in January 2016, members also received an update at the February 2016 meeting. The scrutiny by OJHOSC on this item over the past year has ensured that there has been an additional layer of public scrutiny of the services provided.

### **Partner Liaison**

- 4.11. Developing the awareness of the work of OJHOSC through regular liaison meetings with key partners across Oxfordshire is a key part of ensuring that the committee can conduct effective scrutiny. In 2015/16 the OJHOSC



Chairman met with and/or set up future meetings with representatives from the following organisations: Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford Health Foundation Trust, Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch, NHS England, South Central Ambulance Service and the Chairs of both Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board. These meetings provided a means to highlight key areas for future scrutiny, to develop good relationships with key stakeholders and to raise awareness of scrutiny processes and the work of OJHOSC.

## **Training**

- 4.12. In December 2015, OJHOSC members attended a specialist health scrutiny training session with John Cade from Birmingham University Institute of Local Government Studies. This session followed a general training session for all scrutiny members and a specialist scrutiny Chairman's training session attended by the OJHOSC Chairman in November 2015. These training sessions informed members of the national and legislative context of health scrutiny and the relationships between health overview and scrutiny committees, NHS organisations, Healthwatch and Health and Well-being boards. Members commented on how useful these sessions had been in informing their understanding of effective scrutiny and best practice.

## **Understanding 'Substantial Change' in Services**

- 4.13. Following best practice, OJHOSC has a framework which is used to ensure that all health providers in Oxfordshire can be held to account regarding service changes. In February 2015, the toolkit framework was updated in line with Department of Health Local Authority Guidance (2014). Since then, the OJHOSC framework has been used a number of times. In 2015/16, the toolkit framework was further updated in line with feedback from councillors and key healthcare partners. It was amended to ensure greater clarity of the process of assessing substantial change and to make the framework more user-friendly. OJHOSC approved the new toolkit in February 2016 and since then it has been taken to all partner liaison meetings for any response and feedback and with a reminder that OJHOSC expects the framework to be considered and completed in relation to future developments.

## **Forward Plan**

- 4.14. In 2016/17, the committee will continue to scrutinise planned changes in the provision of healthcare in Oxfordshire, service delivery, the performance and quality of services and the patient experience. The committee aims to focus their scrutiny on key areas of change, quality and performance to ensure impact. It will also scrutinise steps towards the broader transformation of healthcare in Oxfordshire including steps towards integration of health and social care and devolution proposals regarding health and wellbeing in the county. The committee will also focus on the work of the new health inequalities commission in Oxfordshire.

## 5. Cabinet Advisory Groups

- 5.1. Cabinet Advisory Groups (CAGs) are informal member working groups designed to help Cabinet consider how to deal with specific issues, and to help in the development of key policies. Topics can be proposed by any member or scrutiny committee and must be agreed by Cabinet. 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.
- 5.2. There is currently one Cabinet Advisory Group in operation - Income Generation. Additionally, the Early Intervention CAG closed in February 2016 and the Minerals & Waste CAG is currently dormant. Membership details are provided in Annex 2.

### Income Generation CAG

- 5.3. The Income Generation CAG previously ran from July 2013-January 2014 under the chairmanship of Cllr Arash Fatemian, and reconvened in April 2015 under Cllr Lawrie Stratford in response to the need for the council to cope with increasing budget pressures. The group is focusing specifically on:
- Updating the current corporate charging policy.
  - Reviewing existing services that we currently charge for and opportunities for increasing these charges.
  - Identifying skills or services we offer that could be offered out.
  - Investigating discretionary services that we do not currently charge for where we may want to introduce charges.
  - Considering opportunities for generating income from property.
- 5.4. The CAG is exploring a number of different options for income generation, including the possibility of employing a dedicated income generation officer and developing opportunities for generating income from property and land holdings.
- 5.5. On 8 December 2015, Council passed a motion from Cllr Nick Hards calling for the Income Generation CAG, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Property, to set up a task & finish group to produce an interim report by June 2016 which:
- a) Reviews the buildings which the council currently owns or leases in Oxfordshire;
  - b) Considers the present and future requirements of our office based staff;
  - c) Explores the options for making the most cost effective way of using these buildings which we own or lease; and
  - d) Makes recommendations to Cabinet as to savings which could be made and income which could be generated from our property.

- 5.6. To this end, the Income Generation Cabinet Advisory Group has refreshed its membership and is currently working to produce a report for Cabinet by June 2016.
- 5.7. Other issues which the CAG is looking to consider over the upcoming months include:
- Workplace charging
  - One Public Estate Programme
  - Sponsorship of highways assets
  - Selling staff expertise
  - Various other suggestions/opportunities as raised by members

### **Early Intervention CAG**

- 5.8. The role of the Children's Early Intervention Cabinet Advisory Group was to explore the issues related to the future provision of early intervention services for children in Oxfordshire and make recommendations with particular regard to cost-saving. The key tasks and responsibilities of the group were:
- To consider the emerging national evidence and policy relating to children's centres and early intervention services.
  - To undertake visits to children's centres and early intervention hubs as necessary to help inform thinking.
  - To conduct research, community and other consultation in the analysis of policy and possible options.
  - To liaise with other organisations operating within Oxfordshire, whether national, regional or local.
  - To consider relevant benchmarking with other authorities.
  - To consider any petitions, received by the Council which may be of relevance to the topic area under consideration.
  - To submit findings and recommendations to the Cabinet.
- 5.9. The Early Intervention CAG presented a report to Cabinet on 23 June 2015, which recommended consulting on the creation of one coherent 0-19 years' service rather than continuing with an early intervention service divided by age groups. This approach was accepted by Cabinet, and the consultation on future arrangements in children's social care ran from 14 October 2015 - 10 January 2016.
- 5.10. At its final meeting on 25 January 2016, the group reviewed the analysis of the consultation outcomes and how officers planned to respond to this. On the basis of this, a slightly revised model was agreed by Cabinet on 23 February 2016.

### **Minerals and Waste CAG**

- 5.11. The Minerals and Waste CAG met through late 2013 and 2014 and discussed issues relating to the preparation of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local

Plan. Due to the range of members interested in the issue, the usual rules on maximum size and political balance were not applied to the CAG.

- 5.12. Part 1 of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local was approved for submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination by full County Council on 24 March 2015. Following this, the CAG has been dormant. It is likely that the CAG may be required to reconvene for the development of Part 2 of the plan later in 2016, and they have been briefed electronically regarding developments in the interim.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1. Challenges remain ahead for Oxfordshire County Council. Budget pressures will be an ongoing challenge, and it is likely that the landscape of local government will continue to change over the coming years. Devolution, changes to the way local government is funded and reorganisation at both a local and national level are likely to significantly alter the way that Oxfordshire County Council functions. Going forward, it will be even more important than ever that scrutiny is robust, challenging and effective.
- 6.2. Oxfordshire County Council's scrutiny committees will continue to place emphasis on those areas where they can have the biggest influence, and will continue to look for opportunities to improve outcomes for the people of Oxfordshire.
- 6.3. The emphasis on close joint working will include working closely with partners to ensure the best possible services are delivered, whether we are directly responsible for the service or not. This also means being able to carefully and sensitively scrutinise the work of our partners where necessary, and this is an area of work that the chairmen are keen to focus on going forward.

<b>Annex 1: Scrutiny Committee Membership</b>
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**Performance Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (Chairman)  
Councillor Neil Fawcett (Deputy Chairman)  
Councillor Lynda Atkins  
Councillor John Christie  
Councillor Sam Coates  
Councillor Yvonne Constance OBE  
Councillor Janet Godden  
Councillor Mark Gray  
Councillor Steve Harrod  
Councillor Stewart Lilly  
Councillor Charles Mathew

**Education Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Mark Gray (Chairman)  
Councillor Michael Waine (Deputy Chairman)  
Councillor Kevin Bulmer  
Councillor Steve Curran  
Councillor Tim Hallchurch MBE  
Councillor Pete Handley  
Councillor Steve Harrod  
Councillor John Howson  
Councillor Richard Langridge  
Councillor Sandy Lovatt  
Councillor Gill Sanders

*Education Scrutiny Co-Optees*

Mrs Sue Matthew

*Education Scrutiny Non-Voting Members*

Ian Jones  
Carole Thomson

**Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)**

Councillor Yvonne Constance OBE (Chairman)  
District Councillor Martin Barrett (Deputy Chairman)  
Councillor Kevin Bulmer  
Councillor Surinder Dhesi  
Councillor Tim Hallchurch MBE  
Councillor Laura Price  
Councillor Alison Rooke  
Councillor Les Sibley  
District Councillor Nigel Champken-Woods  
District Councillor Monica Lovatt  
District Councillor Susanna Pressel  
District Councillor Nigel Randall

*HOSC Co-Optees*

Moria Logie  
Dr Keith Ruddle  
Anne Wilkinson

<b>Annex 2: Cabinet Advisory Group Membership</b>
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**Income Generation Cabinet Advisory Group – Before 8 December 2015**

Councillor Lawrie Stratford (Chairman)  
Councillor Roz Smith (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor David Bartholomew  
Councillor Charles Mathew  
Councillor John Sanders  
Councillor Les Sibley

**Income Generation Cabinet Advisory Group – After 8 December 2015**

Councillor Lawrie Stratford (Chairman)  
Councillor Nick Hards (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor David Bartholomew  
Councillor Nick Carter (in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Property)  
Councillor Charles Mathew  
Councillor John Sanders  
Councillor Les Sibley  
Councillor Richard Webber

**Early Intervention Cabinet Advisory Group**

Councillor Melinda Tilley (Chairman)  
Councillor Mark Gray (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Hilary Hibbert-Biles  
Councillor Gill Sanders  
Councillor Richard Webber

**Minerals and Waste Cabinet Advisory Group**

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