



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Scrutiny Annual Report

2016 – 2017

Foreword

As with previous years, the council has continued to face a challenging environment. The continued budget pressures the council faces have been compounded by uncertainty due to the shifting local and national political environment.

In the face of these challenges the council has endeavored to take proactive action to address current and future challenges, and deliver improved services for the residents of Oxfordshire. This has seen the council begin the implementation of its transformation programme, Fit for the Future, and advancing the case for a unitary council for Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire County Council's scrutiny committees have focused on these priority issues for the council, and have provided challenge and insight to ensure that the council's proposals serve the residents of Oxfordshire as fully as possible. The focus on these proposals was complemented by addressing the regular business of the council, along with emerging issues for the council and county.

To ensure the council's scrutiny function is as effective and comprehensive as possible, we as Chairmen have committed to quarterly meetings to discuss issues affecting all scrutiny committees, the county council and the county as a whole. This has enabled the council's scrutiny function to be efficient, productive and focused.

We are proud of all that the scrutiny committees have achieved this year, and look forward to a challenging but effective 2017/18.



**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 2016/17. 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 councillor membership is politically proportional to the membership of the Council. The committee met eight times in 2016/2017.
- 2.2. At the start of the year the committee's Deputy Chairman, Cllr Neil Fawcett, stood down and was replaced from within the committee's existing members by Cllr Steve Harrod. In November 2016 Cllr Harrod was appointed to a new Cabinet position for Education, and Cllr Janet Godden was duly appointed from within the committee's members as the new Deputy Chairman.
- 2.3. Some of the committee's 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 Police and Justice Act 2006, to review and scrutinise decisions made or actions taken by community safety partners.
- 2.4. This year the committee was addressed by 2 members of the public and 14 councillors who are not members of the committee. The committee also welcomed a high volume of attendance by members of the public, particularly when agenda items concerned children's services. It is to be hoped that strong public interest remains a feature of the committee's business in future.

Service and Resource Planning

- 2.5. The Performance Scrutiny Committee has overall responsibility for scrutinising budget proposals. In December and January the committee considered budget proposals for 2017/18 and the medium term, including pressures and savings for that year, the impact of key announcements in the Government's Autumn Statement, and the capital programme proposals for 2017/18 to 2020/21.
- 2.6. In this context, attention focused on the council's future development, particularly the "Fit for the Future" transformation programme. The programme will be the vehicle and enabler by which services and administrative arrangements would be transformed over the medium term, delivering savings and creating greater efficiency. The committee heard how some projected

savings would be achieved via the “digital first” work-stream within the Fit for the Future programme.

- 2.7. In considering Service and Resource Planning the committee heard from the council’s Chief Executive, Peter Clark, about the need to continue strengthening the relationship between officers and elected members. For example, this would include the benefits and value for money of drawing increasingly on members’ local knowledge and experience of local and county-wide issues, both to properly help develop the council’s business and to ensure that members are equipped to be accountable to local residents.
- 2.8. The committee warned of the risks of cutting staff resources too far in the name of financial savings, noting the potential for staff being overloaded or demoralised, and services being adversely affected. Similarly, concern was expressed that savings in some services – especially preventative services – could be counterproductive if cut too far. Emphasis was placed on the potential for the Transformation programme to make processes more efficient so that the council can be better run, even with lower staff resources.
- 2.9. The committee continued to ensure that there is effective challenge to Service and Resource Planning proposals through improved briefing and engagement of all members, not just committee members. To this end an all-member briefing was organised on the Cabinet’s proposed budget (18 January) and in support of the approach to Service & Resource Planning this year, an all member briefing on the County Council’s Senior Management Review (9 December), and the committee’s 13 September meeting on proposals for the future of local government in Oxfordshire was widened to become an all-members session at which large numbers of non-committee members were able to speak.
- 2.10. A number of areas of investigation identified in last year’s report by the committee during the 2015/16 Service and Resource Planning process had become high profile this year. These included community safety, safeguarding adults and children, the reshaping of early intervention services, and the review and reform of the council’s performance management arrangements.

Performance Management

- 2.11. The committee has continued with the practice of examining the council’s overall performance report on a quarterly basis, effectively holding the council to account for the pledges made at the start of the year in its Corporate Plan. In addition to examining overall performance the committee has played a vital role in the council’s planning and delivery of some of its highest priority services, such as safeguarding children, adult social care and community safety, which have all featured strongly in the committee’s scrutiny this year.
- 2.12. The committee remained 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. For example, the council’s major contract with Carillion

for estates and facilities management services was given close consideration at the committee's September 2016 meeting. At the same meeting consideration was given to the council's contribution to, and benefit from, the Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership (OxLEP), and a similar scrutiny of the council's strategic partnerships with other external bodies was undertaken in the October 2016 meeting.

- 2.13. With the committee's support, officers have engaged in reforming the council's performance management arrangements, with the ambition of creating a clearer and more keenly prioritised system of business management. At its February 2016 meeting, the committee had given unanimous support for a more streamlined, outcome-based approach to performance, with measures linked closely to the priorities in the Corporate Plan. The results of the emerging new system were considered in the form of the quarterly performance reports which featured on agendas throughout the year. Additionally, the developing proposals were considered in depth at a committee members' workshop in August 2016, which constructively steered the process and ensured that the presentation of performance data in this transitional period remains fit for purpose.
- 2.14. As well as regular scrutiny of individual service areas the committee undertook more detailed examinations of specific areas of performance when necessary. The "deep dive" into the council's activities around infrastructure funding for example (see paragraph 2.27 below) stands as an example of how the committee is employing new ways to dig into detail to understand the council's performance.

Crime and Community Safety

- 2.15. The committee gave considerable attention to crime and community safety during the year. In May 2016 the committee scrutinised the Community Safety Agreement Annual Business Plan, including an account of the work of Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership (2015-16) and the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership (2016-17), presented jointly by the previous and current Chairmen. Progress with, and future direction of, the council's 365Alive strategy, led by Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS), was also scrutinised, as was the OFRS draft Annual Report. OFRS's work beyond emergency response was particularly noted, for example their work on safeguarding vulnerable adults and mental health.
- 2.16. The October 2016 meeting considered the work of both the Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police. This meeting asked challenging questions of the PCC and Chief Constable and sought to hold these two external officers to account. The meeting was designated as fulfilling the committee's responsibility to act as the council's "crime and disorder committee" in accordance with s.19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006.

Safeguarding Children and Children's Services

- 2.17. The committee's scrutiny activities help to ensure the council is effectively safeguarding the most vulnerable people within our communities. The council's proposals to change the way some of our children's services are provided received considerable public and media attention during the year, and the committee ensured that its scrutiny function was also closely applied.
- 2.18. On 12 May the committee considered the findings of a recent inspection of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and work underway at that time to find a new service model. Subsequently at the 24 May meeting the committee considered the impact on children's services of financial changes resulting from the council's 2016/17 budget and Medium Term Financial Plan. The committee focused both on the immediate impacts and related performance matters such as MASH caseloads, supported transport and rural service provision. The committee's conclusion that the proposals and their implementation should remain under close scrutiny reflected the gravity of the subject, and indeed the matter was returned to at several future meetings, both specifically and in the context of other children's service agenda items.
- 2.19. The September 2016 and March 2017 meetings had a particularly strong focus on children's services. In September the committee scrutinised three related reports - the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report, the Performance Audit and Quality Assurance Annual Report, and the Case Review and Governance Subgroup Annual Report. Within this a wide range of topics was scrutinised, from caseload pressures to sexting, and from handling serious case reviews and the Prevent agenda to working with schools and community groups to support awareness of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) issues. In March 2017 the focus returned to the impact of new Children's Services structures on the council's outcomes for children, against a backdrop of rising demand for children's services. Members considered papers on the council's provisions for safeguarding, missing children and serious case reviews, and were able to understand and challenge the factors affecting performance in these areas.
- 2.20. Following discussion of the quarter 2 performance report members of the committee agreed to attend November's meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel to gain a greater understanding of budget pressures on the performance of wellbeing services for children for whom the council acts as the responsible parent. The findings of that exercise were reported back to the full committee in the March 2017 meeting. This is an example of how the committee remains innovative in its approach to scrutinising performance using a wide range of sources of information.

Adult Social Care

- 2.21. Social care services for adults in Oxfordshire remained high among the committee's priorities during the year. Members scrutinised the annual report of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board in September 2016. The committee then devoted time at two later meetings to consider the council's consultation on a range of adult care matters including respite for carers, carers' personal budgets and daytime support.

- 2.22. Within the routine quarterly performance reports, members frequently gave particular attention to areas of concern in adult services, including delayed transfers of care, access to reablement services and home care. Ultimately the committee recorded concerns over funding, sustainability of resources and recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce. As part of the December meeting on Service and Resource Planning the committee challenged the council's handling of new precept powers to raise funds for adult social care, ultimately being satisfied at January's meeting with the Chief Finance Officer's account of budget arrangements in this area.

Future of Local Government in Oxfordshire

- 2.23. Proposals for the future of local government in Oxfordshire featured prominently throughout the county council's year, and the committee duly sought opportunity to scrutinise the emerging proposals and evidence for the various potential models.
- 2.24. In particular, the committee's 13 September meeting looked closely at the two reports produced by PwC (commissioned by the city and district councils) and Grant Thornton (commissioned by the county council) on future options for local government in Oxfordshire in order to make recommendations to Cabinet regarding the Council's next steps. The session was held as an all-member session, reflecting the value of scrutinising the evidence with the contribution of a wider audience. Ultimately the committee was able to make recommendations to the Cabinet which reflected members' priority for (among other matters) residents' needs being met, the greatest opportunity for financial savings, and the need for local engagement, decision-making and powers.
- 2.25. Having considered December's Service and Resource Planning meeting in the context of potential local government reform, the committee again sought the opportunity for more focused scrutiny in the latter area. Its 9 March meeting was dedicated to consideration of a public and stakeholder engagement exercise that was undertaken on proposals for a single unitary authority. The committee, joined in attendance by a number of other non-committee county councillors, discussed the exercise and the revised 'One Oxfordshire' bid document. The discussion was open to all councillors present to make points for consideration by the committee. Members were able to question officers about details in the bid, and to consider matters affected by the bid including local democracy and finance. The committee also considered how the bid, if successful, would be implemented. As a result, the committee resolved a number of formal comments to Cabinet, to be considered by Cabinet in determining whether or not to submit the bid to the Secretary of State.

Other Issues

- 2.26. 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. For example in September the committee considered a detailed presentation which provided a review of, and forward look for, the subject of the council's

interests in property and facilities management. This included close scrutiny of both the council's own activities and those of one of the council's main contractors, Carillion

- 2.27. During the year, three members of the committee worked on a "deep dive" scrutiny of the council's activities around s.106 infrastructure agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Equipped with their own local knowledge of infrastructure provision, members worked constructively with relevant officers to examine in depth the structures and processes around s.106 and CIL, and to consider how these impact on outcomes and performance. The result was that a focused account of their findings was brought back to the full committee. This sort of "deep dive" will stand as a model for future committee work and should strengthen both the scrutiny function and the policy or service areas in question.

Call-In

- 2.28. 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 did not use its call-in powers during 2016-17.

Forward Planning

- 2.29. Forward planning for the year is an ongoing process. The council continues to face significant challenges around both funding and demand, giving rise to changes both in terms of how the council operates, and how services are delivered. Both of these will be themes for the Performance Scrutiny Committee in 2017-18, as well as the ongoing scrutiny of performance.
- 2.30. The setting of future committee agendas remains a matter of balance. Ensuring that meeting time is given to all the business which members wish to scrutinise meant on occasion that agendas were crowded, and at times during the year members felt they would have liked longer to do particular items full justice. Suggested improvements such as longer meetings and improved co-ordination between timetables and agendas for all three committees will help in this respect in the coming year. Equally the extent to which scrutiny business can be handled outside busy meetings – for example by 'deep dives' by smaller sub-groups of members and officers – will be important.
- 2.31. The continuing importance of working in partnership and effective commissioning will mean that the committee is likely to wish to look at these activities in more detail in the coming year. This could include, for example, scrutiny of the council's commissioning framework as well as examination of the annual 'partnerships report'.
- 2.32. The occurrence of Council elections on the near horizon will be factored into the committee's forward plan, taking into account the potential for new members and the need to provide both continuity and new focus in the committee's agendas. For newly-elected councillors in particular, the induction process will include training on the scrutiny function and how this is exercised by the county council.

3. Education Scrutiny Committee

- 3.1. The Education Scrutiny Committee has a membership of 11 county councillors, 4 co-opted members and is chaired by Cllr Mark Gray. The county councillor membership is politically proportional to the membership of the Council. The Committee met 5 times in 2016/2017.
- 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. There was one visit to a school in this year.
- 3.4. The committee was successful in securing attendance at the July 2016 and March 2017 meetings of the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Ofsted Regional Director to ensure the committee can effectively focus upon the continued improvement of schools in Oxfordshire.

Expansion of the Academisation Programme

- 3.5. Following the White Paper 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' the committee discussed and considered the implications for the expansion of the academisation of schools in Oxfordshire and raised concerns about the cost implications and the future viability of smaller rural schools of which there are a number in Oxfordshire. The committee was clear that it supports the encouragement of locally grown multi-academy trusts to meet the needs of both large and small schools in Oxfordshire and raised this with Martin Post, the Regional Schools Commissioner, at the July 2016 meeting.

School Funding Changes

- 3.6. The committee has continued to consider the changing responsibilities and resources in relation to school improvement and support over the last year. The committee has discussed concerns regarding the reduction of resources to the local authority whilst authorities continue to maintain responsibility for carrying out statutory duties.

- 3.7. A national consultation about the introduction of an Early Years national funding formula was undertaken with changes being implemented from April 2017. The committee is currently considering its response to the current national consultation of the Schools national funding formula and High needs funding reform which is due to be implemented in 2018/19. When the change in the way schools are funded is implemented Scrutiny committee members agreed that the committee will monitor the impact on schools and school improvement in Oxfordshire.

Responsibilities of the Regional Schools Commissioner

- 3.8. New government guidance issued in April 2016 has changed the responsibilities and role of the local authority. The Regional Schools Commissioner is now able to intervene in maintained schools in addition to academies. Martin Post, Regional Schools Commissioner for South-Central England and North-West London (RSC) attended the committee meeting in July 2016. The scrutiny committee raised with the Regional Schools Commissioner the concerns around schools that had been judged as inadequate and questioned about the action that had been taken in relation to the underperformance of academies in Oxfordshire. The RSC reported that he is closely monitoring 12 schools in Oxfordshire that were underperforming and was considering introducing further monitoring around the governance to ensure rapid improvement. However the RSC emphasised that it is the Academy Trust's responsibility to ensure school performance improves through the school improvement plan. The committee also expressed concern that not all academies were providing figures on attendance and the RSC would follow this up.
- 3.9. The committee asked about seeking appropriate sponsors for academies and the RSC gave an assurance that he would continue to seek the views of the local authority to identify the most appropriate sponsor and also to name sponsors promptly to ensure rapid improvement of schools.

Oxfordshire Schools Strategic Partnership

- 3.10. The first Oxfordshire Schools Strategic Partnership Annual Report was presented to the committee at the September 2016 meeting. The Oxfordshire Strategic Schools Partnership Board (SSPB) brings partners together to promote the development of sustainable school to school support across the county. The committee heard that in the first year of working together the board has been successful in engaging schools and partners so that the work includes all key partners in the current educational landscape in Oxfordshire. A recruitment and retention project by Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University was commissioned and presented to the committee at the December 2016 meeting. An operational group had also been established which manages the school improvement function.

- 3.11. The Education Scrutiny Committee stressed the importance of the board's priority of improving attendance and the committee's future focus should be working in partnership on this priority.

Recruitment and Retention of Teachers

- 3.12. The recruitment and retention of teachers in Oxfordshire has been a key issue examined by the committee at a number of meetings this year. Several people over the year came to discuss recruitment and retention of teachers with the committee including primary and secondary schools, Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance, SOHA housing association, Oxford Brookes and Oxford University. Schools reported that their biggest concern was finding and keeping good teachers. Factors that were raised to the committee from the different attendees at meetings were that there are national and local shortages of numbers being trained especially in some specialities and the high cost of housing in Oxfordshire was also a barrier. The committee was informed that the shortages of numbers of teachers being trained was a result of the national allocations policy which limited the number of training posts on offer and did not take account of local need.
- 3.13. The committee recommended that the Cabinet Member requested of the Secretary of State that there should be a revised allocations policy that allows Oxfordshire schools to recruit sufficient trainees to meet the future needs of local secondary, primary, nursery and special schools.
- 3.14. The committee also recommended in the meeting in April 2016 that the local authority explores possible options for the sale of local authority land for new housing for teachers. A meeting in December 2016 has taken place with the interim Oxfordshire County Council Director and the cabinet member to explore this option further and this will be explored further in the coming year.
- 3.15. A report had been commissioned by the Strategic Schools Partnership Board to look at recruitment and retention of newly qualified teachers in Oxfordshire Schools. The report was presented to the committee in December 2016. One finding was the significance of teachers' existing connections to the locality and in some cases to individual schools as a key factor in attracting new teachers. There were specific recommendations about recruitment and retention and the committee accepted the report and made several recommendations that the report be shared widely with schools and that the local authority and schools work together on a programme of emphasising that Oxfordshire was a great place to live and work. The report has since been shared with schools and the local authority's Director of Human Resources.

Primary School Educational Attainment

- 3.16. The committee scrutinised educational attainment and noted that although Oxfordshire performed broadly in line with national averages, performance in writing tests was in the lowest 25% nationally. Also the committee noted that there was a significant amount of underperformance of schools in Oxford City and Banbury.

Secondary School Educational Attainment

- 3.17. The committee received a report in December 2016 on secondary school attainment. A new secondary school accountability system was implemented in 2016 with the measures for schools from 2016 are: Attainment 8, Progress 8, Attainment in English and Maths (A*-C), and English Baccalaureate (EBacc) entry and achievement. The committee scrutinised the provisional results published by the DfE and noted that Oxfordshire performs less well when compared against its statistical neighbour group. However there continues to be variation in performance between localities and types of school within the county. The Didcot and Oxford localities show higher progress between key stages 2 and 4 than pupils with similar prior attainment nationally. Three localities, Bicester, Abingdon and Witney show that on average pupils make slightly less progress in these areas than pupils with the same prior attainment nationally. All three of these localities have lower attainment scores as well. Oxford city also shows low attainment from the low prior attaining cohort although high prior attaining pupils in Oxfordshire continue to perform well. The committee invited the principal of The Oxford Academy to the March 2017 meeting to hear first-hand what the school had put in place to reach the highest progress 8 results in the county.

Educational Attainment of Vulnerable Learners

- 3.18. In the March 2017 meeting the focus will be on the progress of vulnerable learners with the case example of the Oxford Academy. Oxfordshire's performance compared with national levels is poor across all groups of vulnerable learners, including special educational needs, disadvantaged and looked after children. However, there are some success stories: the overall Progress 8 score for The Oxford Academy is considerably higher than other schools in Oxfordshire and the 14th highest of all secondary schools nationally.

Ofsted profile in Oxfordshire

- 3.19. In the meeting in July 2016 the committee noted that the proportion of primary schools and secondary schools judged as good/outstanding had increased for the 2015/16 academic year however the number of inadequate schools had increased by 1 to 7 and that in 2015 Ofsted decided that Oxfordshire was a local authority of concern regarding early years outcomes due to Ofsted ratings and children's outcomes. HMI had conducted a number of visits and the Early Years team had changed its practice which had resulted in early years settings improving their Ofsted ratings following support. Members expressed concern over the reduction in the school improvement function and possible effects on attainment, however the committee was assured that the schools strategic partnership board was tasked to ensure partners worked together so that statutory duties are met.

Exclusions

- 3.20. School exclusions were a focus in July and September 2016 meetings. The committee was concerned to note that permanent exclusions from primary schools and secondary schools had increased for the 2015/16 period although this is likely to be an underestimation as data from some secondary

academies was not available due to technical problems in sharing details. The committee asked for a further analysis of data around year 10 as this has the highest number of permanent exclusions.

- 3.21. The subsequent report showed that the rate of permanent exclusion of pupils in year 10 had increased year on year for the last 3 years with a higher rate of girls than previously. The committee was also concerned about the high number of exclusions of looked after children. As a result of the committee scrutinising the data one particular school has been identified for further investigation with regard to their looked after children exclusions.

Elective Home Education

- 3.22. In December 2016 meeting the annual report for Elective Home Education was received and members have asked for more information to be gathered around the spike in home education that occurs in year 10 to ascertain the factors that might be contributing to the numbers increasing for this particular year group. The committee also expressed its concern about the unregulated nature of home education.

Pupil planning process

- 3.23. The pupil planning process was reported in December 2016. Oxfordshire is experiencing rapid growth due to changes in birth rates and new housing developments in the county and this is having a significant impact on the demand for, and supply of, school places.
- 3.24. The Education Scrutiny Committee considered a report that set out the pupil place planning process in Oxfordshire, summarising current pupil planning data, and commented on specific issues relating to pupil place planning. The committee considered that there is currently effective pupil place planning ensuring the needs of Oxfordshire families are met.

4. Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 4.1. The Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OJHOSC) 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 2016/17 the Committee has been chaired by Councillor Yvonne Constance OBE.
- 4.2. The primary role of the Committee is to:
- Review any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in Oxfordshire.
 - Review and scrutinise services commissioned and provided by relevant NHS bodies and relevant health service providers.
- 4.3. The Committee met five times in 2016/17 and held two special meetings to discuss specific issues.
- 4.4. This report provides an overview of the Committee's activity since April 2016 and some of the key areas scrutinised by the Committee.

Transformation of Health and Care in Oxfordshire

- 4.5. The plans to transform Oxfordshire's health and care system have been discussed at every meeting of the Committee in 2016/17. With the introduction of 44 Sustainability and Transformation Plan 'footprints' across the country in early 2016, these regular updates have also included information on the developing Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Plan, and its relationship with the local Oxfordshire Health and Care Transformation Plan (OTP).
- 4.6. Stuart Bell, Chief Executive of Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Chairman of Oxfordshire's Transformation Board, and David Smith, Chief Executive of the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) attended meetings in June, September and November to describe the areas of emerging work in the OTP, expand on plans for public consultation and feedback messages from public engagement. Members emphasised the need for public consultation to be accessible and to describe what services were changing in each locality, so that communities would be able to understand the specific impacts on them.
- 4.7. In November 2016, the OCCG put forward its plans to consult on the OTP proposals in two phases. OJHOSC made clear its concerns about this decision and stressed that a single consultation would be more coherent. However, OJHOSC had required at its meeting in September 2016 that the OCCG consult on changes to obstetrics at the Horton and the acute bed reconfiguration programme (involving the permanent closure of 194 acute beds) in January 2017. Phase 1 of the OTP consultation includes a full consultation on these changes; therefore the Committee agreed that the two phase consultation should go ahead, but with nothing in the first phase of

consultation prejudicing the second phase.

- 4.8. Following the start of the OTP Consultation Phase 1, the Committee met on 2 February 2017 to consider the adequacy of the consultation. OJHOSC explored the sufficiency of engagement with neighbouring areas, the reach of consultation events and involvement of key stakeholders such as the Ambulance Service. The Committee urged the OCCG to ensure that whatever was implemented as a result of Phase 1 was sufficiently robust and rooted in reality, so as to successfully integrate with Phase 2 proposals.
- 4.9. On 7 March 2017, the OJHOSC held a special meeting to formally scrutinise the content of proposals in Phase 1 and provide its response to the OCCG. Key stakeholders and members of the public were invited to submit their views and evidence to the meeting to inform the Committee's discussion. The Committee made clear its concerns about the inherent interdependencies of the two-phase consultation process; parking and access problems across hospital sites; the lack of focus on health inequalities; and the limited engagement with neighbouring areas. The Committee has formally stated these concerns in a letter to the OCCG and made a number of recommendations, to which the OCCG will be responding at a future meeting with the Committee.

Maternity services at the Horton General Hospital

- 4.10. In September 2016 the Committee was informed that Oxford University Hospitals Trust (OUHT) was intending to temporarily close consultant-led maternity services at the Horton from 3rd October 2016, as they were unable to adequately staff the obstetrics unit in a safe and sustainable manner.
- 4.11. The Committee listened to a wealth of public opinion about the impact of the temporary closure and scrutinised the Trust's contingency plan for continuing Maternity and Neonatal services at the Horton during two meetings in September 2016. Members examined evidence of the Trust's recruitment efforts; records of engagement with patients and staff; the reasons for declining birth numbers at the Hospital; and the issue of travel times between the Horton and the JR in Oxford in relation to the safety of mothers being transported in labour.
- 4.12. On the strength of the Trust's action plan to recruit Trust-grade doctors to reopen the unit in March 2017, the Committee agreed in September not to refer the matter to the Secretary of State. This was on the basis that satisfactory reasons had been provided for invoking an urgent temporary closure of consultant-led maternity services at the Horton without consultation.
- 4.13. However, the Trust's December performance update on maternity services at the Horton stated that they would not have enough experienced and skilled medical staff in post to reopen the unit in March 2017 as planned. As such, the Committee felt that the material grounds for not referring the matter had changed and voted to refer the matter to the Secretary of State for review at its meeting on 2 February 2017.

4.14. The outcome of the referral is yet to be confirmed.

Pressures on Primary Care

- 4.15. The sustainability of primary care services and OCCG's actions to support vulnerable GP practices has been an ongoing area of scrutiny for the OJHOSC. The capacity, availability and future development of general practice has been a particular area of concern for members, in light of a greater focus on the preventative role of primary care in the OTP and the OCCG's proposals to move more care from acute hospitals into the community. In November 2016, the OJHOSC discussed the pressures on primary care services and scrutinised the OCCG's approach to tackling rising demand and complexity of patient need, the difficulties of recruiting and retaining staff, and the sustainability of GP practices in light of rising costs.
- 4.16. The Committee's concerns were brought into sharp focus through its examination of the OCCG's decision not to re-procure general practice services at Deer Park Medical Centre, Witney. In this case the Committee's toolkit process was followed, which included an assessment of the impact of closing the surgery on patients and the local area, and the level of public engagement and consultation that had taken place.
- 4.17. The matter was formally considered by OJHOSC on 2 February 2017, but agreement with the OCCG could not be reached on whether the change in service was substantial and required consultation. Members resolved to refer the matter to the Secretary of State on the grounds that inadequate consultation had taken place with the public and patients at Deer Park Medical Centre and the decision was not in the interests of residents and patients in the Witney area.
- 4.18. The Committee has since been informed that the Secretary of State for Health has passed the matter to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) for initial assessment and is urging patients to register with other practices in the meantime. No directions have been issued to the OCCG, but the Secretary of State has advised the OCCG not to take any action that would prevent the resumption or recommissioning of services at, on or near to the Medical Centre until the outcome of the IRP's review is known.

Forward Plan

- 4.19. To highlight areas for future scrutiny the Chairman and Committee members met with and visited a range of health and care providers and commissioners in Oxfordshire during 2016/17. This included two visits to OUHT's Discharge Liaison Hub based at the John Radcliffe Hospital. Member's saw how the discharge of patients with complex needs is coordinated and managed by a multi-disciplinary team, bringing together nurses, discharge planners, adult social care staff, therapy staff, consultant geriatricians and senior physicians. These meetings and visits provide a means to raise awareness of scrutiny processes and develop good relationships with key stakeholders.
- 4.20. Over the course of the next year the Committee will continue to scrutinise planned changes in the provision of healthcare in Oxfordshire, the

performance and quality of services, and the patient experience. In particular, OJHOSC will look to robustly challenge the Health and Care Transformation Plans to ensure that patient and public views are taken into account and the proposals put forward are in the best interests of Oxfordshire residents.

- 4.21. Beyond this, the Committee also plans to discuss the system-wide response to recommendations from the Oxfordshire Health Inequalities Commission, examine joint work to support people with dementia, and scrutinise the quality of care provided in care homes.

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 are currently no CAGs in operation. The Income Generation CAG was closed in December 2016 and the Minerals & Waste CAG reached its conclusion in January 2017, but the possibility of it being reinstated remains - if required in the future. 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 the chairmanship of Cllr Lawrie Stratford in response to the need for the council to cope with increasing budget pressures.
- 5.4. The CAG met approximately monthly and reviewed and assessed a number of options for income generation including
- Reviewing existing services that are currently charged for and opportunities for increasing these charges.
 - Investigating discretionary services that are not currently charged for where we may want to introduce charges.
 - Considering opportunities for generating income from property.
- 5.5. The CAG has explored the following matters related to income generation.

Property

- The CAG reviewed the council's database of property information via an interactive property dashboard, Tableau. The data is now available on the Intranet and was trialed by members of CAG before being made more widely available.
- The CAG examined the council's disposals programme; it reviewed sites released over the last three years, sites due for release, and sites identified for potential release over the next 3-5 years, including estimates as to how much capital/revenue could potentially be generated.
- The CAG reviewed the council's Strategic Property Asset Management Plan and sought assurance from officers that future updates would include the option to explore opportunities for income generation relating to surplus property rather than solely seeking a capital receipt on disposal.
- The CAG discussed potential for expanding the council's existing portfolio to include options such as an 'investment portfolio' approach and owning a property investment company.
- The CAG reviewed the Council's Office Strategy and the options for office use across the county. The Office Strategy will be kept under review

alongside the emerging Transformation Programme to ensure it is aligned with our emerging workforce strategy.

Review of Fees and Charges

- The level of fees and charges for the services the Council provides are reviewed annually as part of the Service & Resource Planning process.
- The CAG undertook a comprehensive review and challenge of the proposed fees and charges for 2017/18 in order to maximise income potential. The expectation was that charges will increase by a minimum of 4% (or more where the market allows). This resulted in a number of fees and charges being increased to a higher rate than originally planned. The CAG's recommendations on the fees and charges were agreed by the Cabinet on 24 January 2017 as part of the Cabinet's proposed budget.

Workplace Charging and Congestion Charging

- The Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan (adopted in July 2016) includes proposals to manage car traffic levels in Oxford and the introduction of a workplace parking levy. The CAG discussed both workplace parking and congestion charging options in Oxfordshire and had presentations from officers on both options on a number of occasions. It was recognised that although this would generate income, the reasons for introducing any charge would be for transport and environmental reasons and both options need to be explored fully.
- The CAG considered a number of policy areas, provided challenge to officers developing policies and pushed for creative approaches to maximise income for the council. Its work reached a natural conclusion as the strategies it informed are being taken forward. The Cabinet endorsed the work of the Group and agreed to disband the group in December 2016.

Minerals and Waste CAG

- 5.6 The CAG has met twice this year, firstly in October 2016 and then again in January 2017. It had not met previously since October 2014 at which time it had considered a draft of the Local Aggregate Assessment and a revised draft of the draft Minerals & Waste Core Strategy (Part 1 of the Oxfordshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan).
- 5.7 The meeting in October 2016 was convened to consider the Interim report of the Inspector who had presided over the Examination Hearings for the submitted Core Strategy in the autumn of that year. The CAG was informed that the Inspector had been broadly supportive of the plan, including its proposed figures for minerals production, but had nonetheless identified the need for some modifications to be made and additional work on the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal. The meeting of the CAG in January 2017 duly considered the additional work which the Inspector had asked to be carried out, prior to consideration and agreement of the same material, for public consultation, at Cabinet later the same month.
- 5.8 No further meetings of the CAG are currently planned and the Core Strategy is expected to be adopted in the summer or early autumn of 2017.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. Challenges and opportunities remain ahead for Oxfordshire County Council in 2017/18. Budget pressures will be an ongoing challenge, and it is possible the structure of local government in Oxfordshire could radically change if current proposals for a unitary council enter the initial stages of implementation.
- 6.2. 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. For these reasons, the role of scrutiny will be even more important in providing robust, challenging and effective scrutiny.
- 6.3. Oxfordshire County Council will contribute to, and learn from, a Parliamentary Select Committee inquiry into local authority scrutiny functions. The inquiry, launched by the Communities and Local Government Committee in January 2017, will “consider whether overview and scrutiny arrangements in England are working effectively and whether local communities are able to contribute to and monitor the work of their councils.”
- 6.4. Following last year's scrutiny annual report, the audit and governance committee requested the Leader, in consultation with the other political groups, consider whether a scrutiny committee should be established specifically either for adult social care, or social care in general.
- 6.5. The consensus following this discussion was that changes should not be made in advance of significant other changes, and the county council election - but that the appropriate form of scrutiny should be looked at in the new council, following implementation of the senior management review, and clarity on the unitary process.
- 6.6. 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.
- 6.7. 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.

Annex 1: Scrutiny Committee Membership**Performance Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (Chairman)
Councillor Janet Godden (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Sam Coates
Councillor Yvonne Constance OBE
Councillor Mark Gray
Councillor Patrick Greene
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Steve Harrod (Stepped down on 13 December 2016)
Councillor Stewart Lilly
Councillor Sandy Lovatt (Appointed on 13 December 2016)
Councillor Charles Mathew
Councillor John Sanders

Education Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Mark Gray (Chairman)
Councillor Gill Sanders (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Kevin Bulmer
Councillor John Christie
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Richard Langridge
Councillor Sandy Lovatt
Councillor Michael Waine

Education Scrutiny Co-Optees

Mrs Sue Matthew
Mr Richard Brown

Education Scrutiny Non-Voting Members

Ian Jones
Carole Thomson

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

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

HOSC Co-Optees

Moria Logie

Dr Keith Ruddle

Anne Wilkinson

Annex 2: Cabinet Advisory Group Membership

Income Generation Cabinet Advisory Group

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

Minerals and Waste Cabinet Advisory Group

Councillor David Nimmo-Smith (Chairman)

Councillor Anne Purse (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Steve Curran

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 Tanner