

ITEM 8(a)



Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2014/15

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www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/scrutiny

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Forward from the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee

I am very pleased to be able to present this Annual Report on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2014/2015.

The Management Committee has continued its role in setting the work programme for the various select committees during 2014/15, trying to ensure that the committees have addressed the priorities for the Council, including those identified at the 'community' priority setting event in June 2014 and I would like to thank all those who took part in that important event.

During the year the Management Committee received the report of the Citizen's Jury into Traveller Issues, making a number of recommendations as to how the findings of the Jury could be addressed and taken forward by the Council and its partners.

This will of course be the last annual report under the current overview and scrutiny structure as the Council moves to a new theme based structure based on tightly focussed task and finish groups, which will hopefully allow scrutiny to be more strategic and focussed on the priorities for Milton Keynes.

The remainder of this report includes reports from the various Select Committee and Review Group Chairs and I would like to express my thanks for the dedication and work of all the Select Committee and Review Group members: it is a pity that the vast amount of work that they do goes unseen by the public. The various Directors of the Council, along with their officers, also deserve thanks for their assistance and fortitude in dealing with councillors' often persistent and detailed questioning.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who attended or contributed to overview and scrutiny over the year. Input from councillors, the public, officers and representatives of organisations have all been invaluable in assisting our approach to challenging proposals and reaching our conclusions.

I commend the Annual Report to you.

Councillor David Hopkins
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
March 2015

Budget Review Group

Members of the Committee:

Chair: Councillor Brackenbury
Vice-Chairs: Councillors M Burke and Hosking
Members: Councillors S Burke, P Geary, Lewis and Wilson

Overview & Scrutiny Officer: Elizabeth Richardson

1. Introduction

The Budget Review Group (BRG) was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to provide a dedicated, cross-party consideration of the Council's annual budget and finances. Most BRG members were new to the group this year and this has led to a fresh approach to taking an overview of the Council's finances and budget process.

The BRG does this in a number of ways. It holds 3-4 routine meetings during the Council's year when it meets to receive updates on the Council's financial performance against the Medium Term Financial Plan, indicative financial forecasts for that year, debt financing, the Capital Programme etc.

It also carries out two very intense periods of work during the budget setting process for the next year. The first of these takes place in October and looks at the pressures which might affect the next year's budget, and the second, in January, when it looks at the proposed savings to alleviate the pressures.

2. Regular Meetings

BRG met in July when it received and considered reports on:

- Medium Term Financial Plan Update;
- Budget Outturn 2013/14;
- Indicative Period 3 Forecast for 2014/15;

At the September meeting BRG received and considered reports on:

- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA);
- Budget Monitoring Forecast Outturn Period 4 for 2014/15;
- Capital Programme;
- Debt Financing;
- Status of the Budget Review Group;
- Arrangements for the October Budget Challenge Meetings.

The next regular meeting of BRG is scheduled for the end of March 2015, when it will receive an update on how the Council's finances have performed against the 2014/15 budget to date, consider any responses from Cabinet to its January report and provisionally plan the 2015/16 Work Programme.

This year BRG also held two training sessions, one in July on *Understanding the Budget Process* and the other in October on *Interpreting Budget Information*. Although run mainly for BRG members. Both sessions were open to all councillors and it was gratifying to see councillors who are not members of BRG finding these sessions of interest.

3. October Challenge Meetings

During October 2014 the Budget Review Group held a series of service area challenge meetings where it met with and interviewed the Council's senior budget holders and relevant Cabinet Members in order to scrutinise future pressures on budgets as part of the development of the 2015/16 draft budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Having reviewed the evidence collected at the Challenge Meetings, the Review Group produced a range of recommendations which it presented to Cabinet on 8 December 2014. The Cabinet Member Resources produced a written response to the recommendations in the report explaining the Administration's position on each point.

During January 2015 BRG held a series of focussed meetings where it met with and received presentations from Cabinet Members, assisted by the Council's senior budget holders, to review, scrutinise, and form judgements on the financial environment as part of the development of the 2015-16 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan. BRG also reviewed the Cabinet response to its interim report (presented to Cabinet in November 2014).

Following these meetings, BRG produced a second report which had two main aims:

- (i) to outline the work BRG had carried out to scrutinise the proposed 2015-16 budget savings, the policy context, key changes and the proposed strategies for implementing these savings; and
- (ii) to present the Review Group's recommendations to Cabinet on 9 February 2015 for consideration prior to the budget being presented to full Council on 18 February.



BRG Report writing session – October 2014

4. Learning Points and Reflections

- (i) Asking the cabinet members to lead on presentations, with officers to back them up when needed, gave real insight into administration strategies and priorities, as well as into how knowledgeable cabinet members were about their portfolios.

- (ii) While the October meetings and initial report were useful, the Administration have suggested that a more co-operative approach may be used in future years, such as getting feedback on specific savings proposals before their formal publication – I welcome this and would ensure that BRG time was available.
- (iii) BRG had little time to reflect on the Cabinet responses to BRG reports. The Cabinet wrote detailed responses to both reports, and these were the basis for a more detailed dialogue between scrutiny and the executive than is usually achieved. It would have been useful to have an opportunity to consider and discuss them with the responsible cabinet member to pursue individual issues and this may be achievable with careful agenda management.

5. Acknowledgements

It has been an interesting year with several periods of very intense, hard work. I would like to thank the Vice-Chairs, Margaret Burke and David Hosking for their help and support, particularly with the report writing sessions. I would also like to thank the rest of the Group's members for their contributions to this year's budget scrutiny process, particularly the many probing questions asked during the Challenge sessions and their persistence with lines of questioning in order to get proper answers – or to reveal where proposals had not been fully thought through.

I would like to thank the Finance Team of Tim Hannam, Nicole Jones and James Smith for all the reports and updates they have produced during the year, their help and advice during the Challenge meetings and for their input into the very useful training sessions, as well as Elizabeth Richardson for managing the group so ably and effectively during the year, particularly in arranging meetings with large numbers of attendees at short notice.

Thanks are also due to those officers and Cabinet Members who attended the Challenge meetings, presented their proposals, answered questions and produced additional information, sometimes at very short notice, when requested to do so.

Ric Brackenbury

Chair

Budget Review Group

Children and Young People Select Committee

Members of the Committee:

Chair: Councillor Crooks

Vice-Chairs: Councillors Dransfield and Wilson

Members: Councillors Ferrans, Gowans, V Hopkins, Nolan, Pallett and Small

Co-optees: Mrs A Marlow (Parent Governor Representative [Special Schools])
Mrs R Collins (Parent Governor Representative)

Overview & Scrutiny Officer: Elizabeth Richardson

1. Introduction

A fair proportion of the work done by the Children and Young People Select Committee each year is regular scrutiny of the work done by other groups, organisations or individuals both within the Council and externally.

Such regular items include the Annual Reports of the Council's Corporate Parenting Panel and the Milton Keynes Safeguarding Children Board, the annual update with the Youth Cabinet on their projects and the Annual Performance and Achievement Report.

During the year the Committee also received, as information items, updates on the work being done by the Children and Families Partnership Board, the Corporate Parenting Panel and one-off items such as successful OFSTED reports.

In January the Committee welcomed Amanda Marlow and Rebecca Collins for a two year term as Parent Governor Representatives. Amanda Marlow was elected as the Parent Governor to specifically represent the interests of the Special Educational Needs sector.

As Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the previous Special Educational Needs Parent Governor Representative, Sanhita Chakrabarti, for her invaluable contribution to the work of the Committee over the last few years.

2. Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel

The Committee welcomed the improvements in the Council's Corporate Parenting Function which had been achieved over the past year. The Committee particularly noted the work being done by the Milton Keynes Virtual School which supported the education of Looked After Children whilst in full-time education. The Committee also suggested that, in future reports, the Panel considered including more statistics specifically relating to Milton Keynes rather than just those the Panel was required to produce nationally and more information on how well Looked After Children were thriving and not just details of the activities of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

3. Update on Early Help and Strengthening Families

This was an update on the strategy to help improve outcomes for 'problem families' which is being funded by central government on a payment by results basis. The Committee was pleased to note that the Council had made significant progress with the strategy since it had first been scrutinised, and that the Council was now starting to receive payment from the government for results achieved so far.

4. Annual Report of the Milton Keynes Safeguarding Children Board 2013/14

The Committee were pleased to note the work being done to establish a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and its inclusion into the Integrated Referral Hub. The Committee endorsed the measures being put in place by the Safeguarding Board to tackle the issues associated with the sexual exploitation of children and the Board's commitment to supporting the Children's Society "The Runaway's Charter".

5. Give Every Child the Best Start in Life

This refers to Objective 6 of the Health and Wellbeing Board's Strategy Implementation Plan Objectives. The Committee received a presentation from the Service Director Children's Social Care who was the Council Champion supporting Objective 6 and covered in detail the hoped for outcomes of Objective 6 for children and young people.

The Committee confirmed its support for Objective 6 of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and agreed to continue to scrutinise progress against this Objective.

6. Presentation from the Milton Keynes Youth Cabinet

The Committee received a lively presentation from the MK Youth Cabinet updating them on issues which were of concern to the Youth Cabinet and progress on the Youth Cabinet's current projects. The Committee agreed that, where possible, it would assist the Youth Cabinet to achieve its aims and would continue to maintain a regular dialogue with the Youth Cabinet to allow an exchange of ideas.

The Committee took a 'straw poll' on whether the voting age should be reduced to 16, which was agreed. As a result of the poll a motion on reducing the voting age to 16 was put to full Council in January and was carried as a matter of principle.

7. School Place Planning and Admissions

Consideration of this item was supplemented by an informal workshop attended by a number of members of the Committee. Following discussion by the Committee a number of resolutions were passed to the Cabinet with suggestions about the Council's approach to school place planning and admissions policies. The Committee received a prompt, written response from the Cabinet Member for Children and School Improvement.

8. Annual Performance and Achievements Report 2013-14

The Committee noted with concern that the 2014 GCSE results showed a significant decline in the performance of Milton Keynes Schools for the key headline measures of 5 or more A*-C grades, including English and maths, leading to a sharp fall in rankings against national, regional and statistical neighbour data. The Committee requested an analysis of what had caused the fall in performance and the development of an action plan in order to improve future performance.

9. Action Plan Arising from the GCSE Performance Report 2013/14

Following the request for detailed analysis of the results and an Action Plan made at the November meeting, at the January meeting the Committee scrutinised the report, noting that a range of factors had contributed to the drop in performance in 2014.

The Committee welcomed the Action Plan as a positive start to improving performance at GCSE level and made several suggestions for other strategies, such as demonstration lessons at subject networking events, which could also be included. It also requested the Corporate Director People to consider the addition of a column for completion dates of each action so that progress can be measured.

10. Increasing School Places at Oxley Park – Governance Options

Having noted that although all children requesting a place to start at a Milton Keynes infant or primary school in September 2014 were offered a school place, there were pockets of high demand in areas of the borough where the number of school children moving into new developments outstrips the average demand upon which school place provision was planned.

The Council is responsible for providing the sites and buildings for new school provision even though there were a number of ways in which new schools could be governed. The Committee considered several options in relation to school expansion in the Oxley Park area and recommended that the Oxley Park Academy be expanded by inviting the trustees of the academy to open a second campus on a site at Shenley Wood..

11. Acknowledgements

As Chair, I would like to thank the two Vice-chairs and members of the Committee, including the Parent Governor Representatives, for their support, and sometimes rigorous questioning of witnesses, over the past year. The Lead Member for his attendance at meetings and his contributions to the discussions. I would also like to thank Michael Bracey and all the staff from Children and Family services for their support and reports presented to the committee.

Sam Crooks

Chair

Children and Young People Select Committee

Community Safety Crime and Policing Select Committee



Members of the Committee

Chair: Councillor Brunning

Vice-Chairs: Councillors Alexander and R Gifford

Members: Councillors Coventry, McPake, Morla, Small, Wallis and Webb

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Fran Bower

1. Introduction

The Committee's role is to assist in creating a sense of place and a safe and strong diverse community in Milton Keynes, and in reducing crime and disorder by supporting and challenging the residents of the Borough, the Council and its partners in the work of operating and maintaining a safe environment. It carries out the Council's statutory scrutiny functions as the designated Crime and Community Safety Committee.

2. Annual Report of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service

The Committee started the year in July by receiving the Annual Report from the Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer. We heard that the number of fires in Milton Keynes had gone down, but the number of road traffic collisions needing the attendance of the service had gone up. We promoted engagement with the Fire and Rescue Service's consultation on its new public safety plan.

3. Overview of the Work of the Committee

At the same meeting, the Committee reviewed its work over the previous two years and examined what was unique about Milton Keynes in terms of community safety. This enabled its newer Members to become acquainted with its work and high-level function. They heard about the work of Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) and decided that they would like a regular update on these from me, as Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods Delivery Group.

4. SaferMK Strategic Assessment

This document covers all areas of the SaferMK Partnership's work and informs its Strategy and Plan for the next three years. Members of the Committee heard about a wide variety of initiatives, including: plans to develop a process to resolve serious disputes, an impact study into the effects of the recent welfare reforms on crime

and community safety and research into the potential implications for fly-tipping of charging for collection of bulky waste.

5. Changes to the Probation Service in England and Wales

Further to hearing in December 2013 about changes that were coming to the Probation Service, we received an update in September 2014 from a representative of the Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company, who explained that this would become a private company in 2015 and would have statutory duties and be paid by results. It would be represented on the Community Safety Partnership. The Committee decided that it would need another update in 2015.

6. Gang Culture and Milton Keynes

Members of the Committee heard about research by the Community Safety Team that showed that Milton Keynes had few or no gangs at present, although it was growing to the size when it was believed to become more likely. A lack of youth provision would increase the danger, and if one gang developed, others were likely to arise in response.

7. Update on Neighbourhood Action Groups

Lastly in September's meeting, I told the Committee about the 19 NAGs and how they were supported by ward Councillors, Thames Valley Police and other agencies. Where NAGs are weak or non-existent, Residents' Associations may be built upon as an alternative.

8. New Powers to Deal with Anti-Social Behaviour

The aim of the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 was to consolidate legislation in this area. Informal actions and interventions can still be used as before, but formal interventions have been added to, and types of orders and injunctions have been reduced in number from 19 to 6.

9. SaferMK Strategy

We looked at this ahead of its public consultation at the end of January 2015. The new Strategy is designed to be outward-looking, more flexible and able to respond to emerging national and local themes more quickly. It will have overarching priorities with specific aims and objectives beneath them, which might arise from various sources or partner agencies.

10. Update on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel

One of our Members, Councillor M Burke, serves on this Panel and told us how important and challenging it was for Representatives on the Panel to balance the interests of the whole Thames Valley Policing Area with those of their local area.

Cllr Denise Brunning

Chair

Community Safety, Crime and Policing Select Committee

Corporate Affairs and Performance Select Committee

Members of the Committee

Chair: Councillor McLean

Vice-Chairs: Councillors Crooks and Priestley

Members: Councillors R Gifford, D Hopkins, Hosking, Khan, D McCall and White

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Fran Bower

1. Introduction

This Committee is concerned with the provision of the Council's central services, public access arrangements and cross-cutting issues. It also monitors the overall performance of council services and delivery of the Council Plan and its projects.

2. Performance Monitoring

The Committee has received the Corporate Quarterly Performance Report at each of its meetings. This includes information such as the wide variety of indicators used to measure the performance of service areas, and the Corporate Project Dashboard, which shows progress of each.

In August, the Committee stressed the importance of public satisfaction with Council performance and said that it would like to consider the Citizens Survey customer feedback again. It was also concerned that performance indicators relating to bridge inspections, payment of invoices and financial performance for social care were still weak, despite already being highlighted by Audit Committee.

In November, the Members of the Committee recommended that the Corporate Management Team be advised of the Committee's concern in relation to the Public Access Programme, specifically the perceived lack of progress, direction and leadership of the programme, and the Key Performance Indicators relating to this and Virtual Desktop Infrastructure.

3. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy

In August 2014, the Committee received a report from the Assistant Director Public Access and Customer Service on progress against the Strategy adopted by the Council in March 2013. Although we felt that the IT Helpdesk was helpful, we were concerned that councillors' ICT needs and access problems were not heeded sufficiently.

4. Public Access and the Council's new website

We welcomed the progress on these but felt that better end-to-end process, Member training and management information were needed. We recommended that an Internal Audit report be prepared on Phase 1 of the Public Access Programme and the Council's new website, and that the Committee's Planning Group be involved in developing the Terms of Reference. At the next Committee meeting, we expressed to the Council's senior managers our concerns about the perceived lack of progress, direction and leadership of the Public Access Programme.

5. Ringway Contract

In November, we considered a report on how the highways contractor Ringway carried out repairs for the Council. We made comments based on our own experiences of the repairs system and public access.

6. Plan:MK

Plan:MK is the first stage in the development of a new local plan for Milton Keynes, to determine what sort of growth and travel should be planned for and what needs to be put in place to enable this. We made recommendations to the Cabinet Advisory Group, which received them in March and considered them alongside the other consultation responses..

Councillor Keith McLean

Chair

Corporate Affairs and Performance Select Committee

Economy, Growth and Regeneration Select Committee

Members of the Committee

Chair: Councillor I McCall

Vice-Chairs: Councillors Clifton (part of year) and D Hopkins

Members: Councillors Bint, Ferrans, L Gifford (part of year), Green, Khan and White

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Simon Heap

1. Introduction

This Committee's purpose is to make recommendations to improve the economic prosperity, regeneration and sustainability of Milton Keynes. It scrutinises the planning process and monitors the delivery of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Plan.

2. Smart Cities – MK Future City Programme

At its first meeting in July, the Committee considered how Milton Keynes was using innovation and smart technologies to become a 'smart city' and how these were being used to address some of the Borough's priorities. We asked how businesses were linking into this agenda and how projects were funded.

We were concerned that benefits to some residents from smart technologies might leave behind others and marginalise them, although we could also envisage advantages such as reductions in the cost of public transport. We suggested further consideration of how 'smart city' technology and applications are communicated locally.

3. Milton Keynes: The Place to Locate and Operate a Business

In October, we looked at the support provided to businesses starting up in Milton Keynes and at Plan:MK, which is the new development plan for the Borough that will affect where they can locate themselves. The Committee heard from representatives of MK College and Arts Central about factors affecting suitability of premises, including location and ability to expand, and the contribution they made to the city.

We welcomed the novel and co-operative work being carried out between these different sectors and suggested that the collaboration between the Council and the South-East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership might be improved. We also made recommendations on measures that the Cabinet could take to help businesses, including predicting the need for employment and residential premises, researching different sectors' needs and maximising use of otherwise empty properties and creativity in the way that the city reacts to innovation.

4. Review of the Recommendations of the Youth and Multi-Generational Unemployment Review Group

We received a report on what had been done to fulfil the recommendations that our Review Group had made in summer 2013 and commended the work being carried out, particularly that preparing pupils for the working environment. We asked to receive further regular updates.

5. Milton Keynes: Capital of Culture

In December, the Committee discussed with Council officers and partners the city's aspirations to become European Capital of Culture 2023 and UK City of Culture 2021, supporting the 'World Class MK' theme in the Council's Corporate Plan.

We noted the high level of support within Milton Keynes for such a bid, encouraged Cabinet to facilitate as wide discussions as possible if it did decide to pursue such a course and highlighted the need for strong leadership, a clear project plan and well-supported bid team.

The Cabinet Member responsible for Community Services indicated that a detailed project plan would be produced at a future phase of the project.

Councillor Isobel McCall
Chair
Economy, Growth and Regeneration Select Committee

Environment and Transport Select Committee

Members of the Committee

Chair: Councillor P Geary

Vice-Chairs: Councillors L Gifford (part of year) and McPake

Members: Councillors Bint, Cannon, Clifton (part of year), Green, Petchey and Wilson

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Simon Heap

1. Introduction

This Committee scrutinises the planning and provision of services to enhance the environment of the Borough and transport services throughout the Borough.

2. Landscaping/Grass Cutting contract

At its first meeting in July, the Committee looked at how the Council would work with its chosen contractor, Serco, and with the Parks Trust, to provide landscaping services. We made three recommendations to Cabinet, which were accepted: two to ask for better communication about changes in landscaping and one to ask for a Tree Strategy.

3. Highways Contract Sub-Group

At the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, we set up a sub-group of three councillors to scrutinise key performance indicators and issues relating to the Highways Contract with Ringway. Exceptionally, this would not be 'task and finish' group but would meet on a regular and ongoing basis.

4. Flood and Water Risk Management

In October, the Committee heard from a Council officer about the Council's responsibilities and work in flood and water risk management, and from representatives of the Environment Agency, Anglian Water and the Internal Drainage Board about how the Council and the Parks Trust worked in partnership with them. The Cabinet noted our recommendation that budgets related to flood and water risk management should not be reduced and said that it would be taken into account in budget setting for the next year.

5. Personal Injury Collisions Data and Trends

The Committee considered a review of all personal injury collisions over a four year period to 2013 and discussed how these might be reduced with Cabinet Members, representatives of the Police and the Fire and Rescue Service and a member of the public. We supported the review and asked the Cabinet to ensure that it was adequately resourced. The Cabinet noted this recommendation as well, and said that it would be taken into account in budget setting for the next year. We also made recommendations to the Cabinet Advisory Group on planning provision for safe cycling, walking and public transport use and on design of road junctions.

6. Highways – Prioritisation of Works

In January, the Committee looked at how highway works were prioritised and the financial model supporting the prioritisation, and learned how other authorities prioritised their work. We made recommendations to the Cabinet on development of holistic and actively engaging communications about future plans for highways assets and about adequate resourcing of applications for Government Grants. The Cabinet Member responsible for Public Realm responded with details of how bidding for external funding was resourced and how he hoped that the existing communications plan might be improved.

7. Council Budget

The Budget Review Group (BRG) asked us to consider the reduction in bus subsidies and travel concessions included in the Council's draft budget, together with an update on consultations with users on the potential reductions. The Cabinet considered our recommendations and received an oral response from Councillor Clifton, the responsible Cabinet member for Public Transport).

Councillor Peter Geary
Chair
Environment and Transport Select Committee

Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

Members of the Committee:

Chair: Councillor Bramall

Vice-Chairs: Councillors I McCall and P Williams

Members: Councillors Clancy, McKenzie, Morla, Priestly, Webb and C Williams
(1 Conservative Vacancy)

Co-optee: HealthWatch MK Representative

Overview & Scrutiny Officer: Elizabeth Richardson

1. Introduction

This year the work of the Committee has been dominated by the Strategic Review of Healthcare in Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire, with the Committee receiving presentations and updates at 3 of its 4 meetings. The Review was started in January 2014 and was scheduled to run for 6 months. However, 1 year on and there are still no definite proposal ready for consultation. Originally it was planned that the review would develop a joint solution for Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire, but as the review has progressed, the two strands have steadily diverged and it is now clear that separate solutions will need to be developed.

The summer also saw the publication of the 2014 GP Annual Survey with Milton Keynes coming 203 out of 211 Clinical Commissioning Group areas for patient satisfaction with local GP services. One of the biggest issues for patients is being able to get appointments to see their GP in a timely manner. The Committee has established a Review Group, which is currently underway, to analyse the problems and if at all possible, make some recommendations on how the situation can be improved.

2. Strategic Review of Healthcare Provision in Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire

This is an on-going item for scrutiny by the Committee, work having started on this in early 2014 with an initial presentation from the Review Team explaining the rationale for the review, how it would be carried out – including details of the public consultation, what the review hoped to achieve and how this would affect the residents of Milton Keynes.

Members of the Review Team attended the July meeting and gave a wide ranging and comprehensive presentation on the progress of the review, including plans to publish its report setting out the options for the future local provision of healthcare in August.

Progress was further reviewed in December when the Committee scrutinised the Review Team's Progress Report which had been published on 29 October. The Committee then invited the Review Team to attend its meeting in March with detailed options on the Care Closer to Home strand of the Review.

Originally planned to take 6 months from January 2014, the Committee remains concerned at the length of time the Review is taking and the lack of any real options that are ready for public consultation.

3. Milton Keynes Adult Social Care Service Peer Challenge

During April 2014, the Milton Keynes Adult Social Care Service was subject to a Peer Challenge visit by councillors and senior officers from other local authorities. The Committee welcomed the very positive findings of the report which had identified the following as particular strengths in Milton Keynes:

- Strong foundations on which to build for the continued delivery of adult social care services;
- Recognition of the value and commitment to its carers;
- Forward Planning to meet future challenges, particularly those posed by the new Care Act;
- The embedding of Safeguarding across partners;
- A strong infrastructure and commitment at all levels.

Areas for development included reviewing the vision for adult social care and the balance between choice, quality and effectiveness, and taking account of the forthcoming Care Act, in particular around building community capacity through market shaping to support carers. The aim of this was not only to improve the quality of life but also balance the responsibilities of the Council with those of citizens and other organisations.

4. Provision of Mental Health Services by the Community and Voluntary Sector

The Committee received a range of short presentations from various voluntary sector organisations that provided additional mental health services to people in Milton Keynes. Apart from outlining the services provided by their organisations, the presenters also included supporting case studies and statements of support from service users. The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing confirmed the Administration's continuing support for the provision of mental health services by the voluntary sector, which was welcomed by the Committee.

5. Care Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 comes into force on 1 April 2015 and the Council's Assistant Director (Older People and Physical Disability Services / Care Act Lead) updated the Committee on the Council's preparations for its implementation and the Council was adopting a simple, but consistent, approach to the delivery of care services. The Committee felt that it was important for service users to be involved in future service planning to ensure that services meet their needs and that they have a way of feeding back any concerns about service provision.

6. Cancer Patient Experience Survey 2014

The Committee scrutinised the poor performance (coming second from bottom) of the Milton Keynes NHS Foundation Trust in the field of cancer care as indicated by the results of the Cancer Patient Experience Survey 2014. The meeting was attended by the Chief Executive of the Milton Keynes NHS Foundation Trust and representatives from Macmillan Cancer Support who discussed the issues with the Committee. Following the discussion the Committee made several recommendations including that all partners and stakeholders who currently provide cancer care services in Milton Keynes should work together to improve the patient experience at all stages of an individual's care pathway and treatment plan.

Following publication of the results of the 2015 Cancer Patient Experience Survey, the Committee would also like to see an update from the Milton Keynes NHS Foundation Trust, indicating any improvements.

7. Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

The Committee is planning to receive the Cabinet Member's Annual Report from Councillor Long at the meeting scheduled for 17 March. Councillor Long has been asked to review progress, identify concerns and achievements during 2014/15 and highlight what he sees as possible issues for 2015/16.

8. Acknowledgements

This has been my first year as Chair of an Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee and I would like to take this opportunity to thank, the Vice- Chairs, Isobel McCall and Paul Williams for their support and advice, particularly during planning meetings. I would also like to thank the other members of the Committee, including the Healthwatch representative, for contributing to a series of lively debates throughout the year. Finally I would like to thank the senior staff in the Adult Social Care and Health Service Group for their help and advice during planning meetings.

Alice Bramall
Chair
Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

Housing and Communities Select Committee

Members of the Committee:

Chair: Councillor C Williams

Vice-Chairs: Councillors Bramall and Coventry

Members: Councillors M Burke, Exon, Morla, Nolan, Pallett and Patey-Smith

Overview & Scrutiny Officer: Fran Bower

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Housing is a large service area of great importance to Milton Keynes, and the Committee did most of its work on considering how it could be improved in both the public and the private sector. However, it also has a role in planning the provision
- 1.2 Adequacy of housing supply was a major theme this year, with many committee items converging on this. The Committee also found time to look at rent and charges and how tenants and other residents were involved in developing these and other housing services.

2. Diverse Communities – Closing the Gap

In July, the first item of the year looked at the changing diversity and population characteristics of Milton Keynes. Alongside key community groups, the Committee considered how the position of disadvantaged people could be improved. The Committee heard from representatives of Community Action MK, the Citizens Advice Bureau and Milton Keynes Equality Council about the work of these organisations.

3. Homelessness Strategy Review Group

The Committee's Homelessness Strategy Review Group had completed its work in summer of 2013, and in July 2014 the Members received a report on demand for housing and advice since then. They noted that the Council was well prepared for Welfare Reform, but housing supply was falling, and the Committee Members decided that they would need a further update on progress against the recommendations of the Review Group and an explanation where they were not to be implemented.

4. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

In September, the Committee considered the Stock Condition Survey for HMOs and recommended that Cabinet extend licensing to all houses in multiple occupation. Cabinet did not agree to do this but did set up independent commission on HMOs and noted that issues around them should be reviewed annually.

5. Strategic Housing Management Assessment

The Committee considered the Strategic Housing Management Assessment and the scale and mix of housing and range of tenures that were likely to be needed by people living within the local housing market area.

6. Tenants Scrutiny Panel

In November 2014, representatives of the Tenants Scrutiny Panel presented a report on how it worked as a critical friend to help to improve Council services to tenants. The Panel would be carrying out reviews of its own, and the Committee decided to invite representatives to attend again in the next Council year to present its findings.

7. Audit of Void Council Houses

The Committee looked at the Council's efforts to process and release its empty properties as quickly as possible. It had requested an internal audit at its meeting in March 2014 and noted that there had been improvements since, although some long delays remained intractable.

8. Availability of Rental Properties in Milton Keynes

The Committee received a report from the Citizens Advice Bureau on its study into the lack of rental property in Milton Keynes. The Councillors made recommendations to Cabinet, which did not accept the need for a register of landlords willing to let to people on Housing Benefit but did respond that the service would investigate ways that landlords who had suitable vacancies could advertise them direct to households on benefits and low incomes.

9. Rent and Charges

The Committee heard in November that there was to be a stakeholder-led review of local rent levels and potentially policy. In February, it invited members of the User-Led Rent Review Group to explain how this would be carried out and made arrangements for councillors on the Committee to be able to take part.

10. Review Groups

The Committee has agreed to set up two Review Groups: the first into housing mix, including whether more one or two bedroom houses or bungalows are needed because there are now more single and older people living in Milton Keynes, and the second to review the Housing Allocations Policy and make recommendations to Cabinet by September 2015. Two councillors from the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat groups will serve on each Review Group.

11. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my fellow Committee members for their work and support during the year, the members of the public and representatives of organisations who contributed to our meetings and the council employees who provided information.

Chris Williams
Chair
Housing and Communities Select Committee