

# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012-2013

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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 the Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2012/13.

Overview and Scrutiny lies at the heart of the democratic process of the Council. It keeps a careful eye on the policy decisions of the Cabinet and has a key role in advising on the development of policies. It also looks at broader issues affecting Milton Keynes.

There are seven Select Committees covering the whole life of the Council. The system was altered slightly this year, to provide greater scrutiny and names which better reflected the work each Select Committee does. The work of the Select Committees is supported and developed by a range of Review Groups, each of which look at a single issue in much greater depth than is possible at Select Committees.

All Councillors, other than Cabinet members, are able to be involved in scrutiny work and nearly all are.

Overview and Scrutiny gives Members the time and space to think, to review issues in greater detail and to shine a light on processes with the aim of proposing better ways of doing things for the benefit of the residents of Milton Keynes.

The Committees and Review Groups call expert witnesses from inside the Council and the wider community. This ensures that the recommendations from the committees are better informed, being based on a wide range of evidence.

An innovation this year, which we will be repeating in 2013, is a Scrutiny Forum at the start of the Council year, involving key, external partners, the outcome of which played a very important part in setting priorities for the year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Scrutiny Chairs and the members of the Committees and Review Groups for their work this year. I would also like to thank the two Vice-Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, who together with me have overseen the detailed planning of the scrutiny function on a cross-party basis. Finally, I cannot praise highly enough, the conscientious work and attention to detail, of the Scrutiny Officers of the Council in their support of the Overview and Scrutiny function.

I would be failing in my duty if I did not express some concerns about the need to maintain, extend even, the resources available to support the Overview and Scrutiny function. In the end, the decisions made in the Council are only as good as the information they are based on and the Overview and Scrutiny is a fundamental part of that support.

The remainder of this report includes reports from the various Select Committee Chairs; I commend the report to you.

**Councillor Norman Miles**  
**Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee**  
**March 2013**



## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEES

This chapter contains a summary of the work undertaken by each of the Select Committees during 2012/2013:

### BUDGET REVIEW GROUP

#### Members of the Committee:

Chair: Councillor Reg Edwards

Vice-Chairs: Councillors Peter McDonald and Alan Richards

Members: Councillors Lee Barney, Stuart Burke, Nigel Long and Keith McLean

Overview & Scrutiny Officer: Elizabeth Richardson

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Budget Review Group has met 10 times during the course of this Council year. Regular meetings to review progress against the current budget were held in July, September and December, together with 3 Budget Challenge meetings during October 2012 and 4 further Budget Challenge meetings in January 2013.
- 1.2 During the October 2012 Budget Challenge Meetings the Budget Review Group met with and interviewed the Council's senior budget holders in order to identify any future pressures on budgets as part of the development of the 2013/14 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- 1.3 The Budget Review Group was open to all members to look at the pressures, one off pressures and savings plus the MTFP which had an impact to the 2013-14 Council's Budget and the four years 2013-2017 comprehensive review to meet the necessary savings over this period of time.

#### 2. Housing Revenue Account and Asset Management Plan

- 2.1 The Review Group received a presentation outlining the changes taking place in Housing budgets including both the General Fund and, particularly, the Housing Revenue Account, as a result of the move to Housing Self-Financing, together with an explanation of the background to the Housing Revenues Account Business Plan which was required under the Self-Financing policy and the key issues and pressures identified by officers in creating the Business Plan.

#### 3. Budget Scrutiny – Service Challenges 2013/14

- 3.1 The Review Group received a presentation from the Corporate Director Resources summarising the budgetary issues which had been identified as affecting the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning. It then scrutinised in more detail the budget pressures identified for the following Service Groups:
  - (a) Resources (Finance, Human Resources, Governance and Public Access);

- (b) Neighbourhood Services (including the Regulatory Unit);
- (c) Highways and Transportation;
- (d) Planning, Economy and Development;
- (e) Corporate Core
- (f) Adult Social Care and Health
- (g) Children and Families – Education, Effectiveness & Participation and Integrated Support and Social Care;
- (h) Community Facilities Unit

3.2 During the January Challenge Meetings the Review Group met with and interviewed Cabinet Members about their proposals for the 203/14 budget and considered the Medium Term Budget Pressures, the One-off Budget Pressures, the Medium Term Budget Savings and the One-off Budget Savings for Service Groups as follows:

7 January 2013

- a) Adult Social Care: Cabinet Member – Cllr Brock
- b) Neighbourhood Services: Cabinet Member – Cllr P Geary
- c) Highways: Cabinet Member – Cllr Bint
- d) Housing and Communities: Cabinet Member – Cllr P Geary

14 January 2013

- a) Children & Families: Cabinet Member – Cllr Dransfield
- b) Community Facilities Unit: Cabinet Members – Cllr P Geary & Cllr Hopkins

21 January 2013

- a) Resources: Cabinet Members - Cllr Bald, Cllr A Geary, Cllr Hopkins
- b) Corporate Core: Cabinet Members - Cllr Bald, Cllr A Geary, Cllr Hopkins
- c) Planning and Economic Development: Cabinet Member – Cllr Hopkins

28 January 2013

At both the October and January Challenge Meetings the Review Group asked officers and Cabinet Members to provide further information or clarification concerning various items which were discussed at the meetings. The requests for additional information and the responses were circulated as part of the papers for the Budget Review Group Meeting held on 28 January 2013.

The Budget Review Group scrutinised the additional information requested at the October and January Challenge meetings in order to prepare a final report

on its findings and a list of recommendations for presentation at Cabinet on 13 February 2013 and Council on 20 February 2013.

**Councillor Reg Edwards**  
**Chair, Budget Review Group**



# Children and Young People Select Committee

## Members of the Committee:

Chair: Councillor Robin Bradburn

Vice-Chairs: Councillors Norman Miles and Gerald Small

Members: Councillors Paul Alexander, Alice Bramall, Keith McLean, Elaine Wales, Alan Webb and Christine Zealley

Co-Optees: Dr S Chakrabarti (Parent Governor Representative [Special Schools]) and Mr S Pritchard (Parent Governor Representative [Secondary Schools])

Overview & Scrutiny Officer: Elizabeth Richardson

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Over the past year the [Children and Young People Select Committee](#) has undertaken a varied and interesting work programme which has included receiving annual updates from the various bodies/individuals required to report to the Committee as well as scrutinising work being done on new initiatives within the field of childcare and education.

## 2. Annual Reports

2.1 The Committee received the Annual Report of the [Corporate Parenting Panel](#) and noted the rise in the number of children in care over the last few years, which was in line with the trend nationally, and that the Panel had also continued to carry out regular, pro-active Section 33 visits to both children's homes and to children in care.

2.2 Elaine Coleridge-Smith, Chair of the Milton Keynes Safeguarding Children Board, attended the October meeting and presented the Board's Annual Report. The Committee was pleased to note that the Board was continuing to make progress in its work and commended it for fully addressing the recommendations made by the Select Committee following receipt of the 2009/2010 report.

2.3 In December the Committee received the Annual Performance Achievement Report. There was a continued upward trend in schools' performance and achievement and the Committee congratulated the Schools Improvement Team on their success. The Committee recommended that the High Needs Block of the [Direct Schools Grant](#) be monitored to ensure that the funding is sufficient to provide effective support for Special Educational Needs pupils.

2.4 At its meeting on 19 March the Committee will receive the Annual Report on the work of the Children and Families Service Group over the past year, from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning.

## 3. New Initiatives

3.1 In July the Committee received a presentation on the proposed changes to the way schools were funded. The Committee noted that from April 2013 the

[Department of Education](#) would be introducing ways to simplify how schools were funded, leading to a national funding formula from 2015/16 onwards. The major changes involved moving the schools census date from January to October and dividing the Dedicated Schools Grant into three blocks: [Schools Block, Early Years Block and High Needs Block](#). The Committee felt that this could have a detrimental effect on school financing in Milton Keynes given the current funding levels.

- 3.2 Another new initiative scrutinised by the Committee was the Pupil Premium. The Pupil Premium was introduced in April 2011 and schools are allocated extra funding for children from low-income families who are eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those from families with parents in the Armed Forces. The Committee invited Mr A Cox, Headteacher of Wavendon Gate School and Mr A Ashmore, Chair of Governors of Heronsgate School, to attend and discuss with the Committee the difference that the Pupil Premium was making to the work with disadvantaged pupils in their schools. The Committee requested that in future an annual report on the use of the Pupil Premium in schools should be produced for consideration by the Committee and that schools should be encouraged to publish annually full details of how the Pupil Premium was being spent and the outcomes of the initiatives.
- 3.3 From September 2013 Local Authorities will be subject to a new statutory duty to offer free education of 15 hours per week to 20% of the most deprived two year olds across the country. This would increase to 40% with effect from September 2014. The Committee noted that a successful pilot had been running in Milton Keynes, on providing education for two year olds since 2009 and was currently funding the education of approximately 500 two year olds across the borough. The number of eligible two year olds was likely to be approximately 800 from September 2013 rising to 1500 with effect from September 2014. A project had commenced to ensure that the new statutory duty could be met and that sufficient, high quality places would be available for all eligible children. The Committee received a witness statement from Ms Z Ravens of Acorn Childcare who had been providing places for two year olds as part of the pilot. The Committee agreed that during the summer of 2013 it would review the Council's progress towards being able to meet its statutory duty to offer free education to 20% of the most deprived two year olds in Milton Keynes from September 2013.

#### **4. Other Work**

- 4.1 Other work carried out by the Committee included scrutinising the Improvement Plan put in place to address the issues raised by the 2012 [OFSTED](#) inspection of the Looked After Children's Services in Milton Keynes. The inspection included a range of partners involved in providing safeguarding services, not just the Council, and the overall rating was based on how all services contributed to safeguarding children. No one part of the partnership in Milton Keynes was outstanding, but nor was any part inadequate; with the rating for Milton Keynes being judged as good/adequate across the board. The Committee commended the Performance Improvement Plan put in place by the Children and Families Integrated Support and Social Care Service Group.

4.2 The Select Committee was also asked to scrutinise the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Terms of Reference for the new Health and Wellbeing Board, both of which come into force on 1 April 2013. The report was presented to Cabinet on 17 October 2012, which noted the recommendations of the Review Group.

## **5. Review Groups**

5.1 Following the successful work on Secondary School Places, the Provision of School Places Review Group met again in March 2012 to undertake a similar piece of work on Primary School Places. Following presentation of the Review Group's report, the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning confirmed that only those schools with an OFSTED rating of 'outstanding' or 'good' would be considered for expansion.

5.2 Together with colleagues from the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee, members of the Committee participated in a Review Group to scrutinise the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Review Group expressed its concern that the raw data from the public consultation had not been included in documentation presented to the Review Group. A report and recommendations were presented to Cabinet on 17 October 2012. However, Cabinet declined to accept the recommendations and approved the Health and Wellbeing Strategy without amendment.

## **6. Final Thoughts**

6.1 It has been a busy year for this Committee and I am grateful that we had four meetings rather than the three we had last year. This enabled the new issues to be dealt with by the Committee and hopefully matters such as the Pupil Premium and the two year old offer there will be ongoing scrutiny on these new initiatives.

6.2 I will not take lines and lines thanking everyone but I would like to in particular thank Elizabeth Richardson who has helped this year be so successful with the setting of planning and "wash up" meetings. My Vice Chairs for their help at these planning meetings and Michael Bracey for his liaison work between the Directorate and the Committee and of course the Lead Member, Gail Tolley and all her team at Children and Young Persons Directorate.

**Councillor Robin Bradburn**  
**Chair, Children and Young People Select Committee**



# Community Safety Crime and Policing Select Committee

## Members of the Committee

Chair: Councillor Hannah O'Neill

Vice-Chairs: Councillors Denise Brunning and Derek Eastman

Members: Councillors Robin Bradburn, Steve Coventry, Don Hoyle, Chris Williams and Paul Williams

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Zahra Dhamani

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This year the [Community Safety, Crime and Policing](#) has considered a varied number of issues, concentrating on the election of [Police Crime Commissioner](#) (PCC) covering the whole of the Thames Valley Area, and the impact this would have on Milton Keynes. Other issues covered included a review of Safer MK Team and the Community Safety approach on domestic violence.

1.2 I would like to thank officers and witnesses for their contribution and support.

## 2. Thames Valley Police - Chief Constables Report

2.1 The Committee received the Chief Constable's Report at its first meeting of the year which focused on the key objectives within the Strategy for Policing 2011-2014. The Committee particularly identified that the number of frontline policing posts had increased in the last year, and that a reduction in domestic violence incidents was high on the list of priorities, together with enhancing support for victims of domestic abuse.

## 3. Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

3.1 The election of the PCC and the establishment of the Police and Crime Panel was a point of discussion prior to and following the election of the Commissioner. The PCC has been invited to the April meeting to discuss the impact on service delivery in Milton Keynes as well as how the Commissioner's budget intended to be structured.

## 4. Safer MK

4.1 Changes in the structure of the Safer MK team along with a review of the support to the [Responsible Authorities Group](#) were looked at by the Committee across its meetings. The Committee requested that it be kept informed of any changes and that a report be brought to the July 2013 meeting to show the impact on service provision and on the budget.

## 5. Domestic Abuse

5.1 The Committee was requested by the Corporate Affairs and Performance Select Committee to look at the data surrounding domestic abuse. The issue had arisen in a number of the Committee's discussions as being of high importance,

particularly as it was a difficult crime to monitor. The Committee recognised that the number of incidents being reported had increased over the past year, but it was difficult to conclude whether actual incident numbers had increased or if the reporting of incidents had increased. The Council would be conducting a review of the domestic abuse service prior to inviting tenders for the provision of the service. The Committee received an update during the early stages of the review

#### **6. Review Groups**

A Review Group to look at Neighbourhood Action Groups in Milton Keynes was established and its draft report was considered would consider at the Committee's February meeting.

#### **7. Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority**

The Committee will at its meeting in April, consider the Chief Fire Officer's Annual Report. It was hoped that the Police Crime Commissioner was able to attend.

**Councillor Hannah O'Neill**  
**Chair, Community Safety Crime and Policing Select**  
**Committee**

# Corporate Affairs and Performance Select Committee

## Members of the Committee

Chair: Councillor Peter Marland

Vice-Chairs: Councillors John Hawthorn and Andy Maric

Members: Councillors Alice Bramall, Jenni Ferrans, Peter McDonald, Rob Middleton, Cec Tallack and Brian White

Overview & Scrutiny Officer: Zahra Dhamani

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This year the [Corporate Affairs and Performance](#) Select Committee focussed on the Council's Organisational Transformation Programme, the Council's performance data and Public/Private Partnerships.

## 2. Performance Report

2.1 At the first meeting Members spent a significant amount of time reviewing the Performance Report to gain an understanding as to what information was being presented and why. A number of recommendations were made to officers to refine the report to enable more effective scrutiny of the Council's performance. Where appropriate, a number of issues were referred to other Select Committees for them to seek clarity and assurances on specific data.

2.2 The Committee requested that the quarterly performance report provide context details for those area where poor performance was indicated, together with details of actions taken to address the low level of performance. The Committee also requested that clarity be provided on how national and local targets were established.

2.3 At its meeting in February, the Committee received the mid year performance report which, together with the Quarter 3 report, would provide a comprehensive picture of performance. Details of the project dashboard were also considered which allowed the Committee to review the improvements made in the alignment of performance monitoring across the Council.

## 3. Organisational Transformation Programme

3.1 A report on the Organisational Transformation Programme (OTP) provided an overview of the programme outlining key points of progress from Strand 5: Organisational Structure and Process, which included the changes to the roles and responsibilities of officers, in particular Assistant Directors. The Committee requested a summary of the strategic aims and achievements for the OTP and the savings arising. The Committee recognised that the Council was aiming to move to an approach where the public perception of what the Council would deliver was realistic and would encourage the public to assist themselves. The number of voluntary redundancies and the subsequent loss of skills was a major concern of the Committee, but it was assured by Officers that managers were fully briefed on the proposals when changes in structures

were proposed to ensure the skill set needed to maintain services was retained.

#### **4. IT and e-Government Strategy**

- 4.1 The Committee received an early draft of the IT and e-Government Strategy (2013 – 2018) which detailed the plans to update the Council's IT hardware and software to a more flexible system which was more energy efficient, thus reducing costs. The Strategy included plans for the re-tender of the contract for the Council's website which would be considered by the Cabinet Procurement Committee in February 2013. The Strategy linked in with the Public Access Strategy and there was potential to improve the channels of communication and response times to customers. The Committee felt that the timeframe for the Strategy was too long and officers assured the Committee that the Strategy would be reviewed every two years.

#### **5. Public Access**

- 5.1 In February the Committee received a presentation and report on Public Access. The Committee felt that this was an appropriate time to look at Public Access following the information received on the IT and e-government Strategy at the meeting in November. The Committee considered the timescales for the Public Access Strand of OTP, including the plans for each phase and details of what would be included. The Committee was interested in the communications plans both internally and externally for the Council and in particular communications with Parish Councils. Members wanted to be informed as to how vulnerable groups would be able to access services as many of the plans involved the development and improvement of online services. The Committee investigated the use of user groups and how staff would be trained to ensure a consistent approach was achieved.

#### **6. Public Private Partnership**

- 6.1 Following a request from the Cabinet, the Committee held a special meeting to discuss the changes to the Public Private Partnership with Mouchel. The Committee heard from a variety of witness, including senior officers and trade unions. The proposals put forward were discussed with the opinions of witnesses taken into account. The Committee requested that further information be provided detailing how a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) would function, and in early November, the Cabinet acknowledged the work undertaken by this Committee and approved the variation to the contract. The LLP came into effect on 1 January 2013, transferring around 670 employees. Officers will be undertaking a review of the Partnership between January and June 2013, at which point, the Committee will look at the results and take a view on the effectiveness of the change in the delivery of services.

#### **7. Review Groups**

- 7.1 The Committee requested the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to establish a Review Group to look at the governance and contracting

arrangements of the Limited Liability Partnership (LLP), with particular attention to the client side management arrangements, the interaction of the LLP with the Council and particularly the level accountability for the Council, together with clarity around the functionality of the trading section of the LLP. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Planning Group decided not to establish the Review Group at this time ,

**Councillor Peter Marland  
Chair, Corporate Affairs and Performance Select  
Committee**



# Economy, Growth and Regeneration Select Committee

## Members of the Committee:

Chair: Councillor Cec Tallack

Vice-Chairs: Councillors Angela Kennedy and Norman Miles

Members: Councillors Jenni Ferrans, John Hawthorn, Ruth Jury, Peter Marland, Sulban Shafiq, Gerald Small and Brian White.

Overview & Scrutiny Officer: Lesley Sung

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The [Economy, Growth and Regeneration](#) Select Committee will have met 4 times during the course of the Council year and covered issues mainly around regeneration, inward investment and adult skills.
- 1.2 Early in the year, the Committee looked at issues relating to the [Localisation of Council Tax Benefit](#). The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, later that year, established a one-off Welfare Reform Review Group to consider a proposed Council Tax support scheme. In view of some claimants affected by the changes not being fully engaged in the process, the Review Group recommended the Cabinet to ensure a robust communication and engagement plan was in place as soon as possible to ensure details of the scheme were communicated as widely as possible and that various payment options should be explored to reduce non-payment and debt recovery costs. The Group remained concerned that the proposed discretionary fund to help the most vulnerable would not be adequate or would negate the point of the charge.
- 1.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee established two further Review Groups; one on Infrastructure Funding to consider how the Council's policy framework was being developed and how this would affect how monies were allocated and managed, and the second on the Council's approach to tackling youth and multi-generational unemployment for those in the age ranges of 20-24 and 25-29.

## 2. Housing Led Regeneration

- 2.1 The Committee had the opportunity to consider and scrutinise the Council's strategic approach to regeneration and, by reviewing the work undertaken on the Lakes Estate, was able to assess how the Council was working corporately, and in partnership with other organisations, to deliver the programme and improve the quality of life for residents, and how further, it was contributing to the development of skills and employment.
- 2.2 The programme of regeneration would be achieved by the Council contributing land value as part of a package to attract private sector investment and the Committee welcomed the opportunity to comment on the procurement process prior to approval being sought from the Cabinet to appoint a strategic partner in January 2013.

- 2.3 The Committee suggested that the report to Cabinet should include an analysis of differing approaches to regeneration, and reasoning as to why the chosen option of housing-led regeneration was selected as the most appropriate way forward. The Cabinet was asked that it be assured that the lessons learned had been taken on board and that appropriate mechanisms were in place to ensure that the views of all were fully represented; that the appropriate governance arrangements were in place to ensure cross party involvement in the programme; appropriate resources were in place to support community engagement in priority regeneration areas through use of the commissioned community mobiliser programme and that all the funding received for neighbourhood plans be allocated in a way that would benefit the neighbourhood.

### **3. Inward Investment**

- 3.1 The Committee welcomed the opportunity to consider and scrutinise the Council's draft [Inward Investment Plan](#), scheduled for approval in early 2013, and to comment on how the Council was meeting the challenges to promote Milton Keynes as an area for investment.
- 3.2 The Committee welcomed the news that Experion and the Municipal Journal, in recent surveys, indicated that of all the local authorities in England, Milton Keynes came out top for inward investment attractiveness for jobs and growth output over the coming years. Members were happy with the way the city was being promoted as a unique, major international business city that could offer centrally located business accommodation.
- 3.3 The Committee commented on the CMK Alliance Plan/Business Neighbourhood Plan and welcomed the opportunity to hear from the CMK Alliance on what they considered to be the barriers to growth and prosperity in Milton Keynes.
- 3.4 The Committee felt that in some cases, the strategic vision for Milton Keynes could be hindered by operational processes and in the case of planning permission, the Committee recommended that the Development Control Committee include in its reports on planning applications, reference to how the Council's strategic policies were positively and negatively affected by the planning application under consideration. The Committee further recommended that the Cabinet be assured that a plan and appropriate mechanisms were in place to increase private sector investment to cover the costs of the inward investment team's work being undertaken on behalf of businesses and ensure that they are fully engaged and encouraged to invest in [South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership](#). (SEMLEP).
- 3.5 This meeting also considered the emerging bid for the latest round of the City Deal. Whilst welcoming any new resources that could come into Milton Keynes if the bid was to be successful, deep concerns were expressed about governance arrangements, lack of Member involvement and what would ultimately be in it for Milton Keynes.

#### **4. Adult Skills**

To compliment the work to be undertaken by the Youth & Multi-generation Unemployment Review Group, the Committee will be considering issues relating to adult skills at its meeting in March 2013, concentrating on the job opportunities available for those over the age of 40 and the type of transferable skills and training required for today's economy.

- 5 I would like to thank all those witnesses who gave up an evening to present information to and be questioned by the Committee. I have also appreciated the support of the two Vice-Chairs who have helped plan the work of the committee, and Lesley Sung, our Overview & Scrutiny Officer, who has organised all the meetings and co-ordinated diaries, which is always a great challenge.

Finally my thanks go to all the Members of the Committee who have played an active role in the meetings, questioning the witnesses and discussing the issues in some depth.

**Councillor Isobel McCall  
Chair, Economy, Growth and Regeneration Select  
Committee**



# Environment and Transport Select Committee

## Members of the Committee:

Chair: Councillor Cec Tallack  
Vice-Chairs: Councillors Mick Legg and Phil Wharton  
Members: Councillor John Hawthorn, Mick Klein, Douglas McCall, Isobel McCall, Gladstone McKenzie and Alan Webb

Overview & Scrutiny Officer: Lesley Sung

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The [Environment and Transport](#) Select Committee will have met 4 times during the course of the Council year and covered issues mainly around rail services across the Borough and how the priorities of transport and highways services were given consideration within the Capital Programme.
- 1.2 Earlier in the year, in response to a number of complaints received from residents of the Borough, the Committee considered the effectiveness of the Landscape Management function delivered from Synergy Park and in particular, the grass-cutting carried out by the Landscape Services Team during the period between March and July 2012.
- 1.3 The Committee also established a Play Area Review Group to look at provisions across the Borough and to consider whether play area provision was fit for purpose and delivered the expected high quality outcomes for the community they served.
- 1.4 During the year, the Select Committee's terms of reference changed to reflect its responsibility for flood and water management and the last meeting of the Select Committee will consider these issues as well as the functioning of the new recycling centre in Wolverton.
- 1.5 I would like to thank the members of the Committee for their contribution and stimulating debate on a number of important issues, the valuable input of our invited guests and the hard work of officers both in democratic services and in the functional services for their valuable work in supporting the Committee

## 2. Landscape Management – Grass Cutting

- 2.1 Following an unusual dry spell in March 2012 where grass had showed little growth, extraordinary levels of rainfall in April lead to a tremendous growth spurt and in some areas, grass cutting was unable to take place where ground conditions had become saturated. During this period, the grass had grown so long that the grass-cutting equipment could not cope.
- 2.2 During this period slippage had occurred and the Committee considered the remedial actions undertaken by the Landscaping Team and looked in detail at the existing input contract that specified how many cuts should be made per year. The Committee recommended that the Cabinet consider, at the most

appropriate time, changing the grass-cutting input contract to an output contract where grass-cutting was based on need rather than a specified number of cuts per year.

- 2.3 The Cabinet received a report on 30 January 2013 inviting tenders for a Landscaping Maintenance and associated services contract with a proposal that a review take place on how contracts were arranged and specifically include as part of the pre-tender consultations to present the Council's requirements as per the recommendation of the Select Committee.

### **3. Transport and Highways Capital Programme**

- 3.1 The Committee considered the transport and highways capital programme funding for 2012/2013 and the breakdown of funding for the [Local Transport Plan](#) (LTP) settlement, giving consideration to how the capital funding linked up with the priorities of the Transport Programme.
- 3.2 It was suggested that substantial capital improvements could be implemented via the highways contract and the review of the traffic management programme. By considering how the schemes in the capital programme had been measured against the priorities of the LTP, the Committee recognised how this provided a decision-making framework and a scoring mechanism that was fully auditable and weighted in accordance with the 7 objectives of the LTP.
- 3.3 In light of the bad weather throughout January, the Committee welcomed the commitment of the Assistant Director (Transport & Highways), to undertake, within the Council's next winter maintenance plan, a review of gritting priorities to include footpaths along main pedestrian routes, bus stops and footpaths that lead to and surround those bus stops.

### **4. Rail Services in Milton Keynes**

- 4.1 Following the Government announcement in July 2012, that, subject to the provision of a satisfactory business case, funding would be available for an East / West Rail line, the [East/West Rail Consortium](#)'s Consultant was invited to assist the Committee in its consideration of the current status and scope of the East/West rail project and its implications for Milton Keynes. The Government announcement had made reference to the upgrading and electrification of the Oxford to Bedford line which would provide extra network capacity for the projected growth in freight and provide opportunities for enhanced cross country passenger services, extending the connectivity of Milton Keynes far and wide.
- 4.2 The Committee welcomed the announcement for the funding of the East/West rail line and acknowledged the opportunities and advantages the line would bring to the local area and looked forward to the developments that would take place over the next few years. The scheme would be delivered by Network Rail and was likely to commence in 2015 with a completion date of 2017.

- 4.3 Network Rail and London Midland attended the January meeting of the Select Committee. Network Rail detailed the move of their headquarters to Milton Keynes with 3,000 jobs including 500 still to be recruited. Both authorities helped the Committee consider a range of operational issues and allowed it to assess to what extent rail services met the needs of those residing in and visiting the Borough. The Committee recommended that the Council works with London Midland to provide, as part of the improvement proposals at Central Milton Keynes Station, an information area providing non-rail information such as real-time bus information, tourist information maps etc. There was a fruitful discussion about passenger facilities at Bletchley and Wolverton stations.
- 4.4. The Committee welcomed the opportunity for greater co-operative working with Network Rail on strategic issues, such as east west rail and wished to encourage joint promotion of the benefits the HS2 project would bring to Milton Keynes, in particular, the projected higher capacity for local rail services.

## **5. Play Area Review Group**

- 5.1. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee gave authority to the Select Committee to establish a Play Area Review Group to consider the Council's strategies and policies associated with play areas to ensure that play area provision was fit for purpose. The Review Group wanted assurances that the Council's approach to fixed play areas took into account the needs of the community and that its policies could sustainably deliver high quality outcomes to the communities they served.
- 5.2. The Group recognised the complexity of the issues and reported its recommendations to the Cabinet in January 2013, recommending a more appropriate assessment process, the involvement of the community and key stakeholders when any substantial changes or removal of play equipment was proposed together with a policy for the replacement and upgrading of 'end of life' play equipment and that an on-going budget be set up for this purpose.
- 5.3. The Review Group supported a much needed review of skatepark facilities, and whilst recognising that skatepark facilities could range from the provision of a small local 'halfpipe' to a large, all encompassing 'destination' type site, the Committee recommended that planning policies should avoid setting any minimum buffer distances between facilities and residential properties.
- 5.4. The Review Group further recommended that a policy be drawn up for the provision and allocation of strategically placed destination parks.

**Councillor Cec Tallack**  
**Chair, Environment and Transport Select Committee**



# Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

## Members of the Committee:

Chair: Councillor Nigel Long

Vice-Chairs: Councillors Alice Bramall and Christine Zealley

Members: Councillors Paul Alexander, Denise Brunning, Margaret Burke, Alan Richards, Rita Venn and Phil Wharton

Co-Optee: Mr A Hastings (Local Involvement Networks Executive Committee)

Overview & Scrutiny Officer: Elizabeth Richardson

## 1. Introduction

1.1 With many changes in the way both health and social care services are delivered coming into force from April 2013, the [Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee](#) have had a busy year scrutinising the plans for some of these new initiatives prior to their implementation in spring 2013.

## 2. Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Board Terms of Reference

2.1 In July the Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director (Joint Commissioning) on the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy which would be implemented, together with the Council's new Health and Wellbeing Board, from 1 April 2013. Together with colleagues from the Children and Young People Select Committee, the Committee agreed to take part in a Review Group to scrutinise the final draft of the Strategy before it was presentation to Cabinet in October 2012.

2.2 In October draft Terms of Reference for the new Health and Wellbeing Board were scrutinised by the Committee, and approved, prior to consideration by the Council on 9 January 2013.

## 3. Clinical Commissioning Group Integrated Strategic Operating Plan

3.1 Also in July the Committee received a presentation on the work to establish the Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group and the development of its Integrated Strategic Operating Plan. The Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group, which would have statutory status from April 2013, represented all 28 GPs' surgeries in Milton Keynes as well as several in the Aylesbury Vale area and would be responsible for providing services to 263,000 patients registered with those surgeries.

3.2 The Committee recognised the plans put forward by the Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group as a positive step forward and endorsed what had been proposed so far. The Committee also requested that it received regular feedback on the work of the Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group and the implementation of the Integrated Strategic Operating Plan.

#### **4. Social Care White Paper**

- 4.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director (Adult Social Care) on the White Paper, [\*Caring for our Future: Reforming Care and Support\*](#), which had been published on 11 July 2012 as an attempt to consolidate existing good practice with an emphasis on prevention. There were currently approximately 6,000 people who received social care in Milton Keynes, of which approximately 2,200 received specialist care. The Committee was also pleased to note that the overall budget for adult social care had increased over the last few years from 24% to 28% of the Council's overall budget.

#### **5. Future Provision of Community Health Services in Milton Keynes**

- 5.1 In December 2012, following an all-NHS procurement process, it was announced that the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) had been awarded the contract to provide Community Health Services in Milton Keynes for 3 years from 1 April 2013.
- 5.2 In January the Committee received a presentation from John Vaughan, Director of Strategic Development and Community Services at CNWL, Claire Murdoch, Chief Executive, Trevor Shipman, Director of Finance and Cathy Walker, Managing Director, Milton Keynes Community Health Service. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the new Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group. Following the presentation the Committee had a very frank and open question and answer session with the representatives of CNWL and were re-assured as to their competence to deliver local Community Health Services from April.

#### **6. Review Groups**

- 6.1 As part of its statutory obligations, the Committee's Quality Accounts Panel met in May 2012 to scrutinise and comment upon the Quality Accounts submitted by Milton Keynes Hospital, the Community Health Service, Brook East of England and South Central Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust. The Committee recommended that in future years, feedback on the usefulness to the various organisations of the Panel's scrutiny of and comments on Quality Accounts be sought.
- 6.2 Together with colleagues from the Children and Young People Select Committee, Members of the Committee participated in a Review Group established to carry out a final scrutiny of the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy, following the closure of the public consultation and before the final draft was presented to Cabinet for approval on 17 October 2012. The Review Group was disappointed to note that Cabinet chose not to adopt the recommendations it had made and approved the Strategy without amendment.
- 6.3 With approval from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, Review Groups to look into the Provision of Mental Health Services in Milton Keynes and Independence for Older People were established.

- 6.4 The Mental Health Review Group started to meet in the autumn of 2012 and decided that, as an initial piece of work, it would consider the provision of dementia care services in Milton Keynes. The Review Group began its work with a series of visits to various sites in Milton Keynes associated with the provision of dementia care; it has also taken a witness statement from the Assistant Director (Adult Social Care) to provide background information. The Review Group is now in the process of analysing its findings and will present its final report to the Committee on 23 April.
- 6.5 The Review Group on Independence for Older People has not yet commenced, but will soon commence its work, aiming to produce its final report in late spring/early summer.

**Councillor Nigel Long**  
**Chair, Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee**



# Housing and Communities Select Committee

## Members of the Committee:

Chair: Councillor Steve Coventry

Vice-Chairs: Councillors Don Hoyle and Chris Williams

Members: Councillors Ric Brackenbury, Margeret Burke, Angela Kennedy, Mick Klein, Sulban Shafiq, Rita Venn, Pauline Wallis

Overview & Scrutiny Officer: Zahra Dhamani

## 1. Introduction

The [Housing and Communities](#) Select Committee focussed its attention on issues around the Council's Tenancy Policy and the implication of direct payments as well as looking at the Council's corporate approach to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HIMOs) and the transfer of community assets.

## 2. Transfer of Community Assets

2.1 The Committee considered the progress of the Transfer of [Community Assets](#) (CAT) following the decision of the former Partnerships and Growth Select Committee to monitor the programme on a regular basis. The former Select Committee had recommended that organisations should produce a robust business plan to ensure sustainability and that during the assessment process, issues such as community access and long term community benefit should be taken into consideration. This Committee was assured that the process for transferring assets had evolved and improved and that the project team had been supported by the [Local Government Association](#) which had taken an outside view of the process and compared the programme favourably with best practice nationally. Communication had been, and continued to be, improved and it had been identified that a single point of contact for the project was of great value. Members of the Committee were concerned that current users of assets would have terms and conditions of use changed once a new landlord was in place and that could lead to some community groups being unable to sustain their group. It was noted that for some assets the benefit to the community outweighed the financial implications of keeping an asset open and the Committee requested the Cabinet to consider introducing an arrangement to protect the services provided by, and costs to, user groups in the short-term when the Council's community assets were transferred to new management organisations. The responsible Cabinet Member gave an assurance that the issue was covered in the Community Assets Transfer Toolkit.

2.2 The Committee will receive a progress report at its April meeting.

## 3. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HiMOs)

3.1 The Committee recognised that there were a number of overlaps in the way the Council managed the administration and monitoring of Houses in Multiple

Occupation (HIMOs). The Committee welcomed the attempts by Council departments to align their definitions of HiMOs as far as possible, but recognised that Central Government set the definition. The Committee discussed the issues thoroughly with both witnesses and officers to gain a good knowledge of the local issues relating to HIMOs in Milton Keynes. The Committee recognised that management practice of HIMOs varied and following a recent incident and fatality at a local HiMO, fire and safety issues were of a major concern to the Committee. The Committee heard evidence from a currently operating landlord and a representative from the Fire Service on possible safety options that could be introduced.

- 3.2 The introduction of a compulsory register for HIMOs was viewed by Members to be of high value and recommended that further research be conducted into the cost and possible installation of sprinklers. The Committee requested that Cabinet extend the licensing of HIMOs to cover all similar properties and to ensure appropriate standards of safety were being achieved. The Committee further requested that Cabinet look at issues surrounding sustainability of tenancies and the Cabinet agreed to receive a report on these issues later in the year.

#### **4. Direct Payments**

- 4.1 The Committee discussed the proposed changes in direct payments of benefits and considered the implications for tenants and how the Council could offer assistance. The Committee considered the outcomes of pilot schemes, the potential impact on homelessness; methods of payments and budget management issues for tenants, while taking into account the statutory duties of the Council. Witnesses were invited to advise the Committee on the national picture and how the changes would impact tenants locally. The Committee were particularly concerned about tenants who might not be aware of the planned changes and how tenants would manage their money on a monthly basis. The committee was particularly concerned that vulnerable groups would be greatly disadvantaged and struggle the most with the scheme. The Committee request that Cabinet look at the options for tenants to switch back to payments made direct to landlords, engagement activities for vulnerable groups; to consider a single application process for discretionary funds and to conduct a review of the scheme once in place. The Chair wrote to the Member of Parliament expressing the concerns of the Committee and these concerns would be put to the Cabinet in March.

#### **5. Tenancy Policy**

- 5.1 The Committee discussed the Tenancy Policy which was currently out for consultation until the end of April 2013. A report would be brought back to the Committee in April, at which point the draft Policy and the results of the consultation would be available. The Tenancy Policy was required to cover a range of tenure issues, including the type of tenancies, how these were sustained, address tenancy fraud and wider tenancy management.
- 5.2 The Localism Act provided an opportunity to introduce an additional, new type of fixed-term tenancy: Flexible Tenancies. The Committee discussed the limit

imposed by fixed tenancies and the potential increase in turnover of tenants in some areas, although acknowledged that local allocation policies could be put in place if it was felt necessary. Although legally the minimum for a fixed term tenancy was two years, setting a minimum of five years was common practice. Concern was expressed for vulnerable tenants and how this could potentially affect their tenancy.

- 5.3 At the Committees last meeting of the year, Members will be considering the Tenancy Policy, maintenance of Council housing; the review taking place on resident involvement and will receive an update on the Community Assets Transfer project.

## **6. Review Groups**

- 6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee had given the Committee the authority to establish also a Review Group to look at the Councils' Housing Allocations and Lettings Review Group. The Review of the Housing Allocations Policy took place from August to January and presented its report to Cabinet on 30 January 2013.
- 6.2 Part of the Review Group's remit was to consider the Homelessness Strategy and this will now be considered later in the year.

**Councillor Steve Coventry**  
**Chair, Housing and Communities Select Committee**



## Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)

This is a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprising representation from Milton Keynes Council, Bedford Borough Council, Luton Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Northamptonshire County Council to scrutinise the progress of the 'Healthier Together Programme' (South East Midlands Acute Services Review).

### Members of the Committee

Councillors King, Mingay (Chair) and Rider (Bedford Borough Council);

Councillors Drinkwater, Sheppard and M Smith (Central Bedfordshire Council);  
Councillors Foord, A Khan and T Khan (Luton Borough Council);

Councillors Long and Zealley (Milton Keynes Council);

Councillors Beardsworth, Blackwell and Shephard (Northamptonshire County Council

Milton Keynes Council Scrutiny Support: Elizabeth Richardson

### 1. Introduction

1.1 In 2003, the Secretary of State issued a Direction with regard to NHS consultations that cover several local authorities. Where this is the case, those authorities' Overview and Scrutiny committees that wish to be involved in the consultation must form a Joint Committee. Councils' Overview and Scrutiny Committees cannot choose to be consulted separately. Under current legislation, a joint committee of this nature is required to be politically proportionate unless the Councils involved agree to waive that requirement.

1.2 The Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been established to review and scrutinise proposals to develop and/ or vary provisions of NHS services in hospitals and in the community, across parts or the whole of the local authority areas set out above, covering the following clinical specialities, excluding Mental Health and Learning Disability services:

- Emergency care
- Planned care
- Long term conditions
- Cancer
- Maternity
- Children

1.3 The JHOSC has met on 4 occasions during 2012 and has considered the following items:

	Venue	Date	Purpose of the meeting
1.	Bedford Borough Council	23 April 2012 at 4pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Formal meeting: update on consultation</li> </ul>
2.	Central Bedfordshire Council	12 July 2012 at 4pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full consultation plan setting out how the NHS plans to engage during the formal consultation; and</li> <li>• Draft consultation document (if available, if not a report and early thinking will be expected)</li> </ul>
3.	Northamptonshire County Council	10 September 2012 at 4pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel and Transport</li> <li>• Clinical Model Options and Strategic Clinical Models</li> <li>• Revised Programme Timetable</li> </ul>
4.	Central Bedfordshire Council	10 December 2012 at 2.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response to Committee's letter to Healthier Together, as well as an update on work to date</li> <li>• General baseline information on the 5 hospitals</li> <li>• Travel and Transport – follow-up to work done at the Committee's last meeting</li> <li>• Work Programme</li> </ul>

The next meeting of the JHOSC is scheduled for 11 March (at Luton Borough Council) and will consider:

- a) plans for the future
- b) Clinical Working Groups – outcomes
- c) Patient Engagement – outcomes
- d) Indicative timetable going forward

## Overview and Scrutiny Review Groups:

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee established a number of Review Groups during the year 2012 / 2013. Set out below is a summary the scope of each review, the work undertaken and, where complete, the conclusion and recommendations made.

### 1. Delivering Independence for Older People in Milton Keynes Review Group

**Members:** Councillors Denise Brunning, Nigel Long and Christine Zealley (Chair to be appointed)

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Elizabeth Richardson

- 1.1 This Review Group has been established to review how the Council and other relevant agencies can assist older residents of Milton Keynes to maintain their independence and freedom of choice during their later years.
- 1.2 The work carries on from the work undertaken by a Review Group on the Quality of Life Strategy for Older People during 2006-2007 and the report of the former Partnerships and Growth Select Committee on the future of Milton Keynes: Changing Demography of Milton Keynes and the Needs of a Growing Older Population (March 2012).
- 1.3 Plans were in place to commence the review in March 2013, aiming to complete by the summer of 2014.

### 2. Health & Wellbeing Strategy Review Group

**Members:** Councillor Robin Bradburn (Chair); Councillors Alice Bramall, Margaret Burke, Gerald Small, Elaine Wales and Christine Zealley (Substitute Member – Councillor Norman Miles)

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Elizabeth Richardson

- 2.1 The Health and Wellbeing Strategy was out for consultation from 24 May to 23 August 2012 and was presented to the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board on 27 September 2012 and the Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group on 2 October 2012.
- 2.2 The Health and Wellbeing Strategy Review Group was set up to review the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy prior to its approval by the Cabinet on 17 October 2012 and to consider whether the Strategy was 'fit for purpose'.
- 2.3 Due to the tight timescale involved, the Review Group met on one occasion on 11 October 2012, picking up the comments made from the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board and the Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group.

Subject to minor amendments and some re-wording of the document, the Strategy was recommended to Cabinet for approval.

### **3. Housing Allocations and Lettings Review Group / Homelessness Strategy Review Group**

**Members:** Councillor Steve Coventry (Chair); Councillors Robin Bradburn, Margaret Burke, Don Hoyle, Mick Klein and Chris Williams

Overview and Scrutiny Officers:

(Housing Allocations and Lettings): Zahra Dhamani  
(Homelessness Strategy): Lesley Sung

- 3.1 The Review Group was established to carry out a review on the Housing Options and Allocations Scheme and the Council's Homelessness Strategy prior to approval by Cabinet in January 2013.
- 3.2 The Review Group was unable to come to a consensus on some of the recommendations made in respect of the Housing Options and Housing Allocations Policy and differing views were set out in the published report which enabled the Cabinet to take on board all the views brought forward by the Members of the Committee.
- 3.3 The Review Group had focussed its attention on the Housing Allocations Policy and had requested the Cabinet to delay consideration of a Homelessness Strategy until it had completed a review. The Cabinet approved both the Housing Allocations Policy and the Homelessness Strategy at its meeting in January and invited the Review Group to come forward with any recommendations / amendments to the Homelessness Strategy, within the next six months.
- 3.4 The Review Group has completed its review on the Housing Allocations Policy and continues its work in respect of the Homelessness Strategy. The Group has now changed its title to the Homelessness Strategy Review Group to reflect its wider remit.

### **4. Infrastructure Funding Review Group**

**Members:** Councillor Peter Marland (Chair); Councillors Ruth Jury and Isobel McCall

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Lesley Sung

- 4.1 The Review Group was established to consider the changing format of infrastructure Funding and to look at the new policy framework that was being developed which would affect how s.106 monies were allocated and managed.
- 4.2 The Group, to date has focused on the Council's approach to the different types of funding available and to consider the approach that would best

benefit the community and work towards the priorities of the Local Investment Plan and the objectives of the Core Strategy.

- 4.3 The review is continuing and the Group plans to complete its review by June 2013 prior to the Local Investment Plan being approved by the Cabinet.

## 5. Neighbourhood Action Group Review Group

**Members:** Councillor Denise Brunning (Chair); Councillors Steve Coventry and Chris Williams

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Zahra Dhamani

- 5.1 The Review Group was established to consider and review the role, structure and effectiveness of Neighbourhood Action Groups and, in particular, how they assisted with the reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 5.2 The final report and recommendations will be presented to the Responsible Authorities Group at its meeting in March 2013 and then to Cabinet in April 2013.

## 6. Play Area Provision Review Group

**Members:** Councillor Douglas McCall (Chair); Councillors John Hawthorn and Rob Middleton (later substituted by Councillor Mick Legg)

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Lesley Sung

- 6.1 The Council's local plan provides quantitative rather than a qualitative guidance on play area provision and this has resulted in a wide disparity in the numbers and types of play spaces across the Borough.
- 6.2 The Play Area Provision Review Group was established to consider whether the Council was taking the right approach in developing its policies and strategies associated with fixed play provision and its location in Milton Keynes, and to consider whether play area provision was 'fit for purpose'.
- 6.3 The Review Group met on a number of occasions from September to December 2012 and undertook site visits to a number of play areas to gain a perspective on the type of play areas that were considered to be highly successful and those which did not meet the same standard.
- 6.4 The Review Group considered the current policies and strategies that affected impacted on the provision of play areas in the Borough, assessed both the positive and negative impacts of play areas, particularly looking at the provision of wheeled sports and play areas for older children.
- 6.5 The Group concluded that issues around play area provision was complex and overall, concluded that the Council's policies and strategies lacked the flexibility and depth required to ensure appropriate and well maintained play

provision throughout the Borough. Flexible policies were key to ensuring appropriate separation distances between residential properties and neighbourhood parks and proposed that minimum buffer distances should be avoided.

- 6.6 The Review Group made a number of recommendations, including the implementation of a play area assessment that would contain specific criteria against which officers would determine whether a proposed or existing play area was 'Fit For Purpose', as well as the criteria upon which decisions should be made to ensure the needs of all the community can be fully met.
- 6.7 The Cabinet accepted the Review Group's report and asked officers to report back to the Cabinet on how the recommendations of the Play Area Provision Review Group could be implemented.
- 6.8 The Review is now complete.

## 7. Provision of Mental Health Services in Milton Keynes Review Group

**Members:** Councillor Christine Zealley (Chair); Councillors Rita Venn and Phil Wharton

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Elizabeth Richardson

- 7.1 The Review Group was established to review the provision of Mental Health Services in Milton Keynes and to consider whether the current level of provision met the needs of the residents of Milton Keynes.
- 7.2 For its first piece of work, the Review Group wished to focus on the provision of dementia services and care in Milton Keynes and has carried out a series of site visits to review facilities and experience first hand how care was provided. The Group visited the Memory Assessment Support Service (MASS), Redwood Day Centre, the Older People's Assessment Service (TOPAS), Flowers House Sheltered Housing and Courtney Lodge.
- 7.3 An interim report on the work undertaken by the Review Group was received by the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee in January 2013. The Group is due to complete its review in March 2013 and report to the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee in April 2013.

## 8. Quality Accounts Panel

**Members:** Councillors Alice Bramall, Nigel Long and Christine Zealley.

Co-opted Member: Mr A Hastings (MK Link)

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Elizabeth Richardson

- 8.1 This Review Group undertakes the Council's statutory responsibility to provide an independent view of the Community Health Service's self-assessment as to

whether the Quality Accounts were an accurate reflection of the actual situation.

- 8.2 The Department for Health Guidance suggested that the Council ensures that the provider's priorities reflected the local priorities and concerns of constituents; identified any omission of any major issues; provides comment on local issues and commented on how well the provider had demonstrated the involvement of patients and the public.
- 8.3 The Group received Quality Accounts submitted by Brook East of England (contraceptive and sexual healthcare services), Milton Keynes Community Health Services, Milton Keynes Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and the South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust.
- 8.4 The Panel commented on submissions made by the above organisations.

## 9. Welfare Reform Review Group

**Members:** Councillor Jenni Ferrans (Chair); Councillor Ruth Jury and Brian White

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Lesley Sung

- 9.1 This Review Group was established by the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee as a matter of priority to consider the proposed implementation of the Council Tax Support Scheme, assuming that the Local Government Finance Bill received royal ascent.
- 9.2 The Group reported a number of concerns to the Cabinet and asked that the Cabinet acknowledge that some claimants who were affected by the changes may not be fully engaged in the process and that a robust communication and engagement plan be put in place, as soon as possible, to ensure details of the scheme was communicated as widely as possible. The Group further proposed that various payment methods be considered as a means of reducing non-payment and debt recovery costs.
- 9.3 The Group considered that the proposed scheme would impact on a number of vulnerable people in Milton Keynes, many of whom simply had no means of either reducing their household expenditure further or of increasing their income. The Group remained concerned that the proposed discretionary fund would not be adequate and the most vulnerable people in the Borough would suffer if the support scheme was implemented; and that it would negate the point of the charge. The Group reported its concerns to the Cabinet at its meeting in November 2012.

## 10. Youth and Multi-Generational Unemployment Review Group

**Members:** Councillor Hannah O'Neill (Chair); Councillors Jenni Ferrans and Angela Kennedy

Overview and Scrutiny Officer: Zahra Dhamani

- 10.1 The Group was established to consider how the Council was tackling unemployment for those people in age ranges 20-24 and 25-29 and its approach to multi-generational unemployment.
- 10.2 The Review Group will consider options for employment and/or further education and training opportunities for young people and how this leads to a reduction in the need to claim benefits (in the case of those unemployed) whilst providing leadership and a good working ethic for their children.
- 10.3 The Group will also consider issues around the barriers to employment, options for early intervention and the changing needs and gaps in provision.
- 10.4 The work of the Review Group ties in with the work undertaken by the Economy, Growth & Regeneration Select Committee on adult skills and in particular, tackling unemployment issues for those people who are over the age of 40.
- 10.5 The review commenced in January 2013 and plans to complete in summer 2013.

## Overview and Scrutiny Annual Survey 2012-2013

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The 2012-2013 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Survey was carried out between 9 January and 1 February 2013 to provide feedback on the Overview and Scrutiny process during the past year and to identify areas for improvement.
- 1.2 The survey was set up as an on-line questionnaire on the Council's Website, under the Consultation Finder.
- 1.3 Various groups were targeted to complete the survey, including Councillors, senior officers that had been prominent in their support to the Overview and Scrutiny function and witnesses who had attended Select Committees and Review Groups.

### 2 Survey analysis

- 2.1 In 2012/2013, 43 responses were received compared to 18 in 2011/2012.
- 2.2 What had been encouraging this year was that 95% of the 43 respondents felt that they understood the role of Overview and Scrutiny as part of the Council's democratic process.
- 2.3 The relationship with Cabinet and the other democratic processes within the Council was understood by 84% of the respondents which shows that there is a good level of understanding, but there was work to be done to improve and clarify the links between scrutiny and the Council's other democratic processes. Some respondents felt that the overall aim of scrutiny was not clear and there was some uncertainty about the accountability of the scrutiny function. Several comments were made relating to the effectiveness of scrutiny and its impact on the decision-making process, in particularly how often the input of scrutiny was incorporated into decisions. There was a view that Council policies should be presented to scrutiny at an earlier stage to allow more involvement with the development of policies and strategies. From the comments, overall, there was a degree of improvement to be made.
- 2.4 In June 2012, Councillors, Officers and interested groups met to discuss the scrutiny priorities for the coming year, which in turn informed the work programme for each of the Select Committee for the year. 42% of respondents considered that the Work Programmes was effectively co-ordinated (compared to 28% in 2011-2011), indicating that that improvement could be made when presenting the Work Programmes of Committees and showing the links and cross over with other Select Committees.
- 2.5 The questions surrounding the amount of information contained in Select Committee Agenda produced a 60% positive response with 16% stating there was too little. However, 67% said the information available in the agenda was clear and explicit enough to enable effective scrutiny of issues. With 19%

stating that information was not clearly explained within agenda, there was scope for improvement.

- 2.6 49% of responses stated that items on agenda showed clear links with the corporate plan and performance data. This area has been improved by the use of a revised report template which highlights how the issues under consideration links to the Council's Corporate Plan, performance data and the Organisational Transformation Programme. With less than half of the respondents understanding these links, more work shall need to be done in this area to improve the visibility of these links.
- 2.7 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee regularly receives the Overview and Scrutiny decision tracker which logs the recommendations made by each Select Committee and provides a summary of subsequent action, as required. From the survey responses received, only 33% stated that it was easy to track recommendations (compared with 28% in 2011-2012). Work is currently being undertaken to consider how the information is presented and when it should become available to all Councillors. As per the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, the format is to be revised and the Council's Corporate Leadership Team will be looking at the decision tracker on a monthly basis.
- 2.8 This year's survey included a question relating to the standard of support received from the Scrutiny team. Whilst 23% of the respondents had not required any scrutiny support, 63% stated that the support they had received had been either good or excellent. This was both positive and encouraging for the Overview and Scrutiny team.
- 2.9 Only 19% of respondents felt that the Council's Corporate Leadership Team and other Senior Officers were effectively engaged in the Overview and Scrutiny process. 47% believed their engagement to be of a moderate level. Respondents welcomed the input of senior officers, but would welcome and would wish to encourage input from frontline staff and those who directly deliver Council services, enabling Members to consider a more holistic approach and providing for a wider evidence base.
- 2.10 There was a perception, mainly from Officers, that scrutiny was a critical rather than supportive process. There was also the concern that at times information provided was insufficient to make an informed recommendation on an item.
- 2.11 The need for a holistic approach was reflected in the question regarding the involvement of witnesses, both from within the Council and external witnesses. 47% agreed that there was sufficient input from witnesses (compared with 55% in 2011-2012) although, they would like to see more external witnesses involved in the scrutiny process.
- 2.12 There was a concern that the public knew very little of Overview and Scrutiny and thus, engagement in the process was not as effective as it could be. Workshops and personal requests to attend a Committee meeting had brought

some interest, but more innovative approaches could be explored to ensure better public engagement.

- 2.13 There was a perception that party politics limited the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny and, in some cases, this prevented the Select Committee presenting a consensus view.
- 2.14 It was felt by some that the level of the Chair's involvement with the overall scrutiny process and work programming could provide for a joined up work programme whilst avoiding duplication.
- 2.15 The Overview and Scrutiny process was viewed by some as highly valuable, yet poorly resourced and this greatly impacted its effectiveness. Four meetings per calendar year was considered insufficient to enable effective scrutiny to take place.

### **3. Comparisons with Annual Survey 2011-12**

- 3.1 Some of the issues identified in the 2011/2012 annual survey as being of concern continued to be highlighted in this year's survey. These being around the effective challenge of Cabinet, (links with other democratic processes, engagement of senior officers and the tracking of overview and scrutiny decisions.

### **4. Conclusions**

- 4.1 With just 43 responses received, caution must be used on generalising the views on Overview and Scrutiny. Similar issues are being highlighted this year as with the previous year which provides some direction on where the resources need to be concentrated to improve the overall process. The engagement of a wider range of Council officers in Scrutiny is an area where most felt would add to the value of Scrutiny. Closer links between Select Committees and performance data would assist with a smooth flow of work programming and effective scrutiny of Council policies and strategies. The respondents on the whole felt that there had been a good level of support provided by the Overview and Scrutiny team, considering the amount of resources available.



## **Web Addresses**

Children and Young People Select Committee

<http://cmis.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/CommitteeDetails.aspx?committeeID=2386>

Corporate Parenting Panel

<http://cmis.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/CommitteeDetails.aspx?committeeID=2390>

Milton Keynes Safeguarding Children Board

<http://www.mkscb.org/mkscb/>

Direct Schools Grant

Department of Education

<http://www.education.gov.uk/>

[Schools Block, Early Years Block and High Needs Block](https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/school%20funding%20reform%20%20final%202013-14%20arrangements.pdf)

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/school%20funding%20reform%20%20final%202013-14%20arrangements.pdf>

OFSTED

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>

Community Safety, Crime and Policing Select Committee

<http://cmis.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/CommitteeDetails.aspx?committeeID=2412>

Police and Crime Commissioner

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/police/police-crime-commissioners/>



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