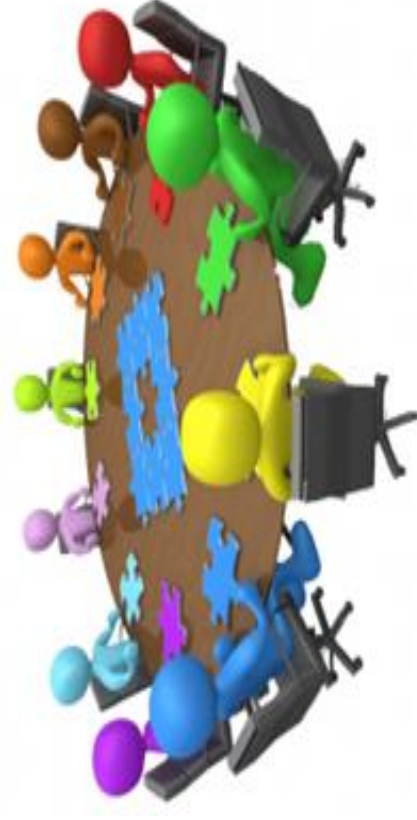


Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18



<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/your-council-and-elections/councillors-and-committees/overview-and-scrutiny>

Introduction

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

All local authorities operating a Cabinet and Scrutiny model have a Cabinet made up of the Leader of the Council and up to nine other members. All executive decisions (i.e. those needed to implement the Council Plan and the Budget approved by the Council) are taken by the Cabinet.

Overview and Scrutiny committees are not “decision making” bodies but are there to monitor and influence those that are. The Overview and Scrutiny role, carried out by non-Cabinet members, is designed to support the work of the Council in the following ways:

- Reviewing and scrutinising decisions taken by the Cabinet, also known as acting as a “critical friend”;
- Considering aspects of the Council’s performance;
- Assisting in research, policy review and development;
- Involving itself with external organisations operating in the Borough to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working;

- Providing a means of involving the community in the Council’s work.

Scrutiny at Milton Keynes Council

Milton Keynes has 5 main Scrutiny Committees:

Scrutiny Management Committee

This Committee manages the scrutiny work programme and acts as the Council’s Statutory Scrutiny Committee in respect of flood and water risk management, crime and community safety and the Councillor Call for Action.

Budget Scrutiny Committee

The Budget Scrutiny Committee provides cross-party scrutiny of the Council’s budget and financial processes.

Children and Young People Committee

The Children and Young People Committee scrutinises the provision of services, the achievement of targets and the provision of resources to support the creation of positive outcomes for the children and young people of Milton Keynes.

Health and Adult Social Care Committee

The Health and Adult Social Care Committee undertakes the Council’s statutory scrutiny role in respect of scrutinising and reviewing any matter

relating to the planning, provision and operation of the health service in Borough, the achievement of targets and the provision of resources to help improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Milton Keynes.

Housing and Community Committee

The Housing and Community Committee scrutinises the planning and provision of housing services in Milton Keynes and the Council’s role as landlord, as well as other housing matters and the planning and provision of leisure and cultural services provided by the Council and its partners.

Task and Finish Groups

Other Scrutiny work is undertaken by a range of Task and Finish Groups, made up of a small number of members (usually 6) which are appointed to look in depth at particular issues. Their recommendations, which may suggest a change in policy or service provision, are usually presented to the Scrutiny Management Committee before presentation to the Cabinet.

During 2016/17 Task and Finish Groups have undertaken reviews of the Council’s public consultation process and the draft Waste Strategy.

Foreword from the Chair of the Scrutiny Management Committee

The Management Committee and the Scrutiny Committees have had another busy year, with packed agendas considering many important issues for the Council, its residents and partners. The report which follows picks out the highlights from the work of each of the committees.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairs and members of the committees and the Task and Finish Groups, and the many witnesses, including officers from the Council's service departments, and members of the public who have given up their valuable time to help scrutiny to have the impact it has.

Picking out three major issues which have faced the Council this year:

- NHS Strategic Transformation Programme
The Council's involvement in the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the NHS's Strategic Transformation Programme with Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Councils, which will help guide major changes to the ways health services are delivered to our residents.
- Emergency Planning
Aware of the negative publicity which surrounded the local council following the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017 and the apparent lack of preparation by that council for a major incident, Scrutiny Management Committee undertook a review of the Council's emergency planning arrangements (more details overleaf).

- Local Government Association Peer Review
The Local Government Association Peer Review Team spent a week with the Council during October, during which time it heard from councillors, officers and partners, attending meetings of the Management Committee and the Budget Scrutiny Committee as part of its evidence gathering. The recommendations from the Peer Review have been receiving detailed consideration by a Task and Finish Group which is due to report shortly any changes it believes the Council should be making to the way we carry out overview and scrutiny.

Other Task and Finish Groups which have reported during the year have dealt with Mental Health Services for the Homeless and the Reduction in Car Park Income, both receiving a positive response from Cabinet.



There has been a long running concern about how the Executive deals with recommendations from scrutiny bodies, with it being difficult to track the impact the recommendations were having on decisions of the Executive. The Management Committee's

Planning Group, consisting of myself and the vice-chairs recently agreed that a monitoring process should be put in place which requests that the Executive's response is reported back to the scrutiny committees and the scrutiny committee builds in a monitoring period after an appropriate time, which could include calling the Cabinet member to give evidence.

Looking forward to 2018/19 the major challenge for scrutiny will be the implementation of any changes adopted by the Council arising from the Peer Review and ensuring a seamless transition, while still coping with the increasing demands on the scrutiny committees.



Councillor Isobel McCall

Key Work Undertaken During 2017/18 by the Scrutiny Committees

Scrutiny Management Committee

The Management Committee, as well as appointing the Task and Finish Groups and managing the overall scrutiny work programme has also undertaken a number of major pieces of scrutiny work in its own right. Also, through its Planning Group, the Council's overall performance has been monitored giving the Planning Group the opportunity to bring forward any matters of major concern for either detailed scrutiny, or report to the Cabinet.

Milton Keynes Development Partnership

The Committee reviewed the outcomes from the independent review of Milton Keynes Development Partnership commissioned by the Council, together with the draft Action Plan.

The Committee noted that the review had been commissioned to ensure the Partnership's aims reflected the Council's priorities and remained fit for purpose.

The Committee considered it important that cross party representation on the Partnership Board was retained, with all members of the Board having appropriate skills. The Cabinet Member for Resources and Innovation was also advised that there should be a strong accountability framework which included both a short and long term plan and required the Partnership to fulfil the Council's instructions as to site usage.

Scrutiny Review

In response to the Council's decision from January 2014 for a review of the overview and scrutiny function during 2017/18, the Committee considered a number of options for the review which

included a peer review, an internal review and a light touch review by an external expert.

The Management Committee agreed on a Peer Review, which was conducted by a team put together by the Local Government Association which included experienced councillors and officers from a range of local authorities and reported in October 2017.



Review of the Council's Emergency Plan

Following the Grenfell Tower fire the Committee reviewed the Council's emergency planning arrangements, to satisfy itself that the Plan was fit for purpose and able to address emergencies of differing scales.

The Committee expressed concerns to the Cabinet at the Council's reliance on volunteers, the absence of on-call incident support officers and the lack of a readily available operations centre.

The Committee also stressed to Cabinet that the Plan should recognise the important roles of the Leader and Cabinet at the time of any major incident and the importance of a clear and detailed communications plan to ensure communications were timely and targeted at the right audience.

In reviewing the Cabinet's response the Committee has asked the Cabinet to reconsider its responses regarding the role of the Leader and Cabinet at major emergencies and the provision of a dedicated operations centre.

LGSS



At its January 2018 meeting the Management Committee heard the views of councillor colleagues on both the LGSS Joint Committee and the LGSS Joint Working Group, noting that an independent review of the LGSS partnership was to be undertaken in

the coming months. While the councillors believed there were many positive aspects of the partnership, there were concerns raised, specifically about the future viability of the partnership, arising from the financial difficulties being experienced by one of the partners and the performance of the Revenue and Benefits Service.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Also in January the Committee discussed with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board the Board's implementation of the recommendations arising from the Peer Review of the Board and future options for scrutiny, which included different models for scrutiny involving lay members from various health bodies.



The Remainder of 2017/18

At its two remaining scheduled meetings during February and March the Committee is due to consider a progress report on the Council's future working programme, an update to the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and progress on implementing the recommendations from the MK2050 study. The Committee will also be holding an additional meeting to scrutinise the actions being taken by the Council with regard to the Residual Waste Treatment Facility in advance of a decision being made by the Cabinet member.

Councillor Isobel McCall

Budget Scrutiny Committee

The current financial climate remains difficult, with the Council still needing to address a projected budget gap of circa £40m between 2018/19 through to 2021/22. This means 2017/18 has been a busy year for the Budget Scrutiny Committee and as well as the “business as usual” items, it has been involved in two other pieces of work: an extensive review of the Council’s financial reserves, what they are used for and how they are managed and a Task and Finish Group which investigated a drop in income from car parking charges.

Draft 2018/19 Budget Proposals Challenge Meetings

As in previous years, the two really intensive periods of work for the Committee were the autumn (Pressures) and the winter (Housing Revenue Account / Reductions) Challenge meetings to scrutinise the draft budget proposals for 2018/19.

During September and October 2017 the Committee scrutinised the identified pressures in the draft 2018/19 budget proposals. This resulted in the Committee presenting 18 recommendations to the Cabinet which were considered at the November meeting of Cabinet. The recommendations were positively received, with a detailed response on behalf of the Cabinet being provided by Councillor Middleton (Resources and Innovation).



The autumn meetings coincided with a peer review of the Council’s Scrutiny Function with members of the peer review team attending one of the October Challenge meetings. They were obviously impressed with what they saw as

the positive work being done by the Budget Scrutiny Committee was commented on in the review team’s final report.

During December 2017 and January 2018 the Committee undertook another extensive and wide ranging review of the draft reductions and income generation proposals in the 2018/19 budget, including the Housing Revenue Account, as well as other matters which might have an impact on the 2018/19 budget such as the delays to the Residual Waste Treatment Facility. This involved presentations and discussions at formal meetings with both relevant Cabinet Members and officer colleagues as well as requests for clarity or additional information in between. This resulted in the Committee making a further 27 recommendations to Cabinet on the draft 2018/19 budget.

Review of Council Reserves

During 2017/18 the Committee carried out two additional pieces of work which have also informed the development of the 2018/19 budget proposals.

The first was a complete review of the Council’s financial and demand led reserves carried out by the Committee’s Planning Group (Chair, Vice-Chairs and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer) together with the then Interim Corporate Director (Resources and Commercial Development), Don McLure and the Service Director (Finance and Resources), Steve Richardson.



The Review Group looked at the whole rationale as to why the Council held reserves and whether there was any necessity to maintain them at the current level. £1.9m across a number of smaller reserves was identified as being no longer required. These reserves have now been closed as part of the review and budget planning for 2018/19 and the money returned to relevant base budgets.

This work was supplemented by a separate report setting out the level of reserves held by schools, how the system of school reserves worked and was administered and the difficulties and risks associated with any clawback by the Council of excessive school reserves.

Reduction in Car Parking Income Task and Finish Group

The second piece of work was a Task and Finish Group to investigate a significant, unanticipated drop in parking income against the budget forecast.



The Task and Finish Group consisted of three members of the Budget Scrutiny Committee (Councillors Bald, R Bradburn and K Wilson) together with three other backbench councillors (Councillors Bint, McPake and Wallis).

Councillor K Wilson chaired the Task and Finish Group.

The review identified deficiencies in the way that anticipated income was calculated as part of the draft budget setting process, highlighting a tendency for income forecasts to be over-ambitious despite the available evidence. Although poor forecasting was identified as a significant factor in the shortfall of income against budget, having heard from various witnesses and examined a range of reports and other evidence, the Task and Finish Group

concluded that the reduction in parking income was also the result of a range of factors, over some of which the Council had no control, and which could not be solely contributed to an increase in parking charges. The Task and Finish Group presented its report to Cabinet on 2 January 2018, with Cabinet requesting that a report considering the Task and Finish Group's recommendations be brought to its March meeting.

Other Work

The Committee remains concerned about the continuing delays to the new Residual Waste Treatment Facility (RWTF) becoming fully operational and the financial implications of a protracted delay to the Council. Updates on the progress of the RWTF have been a standing item on the Committee's agendas throughout 2017/18.

Also of note is the Committee's concern about the continued use of the New Homes Bonus (NHB) to support the Capital Programme. A re-evaluation of Business Rates is scheduled for 2020 which could mean the Council losing up to £4m from revised Business Rates with a need to rebalance the use of the NHB in favour of the revenue account.

The Committee also regularly monitors the quarterly Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report and the Council's Financial Sustainability Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy (2018/19 – 2021/22).



Future Work

At its March meeting the Committee will be scrutinising the allocation and use of S106 monies, including money not yet allocated to a specific project / scheme.

During 2018/19 the Committee is planning to carry out a comprehensive review of the Capital Programme as it considers that in the past insufficient time has been given to what is a major area of expenditure for the Council.

Acknowledgements

The Committee is grateful for the continued commitment and service of Elizabeth Richardson in managing the Committee with diligence and patience, Paul Simpson, the new Corporate Director (Resources and Commercial Development), Steve Richardson (Service Director: Finance and Resources) and the Council's Strategic Finance Business Partners, Natasha Hutchin, Anna Rulton and Mark Smith, for producing relevant documentation for scrutiny both at the Challenge Meetings and regularly throughout the year.

The Committee would also like to thank Don McLure for his help and advice as Interim Corporate Director (Resources and Commercial Development) during 2017.

Councillor Robin Bradburn

Children & Young People Committee

The Committee met on 5 occasions during the year and a final meeting is planned for early March 2018.

Its membership was as follows: Councillors M Bradburn, Betteley (Vice-Chair), Buckley (Vice-Chair), Crooks (Chair), Dransfield, Ferrans, V Hopkins, Miles, Small, Wales and Webb. The Committee also has three co-opted members: Mrs R Collins and Mrs A Marlow, Parent-Governor Representatives and Ms D Main (Diocese of Northampton).

Three members of the Youth Cabinet, Rachel Grimer- James, Clariisa Tear and Toby Poyner also attended regularly.

The Committee is grateful to Zoe Nolan Cabinet Member, Michael Bracey, (Corporate Director- People), and Nicky Rayner (Service Director- Children and Families), for their participation and advice.



The year was one that saw the work of the Committee being commended by Ofsted for the rigour and robustness of its scrutiny of issues as relates to children and young people. The Committee was also commended by the Scrutiny Peer Review for its policy and practice of enabling the Milton Keynes Youth

Cabinet to fully engage in Committee meetings and review of issues.

During the year the following topics were considered:

Annual Report on Corporate Parenting

The Committee considered how the Council fulfilled its responsibilities as a Corporate Parent to Milton Keynes' children and young people in care and care leavers during the 2016/17 Council year, and development plans for 2017/18 as outlined in the Annual Report. The Report was received and noted by the Committee.

High Needs Review- Future of Special Education Needs and Disabilities

The Committee considered Milton Keynes' Council's strategic review of high needs provision for the borough which was aimed at ensuring best value for money and outcomes in meeting the needs of children and young people.

The Committee was encouraged by the Council's developing of an action plan to manage pressures for specialist provision for higher needs, and that health and care plans for individuals included an identification of outcomes and the appropriate intervention for that young person.

Youth Cabinet

Members of the Milton Keynes Youth Cabinet gave a presentation to the Committee which outlined the function and activities of the Youth Cabinet. The Committee also heard that the Youth Cabinet's priorities for 2016/17 were (i) Curriculum for life (life skills education), (ii) Mental Health and (iii) All in one Card.



The Youth Cabinet were invited to the Committee meeting on 31 October to contribute to Agenda Item - "Mental Health, one year on". The Committee considered whether the demarcation between what was taught in schools as against what was taught outside of schools struck the correct balance in preparing children and young people for their adult life, or whether particular things needed to be better fitted in to the curriculum. A view was also formed that composting children and young people towards mental health services and there was a need for greater pro-activeness on the part of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in engaging with other counselling services and youth regarding youth mental health. Committee members offered to meet with the Youth Cabinet to further discuss with them their mental health service concerns and to assist in them adopting a project management approach in their engagement with Milton Keynes businesses regarding the All-in-One card.

Youth Information Service

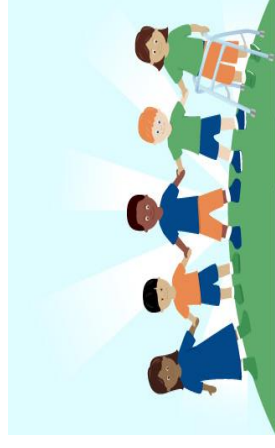
The work, successes and challenges of the Youth Information Service (YIS) in Milton Keynes was considered by the Committee. Note was made of the cultural challenges faced by the YIS in offering its services, for example a social stigma sometimes

attached to those needing counselling assistance. The Committee was however encouraged by the YIS's efforts to overcome challenges, for example, diversity in recruitment to aid engagement with particular communities. It also noted that Parish Councils were targeted for assistance by YIS, and some Parish Councillors have donated to the YIS.

The Committee heard that there was a gender imbalance in respect of young people seeking assistance and there was a need to encourage more males to get counselling where appropriate. It also noted that the YIS had recently recruited two male councillors, and it was hoped that that this would help to address this imbalance.

Community Foundation Vital Signs Report- Child Poverty

The Committee received a presentation from the Milton Keynes Community Foundation regarding its Vital Signs Report on child poverty in the borough. The Committee reviewed the methodology used in the report's preparation. It also noted that the statistics used by the Community Foundation were used in discussions with philanthropists to highlight issues of particular significance and needing prioritisation in Milton Keynes such as child poverty and also homelessness and mental health. The Committee resolved to keep in touch with the Community Foundation on policy discussions as relates to these issues.



Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

SACRE made a presentation to the Committee on religious education within the borough's schools. Note was made that a new religious education syllabus would take effect from 1 September 2017, to later be complemented by a comprehensive guidance document.

Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC)

The Committee reviewed a report on the FDAC. The Committee was disappointed that a Council application for innovation funding for the FDAC to the Department of Education was unsuccessful. It was however encouraged by the Council exploring other funding sources for the FDAC. The Committee decided that the report would be shared with the Scrutiny Management Committee and the Health and Wellbeing board. It was also resolved that the report and supporting documentation would be sent to Milton Keynes' Members of Parliament.

Annual Report from Cabinet Member

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families outlined to the Committee the Council's efforts in providing services for and safeguarding the borough's children and young people. The Committee was of the view that there is a need for the Children and Families Service to assess the quality of careers advice given in the borough's schools. The Committee also expressed a hope that where possible students changing schools should be minimised as evidence suggests whenever a child changed schools the impact was that 5 months in their educational development was lost. The Youth Cabinet's expressed desire to work closely with the Council on the matter of child mental health was welcomed by the Committee and the Cabinet member.

Adoptions Report and Fostering Report

The Committee considered a report of the Committee's discussion on 23 November 2016 in respect of the arrangements being made by the Council to respond to the requirements of new adoptions legislation, in addition to arrangements being made by the Council to increase the number of "in house" foster carers. The



Committee agreed that it would be helpful to have information relating to fostering and adoption compiled into a single report, and that both issues be revisited one year on so as to assess progress.

GCSE & KS1 & 2 Headline Results

The Committee reviewed Milton Keynes's school performance and any trend(s) and issues in such performance.

They welcomed the upward trend in performance results for Milton Keynes schools. Concern however was expressed as to the gap in educational performance between students from disadvantaged backgrounds relative to other students. The Youth and Community Service was requested to include performance data from virtual schools, independent schools and special education needs development (SEND) schools in GCSE and KS1 and 2 results for Milton Keynes so as to provide a complete picture of Milton Keynes school performance.

Local Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report

The function and work of the local Children's Safeguarding Board was scrutinised. Proactivity of schools in fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities was reviewed and note made that an audit would be undertaken by the Board in 2018, as to the uptake of school reporting.



MK Together

The Committee was informed about arrangements being made for a combined Safeguarding Children and Adult function within Milton Keynes. Note was made that the Safeguarding Board has undertaken a review to determine the Board's best use of resources, and hopes to have everything in place by April 2020 based on the national guidance. The Committee resolved to revisit the matter in a year's time, to determine progress and assess developments.

Mental Health One Year On

Progress in mental health service provision was checked against the Children and Young People Committee's initial recommendations at its meeting in February 2016. This included updates from the Child and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS), the Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group and Milton Keynes Council.

The Committee decided that greater clarity and additional information about the quality and accessibility of mental health services for young people in Milton Keynes to the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group, and Milton Keynes Council Special Educational Needs and Disability Delivery Unit would be requested.

Ofsted Action Report Update

Milton Keynes Council's actions in improving children's services following an Ofsted inspection in 2016 were reviewed by the Committee. Improved service delivery and associated management was noted by the Committee.



School Funding

The Committee received an update of changes/reforms to be implemented by the Department of Education as to how schools are funded. The Committee was encouraged by the Council's preparations and was commending of the extent of local stakeholder consultation in this effort.

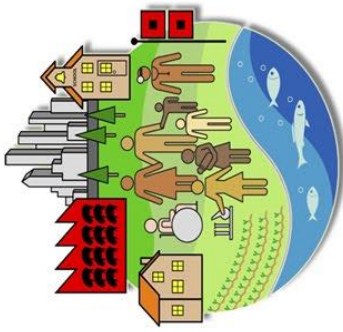
Early Parenting

The Committee assessed parenting services, demand, the management of demand and future plans for service provision. The Committee decided that the Council should be requested to undertake a longitudinal study to measure the outcome of young parent support and intervention programmes.

Councillor Sam Crooks

Health and Adult Social Care Committee

Milton Keynes Council has the authority and responsibility to review and scrutinise matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in Milton Keynes, including the finances of healthcare providers.



This function is carried out on behalf of the Council by the Health and Adult Social Care Committee.

The remit of the Health and Adult Social Care Committee is to assist in the provision of improved health and adult social care services in Milton Keynes, and to support the development of evidenced based policies and strategies by the Council, health services providers and their strategic partners. The Committee also has a responsibility to scrutinise the achievement of targets and the provision of resources to help improve the health and wellbeing of people in the borough.

Care Act

The Committee in July also considered the Care Act, its requirements for compliance, and how the Council was transforming its care services to fulfil its responsibilities under the Act. Following its review, the Committee formally asked the Carers Partnership Board to engage with the Council's Adult

Services as regards the development of services that carers need. Cabinet was also asked to consider more ways in which personal assistance can be encouraged such as through the voluntary sector.

Learning Disability Services

The Committee reviewed the Council's Learning Disabilities Transformation Programme which is aimed at reforming and improving the learning and disabilities services provided by the Council in the borough. The Committee commended the Transformation Programme and asked Cabinet to review the Programme so as to determine how it can be applied to other areas of the Council's People Directorate.

Sustainability and Transformation Plan

The Committee in July received an update on the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Sustainability and Transformation Programme (STP). The impact of the STP's development and implementation on Milton Keynes was also considered.



The formation of a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) involving Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Councils was noted by the Committee, and it was resolved that a Council Sub-Committee also be formed to scrutinise the STP subject to approval by the Scrutiny Management Committee.

The Committee would be grateful that all submissions from NHS England are more detailed and contain actual figures and outcomes.

MK CCG Clinical Priority & Best Value Consultation

The Committee at its July meeting received the outcome and results of a Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) consultation on the CCG's priorities. The CCG thanked the Committee for its contribution to the consultation, the effect of which was that expressed Committee concerns regarding CCG plans for hearing services and obesity services was taken on board by the CCG.

Healthcare/Adult Social Care in Prisons- Woodhill

At its September meeting, the Committee considered the provision of health and adult social care services at HMP Woodhill. A presentation was received from the Central and



North West London NHS Foundation Trust and the Council's Adult Services. The Committee visited HMP Woodhill in February, with a view to developing a report on the progress of improvement in health and social care provision at HMP Woodhill.

Population Figures and How Growth is Planned in relation to Healthcare Provision

Also in September, owing to Milton Keynes' fast growing population, the Committee reviewed the NHS's planning for future service provision in the borough. Following this review the Committee has asked Cabinet to raise the issue of decreased NHS Funding for Milton Keynes relative to population, and that it work with Milton Keynes' Members of Parliament to raise the issue in Whitehall and Parliament. Cabinet was also asked to

assess regeneration and new areas in Milton Keynes where health services are not available or need to be improved.

The Committee also asked Cllr. Nigel Long to meet with the Milton Keynes CCG to ensure that Section 106 funding is utilised effectively in planning for and meeting the borough's health population needs.

Better Care Fund

The Committee reviewed the Better Care Fund. Due to it not being known if the Fund would continue beyond an agreed two year plan, and noted disagreement between the NHS and Local Government Association, the Committee decided that this item would be monitored for potential future scrutiny.



Quality Accounts Panel

The Panel for the 2017 period received and commented on the Quality Accounts of Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, South Central Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust, Central North West London NHS Foundation Trust (Community & Mental Health Services), and Brook Services.

Access to Mental Health Services for Homeless

A presentation of the Access to Mental Health Task and Finish Group Report was made to the Committee in December. The Committee endorsed the Report and recommended that it be provided to the Milton Keynes GP Federation for their information and feedback to the Council.

Directly Provided Domiciliary Care Services

The Committee reviewed in December, Directly provided Domiciliary Care Services so as to develop an informed view as to the success of the provide services, policies informing service provision, and whether further provision should be made by the Council. The Adult Social Care Service was commended by the Committee for the domiciliary care services provided. The Committee also resolved to support the governments “Integration Agenda” for health and social care.

Healthwatch Annual Report 2016/17

In December scrutiny was done of Healthwatch Milton Keynes’s Annual Report 2016/17 which provided insight of Healthwatch’s work in the borough. The Committee endorsed the Report but was of the view that the organisation’s notable successes should have been highlighted to a greater extent.



Councillor Alice Jenkins

Housing & Community Committee

Although the 2017/18 Work Programme of the Housing and Community Committee has been varied, it remains dominated by the issue of homelessness, both of families in temporary accommodation and of rough sleepers on the streets of Milton Keynes.

The Committee has also spent time scrutinising and commenting on the development of the *Homes and Neighbourhoods* section of Plan:MK, monitoring the work of the Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership, reviewing with officers the Council's plans for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the Council's winter provision for street homeless, as well as receiving presentations from external organisations such as the Winter Night Shelter, the BusShelter MK project and the Citizen's Advice Bureau. The unexpected item with which the Committee has also had to deal was the tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire and its implications for high-rise residential accommodation in Milton Keynes.

Homelessness



Homelessness remains a major concern to both the Committee and to the Council as a whole and although the situation in some aspects of this problem has improved since last year, progress remains slow.

The Committee is pleased to note that real progress has been made in getting families out of room-only hotel accommodation and into, albeit still temporary, other accommodation. At its November meeting the Committee heard from YourMK about the construction of 70 x 2 bedroom, self-contained housing units

using modular construction techniques in Fishermead to add to the Council's stock of transitional housing. If successful, other sites where similar developments can be constructed have already been identified. Providing sufficient transitional accommodation locally will also have a knock-on effect in reducing the amount of money the Council has to spend on the Home to School Transport Service, which has also been monitored by both the Housing & Community Committee and the Budget Scrutiny Committee.



At its September meeting the Committee also heard from the Winter Night Shelter and its plans for the future now that it had a semi-permanent home until 2020 in the Old Bus Station building. The Committee also heard from the new manager of the One-Stop Shop, which would also be located in the Old Bus Station, on her plans for developing support services for the homeless. The Committee welcomes the continuing support of the Cabinet for the concept of the One-Stop Shop and is pleased to note the provision of £25k for this in the 2018/19 budget.

Another major piece of work by the Council to address homelessness, particularly street homeless and rough sleepers was the development of the Rough Sleeper Reduction Strategy 2017-2020. The Committee discussed and commented on the proposals in the draft strategy, feeding its response into the formal consultation. The Strategy is scheduled to be approved at the

March 2018 meeting of the Cabinet and is supported by the Housing and Community Committee.

An external project to alleviate homelessness on which the Committee has received regular updates is the BusShelter MK. Based on a concept



first developed on the Isle of Wight, this project is converting a former band tour bus into accommodation for 16 homeless people.

Apart from providing for their physical needs, including cooking, laundry and shower facilities, the project also aims to provide the necessary support to help its residents off the streets into proper accommodation and hopefully into work as well.

Plan:MK

The Committee held a special meeting during May 2017 to scrutinise the proposals for the future development of Milton Keynes set out in the draft Plan:MK document, in particular the section on *Homes and Neighbourhoods*. The Committee made a number of recommendations and suggestions on the content and phrasing of the proposals and submitted them to the Plan:MK Team as part of the formal consultation process.

Following this first phase, Plan:MK was significantly revised with a further period of formal consultation taking place during November and December 2017. The Committee reviewed the revised *Homes and Neighbourhoods* section at its December 2017 meeting, which was held the day before the second consultation closed. Thanks to an intensive day's work by the Committee's Overview and Scrutiny Officer on the closing date, the Committee was able to submit its comments on the revised document on time.

Housing Service



During 2017/18 the Council welcomed Michael Kelleher to the post of Service Director (Housing and Regeneration). The Committee received an in-depth presentation from Mr Kelleher at its September meeting, where, after a brief biography by way of introduction, he set out his plans for the restructuring of the

Housing Service, the need to recruit more staff to handle the continually increasing demand for the Council's housing services, tackling the problem of homelessness effectively and the need to respond to new legislation. He also advised the Committee of his surprise that the Housing Revenue Account did not have its own business plan in place and that developing such a plan was a priority.

Housing Revenue Account and Housing and Community General Fund

In conjunction with the Budget Scrutiny Committee, the Committee reviewed the 2018/19 draft budget proposals in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Housing and Community General Fund in December. Although it endorsed the recommendations in the HRA budget report it flagged up areas of concern that it thought should be monitored during 2018/19, including the possibility of a rise in rent arrears following the introduction of Universal Credit and changes to the Welfare Reform and Work Act, reducing the ability of the HRA to finance investment in the Council's housing stock, whether the balance between responsive and planned repairs and maintenance is

reasonable and fair to tenants and that the works are being carried out properly.

The Committee also plans to carry out scrutiny of the new HRA Business Plan once this is available.

Grenfell Tower Tragedy and Fire Safety

The Grenfell Tower fire happened just before the first meeting of the Committee in 2017. Although there are not many high-rise residential blocks in Milton Keynes, at its first meeting the Committee sought assurance from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Adult Social Care that the Council was carrying out all necessary fire safety checks and where necessary would carry out remedial action to ensure the safety of its residents. Whilst satisfied about the measures the Council was taking in respect of its own high-rise properties (Mellish Court in Blechley and The Gables in Wolverton) it was concerned about privately owned Stephenson House in Blechley and requested updates at subsequent meetings.

At its September meeting the Committee received the following updates on fire safety measures:

- ❖ Information from Milton Keynes Council to residents in Stephenson House;
- ❖ Position Statement Update from Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority on fire safety in Stephenson House;
- ❖ General Fire Safety Information for Residents (in high-rise accommodation) issued by the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service;
- ❖ Response from the Place Directorate on fire safety issues in planning applications.

The Committee is due to receive a further update on fire safety measures at its meeting scheduled for 27 March.

Tenant Participation and Community

Meetings of the Committee have been regularly attended by local residents and the Committee welcomes this interest in its work.

However, although scrutiny of the planned regeneration of some estates in Milton Keynes was allocated to the Scrutiny Management Committee, this has been a major concern of local residents, who have raised it in one form or another at every meeting they have attended, making it very difficult for the Committee to avoid an overlap of work with the Scrutiny Management Committee.



At the invitation of local residents, as part of its Community remit, the Committee undertook a site visit to the Fullers Slade estate in September to meet residents and hear their views on the future of their estate.

At its January meeting the Committee heard from residents that they felt the Council's approach to Tenant Participation and communication with local residents' groups was deteriorating. The Committee learned that there had been a recent high turnover of staff in this team and that currently the posts were vacant. The Service Director (Housing and Regeneration) agreed that there were issues with this area of the Housing Service which he was planning to address through the staffing restructure. The Committee will be monitoring this during 2018/19 to ensure that the promised improvements materialise and that the residents are happy that the Council's obligations in this respect are being fulfilled.

Other Work

During 2017, three members of the Committee, Councillors Coventry, Ferrans and Geaney, together with three members of the Health and Adult Social Care Committee, Councillors M Bradburn, Walker and P Williams, and two members of the Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership, took part in a Task and Finish Group examining the provision of Mental Health Services for the Homeless in Milton Keynes. This was an extensive piece of work with a range of recommendations being presented to Cabinet, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group in November.

Other work has included an update on work being done to reduce the overspend on the Home to School Transport budget, a presentation from the Citizen's Advice Bureau and the work they do to support clients with housing problems and an update on the Council's participation in the National Homeless Property Fund (Real Lettings Scheme).



At its March meeting the Committee will hold its annual session with YourMK, receiving updates on progress since last year, including communications with residents, the number of both responsive and planned repairs carried out, how well the new gas maintenance contract is working and progress on the transitional housing development at Fishermead.

The other major item at this meeting will be scrutiny of the Council's Draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document, which sets out the Council's plans to fulfil its role of an 'enabler' and 'regulator' in assisting others to meet the housing requirements of the community and how it will work corporately and in partnership with others where it can to meet this goal.

Acknowledgements

During the year the Committee heard from a number of external witnesses and would like to thank them for their time in coming and discussing their specialist areas of work with the Committee. There have been some interesting and useful discussions, enabling progress, albeit not always as quickly as the Committee would wish, to be made.

The Committee would also like to thank officer colleagues for their time and attendance at meetings, particularly Michael Kelleher (Service Director (Housing and Regeneration)), Eleanor Nickless (Head of Homelessness Prevention and Housing Access), Julie Nokes (Housing Options Manager) and Mark Smith (Finance Business Partner (Housing and Growth, Economy and Culture)) for their attendance at meetings, the production of relevant reports and their contributions to the Committee's discussions.

Finally the Committee would like to thank its Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Elizabeth Richardson, for her help and support throughout the year.



Councillor Chris Williams - Chair
Councillor Pauline Wallis – Vice-Chair
Councillor Hiten Ganatra – Vice-Chair



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