

Report to Council

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 14/15

Report of: Councillor Colin McLaren, Chair of Overview & Scrutiny

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Reason for Decision

To provide Council with an overview of the contribution made by Overview and Scrutiny during 14/15 as required in line with the Council's Constitution.

Executive Summary

The report outlines the purpose of overview and scrutiny, the roles and responsibilities of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Performance and Value for Money Select Committee, a summary of the work undertaken by overview and scrutiny during 2014/15 and an outline of how individuals can get involved in overview and scrutiny in Oldham.

Recommendations

That the report be approved.

1. What is Overview and Scrutiny?

- 1.1 All local authorities with an executive model have an Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) function, which was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000.
- 1.2 Overview and Scrutiny bodies are made up of Elected Members (Councillors) who are not members of the Cabinet but who hold those decision makers who are members of the Cabinet to account. The Overview and Scrutiny process is not political – it is driven by the interests of the residents of Oldham.
- 1.3 O&S bodies cannot make decisions, but instead examine policies, decisions, areas of work and make recommendations to the Cabinet. It acts as a “critical friend” to the Council and its partners around the decision-making process and uses informed debate and evidence to make its recommendations.
- 1.4 Scrutiny works to drive forward improvements to the Council’s policies, procedures and delivery.

2 Policy Development

- 2.1 The key focus of overview and scrutiny work is to influence and develop policy. O&S can do this through the following ways:
- 2.2 Decision-Making Scrutiny - Holding the Executive to account is a key part of the O&S role. This is done through receiving reports at Committee, Call-in and questioning of Cabinet Members at scrutiny meetings.
- 2.3 Pre-Decision Input - Input on draft policies and strategies before they have been agreed by Cabinet or Council helps to ensure they are more robust and that a check and balance process is in place. It also provides an opportunity for cross party consensus to be development on issues such as the Corporate Plan, Education Strategy and Council Tax Reduction. O&S can act as a consultee in respect of such policies and potential new legislation.
- 2.4 Monitor and Track Implementation of Recommendations - Ensuring that the views and contributions of Overview and Scrutiny have been considered when work is undertaken to improve services – an essential part of the scrutiny process.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

3.1.2 Membership

- Councillor McLaren (Chair)
- Councillor Ball
- Councillor Cosgrove
- Councillor Dean
- Councillor Klonowski
- Councillor Toor
- Councillor Williams
- Councillor Williamson

3.1.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board leads the development of the Overview and Scrutiny process in Oldham. The Board chooses issues and topics to look at during the year, be it reviewing a proposed policy in advance of decision or considering the impact of a key decision made by the Council.

3.1.4 The Board is also responsible for:

- Publicly holding the Executive to account for delivering the Council's priorities and for the decision they make.
- Examining any matters of wider public interest (not just Council services) which affect the wellbeing of the Borough and its people.
- Having a statutory role scrutinising substantial developments or changes to National Health Services and Crime and Disorder issues.

3.1.5 During the last year, the Chair also continued to meet with the senior managers in each of the Council's Directorates. At these meetings, the Chair and officers considered issues Overview and Scrutiny could potentially add value to regarding the development of Council services, policies and the decision making process.

3.2 Performance and Value for Money Select Committee

3.2.1 Membership

- Councillor Wigglesworth (Chair)
- Councillor McCann
- Councillor Ahmad
- Councillor M Bashforth
- Councillor Houle
- Councillor Judge
- Councillor Roberts
- Councillor Harkness
- Councillor Sheldon

3.2.2 The Performance and Value for Money Select Committee considers how the Council and its partners are performing and whether value for money is being provided for the people of Oldham. It also monitors the implementation of recommendations which Overview and Scrutiny has had accepted by the Council's Cabinet.

3.2.3 One of the most important aspects of the Select Committees role is to examine the Council's budget proposals each year. This involves considering various stages of both the administration's budget and any alternative budget proposals put forward by the opposition.

3.2.4 The Select Committee also examines the Council's corporate performance report on a quarterly basis and considers the performance and value for money of the Council's work undertaken with partners.

4 Where has O&S contributed in 2014/15?

4.1 O&S Management Board: Key Plans and Strategies

4.1.1 Corporate Plan - The Board considered the process for and the development of the Council's Corporate Plan, the Oldham Plan. Board Members contributed ideas about how the plan could be made relevant to communities and took part in a wider member workshop that helped shape the devised plan, which was ultimately approved at Council in July 2014.

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- 4.1.2 Education Strategy - The Board considered the launch of the Oldham Education and Skills Commission. The role of the local authority and the role of school collaborative arrangements, which incorporate Teaching School Alliances, were explained to the Board. The Board expressed a desire to see the Commission address a number of issues including around the number of school places and those new arrivals not ready for school. The Board recommended that a School Governor should be on the Commission and suggested that a one-off workshop should take place to identify issues which may need to be addressed following self-evaluation.
- 4.1.3 Affordable Warmth Strategy - The Board were informed of levels of funding available to residents, of which Oldham had the highest uptake in the Northwest. Significant achievements had been made in affordable warmth schemes which included energy efficiency measures in homes, winter health events, assistance to the most vulnerable groups and a grant for boiler replacements. The development of a Warm Homes Oldham Scheme with a joint investment scheme through the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Oldham Housing Investment Partnership (OHIP) was praised as a key initiative. The Board was informed of the progress against targets sets within the strategy which included the significant improvements and investment in affordable warmth schemes and efficiency measures installed in Oldham homes. As well as energy efficiency the Board recognised that the schemes were tackling fuel poverty and improving the health and wellbeing in some of the most vulnerable groups. Work in this area was celebrated by the Board.
- 4.1.4 Housing Strategies - The Board examined progress on the existing Housing Strategy and the emerging themes for the 2015-18 Strategy which included Residential Growth, Health Homes, Improving Neighbourhoods and Building Stronger Communities. The Board asked for there to be consideration of issues around the quality of housing and the lack of housing available for older tenants. The Board also reviewed the Tenancy Strategy in more specific detail, looking at how housing was let and how long tenancies would be granted. The Board was satisfied that the strategy enabled the Council and housing associations to manage social housing efficiently and help those in greatest need. The Board was also updated on the approach to dealing with homelessness in the Borough. Prevention of homelessness was the overwhelming objective supported by the Board and a multi-agency approach had been developed to support those households at risk.
- 4.1.5 Climate Change Strategy - The Board were provided information on how the Council aimed to tackle Climate Change which built upon the Oldham Climate Change Strategy and Community Energy Strategies. A detailed action plan, which had been prepared for submission to the Local Government Association, was shared with the Board. Feasibility studies were underway to look at solar power on schools, council owned buildings and green field sites. The Board endorsed the approach outlined in the strategy and action plan.
- 4.1.6 Council Tax Reduction - The proposed consultation process for the 2015/16 Council Tax Reduction Scheme was outlined for the Board. The Council had exceeded its target collected during 2013/14. Concerns were raised about those residents who paid and were subsidising those who did not. Arrangements were in place for recovery options. A workshop was requested and it was recommended that future report contained information on benchmarked information from other Greater Manchester authorities.
- 4.1.7 CSE Preventative Measures and Strategic Approach - The Board were informed of preventative measures operational within Oldham and future proposed strategies. The partnership approach to CSE had been in place for a number of years. The Board were informed about the work of the Local Safeguarding Board, the training provided, records maintenance and awareness training for members. Annual reports of both the Adults and

Children's Local Safeguarding Boards were also received and given constructive criticism, which was taken into consideration.

4.2 O&S Management Board: internal and external consultations

- 4.2.1 Selective Licensing - The Board were provided information on the consultation ongoing in selected neighbourhoods and project timescales in the selective licensing scheme. Sixteen areas had been identified and addressed low housing demand under the criteria of the Housing Act. The process of the fee was highlighted. The Board expressed disappointment that the Decent Homes Standards had not been included in the legislation.
- 4.2.2 Review of Licensing Act Policy - The Board was consulted on the statutory review of the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy. Members questioned if the policy could tackle long term problems and commented positively on the public safety element, before endorsing the overall policy.
- 4.2.3 Anti-Social Behaviour Management - Information was received on the introduction and commencement of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014), the implications for the Council and the wider Community Safety Partnership. The new legislation provided six new powers which included Criminal Behaviour Orders, Community Protection Notices, Closure Powers, Dispersal Powers, Community Remedy, Public Space Protection Orders and ASB Case Reviews.
- 4.2.4 Individual Electoral Registration - Information was provided on the introduction of the individual electoral registration system which included a data matching exercise. There were three key elements of the IER which included household enquiry forms, confirmation letters and invitations register. A detailed communication plan had been prepared with key messages to be shared across the authority and with public and voluntary sector partners.

4.3 O&S Management Board: Services monitored

- 4.3.1 Adoption and Fostering - Information was provided on the performance of the Adoption Service and on the Government's adoption agenda. The service had made good progress on the scorecard. The challenges facing the service were outlined. Members asked for clarification on the ability to attract local adopters and praised the work being undertaken in adoption and fostering services.
- 4.3.2 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub - The Board received information on the unit whose aim was to promote effective and timely information sharing and strengthen the partnership approach for decision making which was enabled at the point of referral. The unit was established with the collocation of a range of professional services. The Board raised the number of referrals through the emergency services and were impressed with the effectiveness of the service.
- 4.3.3 Youth Services - The Board received information on the future delivery of the Wider Youth Offer for Oldham. The savings required from the service was explained. The Board expressed concern on the impact of poorer areas being disadvantaged.
- 4.3.4 Borough Wide Review of Zebra Crossings - The Board were informed of the methodology of the review and the information included in the assessments, e.g. reported accidents, assessment of traffic speed, pedestrian desire lines, assessment of street lighting and local factors. Oldham did very well with road safety and was the best performing authority in Greater Manchester related to child accidents which had been addressed through targeted projects and education.

4.3.5 Get Oldham Working -_The Board received a report which outlined the Get Oldham Working Programme achievements, the opportunities created for residents and the priorities for 2014/15. The Board raised concerns about the focus on young people and recommended that people over 50 required assistance and support into work.

4.4 **PVFM Select Committee: Finance Scrutiny**

4.4.1 Scrutiny of Budget Proposals – The Council’s overall budget proposals were considered by the Committee at various stages during the 2014/15 Municipal Year. Initial outline proposals were presented to the Committee during July 14 and they continued to be considered at various intervals up until approval at full Council at the start of 2015.

4.4.2 Public Health Budget – The Committee were informed of how Public Health had transferred to the Council. In terms of the budget, the Committee learnt of a ring fenced public health budget which would support the carrying out of public health functions and improvement of health and wellbeing for residents of the borough. The Committee were made aware that since receiving the public health budget the Council had initiated a major review of all contracts under the budget. The Committee resolved to scrutinise the review of contracts in the future.

4.4.3 Community Care Budget – The Committee were concerned with the overspend in Adult Social Care, whilst acknowledging it was common in a number of local authorities due to the increasing demand in adult social care. The Committee was informed of actions within the recovery plan which aimed to reduce expenditure on care during the financial year, including electronic call monitoring, review of care packages and review of supported accommodation. The Committee resolved to challenge performance against targets at the end of the financial year.

4.5 **PVFM Select Committee: Performance Scrutiny**

4.5.1 Quarterly Council Performance Report and Challenge – Reports were presented to the Committee in terms of how the Council was performing against its key local and statutory priorities. The Committee undertook more detailed scrutiny of a number of topics through examining the performance report. These included what the Council is doing in respect of childhood obesity, early year’s performance and educational attainment. It also celebrated successes, such as the performance of our adoption service against its statutory measures.

4.5.2 Unity Partnership – The Committee examined the performance of the Unity Partnership against the contract and its key performance indicators and had an overview of the contract refresh work being undertaken, which the Committee endorsed.

4.5.3 First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO) – FCHO provided an update on 2013/14 year end progress, community investment into Oldham, the approach to community engagement and advised of the plans to carry out a social impact report on the first 5 years following transfer of housing stock to FCHO from the Council. It was recommended that better communication links with Ward Councillors should be a priority. As a result, FCHO arranged for walkabouts with Councillors and tenants and for this to take place on a regular basis.

4.5.4 Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) – Reports were provided which outlined the operational and contractual performance of Oldham Community Leisure for the financial year. Activities offered in the individual leisure centres, Council and Community Partnership events, environmental update were listed. The Committee commended the

quality of the report in terms of providing Members with an opportunity to openly performance.

4.6 Health Scrutiny Sub Committee

4.6.1 The Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee has met six times since April 2014. The Committee has received a number of reports from across the Health and Care Sector in Oldham, but has shown a particular interest in the work being conducted by the Integrated Commissioning Partnership, particularly the re-shaping of carer services, how the hospital discharge process is being improved and how the development of the two new leisure centres in Oldham and Royton will improve the health and wellbeing of Oldham's residents.

4.6.2 The focus of the Sub-Committee in the near future will be on the impact of plans for the devolution of health and social care responsibilities to Greater Manchester. Additionally, the implementation of the Healthier Together reforms of the provision of acute services across Greater Manchester which will impact on the service offer available at the Royal Oldham Hospital and across North-East of Greater Manchester, for Oldham residents.

5 Ways to get involved with O&S?

5.1 Overview and Scrutiny has a rolling work programme. The current version, for 2015/6, can be found on the Council's website at:

<http://decisionrecording.oldham.gov.uk/documents/s60664/OVERVIEW%20AND%20SCRUTINY%20BOARD%20Work%20Programme%202015%2016%20V4.pdf>

5.2 If you are interested in attending a meeting of either the Board or Select Committee, meeting dates can be found on the website at:

<http://decisionrecording.oldham.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?Categories=-13236&bcr=1>

5.3 Contact and speak to your local Councillor about issues you feel have an impact on your local community in Oldham. Overview and Scrutiny will consider issues raised by Councillors.

5.4 You can contact Lori Hughes on 0161 770 4716 to ask Overview and Scrutiny to consider an issue that has an impact on Oldham and local people – this could be a problem, Council service or an issue you think the Council should consider take in a lead in improving.

6 Legal Services Comments

6.1 n/a

7. Co-operative Agenda

7.1 The Annual report contains examples of work aligned to the Council's co-operative approach in relation to issues that have an impact of local communities.

8 Environmental and Health & Safety Implications

8.1 None

9 Equality, community cohesion and crime implications

9.1 None

10 **Equality Impact Assessment Completed?**

10.1 No

11 **Key Decision**

11.1 No

12 **Key Decision Reference**

12.1 N/A

13 **Background Papers**

13.1 None

14 **Appendices**

14.1 None