Thank you Madam Mayor for the opportunity to report to the Council the latest developments on various matters relating to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This report covers meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21st January, 4th, 11th and 26th February, 26th March and 8th April 2015.

21st January 2015

The Committee held a special meeting to consider an item that had been called-in from the Rochdale Township meeting held on 5th November 2014, relating to the disposal of land at Cut Lane/Caldershaw Road, Rochdale. After a detailed consideration the Committee referred this matter back to Rochdale Township and the matter was duly reconsidered there on 4th March 2015. It should be noted that this matter generated considerable public interest, where a substantial number of members of the public attended the Township Committee’s meeting for this item, which I feel helps to demonstrate the importance and relevance of the Call-in function.

4th February 2015

Directorate Plans 2014/2015
The Committee scrutinised progress reports detailing the performance of the Council’s six Directorates, during the third quarter of 2014/15. At an earlier meeting of the Committee, Members in endorsing the Directorate Plans had asked for quarterly updates on progress of these activities. In this regard the Committee received updates in respect of Adult Care Services, Public Health Services, Children’s Services, Customers and Corporate Services, Economy and Environment Services and Finance Services. It was pleasing to note that the various update reports were mainly presented jointly, by both the relevant Portfolio Holders and Directors, or their representatives.

Township Plans 2014/2015
The Committee received a report detailed the progress and achievements, thus far in response to the priorities identified in the Township’s Plan 2014/2015.

Rochdale Safer Communities Partnership
The Committee scrutinised a report that provided Members with a summary of the how the Rochdale Safer Communities Partnership had performed against its targets for the second quarter of 2014/2015 (July - September). The report was pleasingly co-presented by Chief Inspector Khan (Greater Manchester Police).

Rochdale Development Agency
The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Economy and Environment Services which presented the performance monitoring report of the Rochdale Development Agency (RDA) for the second quarter of 2014/2015, which recognised that RDA is the primary delivery agency for physical regeneration, development and investment in the Borough. In a detailed consideration of the report Members of the Committee expressed their general satisfaction at the progress that the RDA had made thus far in 2014/15.

Link4Life
The Committee considered a report of the Interim Chief Executive of Link4Life which provided information relating to their performance during the second quarter period of...
2014/2015. I declared an interest in this item, as a Council appointed Trustee of Link4Life and this item was therefore chaired by the Vice Chair, Councillor Linden.

Homelessness Strategy Update Report
The Committee scrutinised a report that provided a six monthly update on homelessness issues across the Borough. The report also provided Members with a detailed update on the delivery of Homelessness services by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing since the transfer of the Homelessness operational services in July 2014.

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing
The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Economy and Environment Services which provided Members with an update on the performance of Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) during the first two quarters of 2014/2015 (April – September) in relation to the achievement of the aspirations, commitments and promises set out in the Councils formal tenants consultation (offer) document “Your Home Your Choice” for the housing stock transfer process.

11th February 2015

Non Domestic Rates: Discretionary Relief Policy Amendments
The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Finance which was seeking Full Council, at its meeting on 24th February 2015, to consider and approve amendments to the Non Domestic Rates: Discretionary Rate Relief Policy in accordance with the amended powers available to the Council under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

Financial Update
The Committee received several reports that had been prepared by the Director of Finance which detailed the Council’s current financial situation regarding both the Capital and the revenue budgets. In considering these reports, as part of the consultation process on the budget setting process for 2015/16, Members noted that they had received a prior consideration, and approval, by the Cabinet, and were then due to be submitted to the Council’s Budget Fixing meeting on 24th February 2015.

Pay Policy Statement 2015/16
The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Services and Neighbourhoods Portfolio Holder regarding the Council’s Pay Policy Statement for 2015/2016, in order that the Authority complies with Section 8 of the Localism Act 2011 and to ensure that the Council’s Pay Policy is developed in the light of future corporate and service agendas. The purpose of the Pay Policy Statement is to provide transparency in terms of the Council’s approach to setting the pay of its employees (excluding teachers and support staff in schools where these matters are the responsibility of the relevant School Governing Body) and staff transferred to the Council under TUPE who retain their previous terms, conditions and policies).

Savings Programme 2015/16 and 2016/17
The Committee scrutinised a confidential report of the Director of Finance which considered savings proposals that had been subject to consultation as part of the statutory duty to set a lawful balanced budget, and which affected Council Services across the Authority.

Revenue Budget, Capital Budget and Council Tax 2015/16
The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Finance which recommended the Revenue Budget (District Purposes), Capital Budget and Council Tax for 2015/2016 for submission to the Budget Fixing Council meeting on 24th February 2015 and which provided estimates for 2016/2017 and 2017/2018. The report was submitted as part of the
Council’s consultation process on the 2015/16 budget and was seeking the views of the Committee prior to the submission of the report to the Cabinet and Full Council.

**Treasury Management Strategy**
The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Finance that sought approval from the Council for the Borough’s Treasury Management Strategy 2015/2016. The Director advised that the report was due to be considered by the Cabinet and by the Council after consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**26th February 2015**

**Discretionary Crisis Fund**
The Committee considered a report that informed Members of the third Quarter 2014/2015 performance of the Discretionary Crisis Fund. The Fund had received 839 applications in the third Quarter 2014/15. 363 applications were successful and 414 were refused. 62 applications were withdrawn or cancelled by applicants, or were pending a decision.

**Progress of the Improvement Plan**
The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Children’s Services which updated Members of the progress made against the Improvement Notice that had been issued to the Council and its partners by the Secretary of State, in April 2013, and which was subsequently updated in April 2014. In considering the report in detail the Committee were advised that key areas for future action included embedding improvements already made; delivering OFSTED’s Action Plans; producing less variability and greater consistency in practice; continuing with the progress on Early Help; completing recruitment and retaining the strongest available staff; building on success of services that are delivering well. The Committee requested that the Director of Children’s Services submit a progress report to a future meeting, in approximately six months, detailing progress made in relation to implementing recommendations detailed in OFSTED’ Action Plans. Members of the Committee asked numerous and detailed questions including a number of written questions that had been received in advance of the meeting.

**Discretionary Council Tax Support Policy**
The Committee considered a report that presented a proposed Discretionary Council Tax Support Policy for consideration, in advance of submission for approval by Cabinet on the 23rd March 2015.

**Corporate Complaints and Social Care Complaints**
The Committee scrutinised a report that provided Members with details of complaints received by Services during the third Quarter of 2014/15 (October to December). In considering the Social Care Complaints report the Committee asked if in future we could in future be advised of the numbers of all complaints received that related to the provision of adult care services that are undertaken by external provider organisations.

**Corporate Health Staffing Indicators**
The Committee scrutinised a report that provided Members with a summary of the performance of Council Services against the Corporate Health Performance Indicators for staff in the 3rd Quarter 2014/2015. The report identified a trend within absence levels over the year and each quarter to identify when the highest levels of absence occur this is based on absence levels over the last four years. This has shown that over the year around 24% of absences occur in Quarter 1; 22% in Quarter 2, increases to 30% in Quarter 3 and shows an improvement in Quarter 4 with 24% of absences.

**Food and Feed Service Plan 2014/15**
The Committee scrutinised a report which presented the Council’s Food and Feed Service Plan for the current municipal year. The report identified any variation from 2013/2014, and
provided details of future developments for the Service. After a detailed consideration we agreed to have further reports on this and related matters including a confidential report on the Council's enforcement actions, with regard to the licensing of private hire and hackney carriage vehicles. We also requested specific feedback after the Foods Standards Agency complete their independent audit of the Service.

26th March 2015

Rochdale Safer Communities Partnership
The Committee scrutinised a report that provided Members with a summary of the how the Rochdale Safer Communities Partnership had performed against its targets for the second quarter of 2014/2015 (October - December). The report was pleasingly co-presented by Superintendent Mallon (Greater Manchester Police).

Rochdale Development Agency
The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Economy and Environment Services which presented the performance monitoring report of the Rochdale Development Agency (RDA) for the third quarter of 2014/2015, as with previous reports on this matter Members of the Committee expressed their general satisfaction at the progress that the RDA had made thus far in 2014/15.

Link4Life
The Committee considered a report of the Interim Chief Executive of Link4Life which provided information relating to their performance during the third quarter period of 2014/2015. I declared an interest in this item, as a Council appointed Trustee of Link4Life and this item was therefore chaired by the Vice Chair, Councillor Linden.

Financial Update Reports
The Committee received several reports that had been prepared by the Director of Finance which detailed the Council’s current financial situation regarding both the Capital and the revenue budgets.

Revenues and Benefits Service Correspondence Review
The Committee considered an update report on the implementation of a review of correspondence issued to customers of the Council by the Revenues and Benefits Service and to provide an update of progress made to improve the Services communication with residents. The review that is currently being undertaken considers correspondence issued to customers in respect of Council Tax, Business Rates and Benefits and can be categorised into three types: Static Templates; Variable Documents; Free Text Letters. The Service had consulted with key partners including the Plain English Campaign in developing the communications strategy. It was pleasing to note that the Finance Service had received a charter mark from the Plain English Society for its work in this regard.

Rochdale Music Service Discretionary Fees and Charges
The Committee considered a report which detailed the Rochdale Music Service’s proposed fees and charges for 2015/16 and in considering this report the Committee noted that the Cabinet had approved this report at its meeting on 23rd March 2015.

Inspired Spaces
The Committee scrutinised a report detailing the performance of Inspired Spaces in the 2nd and 3rd Quarters of 2014/2015.

Derby Street Nursery School, Heywood- Proposed Discontinuance
The Committee was consulted on a report of the Director for Children’s Services consulting on the proposal to discontinue Derby Street Nursery School, Heywood, with effect from 31st March 2015.
Finance System Procurement
The Committee scrutinised a report that had previously been considered by the Cabinet, on 23rd March, which sought a delegation to the Director of Finance to enter into a contract with Civica UK Ltd for the Council’s main finance system for a five year period with an option to extend for a further two years.

Greater Manchester Housing Investment Fund
The Committee scrutinised a report that had previously been considered by the Cabinet, on 23rd March 2015, which had sought approval for the Council to enter into an indemnity agreement to support the Greater Manchester Housing Investment Fund.

Acquisition of Brook House, Middleton
The Committee scrutinised a report relating to the proposed acquisition of Brook House, Middleton.

8th April 2015
The agenda for this meeting was published, and held, after the deadline for the compilation of this report, so I will update the Council verbally on the reports that the Committee considered on 8th April. The reports for this meeting of the Committee included updated information on the operations of the Children and Adults Safeguarding Boards, the development of the Public Service Reform agenda, the Street Lighting PFI contract, arrangements for public and private hire vehicle licensing and the implementation of the Council’s ICT Strategy. We are also due to hold on that date an informal session relating to the provision of asylum seekers in the Borough.

This is my last report to the Council in the current Municipal year and I should note that the Committee’s Work Programme for 2014/2015 has been extremely full, and reflects the additional areas of responsibility that the Committee has absorbed since the beginning of this Municipal Year. I continue to be grateful for the ongoing commitment of Members in what are frequently very long meetings, often starting early to enable the Committee to complete its business.

Whilst long meetings are not ideal it is essential, in my view, that proper scrutiny and lines of questioning are not curtailed by either time allocation or restriction on the number of questions that Members are permitted to ask. Accordingly the planned additional meetings for 2015/2016 should go some way towards getting the balance right.

An important aspect of scrutiny is that recommendations and requests from the Committee are followed up effectively. During 2014/2015 we introduced an Actions List for tracking these items which is considered at each meeting of the Committee, usually in conjunction with the minutes of previous meetings. This has helped to facilitate proper implementation and consideration of our requests and observations, to monitor feedback and to ask for further reports that the Committee has requested.

Finally I would like to put on record my thanks for the support given to the Committee, and particularly myself, by Peter Thompson.

Councillor Mike Holly  - Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Thank you Madam Mayor, I will be pleased to answer any questions from Members of the Council about these or any other matter relating to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.