Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report
2018-2019

Making a difference and adding value
Foreword

Rochdale Borough Council’s Overview and Scrutiny function, forms an integral part of the Council’s operations, with its influence being seen in policy formation, the budget setting process, holding decision makers to account and the drive for continuous service improvement. As Chairs of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees in Rochdale, we believe it is vital to ensure robust Overview and Scrutiny arrangements continue to be a key element of the Council’s governance and decision-making arrangements, particularly in an ongoing climate of budget pressures and national uncertainty.

Overview and Scrutiny continues to take a proactive approach to addressing current and emerging concerns, and to deliver improved services for the residents of Rochdale. During the municipal year 2018-19 Scrutiny has undertaken a considerable amount of work via reports to meetings, working groups and Committee visits. Through information received and evidence gathered there have been recommendations made to Cabinet for budget savings, policy changes and service improvements, with many being considered and accepted.

We are continually looking to ensure the Council’s Scrutiny function is as effective and comprehensive as possible and as Chairs of each Committee with our Vice-Chairs continue to meet when possible to discuss cross-cutting issues and ensure coherence across all Committees. Over the course of the year, we have also made some practical changes to ensure scrutiny remains impactful.

We are proud of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees and what they have achieved over the past year we look forward to a year of effective Overview and Scrutiny in 2019-20.

Councillor Holly - Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Dutton – Chair of the Health, Schools and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Meredith - Chair of the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny work programme and Key Achievements 2018/19

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

The scrutiny work programme for the year reflects a balanced programme of work and of improvement in the operation of scrutiny which meets the four principles of effective public scrutiny, which are:

- To provide a constructive “critical friend” challenge to executive policy-makers and decisions-makers
- To amplify the voice and concerns of the public;
- To ensure scrutiny is carried out by independent people who lead and own the scrutiny role
- To drive improvement in public services.

Throughout the year the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committees tackle wide and varied work programmes which cut across all Council Directorates. The Committees engage with appropriate Cabinet Members prior to decisions being taken and also held them to account on service areas and policy.

This report summarises the activities of the Council’s three Scrutiny Committees and reports on some of the highlights and achievements over the municipal year 2018-19.

Responsive/Hot Topic Scrutiny

Scrutiny Committees at Rochdale select a work programme at the beginning of each municipal year, however Members regularly monitor and evaluating the priorities for scrutiny throughout the year and ensures that Overview and Scrutiny Committees are, flexible and responsive to high-priority issues or policy changes that occur throughout the year.

During the course of the 2018/19 Municipal year three special meetings were convened:

a. IICSA Report

A meeting of the Health, Schools and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee was held on 23rd May 2018, to which all Members of the Council were invited, to discuss the findings of the national Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICA) following its investigation into historic events in Rochdale. The meeting represented an opportunity for Members of the Council, to demonstrate commitment to child protection issues.

The meeting was requested to reflect that the national inquiry and the investigations were primarily about victims of child sexual abuse and to note that the inquiry had given them a voice.
The report that was presented to the meeting had been prepared following the publication of the IICSA report into its Inquiry into historical events in which children in institutional settings were harmed between the 1960’s and mid 1990’s. The report summarised the findings from the Independent Inquiry report, its context and process, but importantly to provide members with information and assurance about what has changed since that period.

b. **Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan**

On 13\textsuperscript{th} March 2019, a special meeting of the Health, Schools and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee was held for the purpose of scrutinising the key features of Greater Manchester’s feasibility study and its Outline Business Case to reduce nitrogen dioxide exceedances in both the Rochdale Borough and across Greater Manchester in the shortest possible period of time. The Outline Business Case had been developed by Rochdale Borough Council collectively with all of the Greater Manchester local authorities and also with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and co-ordinated by Transport for Greater Manchester in line with Government direction and guidance.

The Committee was advised that taking action on air quality was no longer optional. The severe and long lasting health implications of poor air quality as well as the legal obligations placed on Greater Manchester local authorities meant that authorities needed to act decisively and quickly to reduce harmful air pollutants, and nitrogen oxides in particular. Greater Manchester authorities in deciding to work together to respond to this vital issue were demonstrating collective leadership, which would be essential in helping to clean the air for the combined population of nearly three million residents. Analysis revealed that locations of damaging roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations could be found in every district.

After a detailed analysis of the proposals, the Committee commended the report and recommended that the Cabinet approve the detailed recommendations contained therein – which they duly did.

c. **Highways Services Maintenance Contract**

On 20\textsuperscript{th} March 2019, a specially convened joint meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Communities, regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a detailed report relating to the Highway Maintenance Service Contract, which is due to expire on 31\textsuperscript{st} March 2020.

The current Contract delivered the following highway services: Reactive/Routine Highway Repairs; Planned Maintenance Works; Drainage Maintenance; Winter Maintenance; Out of Hours Call Out.

The report that the joint Committee received set out the delivery options available to implement at the end of the current contract end date. The joint Committee, in this regard, also received specific representations from Councillor Meredith (Chair of the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee), who had actively participated in the study group that had examined this subject in the lead-up to the Committee’s meeting.
Members of the Committee were assured that concerns they had raised (Mainly around the quality of the work being carried out) would be taken into account when considering the options relating to the Highway Maintenance Service Contract for 2020 onwards. The concerns of Members were reported to the Portfolio Holder for Environment, who was leading negotiations with Balfour Beatty, the current holders of the contract, regarding the future operation of the service. in the negotiations the Portfolio Holder was to be supported by the Chair of the Communities Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Senior Council Officers.

Call-In

Call-in provides a mechanism for Councillors to intervene when they feel that a decision being made by the cabinet needs to be revisited (or possibly changed). It provides a key check and balance in the leader/cabinet system of governance. No Member felt the need to use Call-in during 2018/19.

Planned scrutiny

At the first meeting of the municipal year topics were identified during the development of the annual work programme, or were selected to be looked at over the coming year (either as a full committee or through task and finish work).

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee’s primary role is to hold the executive to account by way of undertaking policy and budget development reviews as well as questioning/challenging the judgement and decisions making of the Portfolio Holder’s for Finance and Resources and Senior Officers.

Challenge reviews/topics

The following in depth evidence-based reviews have been completed and have been or will be reported to Cabinet and the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

Savings – Scrutiny’s views presented to Cabinet throughout 2018, this important topic focused on the work being undertaken to ensure the Council met it financial obligations and planned savings targets for 2018-19.

Highway Maintenance - The Committee commissioned a joint study group, with members form the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee that met on a number of occasions throughout the year to examine issues appertaining to the Highway Maintenance Service Contract which expires in March 2020 (see above).

The work of the study group culminated with a joint special meeting of the Corporate and the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny
Committee’s. Recommendations from the Study Group have been presented to Cabinet’s consideration. (See the Responsive/Hot Topic Scrutiny section)

Some of the other topics covered by the Committee in 2018/19 included:

- Quarterly Directorate Plan Updates (Resources and the appropriate services within the Neighbourhoods Directorate)
- Directorate Plans 2018/19 (for Resources and Neighbourhoods Directorates)
- Regular revenue and corporate capital finance updates
- Budgetary reports preparing for the following year’s budget and beyond including scrutiny of the authority’s capital programme proposals and of its Medium-Term Financial Strategy
- Performance monitoring reports in respect of Corporate Complaints (including the Local Government Ombudsman’s Annual Report); Health Related Absences; performance data around Agilisys and the management of the corporate call centre.
- Presentations on the role of the customer transformation programme, welfare reform, the Council’s Digital Strategy and its Communications Strategy.
- Scrutiny of proposals affecting the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

**Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee’s primary role is to assist in the process of holding the executive to account by way of questioning/challenging the judgement and decision making of the Portfolio Holder’s for Environment, Regeneration, Business, Skills and Employment, Culture and Communities and Senior Officers.

**Challenge reviews/topics**

The following in depth evidence-based reviews have been completed and have been or will be reported to Cabinet and the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

**Markets** – following concerns about the operation of the Rochdale market the Committee undertook a detailed review of the provision of markets across the Borough and this is a matter that will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis in 2019/20.

**Winter Gritting** – although 2018/19 was a relatively mild winter for the Borough the Committee examined the Council’s policies and procedures for winter maintenance especially with regard to the gritting of the Borough’s highway network and the provision of grit bins.

Some of the topics covered by the Committee in 2018/19 included:

- Directorate Plans (Neighbourhoods and Economy Directorates – including the Rochdale Development Agency)
- Directorate Plans Quarterly Updates (Neighbourhoods and Economy Directorates)
• Discretionary Crisis Fund (updates on the progress of the Fund)
• Rochdale Boroughwide Housing – performance monitoring information
• Rochdale Safer Community Partnership – including ‘town centre enforcement’ via the use of Public Space Protection Orders
• Food and Feed Plan 2018/19
• Housing allocations – policy and strategy
• Playing Pitch Strategy proposals
• Waste Collection and Enforcement Policy Updates
• Winter gritting and highway maintenance proposals
• Highways (Bridges and Structures) Inspection Policies.

Health, Schools and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The purpose of the Health, Schools and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee is also to challenge the Council’s Executive, including Portfolio Holders for Health and Wellbeing, Children’s Services and Adult Social Care, senior council officers and representatives of external NHS providers who operate in and across the Borough.: -

• To be the responsible Committee for the Council’s health scrutiny function (with the exception of any referrals to the Secretary of State arising from statutory consultations being referred to Council for determination);
• For scrutiny of Health and Wellbeing (including scrutiny of the Health and Wellbeing Board, particularly with reference to joint commissioning proposals arising between the Council and the CCG with regard to health and social care arrangements); and
• For scrutiny of partnerships or key contractors: (eg Inspired Spaces), Child and Adult Social Care Services; Early Help and Schools Services; the Borough’s two Safeguarding Boards and for the overview of the respective Portfolio Holders and Directors.

A major aspect of the Committee’s work in 2018/19 has been the transformation of the health and social care landscape and urgent care redesign. In this regard the Committee received a presentation from the NHS Northern Care Alliance, who co-ordinate activities in the hospitals in their footprint which of course includes Rochdale Infirmary. In January 2019 Members of the Committee visited the Infirmary to view the hospital’s impressive, and award winning, facilities for patients with dementia and related conditions. In addition the Committee received a presentation from representatives of the Pennine Care NHS Trust who manage community services and mental health care services in the Borough (as well as Bury, Tameside, Oldham and Stockport). Members of the Committee visited the Trust’s facility at Nye Bevan House in Rochdale, in April 2019 and were impressed by the wide variety of services that are available for day-patients at this location; for audiology and podiatry. A further visit to the Trust’s facility at Birch Hill Hospital will be held in the near future.

Challenge reviews/topics
The following in depth evidence-based reviews have been completed and have been or will be reported to Cabinet, the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder and the appropriate thematic Partnership.

**Link4Life** – the Committee receives regular updates on the performance of Link4Life, and it is encouraging to learn of the increased uptake at all of their locations in the Borough in terms of physical activity and it was particularly encouraging to note the increased numbers of children undertaking swimming lessons.

**Safeguarding** – an important role of the Committee is to scrutinise the work of the Borough’s safeguarding boards. In this regard the Committee scrutinised in detail the annual reports of both the Safeguarding Children and the Safeguarding Adults Boards.

Some of the topics covered by the Committee in 2018/19 included:

- Directorate Plans and Directorate Plan Updates for Children’s Services, Adult Care Services and Public Health services
- Adult Care Quarterly Market Oversight Reports
- Link4Life Performance Review reports
- Presentation on Special Education Needs provision in Rochdale
- Updates on the Rochdale Borough Locality Plan
- Updates from healthcare providers: Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust, Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale NHS CCG (Northern Care Alliance)
- Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Adults and Children’s Safeguarding Board’s Annual Reports
- Social Care Complaints - quarterly reports
- Adoption Service – Annual Report 2018
- SUNRISE Team’s annual report
- Presentation on service provision for the Rochdale Borough from the North West Ambulance Service.

**Other Scrutiny undertaken**

**Greater Manchester Scrutiny**

Members of Rochdale Borough Council continue to work hard with other local authorities on various scrutiny Committees at a greater Manchester level to ensure that decisions made by the GMCA, the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) executive board, the Greater Manchester Transport committee and Transport for Greater Manchester are held to account.

**Regional Health Scrutiny**
The Council continues to work collaboratively at a regional level to ensure that the impact of changes to health services across local authority boundaries does not adversely impact upon residents of Rochdale. The Council has this year taken a leading role in administering one of the two Joint Health Scrutiny Committees, reviewing the work of Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust. Good working relationships have continued with Members and Officers in both the NHS and in the partner Local Authorities of Stockport, Oldham, Bury and Tameside.

**Co-opted Members**

People from outside the Council are co-opted onto Overview and Scrutiny Committees (as voting or non-voting co-opted members) and/or on task and finish groups, this is something we can make further use of. During the course of the Municipal year 2019/20 new co-opted Members will be sought to add value to the Council’s overview and Scrutiny function.

**Future of Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

The Chairs and Vice Chairs of the three Scrutiny Committees will meet through the 2019/20 municipal year, to consider, review and agree changes to how Overview and Scrutiny can be improved to ensure that it remains a fit for purpose, critical friend for the Borough of Rochdale.

Topics to be considered will include:

- Format of meetings,
- Work programme development and topic selection,
- Developing pre-decision scrutiny,
- Co-opted Members and chief Officer support to Committee.

**Officer support**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees are supported by Committee Services based in the Governance Section of the Council. It is their responsibility to support Councillors throughout the Overview and Scrutiny process, which involves:

- Advising on relevant processes and procedures,
- Providing background information,
- Researching and sourcing professional and technical information from a variety of sources to support specific reviews.

Committee Services also provides administrative support at meetings and ensures that they are held in accordance with the Council’s rules and procedures set out in its Constitution.