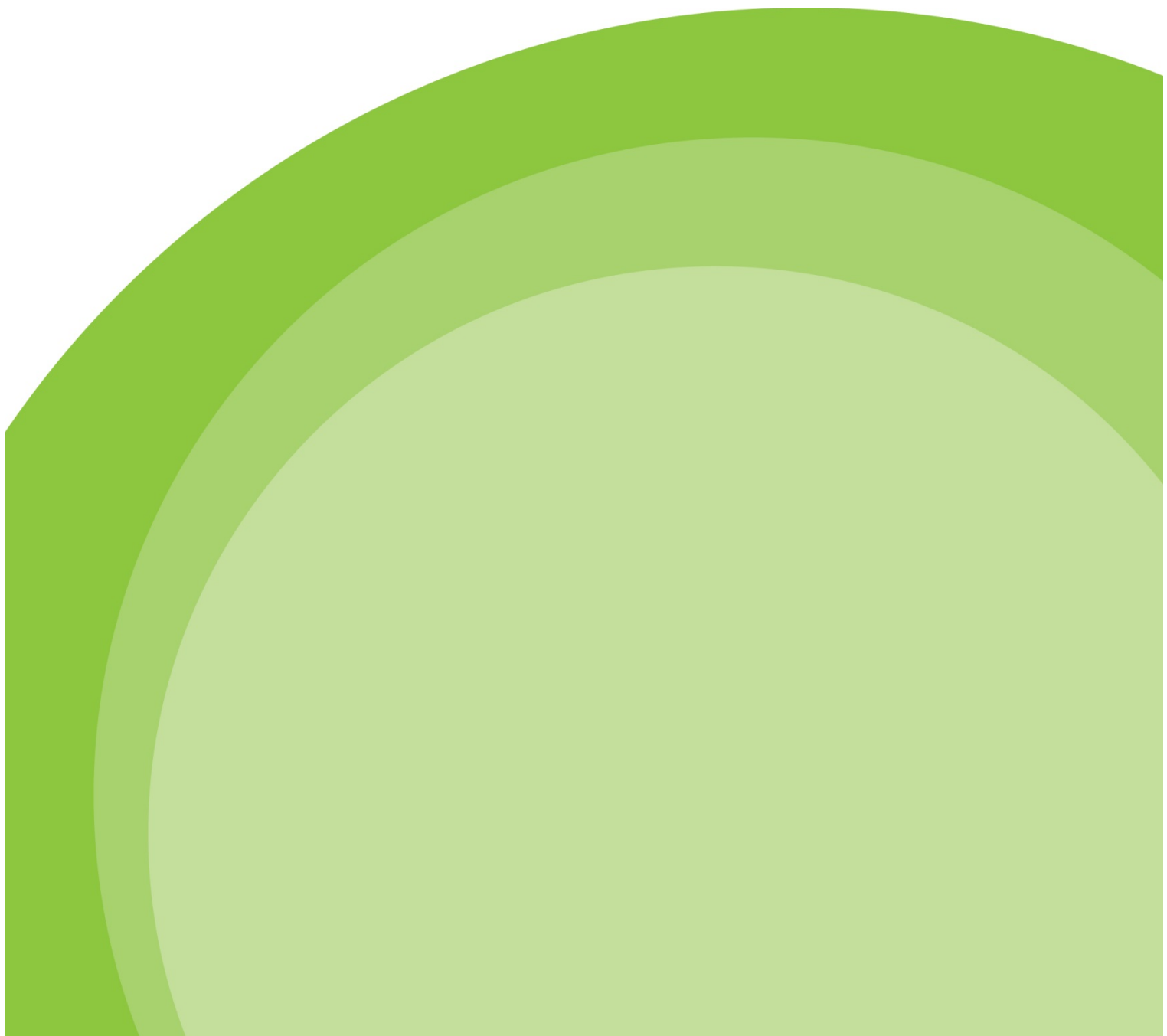




Appendix

Overview and Scrutiny annual report (2015/16)

The Central Bedfordshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee annual
report for 01 May 2015 to 30 April 2016



Introduction

Foreword

During 2015/16 as Chairmen of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees we have continued to encourage OSCs to provide a critical friend challenge and use briefing sessions for elected Members as an alternative means of sharing information on topics of interest. OSCs provide the opportunity to engage all Members in policy development activity critical to the delivery of the Five-Year Plan and opportunities continue to be provided for all Members to engage in discussions that are cross-cutting in nature.

Over the course of the next 12 months the OSCs have expressed an aspiration to lead their work programmes and have embarked on a process of engaging residents to help us determine the items that we should consider with their involvement. Residents are an important resource for the OSCs to develop our agendas and the challenge for us is to encourage more engagement both in our formal meetings and informally in the community in a way that encourages residents to be engaged in policy development.

The OSCs are also trying to engage in conversations on strategies much earlier in their development. During the next 12 months the OSCs will work proactively with the Executive and directorates to identify those areas of interest which would support the Council's direction of travel and delivery of the Five-Year Plan.



Councillor David McVicar
Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Coordination Panel

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If you have any comments on this report, or would like to see any of the papers that are referred to, please contact Jonathon Partridge, Head of Governance on **0300 300 4634** or jonathon.partridge@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny provides an opportunity for elected Councillors and residents to discuss and comment on the Council's policies, plans and strategies before they are implemented. Meetings are normally held in public and residents are encouraged to attend to ask questions and make comments on the reports on the agenda. Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs), made up of non-Executive Councillors and co-opted parent governor representatives and diocesan representatives are held throughout the year to consider proposals and whilst they do not make decisions they provide recommendations to the Executive or full Council. These recommendations will be considered before the Council makes any final decisions.

If committee members feel it is necessary they can also "call-in" decisions of the Executive. During a call-in an OSC re-considers a decision that has been taken to determine whether the decision should be implemented straight away or referred back to the decision maker to be reconsidered.

Scrutiny committees can consider a wide range of issues but they also have statutory responsibilities in relation to scrutiny of health and crime and disorder matters. Issues relating to crime and disorder are considered at least once a year and substantial changes to health services within Central Bedfordshire must be reviewed by one of the OSCs before implementation.

Overview and scrutiny adds value in the following ways:-

1. Providing briefings and quarterly updates on matters relating to finance and performance
2. Engaging non-Executive Councillors and co-opted members in the process of developing plans and strategies or reviewing the outcomes of decisions and undertaking call-ins.
3. Providing a forum for discussion in which the public and partners can ask questions and contribute to the decision making process
4. Reviewing performance and tracking the progress of recommendations as well as encouraging the use of best practice and research from elsewhere

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees

There are four OSCs in Central Bedfordshire, each of which meet approximately 8-weekly and are aligned to the Councils services as follows:-

- Children's Services OSC
- Corporate Resources OSC
- Social Care, Health and Housing OSC
- Sustainable Communities OSC

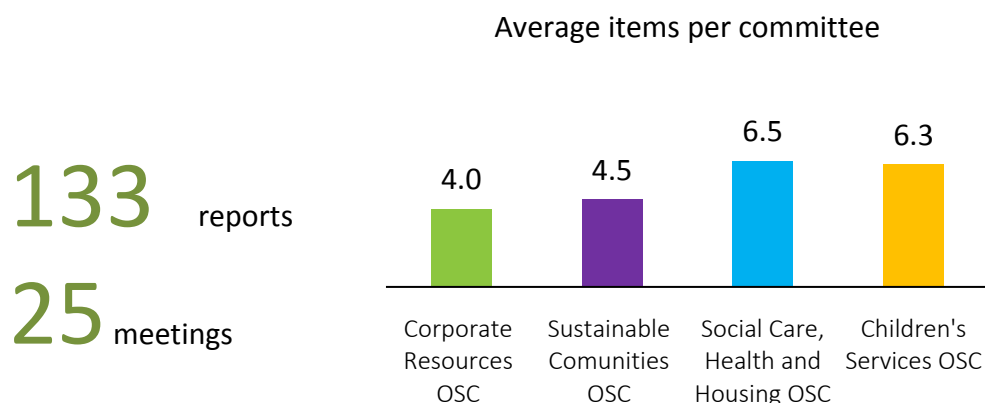
There is also a Co-ordination Panel (OSCP) consisting of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the OSCs, which co-ordinates the function and matters that are relevant to more than one OSC.

In addition to the elected Members appointed to the OSCs, there are three parent governors and two diocesan representatives, one for each of the Church of England and Roman Catholic churches, appointed to the Children's Services OSC. A representative of Central Bedfordshire Healthwatch also attends meetings of the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC as an observer.

The remainder of this annual report sets out more detailed information regards the activity of the OSCs during 02 May 2014 to 30 April 2015.

Overview and Scrutiny activity 2015/16

Overview of items and activity



There were 25 OSC meetings during 2015/16. The highest numbers of items were received by the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC, which has responsibility not only for adult social care and housing but also many aspects of public health and undertakes the Council's statutory responsibilities of considering substantial changes to health services.

Overview of outcomes and recommendations

OSCs facilitate the engagement of non-Executive Councillors and co-opted members in the process of developing plans and strategies or reviewing the outcomes of decisions and undertaking call-ins. During 2015/16 the outcomes of the OSC meetings were as follows:-

Outcome	2014-15		2015-16	
	No.	%	No.	%
Noted	33	31%	39	29%
Endorsed	28	26%	9	7%
Comment/recommendation	43	40%	85	64%
Deferred	3	3%	0	0%

Throughout 2015/16 Members have placed particular focus on increasing the number of reports that result in specific comments or recommendations that will inform the Council's future approach. Throughout the year the focus that has been placed on this activity has resulted in a significant increase in number of items where OSCs have been influenced decisions (an increase of 24%).

Examples of specific activity

OSCs are encouraged to focus their efforts on those items that will support the Council's delivery of the 5-Year Plan or that provide the opportunity for Members and residents to engage on an area of particular concern. Where the OSC provides specific comments or recommendations these are tracked by the scrutiny team to understand how the committee has influenced the decisions of the Council. Outlined below are some specific examples where the Committees have been able to influence the activity of the Council and an external organisation:-

In August 2015 the Sustainable Communities OSC invited **Anglian Water to attend a meeting to respond to complaints of residents in Moggerhanger**. The meeting provided the opportunity for

residents to feedback to Anglian Water on low and very poor water pressure, sewage problems and a lack of sustainable infrastructure for water provision. It also provided the opportunity for Councillors to express concerns on the extent of liaison with the Council's planning department when housing developments were under consideration. As a result of the meeting Anglian Water undertook to make several service improvements to address the Council's and residents frustrations and following a trial period the level of engagement and relations between the Council and Anglian Water has improved as a result. Feedback from Ward Members and residents has been very positive and many have formally expressed their gratitude at the attention the issue was afforded and the support given by the committee to their cause, with improved outcomes as requested.

In January 2016 the Social Care Health and Housing OSC reviewed proposals to **improve care home provision for older people in Central Bedfordshire**. The Committee recognised the need to offer improved accommodation for clients and supported the proposals but requested that account be taken of the effect of the closure on staff and recommended the need to explore further how the relocation of the day care centre was to take place. In light of these recommendations further work has been undertaken with staff to support them in the future enabling some staff to transfer to be redeployed into similar roles. Further work has also been undertaken with customers of the day centre following which it will transfer to Priory View in June 2016.

In March 2016 the Children's Services OSC received the **Children's Services Transformation Programme mandate** at which Members of the Committee were invited to provide their views on the future direction of children's services in Central Bedfordshire. In light of the OSC views were provided to inform a consultation process and further engagement will be undertaken with Members to help define a report on transforming children's services that will be presented to the OSC and the Executive later in the year.

In March 2016 the Corporate Resources OSC received the **Acquisitions Policy** following a request to review the speed with which the Council could acquire strategic sites. In light of the report the Committee recommended to General Purposes an amendment to the Constitution that if a specific budget for the purpose of strategic land acquisition had been approved by full Council, a decision to purchase land could be delegated to a specified group of Members and Officers following the production of a detailed business case for each purchase. In addition, pending amending the Constitution as recommended, the Executive Member for Corporate Resources consider using the protocols of the Constitution for a decision to be taken on the grounds of urgency in order to expedite a decision where supported by a valid business case, should the need arise. The proposals were adopted by Council following consideration by General Purposes which it is anticipated will enable the Council to acquire sites as the need arises to the benefit of Central Bedfordshire residents and businesses.

Additional activity in 2015/16

Throughout the year the OSCs have fulfilled their statutory obligations by receiving statutory reports relating to substantial changes in health services (such as IVF services) and significant annual reports relating to the Children and Young People's Plan, Local Safeguarding Children's Board, Schools Resilience Board, Adoption and Fostering Service and the Safeguarding Adults Board.

In addition to the specific examples above the OSCs have also scrutinised a wide range of issues including the following:-

- Allocations Policy for independent living
- BCCG finance recovery plan
- Caddington Hall Older People's homes
- Children and Adolescence Mental Health Service (CAMHS) service provision
- Central Bedfordshire SEND Preparing for Adulthood Strategy (14-25)
- Council assets and investment or sale of land assets
- East of England Ambulance Trust performance
- Fees and Charges and the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Plan
- Five-Year Plan
- IT Strategy and plans to mitigate financial pressures
- Key Stage 3-4 exam results
- Local Council Tax support scheme
- Nature Conservation Strategy
- Parking Strategy
- Proposals to amalgamate schools
- Proposals to partner the Council's legal service
- Proposals to recommission primary specialist provision for Autistic Spectrum Condition in Dunstable
- Refresh of Foster Carer Fees and Allowances Scheme
- Strategy for Provision of SEN places in Central Bedfordshire
- Superfast Broadband
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel recommendations

Overview and scrutiny enquiries

OSCs can also undertake in-depth reviews of particular topics. These reviews involve a small number of committee members who will review the issue in more detail and consider evidence from various sources to provide a report and recommendations.

In August 2015 the Sustainable Communities OSC undertook an enquiry following a request from a Member to review the Planning Enforcement Service. The evidence considered by this enquiry highlighted the need to review the existing service in light of the number of concerns raised in order to ensure that the Council delivered a robust service that supported effective communication between the Council, Members and residents. The enquiry provided several recommendations relating to improving communication channels, information sharing and providing notification of incidents and progress to ward Members. Many of these recommendations were implemented immediately and a regular reporting mechanism has been implemented to monitor the application of the recommendations.

The OSCs were also engaged in two further task forces during 2015/16 that are yet to produce final reports, these were reviews of engaging in council decision making and a joint health OSC on the proposals to review health services in Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes. It is envisaged that reports will be provided on both of these matters during 2016/17.

Engaging the public and partners

Each OSC agenda has a standing item for “questions, statements and deputations” and residents are encouraged attend meetings to ask questions and contribute to discussions during the meeting. In summary this year the OSCs engaged with the public and partners in the following ways:-

48 residents (compared to 195 in the previous year) attended meetings for various items, there were no petitions or call ins during 2015/16.

14 questions, statements and deputations (compared to 20 in the previous year), by registering to speak residents can influence the decisions of the council and other organisations decisions. During the year questions were raised on several items that resulted in recommendations on the following:-

- the production of detailed reports on the provision of a specialist nurse for people living with neurological conditions in Bedfordshire;
- a reduction in parking fees in Dunstable;
- service improvements within Anglian Water in response to concerns from residents, many of which were integrated and trialled throughout early 2016; and
- a delay of any decision in relation to Downs Road, Dunstable until after the de-trunking of the A5 and a full traffic assessment had been undertaken.

8 organisations attended meetings (compared to 15 in the previous year), the OSCs can also invite specific witnesses and professionals to attend meetings where they feel it would be helpful to receive additional information. During 2015/16 representatives of the following attended meetings:-

- Anglian Water
- Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Bedfordshire Fire Service
- Bedfordshire Police
- East London Foundation Trust
- Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Planned activity in 2016/17

Throughout 2016/17 Members have indicated a preference to encourage more overview and policy development activity, whilst also encouraging the use of detailed task and finish enquiries where it provides an opportunity to influence the principles of a policy early in its development.

In early 2016 the Council also undertook a public consultation to gather the views of residents on the matters that should be considered by the Committees during the course of the year. Each of the Committees will be encouraged to prioritise these items within their work programmes for the remainder of the year.

To support the delivery of the Council's priorities it is currently envisaged that the following items will be included for consideration by the Committees during this year:-

- Central Bedfordshire's Policy for Housing Assistance 2016-2020
- children's community health services
- Council's Debt Collection Process
- Education Partnership Vision
- Improving the Council's Day offer for vulnerable and older people
- Integrated health and care hubs
- Ofsted Joint Targeted Area Inspection
- The Local Plan
- HMI Ofsted Schools Performance Letter and Council's Response
- Parking Strategy
- Passenger Transport
- Review of children's disability provision
- Schools trading
- School transport
- Strategy for the Provision of SEND places in Central Bedfordshire
- Transforming Care Plan

If you would like to get involved in any of these items please get in touch with the team using the contact details in this report.

Getting involved

The residents of Central Bedfordshire are Overview and Scrutiny's most useful resource for finding out what the key issues are. Residents, community groups, local businesses and others that live or work in the area can make valuable contributions to much of the work Overview and Scrutiny does.

The work programme of Overview and Scrutiny can be flexible, so if there is an issue that you would like to see tackled or if you would just like to find out more about Overview and Scrutiny at Central Bedfordshire Council please contact the Overview and Scrutiny team at the following address:-

Overview and Scrutiny
Central Bedfordshire Council
Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands
Shefford
SG17 5TQ

0300 300 4634

scrutiny@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Alternatively you can suggest an item via the Council's website at the following address:-

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council/consultations/overview-scrutiny-survey.aspx>

Details regarding forthcoming meetings, including copies of the reports and a list of future meeting dates can be obtained from the Overview and Scrutiny website at the following link:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council/overview-scrutiny/overview.aspx>

All OSC meetings are open to the public and a list of future meeting dates is available from the Council's website. Residents are also welcome to come and speak and provide their views at meetings. If you would like to attend a meeting and speak please contact us in advance.



A great place to live and work

Contact us...

by telephone: 0300 300 8301

by email: scrutiny@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

on the web: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ