

Appendix A



Overview and Scrutiny annual report (2016/17)

The Central Bedfordshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee
annual report for 01 April 2016 to 31 March 2017



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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:-

- Providing briefings and quarterly updates on matters relating to finance and performance
- 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.
- Providing a forum for discussion in which the public and partners can ask questions and contribute to the decision making process
- 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 Council's services as follows:-

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

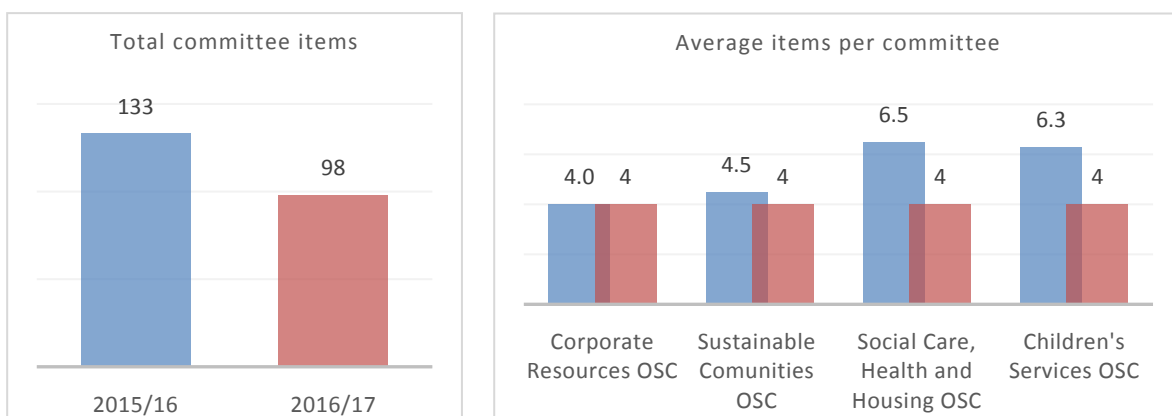
There is also a Co-ordination Panel (OSCP) consisting of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the OSCs, which co-ordinates the function and matters that are relevant to more than one OSC.

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.

In January 2017 the OSCP agreed four principles by which the OSCs were encouraged to organise their activity. The remainder of this report sets out more detailed information regards the activity of the OSCs during 01 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Shorter more focused agendas through prioritisation of items that add value and enable outcomes

Throughout 2016/17 the OSCs have focused on reducing the number of agenda items so as to be able to focus in more detail on those items where they can have a greater influence. Members have been challenged to consider the value of receiving items at OSC to ensure that where an item is for information only it is more usefully discussed at a Member briefing or outside of a formal committee meeting. As a result the total number of agenda items has decreased by 26% on 2015/16 and the average number of items considered at each committee meeting has also fallen when compared to 2015/16:-



As a result of focusing on those items where the OSCs can add most value the total number of items that are *noted* has also fallen, although the proportion of items on which comments/recommendations were provided has remained stable with the number of items endorsed increasing:-

Outcome of item	2015-16		2016/17	
	No.	%	No.	%
No. of items noted	39	29%	22	23%
No. of items items endorsed	9	7%	13	13%
No. of items with comments or recommendations	85	64%	63	64%

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 Governance Services team to understand how the Committee has influenced the decisions of the Council.

As a result of the focus on outcomes the OSCs agreed a total of 120 recommendations or comments on those items that they received throughout the year aimed at adding value to the work of the Council, of these 97% have been accepted by the Executive and external partners such as the NHS to whom they have been directed. Of those recommendations that have not been accepted each of them fell within the remit of partners, more specifically relating to the structure of reporting health trust performance and the mapping

out of simple citizen pathway to good health. Outlined below are some specific examples where the Committees have been able to influence the activity of the Council and an external organisation.

In May 2016 the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC invited five NHS Trusts, used by residents in Central Bedfordshire, to attend a meeting to deliver their **Quality Account**, a report on their priorities and performance. The Members of the committee undertook detailed scrutiny of specific Quality Accounts prior to the meeting to determine key lines of enquiry to raise at the meeting. The Committee then provided the opportunity for the Trusts to outline the key national indicators and their achievements. There were a number of recommendations agreed by the Committee that included a request to provide a list of 20 comparable indicators that would make it easier for residents to compare each NHS Trust. In May 2017, the Head of Quality & Patient Safety at the East and North Herts NHS Trust provided the Committee with a set of eight comparable indicators that helped the Committee and the public to compare the results of Trusts locally for the first time.

In addition to the specific item on the Quality Account the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC has required a large number of updates from health organisations such as the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT). These updates have been provided to Members on an ongoing basis on several topics but in particular related to concerns such as the closure of a GP surgery, mental health services and the financial position of the CCG. These updates have provided an important mechanism of keeping Members informed of issues of importance to local communities.

In August 2016, the Corporate Resources OSC considered the proposed revised **prices for services traded to schools and academies for 2017/18**. Members of the Committee discussed price differentials and the services the Council proposed to provide and agreed that an exercise to determine the volume of uptake of services ought to be undertaken to explore this further. The Service agreed to analyse the volume of services provided to schools and the associated buy in, in order to evaluate the viability and if necessary re-evaluate the process in future. The outcomes of this process will be reported to the Committee in September 2017.

In August and September 2016, the Sustainable Communities OSC facilitated the contribution from three public speakers in relation to **proposed changes to public transport subsidies and provision**. It also provided Committee Members with an opportunity to scrutinise proposals in much more detail as the speakers raised matters that had not been specifically included within the reports and so provided an alternative, public perspective. As a result the Committee was able to provide robust and clear recommendations to the Executive who in turn took the time to carefully consider them. The speakers expressed their gratitude at the time given to them to put their views across and said that it was the first time they felt they had been properly listened to with the ability to affect change and to be a part of the decision-making process. Ultimately some of the recommendations of the OSC were not accepted, however the Executive was able to demonstrate the reasons behind their decision, also outlining the legalities of the recommended approach. This facilitated a greater understanding of the outcomes for Members and the public speakers, one of whom stated that although the outcome was not

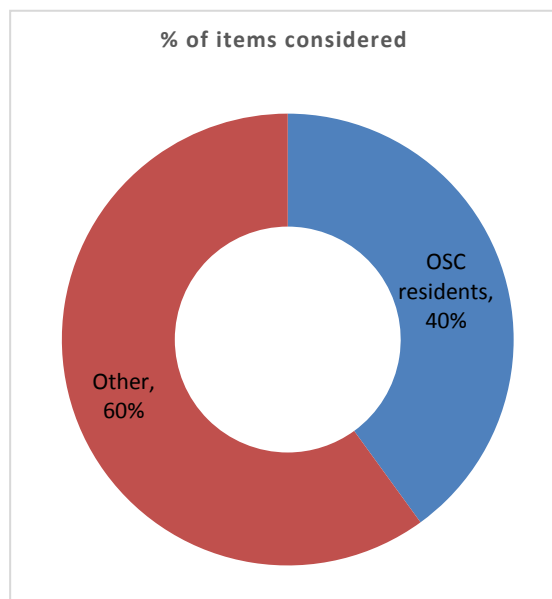
what they had hoped for, they felt they had been listened to and able to have their say. They also understood the reasons behind the decision, appreciated that it was a carefully considered response and that public concerns had not been ignored.

In March 2017, at the request of the Children's Services OSC, a focus was placed on **educational attainment for pupils within Central Bedfordshire**. As a result, it was agreed to undertake an exercise in collaboration with specific Head Teachers, a Chair of Governors, educational and child development professionals and senior Council officers. The aim of this exercise was to better understand the reasons behind educational attainment in some schools, support increased collaboration between the local authority and independently maintained schools, as well as those falling under the responsibility of the Council and increase support where appropriate for vocational subjects and apprenticeships. Following the initial meeting on 22 June 2017 an action plan will be formulated with ongoing monitoring and scrutiny of progress by the Committee.

Activity led by OSCs and residents as well as the Executive Forward Plan

Throughout 2016/17 the OSCs undertook a public consultation process to identify items of interest to the public to be included in the work programmes. This bottom-up approach to work programme is part of ensuring that the OSCs are responsive to communities in Central Bedfordshire and that agendas provide a balance of those items that are important to Executive Members, non-Executive Members and residents. Members have been invited to prioritise those items that were proposed by non-Executive Members or by residents. 40% of the items considered during 2016/17 were proposed by OSC Members or by residents. These included specific reports on: -

- Council responsiveness
- Farming Strategy
- Models of Community Boards
- Police restructures (update)
- Planning enforcement
- Child and adolescent mental health services
- Integration of health and social care
- Education outcomes, progress and attainment;
- Regional Schools Commissioner
- Ofsted Schools performance
- Ofsted Joint Targeted Area Inspection



Each OSC agenda has a standing item for questions, statements and deputations. Residents are encouraged attend meetings to ask questions and contribute to discussions. Throughout 2016/17 there were 5 questions raised, all of which were raised at the Sustainable Communities OSC, resulting in the following: -

- Recommendations to the Executive to consider delaying changes to the community transport element of the Passenger Transport Strategy, specifically the Dial a Ride service for a period of one year in order to allow further discussions to take place.
- Integrated the views of the Head Teachers of two local schools into the Council's approach to parking at schools.

All OSC meetings are usually held in public and residents and partners are welcome to attend meetings. During 2016/17 a total of 46 residents and a range of other organisations attended meetings and task force enquiries to provide their views.

More policy development activity through exploration of proposals and principles at earliest opportunity of commencement of strategy development

During 2016/17 the OSCs have been encouraged to prioritise those items that enable them to explore proposals at the earliest opportunity. This year a total of 15% of the items received by the Committees were regarded as policy development..

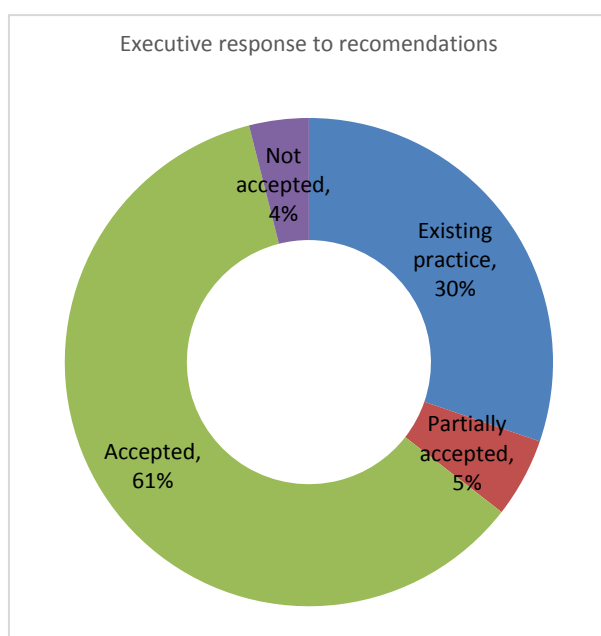
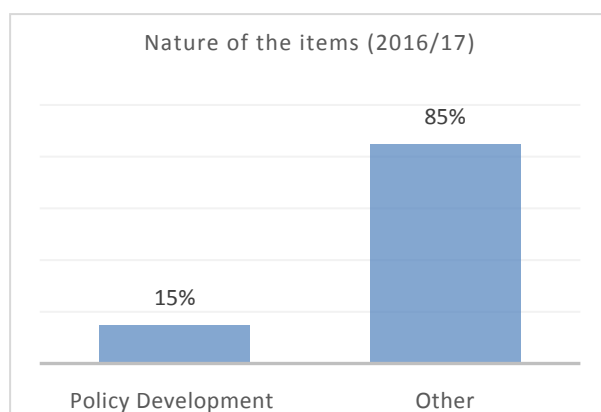
The majority of the policy development activity undertaken by the OSC process was carried out in the form of detailed task force enquiries.

In addition to the formal OSC meetings Members can also undertake in-depth reviews of particular topics, the intention of which is to enable a small group of Councillors to undertake more detailed investigation of a topic, considering evidence from various sources to provide a report and recommendations to inform the Council's future policy approach.

Specific organisations such as the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Kings Fund have also specifically been invited to attend enquiry meetings to provide advice and guidance on specific topics.

The majority of these contributions related to enquiry into integration of health and social care (see elsewhere in the report). In addition, the Regional Schools Commissioner, Department for Education, the Chief Executive of SEMLEP and a range of voluntary and community organisations, set out in detail in the Minutes of the relevant meetings.

There were four task force reviews that took place predominantly in this year, the details of which are set out below. These reviews were undertaken in addition to the formal meetings of the OSCs that also ran concurrently during the year. In response to these reviews 66% of the recommendations were accepted at least partially and 30% were considered to be existing practice. These reviews have affected the Council's future policy and approach as detailed below.



Parking at Schools

The purpose of the enquiry was to determine the best possible solutions with regards to car parking and vehicular access at schools to ensure the free movement of traffic around schools, particularly in light of the implications of school expansion. Many of the

recommendations proposed by the enquiry were already existing practice. Those that were not fell into two broad categories. Firstly, improving communication with and between the Council and schools, particularly in relation to developing sustainable school travel plans; and secondly improving enforcement of inappropriate parking outside of schools.

In light of the enquiry the Executive agreed to enhance communication with schools and to continue to recruit four additional parking officers that would help support the enforcement of parking at schools. It was also agreed to bring forward a report proposing to make it Council policy for all new schools to have 20 mph limits outside of them

Council Responsiveness

The purpose of this enquiry was to review customer experience when contacting the Council and reviewing the extent to which residents could influence council decision-making. Many of the recommendations proposed by the enquiry related to existing practice and as such progress was already underway. However, recommendations did inform the Council's work in two key areas: -

1. Focusing on customer experience to enhance intelligence and tailor services accordingly through several projects that would develop a single view of the customer and the rollout of the Council's digital strategy and new software called 'STORM'.
2. Enhancing the accessibility of the Council's decision-making process in addition to creating a focal point with town and parish councils by making guidance on the Council's decision-making process available on the Council's website and continuing a review of Joint Committees and considering options relating to the creation of Community Boards and the allocation of additional funds

Planning Enforcement

This enquiry focused on a number of areas and agreed recommendations relating to resources and demand management; communication, timescales and prioritisation; and enforcing planning conditions.

In response to this enquiry the Council has undertaken to review the process through which communications are provided to residents who email with concerns, notifications to Town and Parish Councils of matters that have been raised has also been reintroduced. Discussions have also taken place to improve awareness of the Enforcement Plan and a review of standard conditions is planned that will also include training for planning officers on planning enforcement including enforceable conditions. Alongside this a directorate wide restructure is out to consultation which includes proposals relating to enhancing resources within the team.

Integration of Health and Social Care

This enquiry sought to understand the national strategic drivers, barriers and risks and receive evidence, advice and information from sector experts to agree an emerging approach to redesign how residents access health and care services. This review received evidence from a wide range of people and organisations including the health service, Kings Fund and community organisations.

In addition to specific recommendations aimed at enhancing the integration of health and social care the main focus of the enquiry was the agreement of a set of five principles that the enquiry that Members recommended all partners of the health and social care sector adopt and demonstrate a commitment to delivering as follows: -

- Our residents will be at the centre of decision making
- Health and care will be accessed as close to home as possible
- Residents will be able to self-serve and manage their health and care
- Funding and resources should be available at the right time and right place, particularly in relation to locality working.
- Health, care, and housing colleagues will work together to deliver one plan to meet the needs of our residents

As a result of the recommendation of this enquiry the principles will be adopted to form the basis of the vision for Integration of services for Central Bedfordshire residents and will also influence how services are commissioned and delivered. The vision for integration will be produced as part of the Better Care Fund Plan for 2017-2019 and the Central Bedfordshire “Out of Hospital” Strategy.

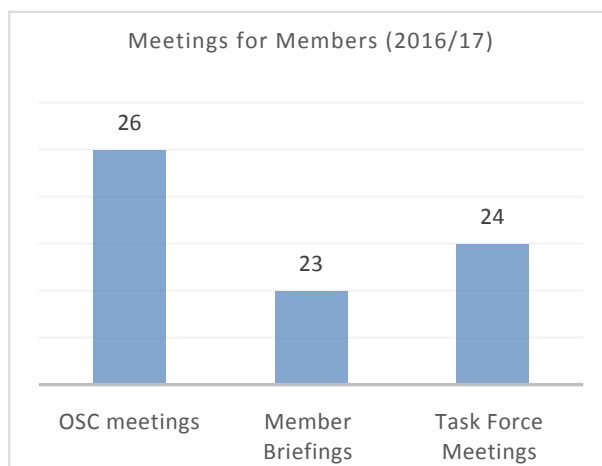
In addition, the Council will review its approach to multi-disciplinary working in the Localities/Quadrants, to secure integrated outcomes, to ensure they are fully embedded over the next two years. A timetable will be determined by senior officers to produce a plan for the delivery of Integrated Health and Social Care hubs in conjunction with NHS colleagues.

Creating more time for Members outside of formal meetings in addition to providing more opportunity to brief Members informally on key topics

During 2016/17 Members were encouraged to identify key topics on which they would like a briefing. These briefings provide the opportunity to share information with Members in advance of meetings to support robust overview and scrutiny of topics at formal meetings. In total there were 73 meetings, task forces and Members briefings. These briefings included topics on the following: -

- Welfare reforms
- Adult safeguarding
- Housing
- Education Partnership Vision
- Sustainable Transformation Plans
- The Care Market
- Economic Insight

Whilst Members were keen to create more time outside of formal meetings to discuss various topics the total body of work has increased during 2016/17 as meetings and briefings have taken place in addition to the planned formal OSC meetings.



Reflecting on the total body of work undertaken by Members it has been agreed that more focus will be placed by the OSCP on prioritising those items that will be considered at OSC meetings. This will ensure that a better balance is struck between the total number of formal and informal meetings undertaken across the year in the future.

Planned activity in 2017/18

Throughout 2017/18 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.

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

- Early Intervention
- HMIC report into the support of vulnerable children
- Homelessness Reduction
- Let's Rent Policy
- Local Council Tax Support Scheme
- Local Plan
- Partnership working with Anglian Water
- Performance of Musculoskeletal services (MSK)
- Quality Accounts
- SEND vision and strategy

We also expect to undertake a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee with other neighbouring local authorities to scrutinise the STP.

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

committeemeetings@cenralbedfordshire.gov.uk

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 speak at a meeting please contact us in advance using the form below: -

<https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/officeforms/SpeakingAtMeetings.ofml>



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Contact us...

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