

# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20

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# Chairman's Foreword

This report takes a backward facing look at some of the overview and scrutiny highlights for the municipal year, 2019/20, a year that has been marked by transition and change for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Committee Members initially sought to maintain 'business as usual' whilst completing outstanding work programmes in readiness for moving to a Committee System in May 2020. In January 2020 the decision was taken to defer the transition to a Committee System until May 2021, thus extending the overview and scrutiny role for a further year and enabling additional task and finish work to take place.

By January, the impacts of the global pandemic were being seen across Europe and on 16<sup>th</sup> March, the United Kingdom entered the Covid-19 lock-down. This immediately impacted on the Council's ability to hold meetings in person and expedited the roll-out of IT systems and equipment to enable members across the Council to engage in 'virtual meetings.' The decision was taken to streamline all Overview and Scrutiny agendas to focus on Covid-related matters and urgent business at meetings that would be held 'virtually' - in compliance with the new Covid legislation.

As the impacts of Lock-down began to emerge, it is timely that significant work undertaken by the Children and Families and Health and Adult Social Care Committees focused on mental health, reflected in the spotlight review of Children's Mental Health services and the monitoring of the re-design of adult mental health services. Of particular note over the course of 2019/20 are the opportunities for wider partnership working that have arisen. For example with health and education partners, flood risk management authorities and in extending joint scrutiny functions with neighbouring local authorities. This is to be welcomed and has provided wider, constructive engagement.

This report gives a flavour of the varied work undertaken by members of each of the four overview and scrutiny committees and reflects the diligence and hard work that they put into it. On behalf of the chairmen and vice-chairmen, I would like to give our thanks to our committee members and the officers who support the committees. In particular we would like to record our thanks to Scrutiny Officer Mark Nedderman who retired during this period.

**Councillor Janet Clowes**  
**Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee**



# Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Janet Clowes (Chairman)



Councillor Brendan Murphy (Vice-Chairman)

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for reviewing the Council's internal operation including budget setting, risk management, governance, ICT and procurement. The committee comprises the chairmen and vice-chairmen of all of the overview and scrutiny committees, and has a secondary role to coordinate the work of the overview and scrutiny function to maintain consistency.

## Budget Scrutiny

Between November 2019 and February 2020, the four overview and scrutiny committees closely scrutinised the council's 2020/21 budget proposals. Informed by the public's feedback and concerns from the consultation, each committee held detailed discussions on the proposals.

After each of the other three overview and scrutiny committees had scrutinised the proposals related to their respective remits, this committee was responsible for collating and summarising their concerns and recommendations.

These were then submitted by the committee and presented to Cabinet before the final budget-setting proposals were considered and adopted by full Council.



As well as scrutinising the council's budget proposals for the next year, the committee reviewed the council's financial performance against the objectives and plans set out in its Medium Term Financial Strategy

### **Call-in of decision on ASDV Review**

Following the call-in of a decision taken by Cabinet in March 2019 regarding its ASDV Review, which was referred to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The committee reviewed the call-in request and scrutinised the reasons for the call-in. After careful consideration, the committee decided not to ask the original decision-maker to review the decision, but did recommend that the Constitution Committee reviews the constitutional process for providing elected members with Part 2 information (what information is provided and when it can be made available.)

### **Joint Scrutiny Working Group**

After closely scrutinising the progress of the Best4Business Programme - a shared investment between Cheshire East Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council—the committee was keen to re-establish the two authorities' Joint Scrutiny Working Group, to more closely monitor the final stages of the project set-up and implementation.

After recommending in December 2019 that the group reconvene, it met in February 2020.

### **Media Relations Protocol**

This committee had maintained an interest in reviewing the council's policy and protocols relating to media publications. After scrutinising how the proposed new protocol would broaden the range of media releases and promote the successes of the overview and scrutiny committees, and how quotes and comments would be obtained from local ward members and committee chairmen, the committee endorsed the proposed protocol and recommended Cabinet approve and adopt it.

# Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Jos Saunders  
(Chairman)



Councillor Penny Butterill (Vice-Chairman)

The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising all of the council's children's services, and its special educational need and disability services for residents aged 0 to 25. The services within the committee's remit range from children's social care, child and adolescent mental health services, education and schools, through to fostering and adoption services.

The committee reviewed a number of quarterly and annual performance reports to ensure that it had sufficiently monitored all of the key services provided to children in Cheshire East.

- **Annual Adoption Report**
- **Corporate Parenting Annual Report**
- **Local Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report**
- **Local Authority Designated Officer Annual Report**
- **Quarterly Performance Scorecards**
- **SEND Written Statement of Action**

## Pre-Decision Scrutiny and Supporting Policy Development



Reviewed the Cheshire and Merseyside Five Year Place Plan, providing feedback to contribute to the final plan document in relation to how it would impact on children's services.



Following close scrutiny of the proposed Cheshire East All-Age Autism Strategy (2020-23), the committee was pleased to endorse the strategy.



Contributed to the development of the proposed Early Help Strategy 2019-22

### **SEND Local Offer for 16-25 Year-Olds**

After a previous task and finish group had reviewed the SEND local offer for 0-16 year-olds, the committee established another group to take an in-depth look at the offer for adolescents and young adults.

In November 2019, the committee agreed to the report of the task and finish group, endorsing the 13 recommendations for change within it.

The report was then presented to Cabinet, which accepted all 13 of the recommendations.

The committee will continue to review this important subject area, and monitor how effectively the committee's recommendations have been implemented.

### **Children's Mental Health Services**

In February 2020 the committee held a Spotlight Review of Children's Mental Health Services in the borough. The committee welcomed officers from across the council's Children's Services and Education team, as well as external partners from CAMHS (Children's and Adolescent's Mental Health Services), Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group, and Adoption Counts.

The committee received a wide range of information on the current service provision for children of different ages, and how easily these are accessed.

An important discussion theme throughout the day was about how effectively the council and partners had been able to work together to ensure a holistic, sustainable provision of mental health services.

The committee agreed to a series of recommendations which will be presented to Cabinet and partners as part of the final report in 2020/21.

### **Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services—November 2019**

In November 2019, Ofsted carried out an inspection of the council's Children's Services. As it has done previously, the committee considered Ofsted's findings from its inspection.

The committee noted that its rating had improved since the last inspection and that the authority had made considerable improvements to become close to being awarded a 'Good' rating.

It also reviewed and endorsed the council's Action Plan—produced in response to Ofsted's inspection—which set out the authority's plans to continue to improve its services.



# Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Paul Findlow (Chairman)



Councillors Suzanne Brookfield (L) (Vice-Chairman through Dec 2019), Laura Crane (C) (Vice-Chairman between Jan-Feb 2020) and Mike Hunter (Vice-Chairman from Feb 2020)



The Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for scrutinising matters relating to highways, transport, waste and the environment, as well as fulfilling the council's statutory duty to scrutinise the council's flood risk management arrangements.

## Pre-Decision Scrutiny and Supporting Policy Development



Helped to shape how the council consulted with its elected membership and the wider public on its proposed Local Transport Plan.



Closely scrutinised the proposed Economic Strategy and submitted comments and feedback to be considered before the final decision was taken.



Provided feedback on the proposed Strategic Framework for the Macclesfield Town Centre Regeneration programme.



Supported the council in updating its Waste Strategy objectives, and recommended that the committee's feedback be included as part of the wider consultation responses that the council shared through focus groups and meetings with the public and town and parish councils.



Scrutinised the council's draft Environment Strategy and Carbon Action Plan; 17 recommendations and suggestions were fed back to Cabinet to consider.

Throughout the year, the committee closely scrutinised and contributed to the development of a number of important strategies and policies.



### **Call-in of Decision on Well Managed Highway Infrastructure**

On 16 March 2020, the committee considered the called-in decision taken by Cabinet regarding the Well Managed Highway Infrastructure. Following significant public concern and community engagement, the decision—taken by Cabinet in February 2020—was called-in over concern that there had been ineffective consultation prior to the Cabinet decision being taken.

After considering the call-in, the committee offered the following advice to Cabinet:

- (1) To carry out an additional round of streamlined consultation on the winter service element only, as part of the annual review process of the Well Managed Highways Infrastructure
- (2) To undertake the annual review process through the Area Highways Groups, also involving all parish and town councils and relevant community/cycle groups as appropriate, ensuring that information is shared with the Area Highways Groups in advance of meetings and also shared with all schools
- (3) That a letter should be sent to all schools in Cheshire East to inform them of the additional round of consultation to be carried out
- (4) That all schools should be given an appropriate amount of time to respond to the consultation.

Cabinet noted the committee's advice and agreed to put in place appropriate measures to enable the suggestions to be incorporated into the implementation and review plans for well-managed highway infrastructure.

### **Flooding and Flood Risk Management**

Flood risk management must legally be scrutinised by local authorities, and this committee takes on this responsibility for Cheshire East Council. Flooding is an issue that has greatly impacted numerous parts of Cheshire East in recent years, and so through this committee, both the council's responses to flooding incidents and its flood risk management plans have been closely monitored.

Whilst it was acknowledged that there had been unusually high rainfall in Autumn 2019—the fifth highest on record in the UK— the committee closely scrutinised and questioned the effectiveness of flood alert systems in certain areas of the borough; how readily available advice on flooding was on a local level to town and parish councils; and the specific, localised responses to flooding in the different areas of the borough.

Throughout its scrutiny of the council's flood recovery and flood risk management, the committee was acutely aware of the significant impacts of flooding to the council's annual budget, and sought to understand its budgetary impacts—both short and long-term.

# Health and Adult Social Care and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Liz Wardlaw (Chairman)



Councillor Arthur Moran (Vice-Chairman)

The Health and Adult Social Care and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a dual role in scrutinising the council's adult social care, public health and communities services, as well as local health bodies within Cheshire East. This includes the Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group, hospital trusts, GP services, dentistry and other health services provided in the borough.

## Monitoring of Health Services



Continued regular monitoring and scrutiny of NHS England and Improvement and its plans for a new model of oral surgery and orthodontic services in the borough



Reviewed the 2018/19 Quality Accounts from the three major hospital trusts in Cheshire East, considering performance, successes and challenges during the year



Received and scrutinised performance data from North West Ambulance Service, as well as the council's adult social care, public health and communities services.

The committee reviewed the council's [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#), also known as the 'Tartan Rug', which shows data for a range of public health criteria for each of its 52 ward areas.

		Wrenbury	Bunbury	Audlem	Nantwich South and Stapleley	Nantwich North and West
1 Total population	number	4626	4979	4908	9174	8737
2 BME population	%	1.2	0.9	1.4	2.4	1.8
3 Proficiency in English	%	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2
4 Population under 16	%	15.8	16.0	15.1	19.5	16.0
5 Population aged 65 and over	%	24.9	20.3	28.2	22.1	24.7

## Pre-Decision Scrutiny and Supporting Policy Development



Reviewed the Cheshire and Merseyside Five Year Place Plan, providing feedback to contribute to the final plan document.



Scrutinised and provided feedback on the council's proposed future arrangements for the Care4CE service, and asked Cabinet for assurances regarding staff terms and conditions.



Reviewed the Clinical Commissioning Group's proposed merger from four separate commissioning groups into one single,

### **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community Welfare**

In November 2019, the committee held an informal meeting to hear and learn from a number of voices on the issues relating to the welfare of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Immediately following this meeting, the committee wrote to the Cabinet to endorse the recommendation within the council's Local Plan to build a designated transit site for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, whilst asking Cabinet to ensure that the chosen site is of high quality, and enables a positive quality of life for those living in it.

The committee received a response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning, on behalf of Cabinet, informing that a transit site had been identified and that further work remained ongoing with partners to consult on the specific needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Members of the Health and Adult Social Care and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health, and officers from Cheshire and Wirral Partnerships NHS Foundation Trust at the 'Silk Ward'



### **Monitoring the re-design of adult's and older peoples' mental health services in Cheshire East**

Between 2016 and 2018, the committee closely scrutinised proposals from health partners to re-design the mental health service provision for adults and older people. The committee's resolve and 'critical friend' challenge ultimately led to health partners bringing forward improved proposals which were endorsed in [November 2018](#).

In January 2020, members of the committee visited the new Mulberry and Silk Wards to see how the new facilities looked.

This committee's involvement and scrutiny of this matter is demonstrative of how scrutiny can lead to positive change.

*Working for a **brighter future**  together*

