

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Welcome to this Council's second Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report.
Overview and Scrutiny plays a large part in the governance of Cheshire East and involves a large proportion of the Council's 81 elected Members. It is our job to ensure that the Council's decision makers and those of our partner organisations are held to account for their decisions. By doing so, we strive to ensure that we achieve the best value possible from the services provided on behalf of the residents of Cheshire East.
- 1.2 Cheshire East, like many Local authorities, is facing difficult times ahead, Overview and Scrutiny will play a key role in those challenges by taking a hard look at not only what we do, but the way that we do it. We will play our part in helping public services adapt to the new circumstances.
- 1.3 During the last twelve months, Overview and Scrutiny Committees have built upon the strong foundations laid during the first year of Cheshire East's existence, by strengthening relations internally with Cabinet Members and Corporate Management Team, and externally with partner organisations.
- 1.4 The Scrutiny Chairmen's Group, which comprises the Chairmen and Vice Chairman, meets on a monthly basis and is forging a crucial role in many aspects of the Overview and Scrutiny function and particularly, in its role acting as a sounding board for matters of common interest across all Overview and Scrutiny Committees, especially in the fields of new legislation and best practice. The group also monitors progress with work programmes and reviews work loads to ensure that there is an even distribution of tasks across the five committees.
- 1.6 The Localism agenda of the coalition government has promised to make Scrutiny less prescriptive with new themes such as accountability, transparency, and involvement at the heart of our future activity.
- 1.7 The five committees have between them, undertaken a number of in depth reviews on a wide range of topics such as Family Support, Community Warden Service, Diabetes and Obesity and Business Generation Centres. These reviews are evidence that Overview and Scrutiny is beginning to make its mark in Cheshire East. Further details of these reviews and others can be found in section 2 of this report.
- 1.8 Our thanks is extended to all those who have taken part in the work of Overview and Scrutiny over the past year. The process would not be

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possible without the co-operation and support of Cabinet Members, co-opted members, officers and public.

I hope you find this report informative and look forward to the year ahead.

Councillor Andrew Thwaite

2. The work of Scrutiny Chairmen's Group

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Chairs Group (SCG) is an informal body which meets monthly to review the work programmes of the five Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Its role is to develop Overview and Scrutiny by sharing best practice, reviewing forthcoming Cabinet agendas and reviewing procedures. The group is now formally acknowledged in the Council's Constitution and now takes the lead resolving conflict between committees, advising on cross-cutting issues and reviewing work programmes and workloads.
- 2.2 The group was instrumental in setting up arrangements for individual Chairman and Vice Chairmen to meet their respective Cabinet Members and Service Heads on a regular basis to ensure that work programmes take account of latest Cabinet thinking. This has led to stronger relationships between Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet. The group also revamped the Committee work programmes to ensure that links are clearly made to the Council's Corporate Strategies and key performance targets.
- 2.3 The group oversaw the production of the Council's 'Scrutiny Toolkit' which sets out a step by step guide to Scrutiny in Cheshire East. This is now available on the Council's website.
- 2.4 The group strives to continually improve the performance of the Overview and Scrutiny function, and to clarify the rules under which it operates. To this end, the group has recently made recommendations to revise the Council's 'Councillor Call for Action' protocol which has resulted in the Scrutiny Chairs Group now having a formal role in the protocol. The group has also reviewed the rules which allow Overview and Scrutiny to review decisions (the call-in rules) and the Council's urgency procedures. The Constitution Committee is due to consider amending the procedural rules in the new civic year.
- 2.5 The group has received briefings on the new localism agenda proposals and in particular on the future challenges facing Overview and Scrutiny. The group has been consulted on the media protocol, on new regulations relating to petitions and is leading discussions with colleagues in Policy and Performance on the production of performance management information to replace the now defunct national performance indicator set.
- 2.6 The group is grateful to the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive for their continued support.

3. The work of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

3.1 Corporate

Chairman: Cllr A R Thwaite

Vice Chairman: Cllr J Narraway

Committee Membership: A Arnold, G Barton, G Baxendale, D Brickhill, S Conquest, J Crockatt, H Davenport, M Davies, P Edwards, P Findlow, D Topping and S Wilkinson.

- 3.2 The Corporate Scrutiny Committee is mainly concerned with the internal operation of the Council, budget setting, management of its assets, risk management, governance and human resources.
- 3.3 The Committee has spent most of its efforts monitoring the progress of many of the internal strategies and policies that are required to enable a complex organisation to function.
- 3.4 The Committee is continuing to develop its understanding of the vast array of services provided by the Council and has received a number of very informative presentations on the shared services arrangements, the competitive dialogue process in procurement, the Council's asset register, the management of the Council farms estate, lifestyle centres and exciting new proposals to revitalise Tatton Park.
- 3.5 The Committee has overseen the asset challenge process, a huge task to put in place a strategy to manage the Council's portfolio of land and buildings which have a current value of £480million. Two pieces of work have stemmed from the asset challenge. The first involved the Committee overseeing the process to rationalise the 20 depots that the Council inherited from its former constituent authorities. The second relating to Business Generation Centres resulted in the Committee setting up a task and finish group to advise Cabinet on the future of the four inherited by the Council.

3.6 Business Generation Centres – Task and Finish Group

3.7 What we wanted to do

The Business Generation Centres were originally set up to provide space for small start up businesses. The Task and Finish Group looked at whether it is appropriate for a local authority to provide facilities for small businesses and looked at a variety of options available in the market.

3.8 How we did it

The Group visited a range of facilities provided for small and start up business by the public and private sector in the North West. Interviews were conducted with experts in the field, the Council's own managers, and the Cabinet Members responsible for the management of the buildings and the promotion of Economic development. Benchmarking information was gathered which compared Cheshire East's operation with that of similar sized local authorities elsewhere in the country. The group also compared the potential capital receipts that could be generated by selling the buildings with the income generated by operating them as business units.

3.9 What we found out

The four units owned by the Council are very different in appearance, size and in the facilities offered. The best facilities that we visited elsewhere, have managers on site whose responsibility it is to market the facilities and to ensure that occupancy rates are high enough to secure a reasonable return. Flexibility was also identified as a key component. Small businesses require easy in easy out terms and tenants do not like to be tied into long term agreements. Business support is advantageous in helping embryonic businesses to survive the early stages of their operation.

3.10 Future Implications

The recommendations are due to be considered by Cabinet in August 2011. The group concluded that Cheshire East should continue its involvement in BGC's as they underpin one of the key aims of the Council's Economic Development Strategy. However, the group believed that the management of the centres should be through a third party arrangement and the group therefore recommended Cabinet to investigate opportunities to go into partnership initially through a 'soft' market testing exercise. The group also recommended that one of the BGC's at Thomas Street Congleton should closed down and the building disposed of, on the grounds that this particular facility is underused and the building is in urgent need of refurbishment.

3.11 Other Activities

- 3.12 The committee undertook site visits to Crewe Lyceum Theatre and Knutsford Cinema prior to commenting on a Consultant's report on the future of the two facilities. Cabinet agreed with the conclusions of the Committee that these two valuable assets should continue operating, to allow the Council to investigate alternative management arrangements to ensure their long term survival.

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- 3.13 The Budget monitoring group was charged at the beginning of the municipal year with overseeing the budget consultation process for the 2011/2012 budget process. The group had put in place arrangements to ensure a full programme of consultation on the budget challenge and budget setting processes. This programme was derailed by the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review which delayed the grant settlement announcement until mid December. Nevertheless, the Budget consultation group still managed to challenge Cabinet and Corporate Management Team on the budget proposals for the coming year at two in depth sessions held in January and February.
- 3.14 A Cabinet sub – committee decision to procure a new Highways contract was 'called-in' by the Committee. Members rigorously tested the rationale of opting for the preferred procurement method, by questioning Cabinet and senior officers at a specially convened meeting held in Crewe on 26 August 2010. One outcome of the call-in of this decision was that an Overview and Scrutiny monitoring group is now shadowing the procurement process for the new highways contract.
- 3.15 Looking Ahead to 2011/12
- 3.16 The Committee will be taking an in depth look at various parts of the Council's asset challenge process. A major piece of work will centre on the Council's farm estate with a view to making recommendations to Cabinet on the future retention/disposal of farms.
- 3.17 Additional work will be undertaken in the field of discretionary leisure facilities, devolution of assets to Town and Parish Councils. The committee is also committed to reviewing a matter of great importance to the residents of Cheshire East, the future of libraries.
- 3.18 The Committee will continue in its monitoring role in respect of performance management and risk management, and will again embark upon a process to oversee the budget consultation and monitoring arrangements throughout the year.
- 3.19 The Committee is also keen to have a better understanding of and greater influence over the shared services operated across Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils

3.20 Children and Families Committee

- 3.21 The Children and Families Committee deals with the scrutiny of Education, Children's Social Care, Early Years Provision, Looked After Children and Youth Services. These services are often complex, with a large budget allocation and cover some of the most vulnerable in

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Cheshire East. An added challenge for the Committee this year has been with the Children's Service being in a period of flux with a number of new systems and structures being formulated and embedded.

- 3.21 In order to meet this challenge, the Committee has often taken a policy review role, providing an essential steer for some major changes that will affect the children and young people of Cheshire for years to come.

Key to this approach has been the Committee's Task and Finish Reviews. Here the Committee has built on last year's work by investigating in more detail the issues that arose during the 2009/10 work programme. In doing so, the Committee has helped to shape Cheshire East's approach to ensuring that its children and young people have the best chance in life as possible.

3.22 Review of Residential Provision – Task and Finish Group

Membership: Councillors D Neilson (Chairman), D Flude, M Simon, D Beckford and J Goddard.

What we wanted to do

This review of the residential provision in Cheshire East looked at the inheritance from the former Cheshire County Council (CCC). Ofsted inspections had found that the two CCC residential homes in the east of the county did not meet their standard.

A Group was therefore established with the following Terms of Reference:

“To review and examine current residential provision for young people for 11 – 17 and make recommendations as to future residential provision for Cheshire East children”.

How we did it

The Group had the opportunity to visit all existing provision as well as two new homes in the Crewe area and this proved to be a very useful exercise. These visits plus information from officers provided the basis for the Group's work. The Group also received valuable first hand information from members of the Children in Care Council which informed a number of the recommendations.

What we found out

That the current and future focus for residential provision appears to be towards smaller units in established residential areas. Members heard how the new units will achieve a homely and ordinary feel. The recommendations of the group supported this approach and proposed measures to extend it.

Future Implications

The recommendations have been adopted by Cabinet, albeit with some slight modifications due to financial implications. The review contributed to a new approach for Cheshire East in how it provides residential provision, one that it will continue to follow.

3.23 Review of Family Support – Task and Finish Group

Membership: Councillors R Westwood (Chairman), D Neilson, D Flude, D Beckford and G Merry

What we wanted to do

Today, it is widely recognised and agreed by experts across the world that early intervention works, both with regards to improved outcomes and greater efficiency of resources and services being delivered. The evidence is unarguable that a good start in life, in terms of physical, emotional and cognitive development, will result in better individual and social outcomes later in life. The Group therefore wanted to make a series of recommendations that would help to develop a wider, more targeted model of family support that would improve systems and most importantly improve outcomes for the children and young people of Cheshire East

How we did it

The Task and Finish Group embarked on a research and review process which incorporated interviews, questionnaires and site visits in order to uncover the best way forward for Cheshire East's Family Support Services and early intervention agenda.

What we found out

The review was heartened to find teams and individuals involved in family support that were dedicated, knowledgeable and skilled, both from within Cheshire East and its partner authorities and third sector organisations. Whilst a number of innovative programs are in place, it was clear that services were currently not well co-ordinated, joined up, performance managed or operating efficiently within a value for money framework.

Future Implications

Following the findings of the review, a number of recommendations were made which suggested that in an increasingly difficult economic climate, there was a need to bring services together, with an emphasis on co-ordination, improved information and data sharing and targeted intervention based on a continuum of need. The recommendations are

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currently in the process of being adopted by Cabinet and the Group are hopeful that if accepted, outcomes for Cheshire East's people and their families will be greatly improved.

In addition to the specialist and more discrete Task and Finish Reviews, the Committee took a themed approach in its work programme to provide a more overarching take to service redesign.

3.24 Safeguarding

3.25 In April 2009, the interim the Council commissioned a number of reviews to establish whether the Children and Families service had inherited effective arrangements from the Cheshire County Council. The outcome of this work found some significant concerns around the ability of the inherited statutory social care services to adequately identify safeguarding risks.

3.26 Members decided to allow officers to design new and improved systems and put these in place with minimal interference. Members received regular briefings on the progress of the redesign and helped to provide direction at crucial junctures. This process has left the service in the healthy position.

3.27 SEN Review

3.28 This review began in July 2010 as a result of how the distribution of special schools had been split with the reconfiguration of the Cheshire authorities. It had been discovered that this process had left Cheshire East with insufficient capacity and as a result, the authority was inefficiently spending the relevant budget on out-of-Borough provision.

3.29 Once again, Members have been involved in providing a steer at crucial periods of this review as regular updates have been brought to Committee. Once the new structure of provision is in place, the Committee will be well placed identify gaps and drive forward improvements.

3.30 Looking Ahead to 2011/2012

3.31 Whilst congratulating the Children's Service on their hard work and progress, the Committee in its role as a scrutiny body will not be complacent. As the various teams and departments settle into their new structures, the Committee will extend its role as a 'critical friend' and will continue to drive forward improvements.

3.32 As part of this, Task and Finish Reviews of the Fostering and Adoption Services are expected to report and Members of the Committee will be embarking on an innovative project to observe Social Care Services to enable them to gain even more understanding and insight into the

child's journey through the statutory process. This will leave those involved in an excellent position to assess the efficacy of the systems and to note any gaps that become apparent. There will also be a need for strong links to be forged with the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee as the new public health responsibilities for local authorities and their relation to children and families become apparent. With a newly developed comprehensive work programme which aides the Committee in receiving regular reviews in a timely manner, there is certainly confidence that the Committee will be able to keep fully abreast of an expanding remit.

- 3.33 The Committee will also continue to monitor a fast-moving policy landscape and will endeavour to assist the Children's Service in formulating and improving policy to help Cheshire East's children and young people to fulfil their potential in what is expected to be a challenging year ahead.

3.34 Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Cllr G Walton
Vice Chairman: Cllr A Martin

Committee Membership: G Barton, S Broadhurst, S Davies, H Davenport, R Fletcher, L Gilbert, M Hollins, T Jackson, M Parsons, M Simon, C Thorley, J Weatherill.

- 3.35 The Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee deals with Environmental Services, Regeneration and Planning and Policy. The Council has had some major challenges to meet over the past year, not least of which was the Council's response to the second severe winter in succession the first of which had been the worst for over 30 years. In September 2010 the committee had considered a report prepared by the Strategic Director places under the banner 'winter learning', which had outlined the council's response to the previous year's winter. The report had been framed to facilitate scrutiny of the Council's performance and to highlight what could be key lines of inquiry by Scrutiny Committee Members.
- 3.36 In addition the Committee has received regular updates on Highway maintenance, waste, and the Total Transport Transformation Programme.
- 3.37 In order to address these challenges, the Committee has taken on a policy development role, helping the authority to achieve its corporate objectives to grow and develop a sustainable Cheshire East and enhance the Cheshire East Environment.

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- 3.38 The Committee has submitted several recommendations to Cabinet, all of which have been approved.

3.39 Affordable Housing

- 3.40 The Committee received a presentation on affordable housing, which provided the committee with a definition of affordable housing, explained why affordable housing is required and why it is important to Cheshire East. The Committee was apprised of the current policies and details of the interim policy statement. On 9 September 2010 the Committee undertook visits to housing schemes in Sandbach, Crewe, Nantwich, Bunbury, Holmes Chapel and Macclesfield to see at first hand, typical examples of affordable housing.

- 3.41 The tour enabled Members to review the interim policy statement in a much more informed manner.

3.42 The Committee subsequently commended the interim planning statement on affordable housing to Cabinet for consultation purposes and recommended that the document should be treated as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

3.43 Review of Towns and Villages – Task and Finish Group

Membership: Councillors G Walton, B Dykes, R Fletcher, G Merry and C Thorley.

What we wanted to do

The Cabinet Member for Environment, asked the Committee to set up a Task and Finish Group to review the towns and villages within Cheshire East, and to rank them by judging them against a set of criteria suggested by the Portfolio Holder.

Terms of Reference

The group agreed to rank towns and villages by a set of criteria suggested to it by the portfolio holder, which compared such matters as socio economic conditions and other factors such as facilities, retail, hospitality, business and travel for each of the towns and villages. The review was undertaken to provide a basis upon which towns and villages considered to be comparable are treated equally in the event that the Council decides to review its car parking charging policy in the near future and to ensure that a fair and equitable tariff scheme is created, although the level of charges was outside the scope of the review.

How we did it

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The Task and Finish Group undertook a series of site visits, and noted the various facilities within each town, such as whether there was a railway station, the nightlife, shopping facilities etc and marked each category out of 10. This allowed the group to give each town or village an overall score and to give them a final ranking ranging from A-E, with A indicating the towns with most facilities and E the least.

Outcome

The Portfolio Holder accepted the following recommendations of the Task and Finish Group:

1. That the rankings of towns and villages identified within the report be agreed.
2. That any future decisions made by the Portfolio Holder should be in line with the Cheshire East Council Parking Strategy and agreed that when car parking is reviewed in the future, consideration be given to the following observations:
 - That the parking charges on Thomas Street car park in Crewe be reviewed.
 - That the parking restrictions in Disley be enforced on a regular basis.
 - That the possibility of charging for parking in Disley be investigated.
 - That a solution to the parking problems on the Rams Head public house car park be sought.
 - That the possibility of the Borough Council managing the privately owned car parks in Handforth be investigated.
 - That the car park at the Paddock in Handforth have a maximum waiting time, which must be enforced.
 - That due to the size of the car parks Audlem, Haslington, Holmes Chapel and Middlewich, parking charges should not be implemented.
 - That the working arrangements for the Booths supermarket car park in Knutsford be used as an example of good practice.
 - That the legal issues regarding the car park in Poynton be investigated.
 - That action be taken to increase the usage and cleanliness of Spring Street car park in Wilmslow.

3.43 Looking Ahead to 2011/2012

- 3.44 During 2010/2011, the Committee has mainly concentrated on policy development and has worked closely with Cabinet on a number of policy documents. It is hoped that in the year ahead, the committee will be able to take on work specifically commissioned by the committee

itself, and to review the outcomes of the recommendations made to cabinet during the 2010/2011 civic year. Close attention will also be paid to highway policies, the improvement of the planning service and waste harmonisation, particularly recycling and collection methods.

3.45 Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee

Chairman – Councillor H Murray

Vice Chairman – Councillor B Livesley

Committee Membership – E Alcock, A Barratt, J Crockatt, M Davies, P Edwards, D Flude, S Furlong, M Hardy, D Hough, J Jones, Wilkinson and J Wray.

Expert Advisor – E Lam

- 3.46 The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee deals with the Safer and Stronger Communities service, Internal Audit, Policy and Planning, Customer Services, Partnerships and Communications. The Committee is also responsible for the external scrutiny of community strategies and statutory crime and disorder matters in accordance with the Police and Justice Act 2006.

3.47 External Scrutiny

- 3.48 The Committee has undertaken external scrutiny of the Safer Cheshire East Partnership, Cheshire Constabulary and the Probation Service.

- 3.49 Particular attention has been paid to the Neighbourhood Policing Grant, Road Safety and Restorative Justice.

- 3.50 The Committee has expressed serious concerns regarding the Neighbourhood Policing Grant, as the ring-fenced CDRP (Crime and Disorder Reduction partnership) grant which had supported the funding of Police Community safety Officers (PCSO's) in recent years was no longer earmarked for neighbourhood policing in the new formula grant settlement announced in the Governments Comprehensive Spending Review late in 2010. The Committee are continuing to investigate the impact this will have on the authority and PCSO's.

- 3.51 Road safety is highlighted in the Safer Cheshire East's Partnerships Strategic Plan and the Council's own Corporate Plan as priorities. The Committee has been aware for some time that the authority has been underperforming in this area' and the Committee met a representative from the Fire Authority at regularly to address Member's concerns. A Working Group has been established to tackle road safety; and as there have been significant budget cuts in this area and the Committee has decided to continue to monitor the situation.

3.51 Review of Community Safety Wardens – Task and Finish Group

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Membership: Councillors P Edwards (Chairman), D Flude, D Hough and B Livesley.

3.52 What we wanted to do

- 3.53 Cheshire East Council inherited two existing Community Warden services from Congleton Borough Council and Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council, and from Macclesfield Borough Council, a distinctly different service of Environmental Enforcement Officers. Whilst the warden services from Crewe and Congleton shared many common features, Macclesfield's Environmental Warden's focused on the Clean Safer Neighbourhood Agenda and mainly dealt with environmental offences such as fly tipping. The Council therefore needed to harmonise the 3 services into one service in order to deliver the objectives of Cheshire East Council in a more focused and cost effective manner and to assist in this process, the Committee set up a Task and Finish Group.

The task and Finish group therefore set about to establish

- Existing service delivery
- whether or not there are any overlapping services
- the services unique to the Community Safety Wardens
- best practice

How we did it

The group took evidence from a range of sources including other local authorities, private sector operators and the representatives of the community warden service about how they approached their service delivery.

What we found out

It was evident that there is duplication of some of the services being carried out, between the Council Warden service, PCSO's and Fire and Rescue Service, particularly in the field of education. The Community Safety Wardens and Cheshire Constabulary were both undertaking crime prevention tasks and the Community Safety Wardens and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service were both undertaking home and fire safety issues.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service had the capacity to take on additional duties, however they did not currently have the powers to issue fixed penalty notices.

Outcome

The Committee noted that the economic landscape had changed considerably since the review of the service had commenced, it was

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therefore agreed that the Community Safety Manager should undertake some additional work and bring a report back to the Committee outlining:

- A revised job description –after consulting with Street scene, Enforcement Officers etc, to highlight any gaps in need.
- A deployment proposal outlining how many Community Wardens would be required and where they would be placed.
- How performance would be measured
- How the Wardens would be managed.

Members considered the new working arrangements at a subsequent meeting and asked the Community Safety Manager to report back to the Committee in six months time on progress with the service and with detailed financial information on the savings achieved through the restructure.

3.54 Looking Ahead

- 3.55 As well as continuing to closely monitor the work of the Community Safety Wardens, a Task and Finish Group will be established to review all of the other Warden Services that exist within Cheshire East, with a view to bringing the services together under one management structure.
- 3.56 The Committee will also be review the effectiveness of the recent restructure of the CCTV Service, to ensure that the goals and objectives of that restructure have been achieved.
- 3.57 Road safety and the Neighbourhood Policing Grant will continue to be monitored.
- 3.58 The Committee would like to thank Emily Lam for her hard work and expert advice throughout the year on behalf of the Police Authority.

3.59 Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

Chairman: Councillor B Silvester
Vice Chairman: Councillor C Beard

Members: Councillors C Andrew, G Baxendale, D Bebbington, S Bentley, D Flude, S Furlong, S Jones, W Livesley, M Lloyd, A Moran, A Thwaite and C Tomlinson.

- 3.60 The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee deals with the scrutiny of health and social care services by holding the Council and the many healthcare service providers to account to ensure that health and wellbeing objectives are achieved. The Committee has fulfilled the statutory health scrutiny role by commenting on substantial

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developments and variations proposed by the NHS, commented on changes to adult social care services including “Calling In” for detailed scrutiny the Council’s proposals to close some Community Support Centres and undertaken a policy review role by setting up Task and Finish Groups to look in depth at specific service areas.

- 3.61 The Committee has also kept up to date with proposed changes in the NHS outlined by the coalition government
- 3.62 The Committee continues to have a strong focus on the work and performance of the North West Ambulance Trust (NWAS). The Chairman held a meeting with the Chief Executive of NWAS in December 2010 at which the issue of response times in Cheshire East was discussed – figures from NWAS showed that the service was not meeting response time targets in many of the postcode areas of Cheshire East.
- 3.63 The Committee was keen to question representatives of NWAS about their performance and heard from senior NWAS officers about the difficulties in meeting response time targets, without additional resources, due to the rural nature of the Borough. However, various other measures have been introduced to help patients including an increase in Community First Responders Schemes, “Hear and Treat” (use of paramedics to assess callers), See and Treat (use of Advanced Paramedics to treat), as well as plans to introduce Co-Responder schemes (joint schemes with the Fire Service) more widely.
- 3.64 There are estimated to be 4,500 people living with dementia in Cheshire East over the age of 65, with one in five people over 80 having a form of dementia. The Committee received detailed presentations on various aspects relating to dementia including how the Council would deliver services in the future, investment in Assistive Technology which would enable people to stay in their own homes for longer, maximising the use of Extra Care Housing developments and investment for carers and respite.
- 3.65 Alongside this, the Committee was concerned when proposals by Age UK to close its Day Care Centres came to light. There was similar concern among members of the public; in response, the Chairman requested that representatives of Age UK attend a meeting of the Committee to explain their proposals. In a packed meeting, Age UK announced that they were to postpone any decision on closure to enable alternative providers to come forward; representatives of a voluntary group, Wishing Well, were at this meeting and indicated they would be keen to investigate providing the service themselves.
- 3.64 In response to this important issue, the Committee set up a Task/Finish Group to look at services for older people and dementia, including the future provision of Day Care Centres. So far Members of this Group have visited an Assistive Technology demonstration flat, visited an Extra Care Housing Scheme and a number of Community Support

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Centres owned and run by the Council, as well as visiting a Dementia Café. The Group has heard evidence from the Alzheimer's Society, Crossroads (a carers' organisation) and Age UK. The Group was consulted on the proposals around future provision of Day Care Centres and supportive of the proposals for Wishing Well to take over the running of six of them with the remaining one being run by a Community Action Group in Audlem. The work of the Group is currently ongoing.

- 3.65 Members questioned the Deputy Chief Executive of Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS foundation Trust (MCHfT) following the publication of a report by the Dr Foster organisation "How safe is your hospital?" that raised concerns about mortality rates – according to Dr Foster, mortality rates in MCHfT were higher than the average Standardised Mortality Rate (SMR) of 100. Members were advised that two different methods of measuring mortality rates were used which meant different mortality rates could arise for the same hospital; also figures published by Dr Foster related to the previous year so were slightly out of date. Nonetheless, the Committee was pleased to hear about specific work being undertaken to address mortality rates by the Hospital Mortality Reduction Group. There were also various other "improving patient safety" projects taking place across the Trust and MCHfT had set itself an improvement programme to reduce its mortality rate by 10 points by March 2011. In February 2011, Members were advised that mortality rates were below the SMR and the 10 point reduction had already been achieved.
- 3.66 The Committee took part in the Centre for Public Scrutiny pilot project on how scrutiny can help address health inequalities – this was through a Joint Scrutiny Panel with members from Cheshire West and Chester Council. The project focused on trying to identify health inequalities in rural areas which may exist in small hidden "pockets"; this was done through contacting various organisations to find out what information they held on health inequalities; and, additionally, through questionnaires to local residents conducted by Members and Officers through door step interviews and interviewing people who had attended an Age UK exercise class. Members also carried out a half day "mini scrutiny review" of mental health services in rural areas when they heard from officers of the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS foundation Trust (provider of mental health services), the Local Involvement Network and Cheshire Community Action. The findings from the Panel's work have contributed to a national Scrutiny Toolkit to be launched soon and it is hoped that the findings from the review will be a useful reference document for the emerging Health and Wellbeing Boards in their role in tackling health inequalities.

3.67 Obesity and Diabetes- Task and Finish Group work

Membership: Councillor A Moran (Chairman), Carolyn Andrew, Rachel Bailey (until 13th May 2010), Chris Beard, Gillian Merry and Christine Tomlinson

What we wanted to do

The Terms of Reference for the Group are set out below:

1 To review the outcomes and recommendations from the Scrutiny Report on Diabetes (2004) and Tackling Obesity in Cheshire (concluded in 2006) taking into account:

a) Ongoing performance in Cheshire East on the detection, access to services and preventative element of the NHS National Framework for Diabetes (with particular reference to Type 2 Diabetes)

b) The effectiveness of various initiatives on children's eating habits undertaken in Cheshire East by the relevant agencies and schools.

c) The "Think Family" strategy currently being developed by Cheshire East Council and partner organisations.

2 To report on and produce a revised action plan, reflecting progress achieved to date and any developments since 2006.

How we did it

The methodology adopted by the Panel was the careful review of the recommendations from both of the original reports (including recommendations from a review on "Food in Schools" carried out by the former Central Cheshire Local Health Scrutiny Committee) and the review of the Diabetes Action Plan in 2006. The focus was very much on work with children and younger people, particularly in the school setting. The Group heard evidence from officers of the Council's Health and Wellbeing Team, the Primary Care Trust, Cheshire East Catering, Trading Standards (regarding food labelling) and a Diabetes Consultant.

What we found out

A great deal of activity has been successfully led by schools, and the Central and Eastern Cheshire Primary Care Trust (the PCT) has contributed fully to these initiatives and in addressing the rise in diabetes in the general population. Inevitably, the Panel noted several areas where more remains to be done including addressing the pressure on pupils' time in school at mealtimes and the physical constraints of some canteens; making school facilities open to the community when the school is closed, the dependence of many exercise and activity programmes on "one – off"

opportunistic funding, rather than being consolidated in core programmes, which may impact on longer term viability especially in the current economic climate; and the lack of progress nationally towards a single regulated system of food labelling and nutritional information.

Future implications

The recommendations were forwarded to the Cabinet who heard that progress has been made in relation to a number of recommendations. The Committee will monitor progress at a future meeting.

3.68 Looking ahead to 2011/12: the Committee will be finalising its report on services for Older People and Dementia; scrutinising proposals for the provision of specialist dementia services in the north of the Borough; studying proposals for Lifestyle Centres which are intended to provide a variety of health and wellbeing services; as well as keeping an eye on all the changes in the NHS with the introduction of GP consortia and the transfer of responsibility for public health to the Council and how this will impact on the work of the Committee. We will also continue to press the North West Ambulance Services (NWAS) to improve their performance. In addition, we will need to ensure that the new providers of day care centres are meeting the required standards and working within the budget available.

4 Lessons Learned

- 4.1 At the end of the 2010/2011 civic year, the Scrutiny Chairmen's Group undertook an 'end of term' review of the scrutiny function.
- 4.2 The group summarised their findings as follows:
- 4.3 Meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees**
- 4.4 Meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees had taken place in the following forms:
- **Formal meetings** – in accordance with the statutory deadlines either monthly or bi - monthly
 - **Mid point meetings** – mainly to deal with agenda setting and review of actions from previous meetings
 - **Informal meetings** – to deal with matters not yet in the public domain, awareness sessions
- 4.5 As there had been some confusion about the status of mid point meetings and informal meetings, the group agreed that there should be a consistent approach wherever possible across all 5 committees as much as possible. Mid points should be used for agenda setting purposes and to review actions from previous meetings. Informal meetings should be used occasionally, as a means to increase awareness of forthcoming issues, but should not be used to deal with formal business.
- 4.6 The general consensus of the group was that monthly meetings should be continued, but that each Chairman should have discretion to vary the schedule of meetings.
- 4.7 The group was also aware of the impact that requests for information was having on some service departments, The group agreed that in order to avoid placing additional demands on service departments, Scrutiny should adopt a flexible approach and allow innovative means of receiving information.
- 4.8 1-1's**
- 4.9 There had been a mixed response to the effectiveness of 1:1's with portfolio holders. One committee had not used them at all, whereas other committees had ranged from regular monthly meetings to occasional meetings held as and when required. It is considered important that the use of 1:1's should continue as appropriate as continuing dialogue between Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Chairs is essential to achieve the best from Overview and Scrutiny.

4.10 Task and Finish Groups

- 4.11 A continuing concern has been that only a small cohort of Members has been involved in Task and Finish Groups.
- 4.12 Another concern is the potential for duplication of work streams. On a number of occasions, Cabinet/and or officer groups had commenced work in an area already identified by Overview and Scrutiny. Communication between Cabinet and Scrutiny needs to be improved to avoid duplication of effort. This matter will be taken up in future by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer

4.13 Member Involvement

- 4.14 An opportunity should be taken after the election to reduce the number of Members on each committee. It is acknowledged that this can only happen in accordance with the normal proportionality rules. Also in view of the sweeping changes affecting future health arrangements, the group also believe that there is a strong case to separate Health and Wellbeing from Adult Social care, thereby creating a 6th Committee.

4.15 Co –option

- 4.15 The group feel that the existing arrangements on Co-option, should remain in place.

4.16 External Organisations

- 4.17 As a relatively new Overview and Scrutiny function, it is understandable that there hasn't been much activity in scrutinising external organisations, however the group hope that the Scrutiny function will widen its horizons in future and scrutinise partner organisations. In particular it was suggested that the Children and Families Committee may wish to scrutinise organisations affiliated to the Council such as the Children's trust etc.

5 Future Developments

- 5.1 The landscape for Overview and Scrutiny is changing as the government pursues its Localism agenda. Although there is uncertainty about the future, the Council is determined to embrace any opportunities that arise from the new Act when it receives Royal Assent. The Council will strive to pursue the new themes of accountability, transparency and involvement with enthusiasm. The move away from the 'top down' style of governance will free the Council to challenge decision makers in new innovative ways. There will be scope for greater community involvement and Overview and Scrutiny Committees must ensure that they are in the vanguard of such movements.
- 5.2 We are in no doubt that Overview and Scrutiny is ideally placed to review commissioning with the voluntary and community sector, and can help take into account the impact that funding such organisations has on the community. Scrutiny should play a role in ensuring that community groups or other organisations who are providing local services are held to account. Scrutiny can also hold the council to account on behalf of these groups and organisations.
- 5.3 However, not all of the Council's statutory responsibilities have disappeared and the news that Health Scrutiny is still to be a key responsibility of the Council is warmly welcomed. The latest information from Whitehall suggests that Local authorities will have a pivotal role in Scrutinising the work of health Commissioners although details are still emerging resulting from the eleventh hour Government announcement to pause the parliamentary timetable to engage with people about the changes. There are also likely to be other opportunities connected with the new police commissioner regulations.
- 5.4 Now that CAA and the national performance set have disappeared, it is for local authorities themselves to determine how they measure performance. Overview and Scrutiny in Cheshire East will be working closely with colleagues in Policy and Performance to ensure that accurate and timely performance information is made available to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, so that they can maintain their lead role in challenging the Cabinet on its performance.