

# Scrutiny Annual Report 2014

## Introduction

Last year's annual report showcased some of the work Select Committees carried out during 2012/13 – highlighting particular successes and reflecting the range of different approaches which were taken to help the Council meet the challenges it faced.

2013/14 was always going to be a time of change: the May 2013 County elections resulted in almost 20% new Members and there were changes to the Cabinet structure (with the appointment of Cabinet Associates), as well as changes to select committee remits – as set out on the following pages.

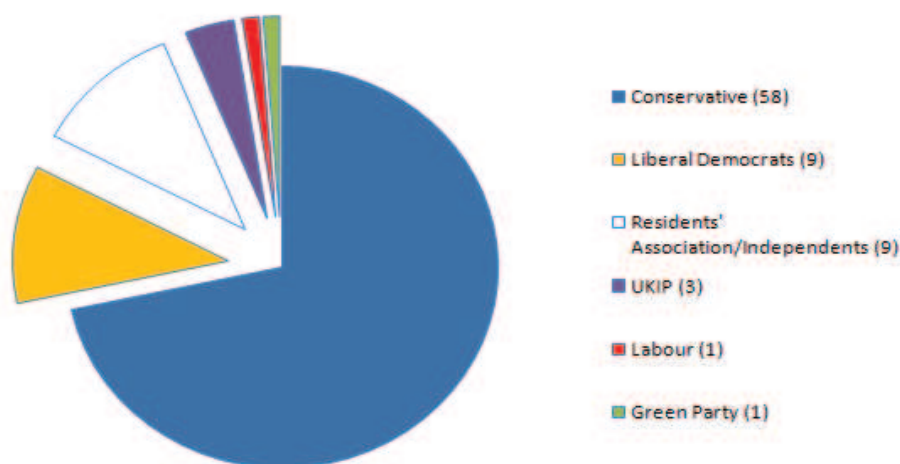
In his address to full Council on 16 July 2013, the Chief Executive set out some of the serious challenges Surrey County Council would face over the coming years. He outlined the very significant progress the Council had made in recent years but also stressed that the Council's job would get harder over the next 5 years. The Council would respond to the challenge by continuing to build on strengths by **working together with residents and partners to find innovative solutions that can improve services and values for residents.**

Select Committees have responded to these challenges by adapting the way that they work to provide meaningful scrutiny and policy development support to services and the Cabinet. This report starts by setting the Democratic context, followed by four case studies demonstrating examples of good practice where the work of Select Committees has positively influenced outcomes for residents.

The case studies in this report are structured around the Centre for Public Scrutiny's four principles of good scrutiny, providing a useful reminder about where the focus of scrutiny should be. As well as highlighting some successes from the past year, this report acknowledges that further progress can continue to be made. The 'now and what next' section at the end of the report sets out some of the work, goals and objectives for the year ahead to ensure the scrutiny function builds on past achievements and helps the County Council to continue adapting to changing circumstances.

## What happened in 2013-14?

**County Council elections were held** in the 81 electoral divisions within Surrey on Thursday 2 May 2013. There were 24 new Councillors elected and 57 returning Members.

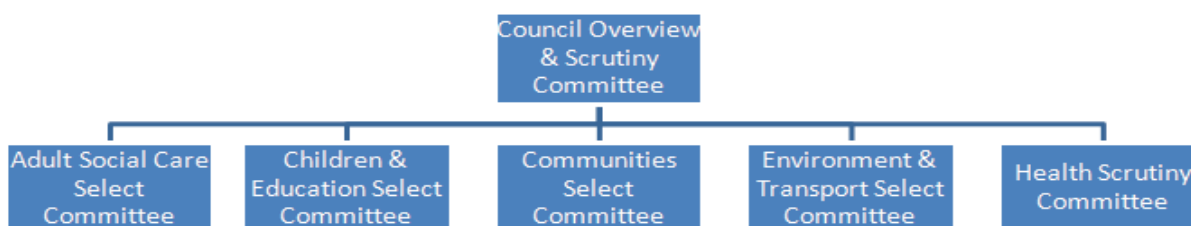


### The remit and role of the Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee changed

COSC was created in June 2011 with the remit of reviewing performance, finance and risk information for all Council services and performing an advisory role in relation to the work programmes of the Select Committees. It was felt that the effectiveness of the Committee would be enhanced if its role was clarified and strengthened, and therefore the remit was revised so that it had a **clear lead responsibility for the Council's overview and scrutiny function**, including approval of the work programmes of Select Committees and a **stronger corporate focus**.

### There was a reduction in the number of Select Committees

Following a review of the effectiveness of the select committee structure during 2012/13, County Council approved a reduction in the number of Committees from 7 to 6. Overview and scrutiny of Children's and Education services had been carried out by two separate select committees: Children & Families and Education. There was inevitably a degree of overlap between the work of these two committees and, although they had successfully carried out joint reviews when appropriate, it was felt that there would be greater clarity and stronger focus if there was a **single committee responsible for both Children's and Education services**. Although there was a reduction in the number of Select Committees, 2013/14 was the first full year of the Police & Crime Panel, set up in 2011 to scrutinize the work of the Police & Crime Commissioner. The current Select Committee structure is illustrated below.



## Member Development and Induction

### Scrutiny Induction

With 24 new Members and revised Select Committee membership, a comprehensive induction programme was offered to equip Members in carrying out their scrutiny role. Each Scrutiny Officer, in consultation with their Select Committee Chairman, designed a committee-specific induction programme that included presentations, site visits, buddying opportunities and briefings. Some highlights of the induction programme are shown below:

#### An overview of the role of select committees – what select committees should be doing:

##### Holding the Cabinet to account

- Call-in powers
- Monitoring the performance of the Cabinet Member
- Questioning reasons for decisions

##### Pre-decision scrutiny

- What's on the Cabinet Forward Plan?
  - has the right evidence been gathered?
  - have the right people been consulted?
  - are the reasons for decision robust?
- **Horizon scanning** – what's coming up in terms of policy development, national issues or central government legislation and how should we respond?

##### Performance monitoring

- Have the decisions made been implemented? How effectively? On time? Did it have the desired impact?
- What's the outcome of service delivery for our residents?

##### Policy Development

- Working with services to drive improvement
- Ensuring value for money
- Innovative approaches to developing policy with service: being involved at an early stage

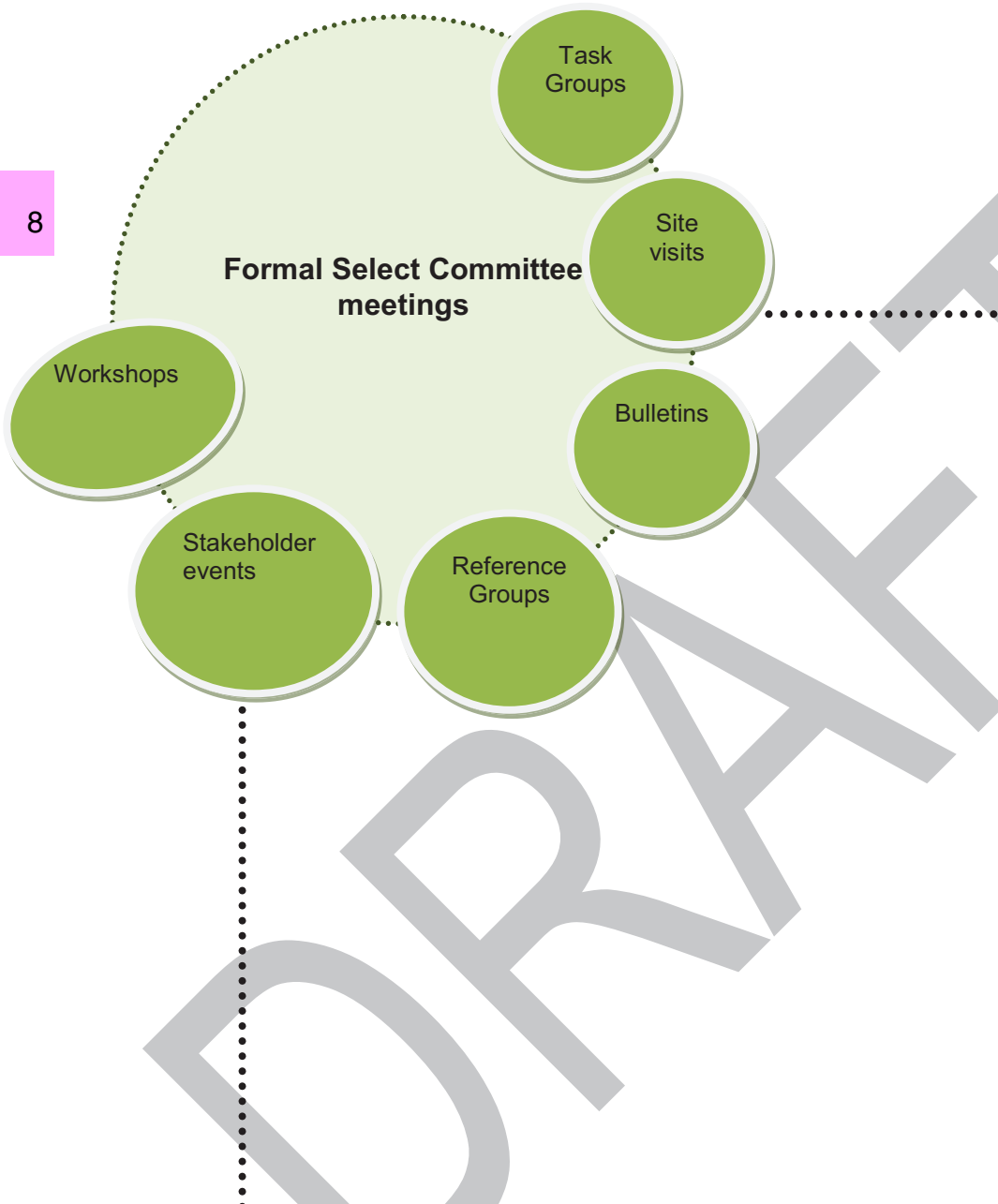
#### Training provided by South East Employers:

- Introduction to scrutiny
- Different methods of scrutiny
- Questioning skills
- Effective work programming
- Engaging stakeholders in the scrutiny process

**An introduction to different methods of working and different ways of carrying out scrutiny:**

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**Formal Select Committee meetings**



Members of the **Children & Education Select Committee** visited services & teams including social care, disability, adoption, safeguarding & residential homes.

The **Environment & Transport Select Committee** visited the highways depot at Merrow.

**Communities Select Committee** were treated to a guided tour of some of Surrey's cultural hotspots including Royal Holloway University, RAF Memorial site, Fairhaven Lodges and the Runnymede Pleasure Grounds.

**Adult Social Care Select Committee** Members were paired with 'buddies' from the directorate leadership team

**Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee** have met staff to hear about what has an impact on their well-being and morale

**Health Scrutiny Committee** met with NHS managers who had recently transitioned to Surrey's new Public Health service.

**Getting to know the services**

## Case Studies

The Centre for Public Scrutiny has identified four principles of good scrutiny:

- Provides 'critical-friend' challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers.
- Enables the voice and concerns of the public to be heard.
- Is carried out by 'independent minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny role
- Drives improvement in public services

This annual report highlights the ways in which Select Committees have followed these principles to reach effective outcomes, as well as highlighting ways in which the overview & scrutiny function can continue to improve in the future.

While there are a number of examples of work Select Committees have carried out over the last year that could demonstrate the four principles of good scrutiny, this report will focus on one clear case study for each principle. It is intended that these examples could be understood as standalone case studies, demonstrating the value of scrutiny to both the Council and residents.

**Surrey Rail Strategy (page 7)**

**Surrey Cycling Strategy (page 8)**

**Welfare Reform (page 9)**

**Patient Transport Service (page 10)**

# Good scrutiny provides ‘critical-friend’ challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers

Good scrutiny should act as a ‘critical-friend’ to the Cabinet by reviewing decisions and policy and providing evidence-based recommendations in order to promote improved service performance and value for money for residents.

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## Rail Strategy

### Why it was an issue for residents:

An extensive consultation with stakeholders and the public revealed that Surrey residents using the rail network were affected by a number of issues, including:

- Overcrowding
- Inadequate car parking at some stations
- Poor connections to other modes of public transport
- Infrequent services from Camberley, Bagshot and Frimley
- Poor access to airports
- Inadequate access to local employment centres, such as Guildford

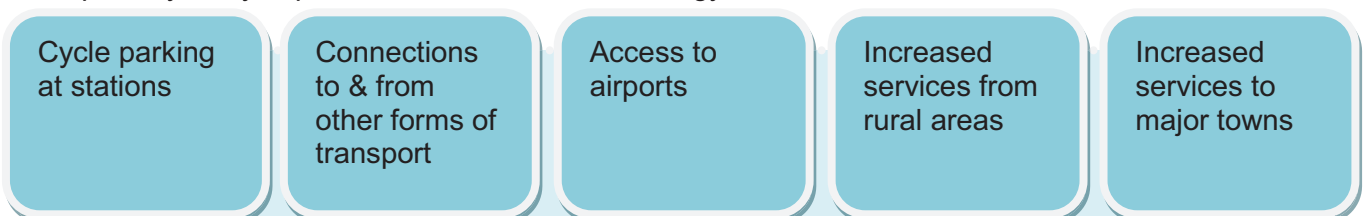
Without investment, these problems were likely to get worse and the County Council contracted consultants to develop a rail strategy for Surrey. Members of the **Environment & Transport Select Committee** were invited to help shape the strategy at a number of different stages, acting as a ‘critical friend’ to the decision maker to ensure the final policy was robust, deliverable and provided good value for money for residents.

### What the Select Committee did:

Informal meetings	The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and a Member of the Committee with <b>expertise in the rail industry</b> were invited to attend initial discussions with consultants to help shape the draft strategy.
Private workshops	Once the draft strategy had been completed, all Members of the Committee were invited to comment in a private workshop, prior to the full public consultation.
Formal Select Committee	Following the public consultation, the Select Committee scrutinised the final strategy and provided further comment prior to the Cabinet decision.

### What was the outcome for residents?

Involving the Select Committee from an early stage meant that Members could offer their expertise to critique and submit evidence based recommendations to the decision maker – vital for ensuring public acceptability. Key improvements made to the strategy, included:



# Good scrutiny enables the voice and concerns of the public to be heard

## Cycling Strategy

In November 2013, the **Communities** and **Environment & Transport Select Committees** held a joint meeting to scrutinise the Council's proposed Cycling Strategy, ahead of a Cabinet decision, due in December 2013.

### Why it was an issue for residents:

- There had been over **3,500** respondents to an independent consultation carried out by Dialogue by Design. The largest volume of respondents were from Mole Valley and around 12% from outside of Surrey. Three quarters of respondents were over 40 years old and two thirds were male.
- There was a mixture of both support and concern, some of which is highlighted below:

#### Support

- ✓ ...from motorists for segregated cycle routes
- ✓ ...for greater awareness & respect amongst road users
- ✓ ...for promoting the County and the benefits for local business
- ✓ ...for Local Cycling Plans, integrated across District & Borough Council boundaries

#### Concern

- ✗ Funding – is this a SCC priority?
- ✗ Cyclists worried segregated lanes would mean they could no longer cycle the routes they enjoy
- ✗ Safety – is it responsible to promote cycling to children?
- ✗ Road closures & disruption
- ✗ Unregulated 'Sportives' organised in Surrey

### What the Select Committee did:

At a meeting on 28 November, Select Committee Members scrutinised the results of the consultation, using the public forum to challenge the acceptability of the cycling strategy, based on public concerns and expectations. The involvement of Members from across two Select Committees improved the effectiveness of the scrutiny, as it meant their cross-Council expertise was utilised and a greater range of views was represented.

### What was the outcome for residents?

Having heard and considered the voice and concerns of the public on the Council's proposed Cycling Strategy, the Select Committees were able to make a series of meaningful recommendations, to help ensure the final strategy was acceptable to Surrey residents:

Benefits for local businesses

Cycling infrastructure schemes on highways maintenance programmes

Lobbying central government so that unregulated 'Sportive' events become regulated

Working with Boroughs & Districts to develop cycling plans

Amendment to the strategy to ensure roads would only be closed with strong local support

# Good Scrutiny is carried out by ‘independent minded governors’ who lead and own the scrutiny role

Good scrutiny needs to be led by Members who understand and champion the role of Select Committees, understand its importance in the democratic process and seek to make improvements to function wherever possible.

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## Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Welfare Reform

COSC is unique because each of the Select Committee Chairmen sit on it and take responsibility for informing the Committee of the work they are planning or have carried out, as well as flagging up specific issues for their service areas. During 2013/14, a Task Group of COSC was convened to consider the cross-cutting issue of Welfare Reform in Surrey.

### Why it was an issue for residents:

The Coalition Government’s ongoing welfare reforms are a fundamental change to the welfare benefits system. As the changes to welfare benefits are being introduced in stages, the effects on residents will be felt over time. Some households will be affected by multiple changes, for instance changes to the level of council tax and rent they are required to pay.

### What the Task Group did:

It began its work by receiving evidence from key partners, relevant services and claimants affected by the reforms. The Task Group also requested and reviewed documentary evidence from witnesses and considered relevant reports. Through research and witness sessions, the Task Group identified the following groups as likely to be significantly affected by the reforms:

Some low-income working families

Some large families not in employment

Some disabled people & those with mental health issues

The Task Group also identified a number of the Council’s services and directorates that could be impacted, as they were likely to be helping residents deal with the effects of the reforms:

Adult Social Care  
Library Services  
Finance

Children, Schools & Families  
Public Health

### What was the outcome for residents?

The Task Group made a number of recommendations to assist the Council and its partners in delivering services in the context of welfare reform. The Leader of the Council welcomed the work of the Task Group, commenting:

**“Welfare Reform cuts across a number of different services & platforms... it is cross-cutting areas such as this where scrutiny task groups can add most value”** – David Hodge, Leader of Surrey County Council. The ongoing work of the Task Group, and the outcomes that will support services and residents are highlighted below:

Training for front line staff who offer advice to service users

Improvements and best use of the Local Assistance Scheme for emergency crisis support

Thorough preparation for the introduction of Universal Credit

Ongoing monitoring of the impacts of reforms



# Good scrutiny drives improvement in public services

The ultimate aim of good scrutiny should be to result in tangible improvements in public services.

## Patient-Transport Service

In September 2013, the Health Scrutiny Committee scrutinised the South East Ambulance (SECAmb) Service on the delivery of the Patient-Transport Contract.

### What service users had to say:

The Surrey Coalition of Disabled People (SCDP) provided evidence to the Health Scrutiny Committee, and expressed their own significant concerns about the problems patients still faced, one year after the contract had been awarded to SECAmb.

### What the Committee did:

Upon questioning witnesses, Members identified a number of areas of significant concern about the service. During the questioning, it was highlighted that there were issues with the clamping mechanism used in the vehicles and their appropriateness for wheelchair users. It was noted that the Committee were deeply appalled by the lack of suitability of the Patient Transport Service in transporting disabled people. Through a recommendation, Members **urged all partners to work together to ensure that issues in wheelchair transportation were resolved as a matter of urgency.**

### Outcomes for service users:

When the service returned to the Committee in January 2014, Members were pleased to note that there had been some positive progress, with an improvement plan and updated governance. In response to the Committee's specific recommendation regarding the suitability of PTS for wheelchair users, the SCDP reported:

*"We were informed a few weeks ago that SECAmb had at last accepted that the wheelchair clamping mechanism installed in their new fleet of ambulances a year ago was inadequate. We have also been advised that a new system has been installed. A patient representative experienced the new system in early December. The tie down system is an improvement on the previous system, however as the existing floor tracking has not been amended (widened) or added to, tying down different width wheelchairs is still challenging for the crews. SECAmb also need to source headrests for wheelchairs for these vehicles to prevent whiplash in the event of an accident"*

The SCDP thanked the Committee and its Chairman for the recommendation and work it had undertaken to ensure improvements were made to PTS. While there were still ongoing concerns with the Service, the SCDP were hopeful that with the continued influence of the Health Scrutiny Committee, the PTS would soon deliver standards which patients should reasonably expect.

# What now and next? Scrutiny in 2014/15

## Making Scrutiny a priority

The ongoing financial circumstances facing the public sector will require all Council services, partners and Members to challenge the way they work to improve services and ensure value for money for residents. Select Committees play an important role in scrutinising the Decision Maker and helping the Council develop its policy. To reflect the importance of proper scrutiny in helping the Council achieve its objectives, it was agreed in early 2014 that scrutiny would be the main priority for Democratic Services as part of the Chief Executive's Office directorate strategy:

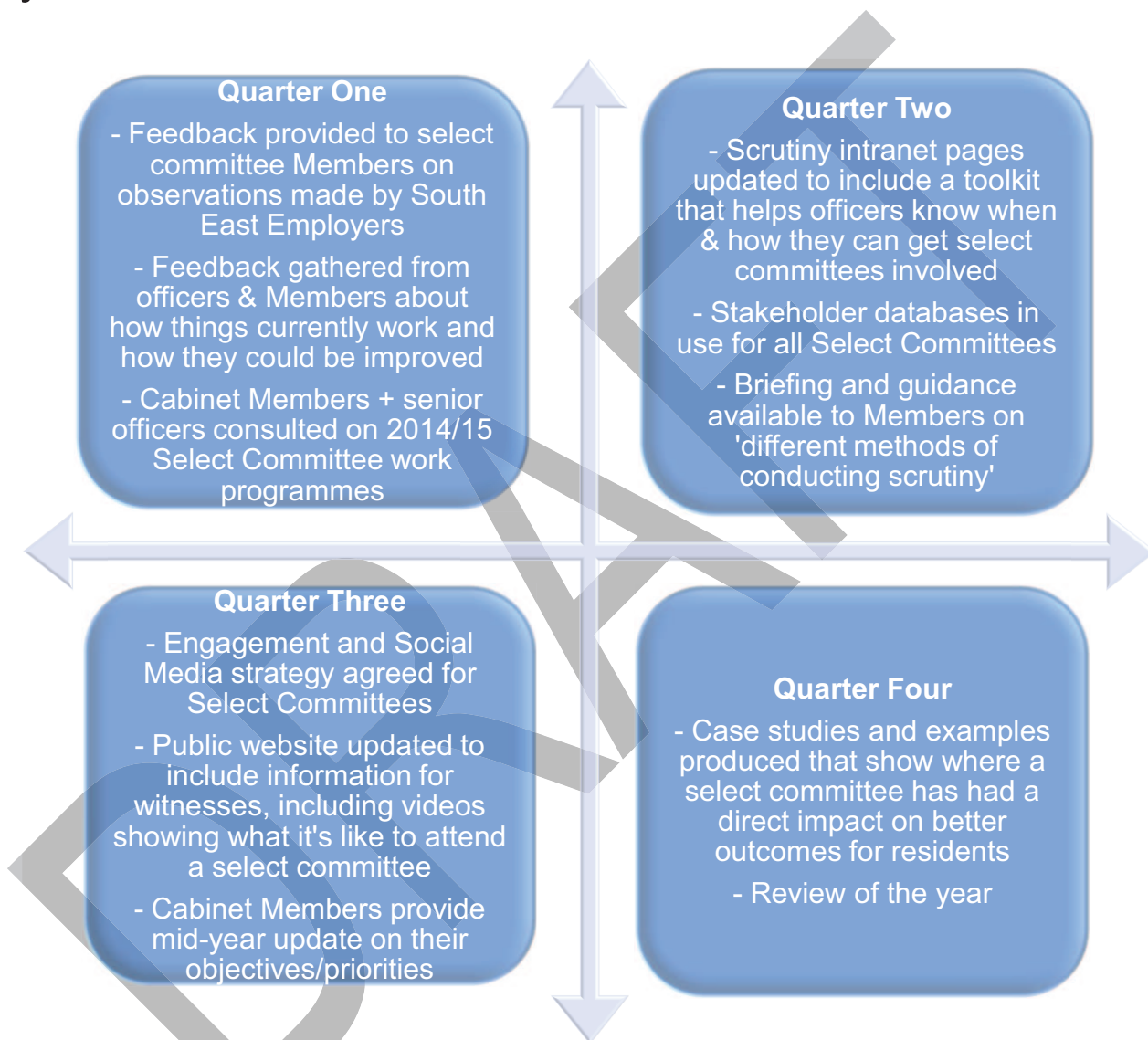
### ***Ensure Select Committees contribute to the delivery of value for money and the achievement of better outcomes for residents through scrutiny and policy development***

A number of activities have been prepared to help the Scrutiny Team achieve this priority, and continue to ensure that select committees can fulfill their important role. Research, best practice and feedback from officers and Members has helped us determine the following picture of 'what great looks like':

<b>Cabinet Members...</b>	<b>Officers...</b>	<b>Select Committees...</b>
Commission work from Select Committees	Include Select Committees in consultation/policy development projects	Develop work programmes that are clearly linked to helping achieving corporate objectives
See Select Committees as a valuable opportunity for two-way communication by sharing knowledge, guidance and expertise	Look to get Member steer at an early stage to promote shared ownership of policy, projects and initiatives	Enable the voice and concerns of the public to be heard and facilitate powerful public discourse
Take into account representations from Select Committees when making decisions	Share challenges to enable co-design and joint problem solving that leads to better outcomes	Help the Council find new & innovative ways of doing things
	Use Select Committees to test out public acceptability or views	Bring learning from other organisations and/or witnesses into the organisation
	Have open & honest conversations with Members	Provide a critical friend role, challenging in a supportive way
	Provide clear, concise accurate & timely information to Select Committees in a format that is accessible to Members and residents.	Gather evidence by asking focussed and challenging questions at formal meetings and witness sessions
	Senior officers actively involved in annual work planning & continue to support across the year	Adopt a range of approaches to their work
		Individual Members suggest scrutiny items

The Scrutiny Team will work closely with Members and senior leaders of the Council to continue on the journey towards 'what great looks like'. A number of the planned activities are highlighted below, and a snapshot of some of the work already underway is detailed on the next page:

## Key milestones for 2014/15



### Leadership support

In order to carry out their role effectively Select Committees require access to information so that they can present meaningful options and evidence based recommendations. To support this and enable Members to carry out their scrutiny function effectively, the Leader of the Council has challenged Select Committees to be much more robust in their scrutiny of service budgets so that they can make a real contribution to the savings required for 2015/16 and beyond. Select Committee Chairmen have worked with the Leader to agree new arrangements for scrutinising business planning, whereby each Select Committee will establish a cross-party Performance & Finance Sub-Group. The sub-groups will meet in private and undertake detailed scrutiny of current services and costs and identify a range of evidence-based options for delivering services differently and/or reducing costs.

## A snapshot of some of the work already underway:

**Adult Social Care Select Committee** will be taking a new format in September 2014 for its scrutiny of the Councils Friends, Family & Support initiative. This will include Members meeting with and talking to front line staff about their experiences of social capital.

**Children & Education Select Committee** has set up a School Governor Task Group to help the Local Authority contribute towards good governance for Surrey Schools.

**Communities Select Committee** is looking at options to hold their meetings out in the community, to be nearer to the residents affected by the services within their remit.

**Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee** is championing shorter report formats and different ways of working, such as holding interactive workshops with staff.

**Environment & Transport Select Committee** is liaising with a large number of stakeholders including several divisional Members, and acting on resident's views with regards to the recent flooding incidents in Surrey.

**Health Scrutiny Committee** has hosted a successful stakeholder networking event, which has transformed the way that the Council and its partners approach topics within the 2014/15 plan.

The **Police & Crime Panel** has successfully completed its first year, with Members from across Districts, Boroughs the County and co-optees all engaging proactively in the democratic process

## The challenge ahead

The case studies in this report demonstrate that there have been some real success stories of where scrutiny has made a difference. Inevitably, there have also been some challenges. Some of these difficulties are highlighted below, along with actions being undertaken to tackle them:

### Large Committees with broad remits can make it difficult to effectively cross-examine issues

Select Committee Chairmen have endorsed making use of different ways of working such as task groups or sub-groups, to enable more focused and challenged scrutiny.

### Information presented to Members is not always succinct and accessible

Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee have championed the use of shorter reports with concise, executive summaries. This successful approach is now being rolled out to other Committees to help make report content accessible to both Members and residents.

Democratic Services are working closely with officers across the Council to support them adapt to this changed approach.

### Select Committee Members need to be equipped to ask strategic, critical and probing questions to respond to the challenges currently being faced by Local Government

The Scrutiny Team provide policy research support to help ensure Members have the background information they require to effectively scrutinise an issue. Briefing notes and suggested lines of inquiry will continue to be produced to support Members in their scrutiny role.

### Information made available to Members is not always timely and Select Committees risk hearing only "one side of the story"

2014/15 will see a greater emphasis on inviting external witnesses to verify information provided to Committees. Democratic Services are working with services across the Council to help aid the flow of information to Select Committees.

## Support for Overview & Scrutiny

The overview and scrutiny function at Surrey County Council is supported by a small but dedicated team sitting within Democratic Services. Four Scrutiny Officers work on specific Select Committees and have developed good knowledge of scrutiny principles and their relevant service areas. A Scrutiny Manager has oversight of the work of the Scrutiny Team, project managing the Priority Plan and ensuring that Select Committee work programmes are coordinated fully integrated.

In the same way that scrutiny seeks to ensure continuous improvement in the services reviewed to ensure that they meet the changing challenges they face, Select Committees and their support team need to look at how they work to ensure that they provide valuable resource to maximise effectiveness. One of the key objectives for the Scrutiny Team during 2014/15 will be to develop Select Committee processes and explore innovative ways of delivering work programmes to support the achievement of the directorate priority. The current support arrangements for select committees are set out below:

### Select Committee Officer contact details

Adults Social Care	Ross Pike	020 8541 368
Children and Education	Andrew Spragg	020 8213 2673
Communities	Victoria White	020 8213 2583
Council Overview and Scrutiny	Helen Rankin	020 8541 9126
Environment and Transport	Tom Pooley	020 8541 9902
Health Scrutiny	Ross Pike	020 8541 368
Police and Crime Panel	Victoria White	020 8213 2583
Scrutiny Manager:	Helen Rankin	020 8541 9126
Senior Manager:	Bryan Searle	020 8541 9019

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