

# Scrutiny Annual Report

2017/18



# Foreword

“Good overview and scrutiny is vitally important to Council decision-making. Surrey County Council’s Select Committees, therefore have a key role in ensuring that the Cabinet is held to account, resident voices are heard and ultimately, that effective decisions are taken.

The scrutiny function has undergone a number of changes to structure and membership since this Council was formed in May 2017. There has also been significant turnover in Councillors with the Council welcoming many new Members.

This period of change is reflected in the variable quality and impact of scrutiny to date. As shown by this annual report there have been examples of good work done by Select Committees but there is more to do. We must ensure that key issues, from improvements to our Children’s Services to delivery of the Transformation programme and many more are effectively scrutinised.”



Kay Hammond  
Chairman of Overview & Budget Scrutiny Committee 2017-18  
Current Chairman of Children & Education Select Committee

# Role of Scrutiny

- The Centre for Public Scrutiny's four principles for good scrutiny form the basis of select committees' role at the Council.
  - Scrutiny provides a constructive 'critical friend' challenge;
  - Amplifies the voices and concerns of the public;
  - Is led by independent people who take responsibility for their role; and
  - Drives improvement in public services

# How do Select Committees do this?

- They meet in public
- Gather evidence through research and engagement
- Listen to a variety of voices
- Undertake reviews of key topics of public interest and organisational priority
- Hold decision makers to account
- Make SMART recommendations to decision makers to improve services and outcomes for residents

# Changes to our Committees

- At the May 2018 AGM several changes were made to the existing scrutiny function:
  - All of the Select Committees were renamed, given tweaked remits and refreshed memberships
  - All but two of the Scrutiny Chairmen were new appointees
  - A Corporate Overview Select Committee was created which has oversight of all the scrutiny work done at the Council

# Select Committee Activity

**55**

The number of items requested by the Select Committees in 2017/18

**11**

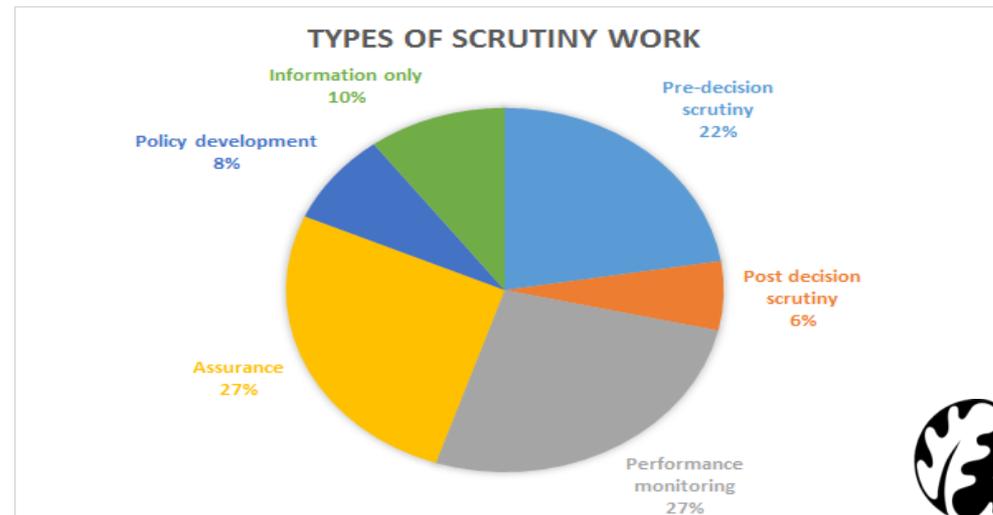
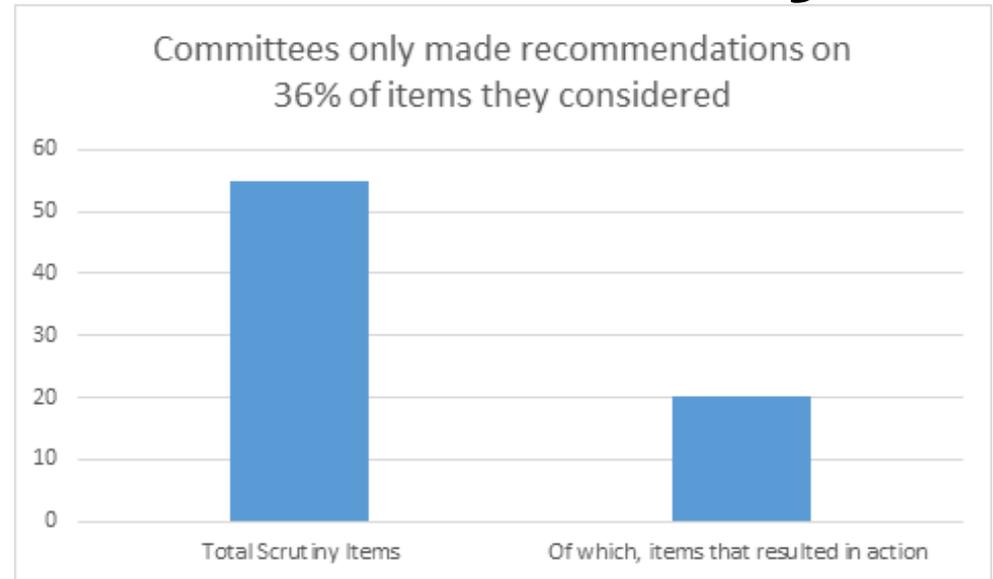
The number of sub-groups formed by Select Committees in 2017/18

**2**

The number of these sub-groups that produced committee reports

**2**

The number of call-ins



# Achievements and Challenges

- Against a complex and changing local government backdrop the Council's scrutiny function has largely been playing catch-up owing to the number of new Members elected in 2017 and a number of political reorganisations necessitating two separate induction programmes in the last two years
  - ✓ The scrutiny on the future of the Surrey Performing Arts Library brought many residents to County Hall adding their voices, formally and informally, to deliberations over the course of two meetings and the subsequent recommendations to Cabinet
  - ✓ Health Scrutiny set up a task group to review the commissioning and engagement behind the new Integrated Sexual Health Service in Surrey. The Task Group met with many stakeholders, commissioners and clinicians in their review and made a number of recommendations that will impact on future commissioning work across the Council.
- However, impact on Council policy and decision making has generally been **low**
- Save for the few exceptions above Select Committees have **not** taken the opportunity to make useful recommendations.
- Only 36% of all the items considered by Select Committees in 2017/18 concluded with recommendations. Most meetings concluding in requests for 'further information' or with Committees simply noting the report

# Public Involvement

- Committees have invited contributions from partners and stakeholders at Committee meetings but this is **not consistent** and take up is **variable**
  - Democratic Services runs a twitter account with nearly 600 followers that provides information on democratic process and engages with the public
  - The Sexual Health Services Task Group interviewed numerous service users and set up an online survey to gather views from the public
  - Dozens of residents attended public meetings on the future of the Performing Arts Library
  - How many public questions/petitions?
- But scrutiny can do more. Public involvement is a key element of good scrutiny

# The Year Ahead

## Key Areas of Focus:

- Implementing coordinated and focused scrutiny of the Council's Transformation Programme
- Developing robust and meaningful forward work programmes that align with community vision outcomes and resident interests
- Boosting the effectiveness of Select Committees through training, more focused forward plans, SMART recommendations and increased input from the public and partners into scrutiny
- Providing training to close skills and knowledge gaps amongst scrutiny members
- Implementing the learning points from the November 'Scrutiny Essentials' training delivered by the Centre for Public Scrutiny including working agreements, committee pre-meetings and rigorous topic prioritisation.

