



## OFFICER REPORT TO COUNCIL

### SELECT COMMITTEES' REPORT TO COUNCIL

#### **KEY ISSUE/DECISION:**

For Members to note the headline activity of the Council's overview and scrutiny function in the period April to September 2022 asking questions of Scrutiny Chairs as necessary.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

As part of the ongoing process to raise standards in the Council's overview and scrutiny function and to raise the profile of the work of Select Committees more generally, Chairs agreed to regularly report activity to Council.

#### **SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2022:**

In this period Democratic Services welcome two new Scrutiny Officers to the team. Omid Nouri and Julie Armstrong support the Adults and Health Select Committee and Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture Select Committee respectively.

#### **Adults & Health Select Committee**

The Committee met once formally in this period in March. Members undertook a review of the Council's All-Age Autism Strategy a year on from its implementation. The Committee recommended deeper partnership working on the aims of the strategy and that autism is a part of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training for social care and health staff.

Complaints made to the Adult Social Care Directorate were also reviewed with suggestions made to improve the system for reporting and analysing complaints at the Council.

Finally, the Committee followed up on the health and social care system in Surrey's response to recommendations made by an independent peer review to improve mental health services in the county taking in a wide ranging of evidence from the Council and its partners.

The Committee's *Health Inequalities Task Group* met to consider its next steps and alighted upon three areas of focus for the final phase of its review: Black and Minority Ethnic Groups and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities; those experiencing Homelessness, Drug and Alcohol Abuse; and those suffering Domestic Abuse using the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy as a framework for scrutiny.

The Committee convened seven informal sessions of its Membership for briefings on a range of topics including access to primary care, mental health and changes to charging in Adult Social Care.

### **Children, Families, Lifelong Learning Select Committee**

The Committee met three times in this period: April, June and July including one extraordinary meeting called to review the closure of a Children's Care Home.

The Committee made recommendations to the Corporate Parenting Service to ensure the energy efficiency of Care Leavers' accommodation and to encourage district and borough councils to support the independent accommodation of this cohort. The Committee made several recommendations to the character of the new Home to School Transport Assistance policy to Cabinet which were noted and a response can be found [here](#).

The review of the circumstances which led to the closure of a Children's Home in Surrey resulted in material changes in the reporting of planned inspections and their outcomes to the Select Committee and Members more broadly with information routinely shared on the Members' Portal.

Latterly, the Committee reviewed and was supported of the Council's approach to sufficiency and sustainability of school places and committed to ongoing oversight of Children's Services response to Ofsted's January 2022 inspection and the *Achieving Excellence* programme. Further to this the Committee's Performance Sub-Group is working on a set of indicators to help track Children's Services ongoing improvement work.

### **Communities, Environment & Highways Select Committee**

The Committee met formally once in June and undertook a comprehensive performance review of the Environment, Transport and Infrastructure Directorate as well as items on the Council's approach to any devolution deal for the county and pre-decision scrutiny of the Waste & Minerals Plan.

The Committee also runs two Member Reference Groups on the Greener Futures programme and Highways Maintenance offering feedback and views on the implementation of new policies.

A Member Reference Group met in September to assess progress against the Council's carbon net zero by 2050 commitment by reviewing the climate change delivery programme which included data on emissions and updates on the various projects underway to meet this commitment.

### **Resources and Performance Select Committee**

There were two meetings held by this Committee in the period of this report: April and July. The Committee did pre-decision scrutiny work on the Supported Independent Living – Design & Construction decision being taken to Cabinet. The Committee received an update from People & Change and sought to influence HMRC to make the 45p mileage rate for business travel non-taxable.

In July, the Committee received an update from Customer Services and an overview of the roll-out of improvements to digital infrastructure across Surrey, including changes introduced by Central Government to the way in which public subsidy is administered to support digital connectivity.

The Committee also held a performance monitoring session in June to review the services under its remit.

### **Budget Scrutiny**

All four Select Committees will resume work on scrutiny of the draft 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Budget in early October having all held briefings with Finance and the relevant Cabinet Members and Executive Directors in July on the early direction of the upcoming budget.

The cross-committee *Budget Task Group* has been reviewing the proposals for 'twin-track' savings in the next budget and monitoring in-year budget performance throughout this period. A round of public, formal scrutiny of budget proposals will take place in December 2022.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. That Council review the work summarised in this report providing feedback to Scrutiny Chairs as appropriate.
2. That the Select Committees report to Council once more this calendar year.

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**Sources/background papers:**

Select Committee Agenda and Minutes:  
[Committee structure - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

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