

Scrutiny Annual Report

May 2019 – November 2020

Background

- The current Select Committee structure was adopted by Council on 21 May 2019
- Four Select Committees were set up:
 - Adults and Health (statutory health scrutiny)
 - Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture
 - Communities, Highways & Environment
 - Resources & Performance
- An informal Select Committee Chairmen & Vice-Chairmen's Group was created to set strategic direction and provide general oversight of the function
- Each Select Committee would have two Vice-Chairmen responsible for chairing task & finish groups
- As a result of these changes and latterly, the coronavirus pandemic, the reporting period for this report is longer than usual, covering the period May 2019 to November 2020



Role of Scrutiny

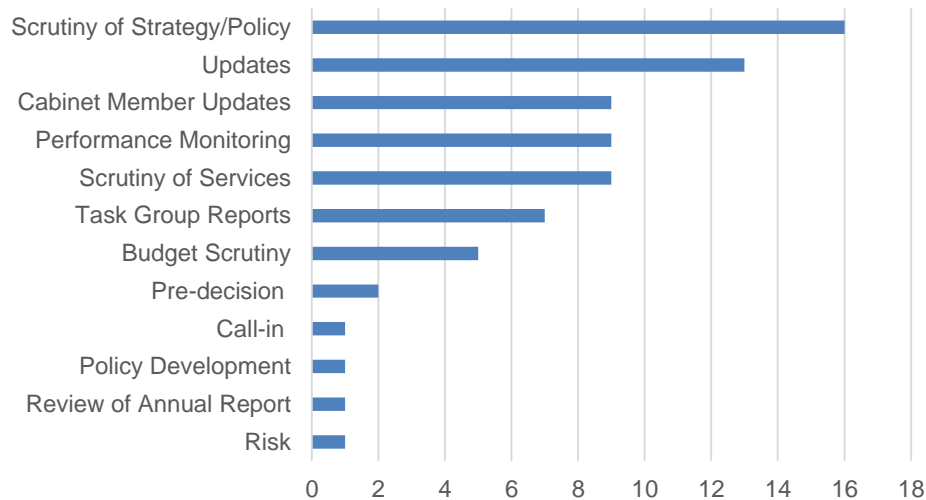
- The Constitution of the Council sets out four main roles of Select Committees: scrutiny; overview, policy review and development; and performance management
- The function also follows the best practice set by the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny and has due regard for the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities

Select Committee Activity

From **May 2019 to October 2020** Select Committees considered **74** substantive agenda items at their public meetings. Scrutiny did not cease during the pandemic.

Select Committees undertook extensive work **outside of committee meetings**; planning in pre-meetings, organising briefing sessions to better understand issues, forming standing groups (Member Reference Groups) to offer feedback and challenge in policy development and more. This amounted to **102** meetings in 2020.

Type of Scrutiny Work Undertaken at Public Select Committee Meetings



In this period Select Committees convened **7 task & finish groups**.

Five have now completed their reviews with all of these producing SMART recommendations to decision makers

Highlights

- Widespread adoption of the **task & finish** methodology for in-depth scrutiny, producing tangible results in the form of **SMART** recommendations accepted and implemented by decision makers
- Greater **focus on key topics** at main Select Committee meetings and the use of informal processes to gather information and produce reports outside of the standard committee cycle
- More **feedback** on key issues to the Cabinet via reports
- Routine use of full-committee **pre-meetings** to develop key lines of enquiry, structure questioning and consider recommendations
- **Coordinated scrutiny** of cross-cutting council issues via the Select Committee Chairmen & Vice-Chairmen's Group e.g. the strategic reset
- Continuing to deliver good scrutiny during the coronavirus pandemic using **remote meeting technology**

Adult Mental Health

The mental health of Surrey residents has been a key issue for the Council and its partners for several years. The Adults & Health Select Committee inherited plans for a review of this topic upon its creation in May 2019 subsequently establishing a task & finish group to review patients and service users' experience of adult mental health care in Surrey.

Also in 2019 the [Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) was published setting clear ambitions to help Surrey residents live longer, healthier lives and in particular 'having good mental health.' Similarly, the Community Vision for Surrey and the Council's Organisational Strategy

County Councillors Bernie Muir, Nick Darby (Chair of the group) and Chris Botten foregrounded many of the issues faced by patients and service users in the county by talking extensively to individuals and organisations across Surrey and listening to their experiences of the care system. The task group gathered wide-ranging evidence to share with providers and commissioners of mental health services in Surrey amplifying the voice of residents and make a robust case for change.

The recommendations made by the task & finish group offer practical suggestions for service improvements. The groups' conclusions are also echoed in the Council's refreshed Organisational Strategy passed by Cabinet in October 2020 which has a priority to tackle health inequality stating that it will be '...increasing our focus on addressing mental health'.

Scrutiny contributes to:

The Community Vision for Surrey's ambitions for people, specifically:

- Everyone lives healthy, active and fulfilling lives, and makes good choices about their wellbeing
- Everyone gets the health and social care support and information they need at the right time and place

And

The Council's Organisational Strategy priority to tackle health inequality

No Wrong Door

This task & finish group was created in response to a commission from the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families to test the suitability of the 'No Wrong Door' model pioneered by North Yorkshire County Council for use in Surrey.

Chaired by Vice-Chairman Lesley Steeds the group involved Chris Botten, Liz Bowes, Robert Evans, Barbara Thomson and Chris Townsend was completed in under two months.

The group reviewed the needs of Surrey children and young people, assessed research and identified a wide range of stakeholders to interview. The group solicited written evidence from a variety of sources and created an online call for evidence using the Surrey Says consultation portal to help them consider whether the new model was the right fit for Surrey.

Having built a robust evidence base the group made recommendations to [Cabinet in October 2020](#), the majority of which were accepted in outright.

Scrutiny contributes to:

The Community Vision for Surrey's ambitions for people, specifically:

- Children and young people are safe and feel safe and confident
- Everyone gets the health and social care support and information they need at the right time and place

And

The Council's Organisational Strategy priority to tackle health inequality

Surrey's Greener Future

- The Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and the Communities, Environment & Highways Select Committee took the responsibility to develop the Council's response. To do this it convened a task group comprised of Andy Macleod (Chair), Paul Deach, Nikki Barton, Jonathan Essex, Becky Rush, Fiona White and John O'Reilly.
- This group worked intensively over a number of months, supported by Council officers, to take evidence from a wide range of stakeholders including other local authorities and sector experts. It conducted numerous interviews and instigated a public 'call for evidence' using Surrey Says that asked for views on what the Council might do to become carbon net zero.
- The evidence was analysed and used to create a ['Call for Action'](#) that set the direction for the Council's Climate Change Strategy adopted in April 2020 by [Cabinet](#).

Scrutiny contributes to:

The Community Vision for Surrey's ambitions for place, specifically:

- Residents live in clean, safe and green communities, where people and organisations embrace their environmental responsibilities'

And

The Council's Organisational Strategy priorities to enable a greener future and grow a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit

Your Fund Surrey

- The intention to roll out a £100m capital fund in Surrey to be allocated to community projects was outlined in the 2019/20 Revenue & Capital Budget. The Communities, Environment & Highways Select Committee engaged with the plan early on and set up a task & finish group to develop the policy in collaboration with the Deputy Cabinet Member, Mark Nuti.
- Throughout June and July the task group chaired by John O'Reilly met to review and shape the final funding criteria and scope of the fund, emphasising the need for appropriate due diligence as well as accessibility. It also made suggestions on communications and branding to promote the Fund to make sure it was fully utilised by communities
- In July the Cabinet approved the process, criteria and governance for managing the Community Projects Fund (CPF) now known as [Your Fund Surrey](#).

Scrutiny contributes to:

The Community Vision for Surrey's ambitions for place, specifically:

- Well connected communities, with effective infrastructure, that grow sustainably

And

The Council's Organisational Strategy priority of empowering communities

Areas for development in 2021

- **Forward planning:**
 - continue to prioritise key issues and limit the amount of general updates in work programmes; and
 - looking beyond Council services to tackle issues of strategic importance in Surrey
- Developing our **scrutiny methods:**
 - Greater use of external witnesses including members of the public to bolster evidence base for scrutiny
 - Employing diverse methods to gather evidence backed up by data analysis to reduce reliance on officer produced information
- Raising scrutiny's **profile** at the Council and with residents
- Developing our **scrutiny skills** during induction and beyond
- **Self-evaluation** – taking time to regularly review our performance

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