



# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

Councillor Dianne Elizabeth Lloyd

## Chair's Foreword



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There's no doubt it's been an interesting year, with a dynamic Corporate Strategy following almost two years of coping with the Covid 19 pandemic and how it affected the council and our residents. Also, getting to grips with the new structure of scrutiny, in line with the new constitution that was adopted by Havant Borough Council on 1 March 2021, was a new challenge. This set the scene for the way of operating in the 2021/22 municipal year, seeing the membership of the scrutiny function as a whole reduce from 30 to 14. Interestingly, since I have chaired a scrutiny panel or board, there have been three different structures to this function of Havant Borough Council.

Given the rate of change to the scrutiny process, I was delighted that most of the Members of the 2018/19 to 2020/21 Operations and Place Shaping Scrutiny Board remained a member of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as we entered 2021/22, allowing some element of continuity. Attendance at committee meetings has averaged 60%. Membership of this committee demands much attention but gives Members the opportunity to help shape the decision-making process.

Setting the Work Plan for the committee began with input from the Cabinet leads in line with the Corporate Strategy and how it affected their portfolios. This did lead to a large Work Plan, and it was doubtful from the outset that the committee would have time and resources to deal with all topics / services on that Plan. However, as the now current structure of Overview & Scrutiny allows for Task & Finish Panels to carry out their work in tandem with the committee, most of the work planned has been completed. Two items have been deferred to 2022/23: The Meridian Centre-ROI and Future Plan plus the service Enforcement-Building Control. Both of these items were proposed to be scrutinised by a working group, reporting to the O&S committee, and it is hoped they will be dealt with early in 2022/23.

I sincerely hope that Members and the public have found the scrutiny meetings, based on the reports presented and publicised, informative and helpful in understanding the aims of the Cabinet to enact the Corporate Strategy of Havant Borough Council.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the Democratic Services team for their support throughout the year. Thank you

## **A. Introduction**

The Work Plan was constructed by the committee but through collaboration with Cabinet members and the Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee members, ahead of the beginning of the municipal year and again, reviewed at the half year point.

The aim of the Work Plan was to ensure that the right topics / services were included. Also, to make sure that the portfolio holders were aware of the reasons why each topic / service was put on to the Work Plan, and to plan such that the anticipated outcomes of any scrutiny would be worthwhile, realistic and achievable.

The Work Plan has been treated as a 'live' document, and the Chair of O&S committee has taken a flexible approach, based on the importance of topics coming from the Cabinet for pre-decision scrutiny, ongoing major strategic programmes and the available resource, particularly from the Democratic Services' teams.

Officers and Members have worked closely together to ensure the scrutiny process is transparent and meaningful, and able to put forward conclusions and recommendations to Cabinet. It has also been critical for the public to see the scrutiny process adding value not only to their understanding but also to the decision-making at the Council.

## **B. Scrutiny Main Achievements - 2021/22**

The main achievements of Scrutiny during 2021/22 are set out below:

- All topics / services reviewed have been put through the scrutiny process by either Full Committee, Working Groups or Task & Finish Panels. This has proved very successful management of resources.
- All topics / services for the scrutiny process have been through a validation and prioritisation process; all topics selected have had focussed objectives.
- The outcomes of the reviews have directly influenced policy development: this approach is recommended for future years.
- Scrutiny has become truly 'Member led' in line with best practice.
- Members of the Overview & Scrutiny committee have maintained an effective structure for managing the function: good planning in preparation for meetings in public.

- All topics / services and their associated reports have been discussed in public.
- The willingness of Cabinet to enable the Committee to comment on proposed strategies and policies at an early stage has made the decision-making process more transparent and helped shape a more robust policy making process.

### **C. Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Work undertaken 2021/22**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (O&S) has had a busy year focusing on the work coming forward from the Cabinet, linked to the Corporate Strategy, and Member-led reviews of certain policies. The following topics have been through the scrutiny process during the municipal year 2021/22:

- Ongoing Strategic Programmes' reviews:
  - Shaping our Future –Transformation – 1/4ly reviews.
  - Regeneration Programme – 1/4ly reviews.
- Post-decision scrutiny:
  - Disbursement of Business Grants money linked to Covid 19 Lockdown.
- Pre-decision scrutiny:
 

	<b>Meeting Date(s)</b>
○ Climate Change & Environment Strategy	24 August 2021
○ Changes to Glass Collections	2 December 2021
○ Draft Budget for 2022/23	9 February 2022
○ Hayling Island Regeneration Strategy	24 August 2021 and 1 March 2022
○ Havant Town Centre – Priority Projects' Regeneration Strategy	1 March 2022
○ Regeneration – A refreshed strategy	24 August 2021 and 1 March 2022
○ Climate Change & Environment Action	12 April 2022
- Policy development scrutiny:
  - 'Red Card' process related to planning application, changed in the new Constitution
  - Provision of Temporary Housing for the homeless within in the Borough
  - Paperless Agenda for Councillors

- Outstanding Actions from previous Recommendations from O&S agreed by Cabinet:
  - Training Programme for Members of the Planning Committee
  - Actions related to the Parking Review report
- Items earmarked for Scrutiny and deferred to 2022/23:  
The Overview & Scrutiny Committee, after consultation with the portfolio holders of services, identified the following topics for scrutiny, but time pressures and the availability of the relevant officers, has meant these topics / services have had to be deferred to the next municipal year:
  - The Meridian Centre – ROI and Future Plan – via a Working Group
  - Enforcement – Building Control service – via a Task & Finish Panel

**D. Other meetings:**

- The Chair convened a meeting of O&S committee in private but open to all members, to facilitate a question-and-answer session with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council following the decision announced on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022 to dissolve the Joint Management Agreement with East Hants District Council.
- It must be noted that in order for lengthy and complex reports to be discussed adequately and in an organised manner in public, Members were sometimes convened in private to ensure comprehension of the report and to discuss themes and specific questions to be posed.
- The Chair also had regular bi-monthly meetings jointly with the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council and separately with the Monitoring Officer, to ensure Scrutiny could function unhindered, and that the committee and its panels / working groups were adequately supported by officers from the Democratic Services Team.

It is important to the Membership and the residents represented by them, that the Overview & Scrutiny committee maintains its position as a critical friend to the Cabinet in their decision-making process, and its stance as being Member-led.

**E. Consultation on Urgent Key Decisions**

- The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was consulted on the following urgent key decisions in accordance with Standing Order 49:

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- Purchase and installation costs of a charging point for the electric rubbish bin collection vehicle on Hayling Island.
- Cost of replacing some and repairing other beach huts following storm damage in February 2022.
- Process for disbursing monies, from central government, as discretionary cost-of-living help (max £150 per household) for homes in Council Tax bands E to H.

## **F. BACKGROUND**

### **What is Overview and Scrutiny?**

Good scrutiny is an essential part of the Council's governance framework and is integral to decision making. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny committee fulfils the statutory responsibility placed on local authorities to review and scrutinise decisions and actions taken, and it plays a vital role in influencing services and shaping policies and plans which affect the corporate strategy and in turn, the borough's residents.

### **What is an Overview and Scrutiny Committee?**

The Council's Constitution allows for one Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The terms of reference are approved by Council and are set out in the Constitution:

The Committee is made up of councillors proportionally represented from the different political parties.. They consist of a Chair, a Vice Chair (either position must be from a minority party of the Council) plus twelve members.

The Committee is designed to support and enhance the decision-making process and aims to make a positive impact by supporting the development of policy, monitoring performance and making important recommendations that will lead to improvements in services and make best use of resource in everything the Council does.

### **How Does Scrutiny Work?**

Matters that are of importance to local residents or business, or that are of strategic importance to deliver services in order to meet the Local Authority duty as required by law, are identified by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and form the work plan for the year ahead. The Committee can invite people to attend meetings or inquiry sessions to provide information, explain structures and situations and respond to questions. Committee meetings take place regularly, they are usually open for the public to attend, and they are broadcast on the Havant Borough Council website.

Methods of scrutiny, where members investigate a topic / service in depth, are either by Full Committee, Working Groups or Task & Finish Panels. These Panels are led by a member of the Panel and are supported by a Democratic Services officer. The reviews by a Panel take place over a set period of time and are scoped to ensure the right focus and evidence is gathered to inform a final report and recommendations. Panel Leads report progress and submit a final report to the Committee, which is then reviewed at a meeting of the committee in public.

### What is Pre-Decision Scrutiny?

*“Pre-decision scrutiny is also a vital part of a committee’s role. By commenting on and contributing to a decision before it is made, scrutiny committee are able to offer executives the benefit of their ability to focus on an issue in greater depth over a longer period of time”<sup>i</sup>*







The O&S Committee is given an opportunity to scrutinise and comment on a proposal before a decision is made. The intention of this is for the scrutiny process to add value to the decision. It can also prompt further investigation into the reasons behind the proposals if the Committee feel that it is appropriate. The use of referrals is recommended, especially regarding controversial issues, to prevent decisions taken by the Cabinet being ‘called in’.

### How Does Scrutiny Make a Difference?

By looking closely at a topic / service, Members gain an understanding of the facts, the issues arising and can proffer solutions to any challenge. Members can provide different perspectives on challenges and proposals leading to well-thought-out decisions.

Holding a matter up to scrutiny raises awareness	Helps to develop relationships between services, partners, Members, officers and the public	Shows us how we perform and why we do what we do
Invites people into the same space to hold an open and transparent discussion	Identifies and encourages good practice	Initiates ‘the difficult conversation’ between interested parties
Questions the issues, identifies barriers and consequences	Monitors and maintains oversight of issues that impact residents and businesses of Havant	Makes comments and recommendations to decision makers based on evidence gathered

**G. Summary of work carried out by Overview & Scrutiny in 2021/22**

	<b>The Committee Activity</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
	Number of formal meetings of the Committee, in public and broadcast	7
	Pre Scrutiny Reviews	7
	Number of Panel and Pre Scrutiny written reports considered	22
	External Partners at meetings	0
	Task & Finish Panels	4
	Call ins	0

<sup>i</sup> “Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee” – House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee December 2017