



Horsham  
District  
Council

# Scrutiny & Overview

Annual Report 2015/16



May 2016

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## Introduction by the Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

This Annual Report of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee confirms the work that the Councillors on the Committee were involved with and focused on, in the Working Groups of Scrutiny, which produced a range of results and recommendations during the year. In addition the guidance, experience and focus of the Chairmen of the Working Groups, who played a pivotal role in achieving engagement and outcomes for Scrutiny. (N.B Nine Councillors of the Committee's 15 members were newly elected in 2015).

The work of Scrutiny has included:

- Review of the Planning Appeals process: new policy and procedure
- Review of the 106 Process
- Review of Property/Asset management
- Review of work of Community Safety Partnership
- Improving Council financial information by presenting an ongoing Balance Sheet at quarterly meetings
- Improving payment system of Claimants' Benefits to reduce/eliminate penalties paid by Horsham District Council (and other Census partners) to the DWP
- Review the provisions for local residents suffering financial hardship
- Ensuring that local residents have easily accessible communications links to Horsham District Council given the Council's digital agenda
- Engagement and discussions with the NHS providers of Primary care (e.g., surgeries) to ensure adequate capacity to meet the health needs of the ever increasing Horsham population arising from current and future house building.



Also, I and the Vice Chairman have been involved in both a review of the future Governance of the Council plus discussions on a review of the Scrutiny and Overview process seeking possible areas of improvement in the work of the Committee in 2016/17.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with Councillors and Officers seeking to ensure a more effective and engaged Council for the benefit of the residents of Horsham and District.

### **Councillor Leonard Crosbie**

Chairman of Scrutiny & Overview Committee

**April 2016**

## What is Scrutiny and Overview?

Since the Scrutiny and Overview Committee was introduced in Horsham District Council in 2001 it has provided the Council with its own 'watchdog' or 'critical friend'.

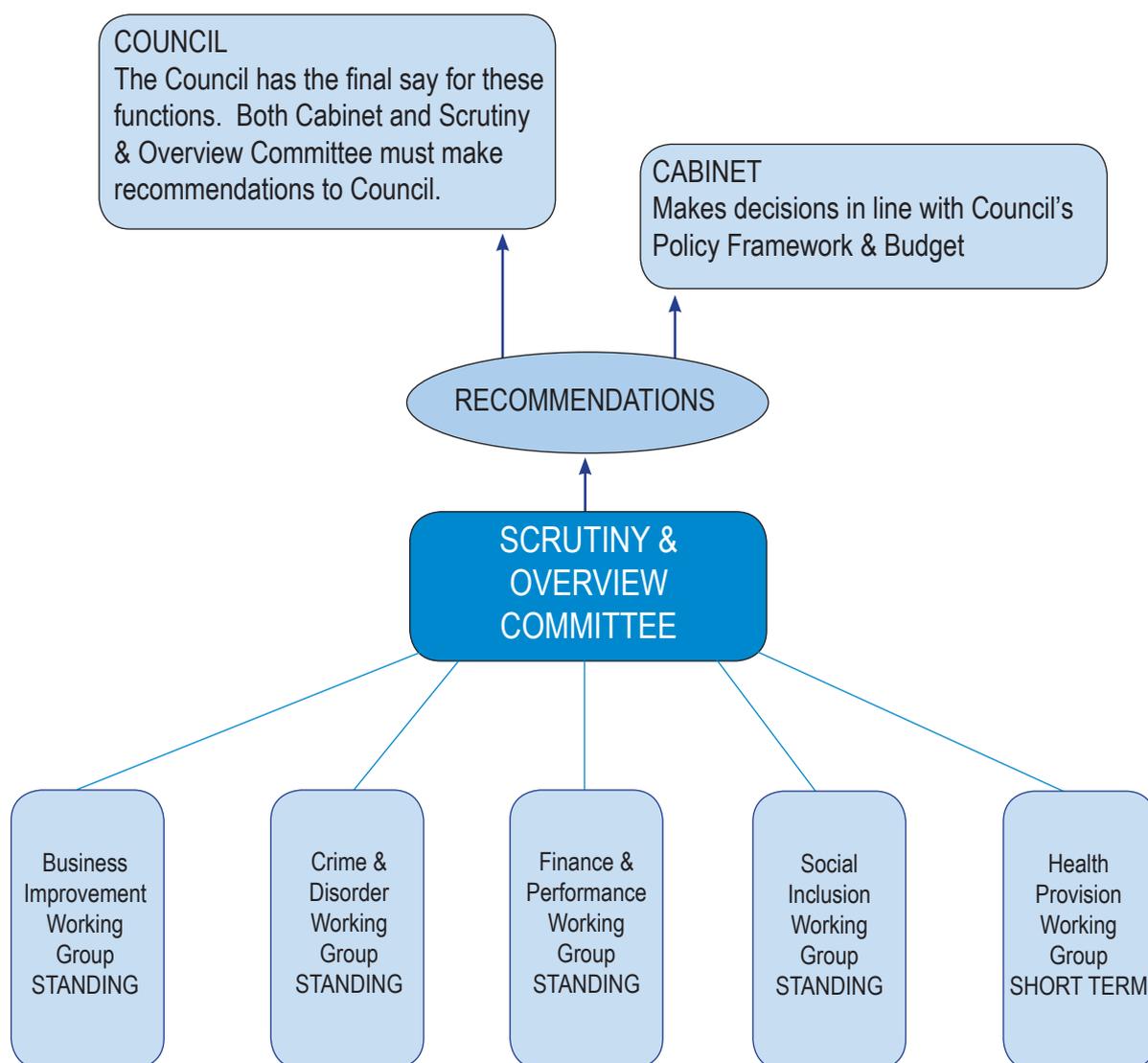
Scrutiny and Overview is a common sense approach to reviewing decisions and policies and considering whether they are right for the District, ensuring that Horsham District Council remains effective and accountable.

One of its principal purposes is to improve the decision-making process and to make it clear and accessible. It does this by:

- Reviewing and developing policy recommendations for the Cabinet's consideration
- Providing a means to review the Council's own achievements against its planned targets
- Setting out to influence Council/Cabinet decisions and policies
- Playing a part in the community leadership role of the Council i.e. by reviewing services provided by other organisations on issues that affect the public and by calling individuals/organisations to account
- Contributing to democracy by stimulating public engagement

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee's terms of reference are:

- To assist in the strategic development of policy
- To review issues of local concern
- To review the policy of others within and outside the Council
- To call in Cabinet decisions
- To scrutinise the Council's decision-making processes
- To monitor the internal and external delivery of services
- To review specific services
- To monitor and scrutinise the activities of outside bodies



## Structure of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and its Working Groups

Membership of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee:

Councillor Leonard Crosbie (Chairman)

Councillor David Coldwell (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: Alan Britten, John Chidlow, Paul Clarke, Roger Clarke, Jonathan Dancer, Matthew French, Tony Hogben, Nigel Jupp, Tim Lloyd, Brian O'Connell, David Skipp, Ben Staines, Michael Willett

## How the Scrutiny and Overview function has developed over the past 12 months

Councillor Leonard Crosbie was elected as Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee for 2015/16. With many years of experience as both a Member of the Committee and also as a Chairman of the Finance and Performance Working Group, Councillor Crosbie was considered well qualified for the position of Chairman of the Committee.

The Committee continues to meet approximately every six weeks over the course of the Council year and the working groups also meet on a

regular basis. There have been changes to all the working group memberships this year and new chairmen have been appointed. There have also been changes to the way information is received and considered by the working groups to ensure a smooth and streamlined process.

The Council's Director of Corporate Resources continues to act as a Scrutiny Champion, with a dedicated Scrutiny Support Officer and assistance from other members of the Democratic Services team.

Scrutiny has undertaken a number of significant reviews over the past 12 months, such as, a review of local residents suffering financial hardship, a review of digital inclusion and a review of the health provision in the District arising from the growing population. A review of the entire Section 106 process also continues.

The Council's Budget, District Plan and Key Performance Indicators are continuously reviewed.

There have been some excellent recommendations arising from the working groups which have led to positive changes, such as to the Council's Constitution in relation to planning appeals.

The Committee continues to ensure that any recommendations are not lost and that the close monitoring of the outcome of any recommendation is ongoing.

Council officers, Sussex Police, local GPs, South East Coast Ambulance Service and organisations such as the Samaritans and Citizens Advice Bureau are just some of the people who have been involved with the various reviews over the past 12 months.

We have welcomed a number of new Councillors to Scrutiny and Overview this year, following the elections in May 2015, who have brought new qualities and fresh ideas to the scrutiny process. Along with our experienced Members, the function continues to remain strong and critically examine the decisions and functions of the Council, holding the Cabinet to account.

## **Joint Scrutiny arrangements across West Sussex**

Joint scrutiny arrangements in West Sussex have been well established for some years now. The West Sussex Joint Scrutiny Steering Group was set up in 2010 and enables the County Council and district and borough councils to work together to draw up a work programme to scrutinise specific topics of common interest. The Joint Scrutiny Steering Group meets approximately twice a year. The Chairman of Horsham District Council's Scrutiny and Overview Committee attends those meetings.

Joint Scrutiny reviews so far have been of the Community Legal Advice Services Contract and Flooding.

The first meeting of the New Year was in January 2016, at which the Group met to discuss some potential joint scrutiny topics and the Steering Group agreed to establish a Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Working Group to consider the review of the Housing Care Provision for Care Leavers. The review started in February and would help the Councils to better understand the housing needs of care leavers and to ensure that new procedures for co-working are improved.

Councillor Alan Britten represents Horsham on the current Task and Finish Group and provides updates at the Scrutiny and Overview Committee meetings. Following the first meeting he explained that Ofsted had highlighted many areas which

required improvement in relation to the education and housing provision, for care leavers. The service was considered to have deteriorated. The Group would be looking into whether there was adequate support for young people leaving care. At the second meeting the Group heard from a number of key officers involved with housing care leavers from West Sussex County Council, along with three care leavers themselves who gave the Group a better understanding of the current situation.

The review was due to be completed by the end of April and although it was in the early stages at the point of writing this report but the full outcome would be presented to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

Horsham District Council is committed to participating in the joint scrutiny work.

## Scrutiny Working Groups

There are four permanent Scrutiny Working Groups which monitor and review different aspects of the Council's business.

## Business Improvement Working Group

Chairman: Councillor Brian O'Connell

The Business Improvement Working Group is responsible for scrutinising the Council's business improvement proposals and encourage consideration of best practice. It reports to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee in terms of its reviews into benefits, effect on services, risk and progress, and investigates matters related to operational effectiveness.

One major review of the Business Improvement Working Group over the year was that of the **planning appeal process – policy and**

**procedure.** The Working Group was concerned about the costs incurred by the Council over the recent years following decisions made by the Development Control Committees. The Working Group looked towards avoiding these costs in the future and as a result of the review, made a recommendation to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee in November 2015 which was then recommended to full Council. The recommendation was to revise the Council's Constitution so that when a decision was being made at a Development Control meeting, if the Committee appeared to be leaning towards a decision which is contrary to the planning officers' recommendation, and it would appear that substantial costs could be incurred if the application went to appeal, the case would be deferred for determination by full Council.

This recommendation was accepted by Council in December 2015 and a change to the Constitution was made.

The Business Improvement Working Group also commenced an entire review of the **S106 process**; this was an independent review with its own terms of reference which included establishing and clarifying the existing process, review of the monitoring process, the changes to the process following the introduction of CIL. The review was due to finish in May 2016 and the Working Group would present its final report and a number of recommendations to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

Other reviews of this Working Group included updates on the **Business Transformation programme** – the Working Group continues to monitor the progress of the programme into 2015/16, **Property and Asset Management** review – and the performance of the department following the implementation of the new structure.

**Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000** (RIPA) – this continues to be a standing item for the Business Improvement Working Group; it is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the RIPA Policy on an annual basis and now, also new this year, the usage on a quarterly basis.

## Crime and Disorder Working Group

Chairman: Councillor Roger Clarke

This working group was established in 2013 following a decision that every local authority was required to have a committee with the power to review and scrutinise the functioning of the local Community Safety Partnership. The legislation forms part of the Government's commitment to strengthen the accountability of local Community Safety Partnerships and enhance the role of local councillors and local communities in preventing and reducing crime.

The Working Group scrutinises the work of the Horsham District Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and the partners who comprise it. It does this by receiving reports twice a year on the progress of the Partnerships' action plans, under the CSP's three priorities, mid-way through and at the end of the partnership's delivery year.

The three priorities of the Community Safety Partnership are:

**Alcohol and Drugs** – aiming to reduce the harm caused by drugs and alcohol to individuals, families and the Horsham District Community

**Vulnerable Victims** – under which the Police engage with the vulnerable victims in the community in order to prevent crime and provide support

**Casualty Reduction** – the objective is to reduce the number of those killed or seriously injured on the roads in the District.

Officers from the Council along with representatives from Sussex Police and West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service attend the Working Group meetings to provide updates on what actions are taking place under each of the priorities and progress that is being made.

The Working Group has been very impressed with the work of the Community Safety Partnership and arranged for a presentation to take place for all Councillors demonstrating the work that they have achieved over the past 12 months.

## Finance and Performance Working Group

Chairman: Councillor Stuart Ritchie

The Finance and Performance Working Group saw some changes to the way it operates in 2015, following the election of a new Chairman. The format in which the Working Group reviews its information has been streamlined to give a far more effective system.

The Finance and Performance Working Group has been established since the Budget Review and the Performance Management Working Groups merged in 2012. The Group scrutinises the **Medium Term Financial Strategy** and receives regular budget reports and it reviews the Council's **performance against the District Plan Priorities and Key Performance Indicators** through the Council year. Highlighting areas of excellence or concerns, which it may do further review of.

Further reports are often requested on areas of concern regarding service performance or budget overspend / underspend, by calling for further information from the Cabinet Member and his portfolio area.

The Working Group has recently raised the issue of improving the payment system of **claimants' benefits** in order to reduce the penalties paid by Horsham District Council (and the other CenSus partners) to the Department of Work and Pensions. Following discussions with Mid Sussex District Council, the lead Council in the CenSus partnership, the situation will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

As part of the Working Group's remit, it also receives quarterly reports on the Council's **complaints, compliments and suggestions**, and biannual reports on **Freedom of Information** requests made to the Council.

The Working Group continues to meet quarterly but can increase meeting frequency at the time of the Budget.

## Social Inclusion Working Group

Chairman: Councillor David Skipp

The Social Inclusion Working Group does excellent work reviewing and making recommendations on initiatives to develop and enrich the Council's approach to social inclusion, equality and diversity, access to services and supporting vulnerable people, anti-poverty initiatives, and relevant health matters.

The Working Group commenced the year by considering how the Cabinet had responded to the Group's earlier report and recommendations on the **review of the effectiveness of the provision for local residents suffering financial hardship**. This comprehensive review involved a number of representatives from key organisations who shared information on the support they offered to those in financial hardship. Attendees included Horsham Churches Together, who operated a night shelter over the winter months, as well as running a foodbank, Horsham

Debt Advice Service, the Samaritans and Citizens Advice Bureau. They provided information on the services they offer, for example appointments or drop-in sessions, or telephone services to discuss those with financial problems, debt issues or help those with emotional problems resulting from financial hardship.

Arising from this review a number of recommendations were made to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee in March 2015, these were accepted and recommended on to the Cabinet. The Group then received the Cabinet's responses in September.

Arising from the first review, the Social Inclusion Working Group decided to review **Digital Inclusion**, following one of the recommendations to consider the provision of the Council's online communications and services for local residents who do not have access to the internet. The Community Development and Engagement Manager was involved in the review and the Group discussed the importance of writing a Digital Inclusion Strategy which would outline the Council's commitment to ensuring that residents in the District could access the online services provided by the Council. The Leader of the Council and the Business Transformation Manager were invited to discuss the inclusion of a strategy in the forthcoming Corporate Plan.

One significant change made during the digital inclusion review was the change to the Council's website, to improve links to the accessibility information on the website, which now can be accessed from one click from the Home page, a small change with a significant impact.

## Temporary Working Groups

### Health Provision

Chairman: Councillor David Skipp

The Health Provision Working Group was established to consider the present health provision at Horsham Hospital including acute services, outpatient services and inpatient facilities, access to services at the hospital, future plans by the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS Trusts for the use of Horsham Hospital and the benefits of these plans to the residents of the District, and the future role of the hospital.

However its work has been ongoing, it continues to meet to consider the health provision across the District as the population increases.

The Group recently invited two GPs from two of the fundamental town centre surgeries – Orchard Surgery and Riverside Surgery, to hear their views on the health provision going forward and the plans for their surgeries.

The GPs explained how they could merge together in order to provide an increased service, i.e. longer surgery hours and weekend appointments and potentially increase patient capacity but remaining in the same location, which was what their patients wanted.

The Working Group also received a presentation from South East Coast Ambulance Service following concerns over the ambulance response times in the District, especially in the rural areas.

Although this Group is temporary, it is ongoing.

### Updates on previous reviews

#### Trade Waste

In April 2014 the Trade Waste Working Group

made a report and a number of recommendations following the review into the collection and disposal of trade waste and recycling collection service.

In November 2015 the Trade Recycling and Waste Services Manager provided an update for the Committee on each of the recommendations which were made in the report approximately one year on. The Council continues to offer a trade waste collection service in the District as there continues to be a demand from small shops and businesses. Also provided as part of the update was a Trade Refuse and Recycling Marketing and Communications Plan proposing a marketing communications plan for the trade refuse and recycling service which would aim to increase customer numbers and market share of trade refuse collections and improve the recycle quality.

The Committee requested that in approximately 12 months' time an update on the position be provided including the success of the service. Therefore in November 2016, the Committee would aim to receive a further report on trade waste and decide how to proceed from there.

### Future work and how to get involved

Future reviews of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee are set to include: **a Boundary Review**: a review of the number of Councillors representing the District and the ward boundaries. This was due to commence in the summer of 2016.

A review of the **Council's Constitution**: the current Constitution was considered in need of revision, especially following the recent Governance Review carried out by the Council. Many areas of the Constitution had not been reviewed for a number of years and were in need of updating to develop it into a more modern,

agile, flexible and well understood document. This would also take place in the summer.

At a recent meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee the Chairman suggested that a review of **Parking Services** be undertaken. As a result of all the additional housing in the District there was concern amongst the Committee that this would lead to an increase in car ownership and that there was no provision for an increase in parking in the town centre. Therefore a report was requested from the Cabinet Member and the Committee may decide to review this area later in 2016.

## Scrutiny Training at Horsham District Council

On 1 July 2015 a Scrutiny Induction training session was provided by Tim Young, an experienced scrutiny trainer, who has worked with Horsham councillors before on scrutiny as well as other councillors and officers across the country on a number of local government aspects.

The training session was set up to help provide some understanding for new Members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and also to help existing Members build on their knowledge. It provided information on how Scrutiny and Overview fitted into Horsham District Council's governance structure, effective scrutiny, the role of scrutiny, getting the best results, work programming and much more.

Members who attended the session provided extremely positive feedback, overall the training proved was considered very useful. Potential training options for the future are currently being explored.

## Review of Scrutiny

A Governance Project Manager was appointed temporarily and amongst other things has carried

out a review of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and process at Horsham, he met with the Chairman and the Scrutiny and Committee Support Officer to examine how Scrutiny currently works and whether there were any areas for improvement. Areas such as work programming, holding Cabinet to account, engagement with the forward plan, effective use of the Committee and the working groups were discussed in detail and the outcome was positive.

Members supported the suggestions that would enhance and strengthen the role of Scrutiny at Horsham.

## Getting Involved

Horsham District Council welcomes contributions to the Scrutiny process and wishes to encourage people to make suggestions for the work programme, to attend meetings or to ask questions.

Please contact the Scrutiny and Committee Support Officer or complete and return the attached suggestion form.

For further information please see the Scrutiny pages on the Council's website: <https://www.horsham.gov.uk/councilanddemocracy/councillors/scrutiny-and-overview-committee>

## Contact Details

Scrutiny and Committee Support Officer  
Horsham District Council  
Parkside, Chart Way, Horsham,  
West Sussex  
RH12 1RL  
Telephone: 01403 215138  
Email: [scrutiny@horsham.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@horsham.gov.uk)  
Website: <http://www.horsham.gov.uk/council/members/scrutiny-overview.aspx>

# WORK PROGRAMME SUGGESTION FORM

Ref: 16/Cllr

Your Name: ..... Contact No: .....

Proposed scope/focus of review:

Your rationale for selection:

Evidence:

Desired outcomes/objectives/possible terms of reference:

Other comments:

Would you be interested in being a co-opted member  
Would you be interested in providing evidence to the Group  
\* Please delete as applicable

yes/no\*  
yes/no\*

What time scale do you perceive to be necessary for this review?

Urgent

Within six months

Within 6-12 months

**Please return this form to: Scrutiny & Committee Support Officer,  
Horsham District Council,  
Parkside, Chart Way,  
Horsham, RH12 1RL**