



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR –



Welcome to Rossendale Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2011/12

This is my first year as Chair of O&S and it has been quite a challenge meeting the demands of the role. However, I feel that I have learnt a lot over the last year and I hope that members and participants have found the meetings to be both effective and efficient. The work undertaken this year has been very challenging and thought-provoking for all of us.

The new Localism Act is still deciding what the role of scrutiny will look like, but one thing is for sure, scrutiny will be strengthened. It is envisaged that external scrutiny is the way forward for local authorities. This is an area of work which here at Rossendale we have been doing for quite some time, having presentations from such organisations as the Police and the Health Services and undertaking visits to numerous outside organisations. These will be highlighted further within this report.

I hope that you find this annual report interesting and informative. It has been designed to highlight the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny and provide a snapshot of the work of the Committees. If you would like to find out more, all Scrutiny Committee meetings are open to the public and information is available on the Council's website.

As always I would like to thank all Members and co-opted Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for the contributions they have made throughout the year.

I would like to thank Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer and all other Members of the Committee and Member Services Team who have helped support the Scrutiny Officer during the year.

Also, thank you to Officers within the Council who have provided us with their knowledge and expertise to assist us with our work.

I hope that you enjoy reading about our achievements during the last 12 months and that you will continue to support us in our efforts to improve public services in Rossendale during 2012/13.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz McInnes', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Liz McInnes and Chair of Overview and Scrutiny



Comments from the Portfolio Holder for Customers, Legal Services and Licensing, Councillor Sean Serridge

Rossendale Borough Council aims to provide the best possible services for our residents. Overview and Scrutiny is a crucial process in ensuring we are delivering those services, and are giving best value to local people.

In the last year, the committees have carried out reviews of Rossendale Transport, Leisure (including Rossendale Leisure Trust/CLAW) and the facilities and activities available to young people in the borough. Overview and Scrutiny has also continued to monitor health provision in Rossendale, something which we need to continue to do.

Over the next 12 months I would like to see a strengthened Overview and Scrutiny process and closer working between Scrutiny and the Cabinet, as both have a very important part to play in the democratic function of our council, and mutual respect is key to a strong and successful working relationship.

As well as working with the Cabinet, I would like to see a strengthened partnership process, finding out what services are available in the borough and making constructive recommendations where we think things can be improved.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Councillors and Independent members that have taken part in the Scrutiny process and to our Scrutiny Officer, Pat Couch for their excellent work over the last year.

This is a difficult time in local government and difficult decisions will have to be made. I hope that by working together we can all be sure we are doing our very best to deliver good local services and value for money for our residents.

Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sean Serridge".

Councillor Sean Serridge
**Cabinet Member for Customers, Licensing and Legal
and Young People's Champion**

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN ROSSENDALE DURING 2011/12

Overview and Scrutiny is a statutory function, which all councils are required to carry out. Its main purpose is to help to improve local services, which it can do in a number of different ways.

Overview and Scrutiny seeks to reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities and to make an impact on the delivery of public services.

Scrutiny committees are really important vehicles for challenge, improvement and change within local authorities and there should be opportunities for third sector groups to get involved. No cabinet members are allowed to sit on scrutiny committees - instead they are made up of the backbench councilors and co-opted members. Committees do not have any actual decision-making powers but they do make recommendations to the Full Council and Cabinet.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee acts as a co-ordinator and planner of the scrutiny work plans, as well as promoting good practice in overview and scrutiny.

To ensure that scrutiny activities remain focused, and that important work is not duplicated, an Annual Work Programme is developed at the start of the year. The Work Programme allows the Committees to plan their activities and to monitor progress over the year. Development and delivery of the Work Programme is overseen by the Overview and Scrutiny Chair.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees decide their agendas and review topics without direction from the cabinet. This ensures an independent challenge, promoting accountability and transparency.

Overview and Scrutiny Members also engage with external partners and other organisations to obtain evidence in relation to scrutiny investigations and to develop working arrangements of benefit to the Council and its partners as a whole.

Overview and Scrutiny has been working with the NHS East Lancashire Primary Care Trust, in particular the Rossendale Health Lead, to be kept up to date on current health provision in the Borough.

The Localism Act gives overview and scrutiny committees new powers to challenge partners on any of their local activities and a requirement to information and responses from them.

Below is an overview of our work during the year.

Key Facts	
• Performance Overview and Scrutiny Meetings	8
• Policy Overview and Scrutiny Meetings	4
• Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Meetings	5
• Task and Finish Groups	2
• Response to Consultations	10
• Site Visits	6

THE COMMITTEES

PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

As always this Committee has been busy scrutinising not only the Council Performance Indicators, but also the performance of some of its partners.

Whenever a service is under achieving its targets they are asked to come along to our next meeting to explain the reason for underachievement and at the same time explain what they plan to do to ensure targets improve by the next quarter. This year the Council has been very successful with its Performance and very few Officers have been asked to come back to the Committee. Scrutiny has complimented officers for their performance over the last twelve months.

Another area of work that the Committee looked at was Rossendale Transport Limited. Directors from the transport company have attended three meetings this year to enable the committee to review their business plans and past year's performance, together with financial information. Members have extensively challenged the bus company and feel that they are now in a position to invite them to come to just one meeting a year to keep us up to speed on their performance.

For three years now, at the request of Council, Overview and Scrutiny has been reviewing leisure provision in the Borough, receiving reports from the Leisure Trust and CLAW (Community Leisure Association Whitworth), as well as monitoring their funding agreements.

Work in these areas has also progressed well and again it has been agreed that they should only report to the Committee annually.

POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Policy Scrutiny Committee has given its views on 14 policies/strategies and 2 verbal update reports over the last 12 months.

Having had sight of these documents, Members put forward a number of additional recommendations and amendments, which were agreed and included in the final versions before they were presented to Cabinet.

During the next twelve months it is our intention to ask to receive updates on existing policies/strategies so we can measure outcomes and challenge Officers with the 'so what' factor, to ensure that decisions taken have been, or are to be implemented.

Review and challenge is more effective when members and officers are clear about their responsibilities for challenge.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

This Committee met five times during the year and received presentations as detailed below:

June 2011 – Cabinet responses to recommendations from Task and Finish Groups, along with approval of our Annual Report 2010/11, and approval for our Work Programme for 2011/12.

September 2011 – Presentation on Mental Health Service Provision in Rossendale - Mental Health Commissioning and representatives from NHS East Lancashire PCT, together presented information on Lancashire's mental health acute reconfiguration.

December 2011 – Police and Community Safety Partnership - Under Government legislation, Councils were given powers to scrutinise the work of crime and disorder reduction partnerships to ensure they are effectively tackling local problems. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee had been designated as the Council's crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committee to carry out this function and in December the Chief Inspector for Pennine Division responsible for Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale, presented comparison data of the 15 closest authorities with similar geographic areas, including the average number of crimes per 1000 residents and a historical comparison with 2003 data.

At the meeting the Committee also received a presentation from representatives of Rochdale, Heywood and Middleton PCT's Healthy Futures team on a consultation of Stroke and Cardiology Services and how the changes would impact on Rossendale residents.

February 2012 – Presentation from the PCT on the new Urgent Care Provision for Rossendale. Also in February 2012, the Committee looked at the Council’s budget for 2012/13.

March 2012 - This was an additional meeting to approve the Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group report and the Young People’s Task and Finish Group Report. Due to concerns raised by Councillors about the remit of the Job Centre, representatives were invited to give an overview of the services they provided. There was also a presentation from the Community Engagement Officer who explained the work of the NESTA programme.

Rossendale was the only Borough Council shortlisted with 16 other local authorities to work with a small group of local authorities across the country and their partners to develop, implement and spread new approaches to meet medium and long term challenges facing communities and local services. For this the Council should be congratulated!

Attendance of Members at Overview and Scrutiny

Attendance at Overview and Scrutiny over the last 12 months has been as follows:

Meeting	Number of Meetings	%
Performance Scrutiny	8	92%
Policy Scrutiny	4	91%
Management	5	84%

HEALTH SCRUTINY

The Health Overview and Scrutiny function is the remit of Lancashire County Council. Local health providers must consult with LCC’s Health Scrutiny Committee when they make proposals that represent significant changes or ‘substantial variations’ to health services.

Rossendale Borough Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been looking at local health issues which affect Rossendale and has had regular meetings with the Rossendale Commissioning Lead to keep us updated on future proposals.

Some years ago prior to the closure of Rossendale Hospital, the Council were assured that all services provided within the hospital would be transferred to the named, Rossendale Primary Health Care Centre and Overview and Scrutiny had been working with the PCT to ensure these services were transferred. We were also promised additional services and in April 2012, a new Urgent Care Provision was opened in the health centre. This would be open 8am-8pm 365 days a year.

We are continuing to monitor the number of births in the new Birthing Centre to ensure that the service continues to develop.

WORK OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUPS THIS YEAR

This year we have undertaken two detailed pieces of work which have been ongoing for 6 months.

Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group



In Rossendale, the STAR Centre is one of the organisations providing support to people suffering domestic abuse. However, the Star Centre is entirely dependent on grant funding and applies to the council and other partner agencies each year for funding.

It had been reported that referrals to the Star Centre were rising rapidly in line with the predicted patterns associated with recession. However, at the start of the review the STAR Centre had not been able to secure a sufficient amount of funding.

Local authorities had a statutory duty to make provisions for people suffering or at risk of domestic violence. However, members thought it was unclear what the requirements were, and how they were being fulfilled. Therefore, it was agreed that a review was urgently required.

The Group visited the STAR Centre and the East Lancashire Women's Refuge to find out what services they offered.

Rossendale Statistics

- There had been 911 domestic abuse incidents between 1st April – 31st December (including text message abuse or drive-by sightings).
- Domestic abuse incidents in Rossendale make up 22-23% of the Pennine area.
- For Rossendale there are 270 domestic abuse incidents where arrests will occur, out of these there have been 265 arrests (140 Rossendale East and 130 Rossendale West). The number of associated crimes is 138 East and 122 West.
- Sanction detections for domestic abuse are 73.2% Rossendale East and 74.6% Rossendale West (compared with the average 73.4%).

The Group received presentations from Victim Support, Children's Trust, East Lancs Drug and Alcohol Team, the Homelessness Service and the Public Protection Unit within the Pennine Division Police and Green Vale Homes. There was statistical information sent from Lancashire County Council.

The report is now with Cabinet and Lancashire County Council for their comments.

Young People's Services Task and Finish Group



The Young People's Services Task and Finish Group were made aware that Lancashire County Council, as part of a shake-up of youth services in a bid to save £8m, was cutting back on services for young people. This would mean that funding for community groups in the valley was being cut and that the youth centre at Rawtenstall Fire Station would be the 'key' centre for services for young people.

Therefore, the Task and Finish Group was established to look at the possible impact this could have on youth services.

Site visits were undertaken to the young people services in the Old Fire Station in Rawtenstall, the Boilerhouse (formerly the White Horse Project) and Engage, giving members the opportunity to talk to young people and staff.

The Group also heard about the homelessness service provided by the Housing Options Team.

Rosendale Leisure Trust came to talk about what sporting facilities/services are available for young people in the Borough.

The group heard from Rosendale's Teenage Health Co-ordinator of the Contraception and Sexual Health service for young people under 25 and offers free and confidential clinical services, educational training and deliver sessions for all partner agencies working with the under 25s.

The group heard from the Community Engagement Officer within the Council on a number of initiatives taking place. The Fusion Project is delivered through the Communities Team, who fund the Children's Trust to deliver consultations with young people. Fusion was working with funding from Sportivate as well as the Children's Trust.

The report is now with Cabinet and Lancashire County Council for their comments.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM LAST YEAR'S TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

How does the scrutiny function in the council contribute to the improvement of services?

Last year we held two task and finish group reviews. These groups met as and when – usually on a six week basis. At their final meeting they agree recommendations to be put forward. Usually Officers who would be responsible for implementing any recommendations attend the final meeting to help lessen misunderstandings and make the recommendations clear and concise.



The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Task and Finish Group made 7 recommendations and in June 2011 at its first Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee meeting the Committee received a response from Cabinet accepting some of the recommendations, with an explanation of other options for the rest of the recommendations.

Scrutiny asked that the Council considers placing a local land charge on properties which receive grants over £10,000 from April 2011 - **Cabinet supported** this recommendation.

Scrutiny asked that a joint leaflet be produced to include information on the process of DFGs from a Council and Occupational Therapist perspective and to include sources of financial help and advice - **Cabinet supported** this recommendation.

Scrutiny asked that a defined policy be introduced to allow for a specific amount of money to be spent on non-urgent cases eg 25% of the available funding specifically for non-urgent cases to help reduce this element of the waiting list - **Cabinet supported** this recommendation.

Scrutiny asked that the local MPs are kept up to date of waiting times for DFGs, costs for aids and adaptations on the waiting lists and the procedure for applying for these grants to enable them to inform their constituents – **Cabinet supported** this recommendation and would be a regular agenda item on scheduled meetings between the local MPs and Chief Executive.

The other report was from the Enforcement Task and Finish Group, who made 8 recommendations.

Scrutiny asked that guidance notes be produced and distributed to Members to enable them to hand out to local businesses which include relevant information on shutters and types of advertisement board/banners which are acceptable within their area – **Cabinet** were receiving two reports for approval in relation to these issues, following which a leaflet would be produced as a guide.

Scrutiny asked that guidelines be produced with realistic targets for when each stage of the open planning enforcement file is complete – **Cabinet agreed** that a set of procedures would be established.

Scrutiny asked for a joint protocol between the Police and the Council to determine a process for dealing with noise and nuisance complaints and if they are purely nuisance complaints the Council can investigate – **Cabinet** proposed that this forms part of a multi-departmental review following the Governments review of the current ASB legislation.

Scrutiny asked that the Council has further debate on how the ‘recycling of Work by Default’ money could be justified and if there was an opportunity to establish a corporate ring-fenced Works in Default budget to support enforcement work – **Cabinet** indicated that this has now been resolved with Finance and is monitored through the Vacant Property Task Group.

Scrutiny asked that the Council work towards a press release to raise the profile of the Hyndburn Used Furniture Service, who provide bulky waste collection to discourage people from dumping bulky waste unnecessarily – **Cabinet** agreed that as Hyndburn Used Furniture provided information about the service they deliver, this would be re-drafted into a press release with the aim of promoting responsible waste disposal which benefits others, and avoids legal action.

RESPONSE GROUPS

At the request of the Chief Executive, Overview and Scrutiny responded to a number of consultations. A response group, made up of three to five members, met to discuss a particular consultation document. Officers from the Council with a specific interest in a topic would also attend to give their support to Members. Once a response letter had been produced it was sent to the Chief Executive for signing off. The following consultations were undertaken.

- Discretionary Travel – 464 bus service (see below**)
- Fire Service Action Plan
- Housing Benefit Reforms
- Planning for Traveller Sites
- LCC Transportation Plan
- Police Reforms
- Rationalisation of Waste Centres
- Tor View
- Waste Enforcement
- LCC Budget

**The 464 bus service response group made up of cross party representatives met on a number of occasions during the last few months to persuade Lancashire County Council to continue to subsidise the late evening 464 bus service. At a meeting in February the Lancashire County Council confirmed that they would support the 464 bus subsidy for the next 6 months. The response group will meet again later in the year to review usage of the 464 and agree the next course of action.

SCRUTINY NETWORKS

Both Officers and Members have attended Scrutiny Network meetings including the Lancashire Scrutiny Partners Forum led by Lancashire County Council and the North West Scrutiny Support Officer Network, which is organised by North West Employers Organisation.



Discussion on partner scrutiny at the Network

At a North West Scrutiny Support Network meeting in February 2012, we were asked to do a short presentation to members of the Network on our Level 2 Charter Mark, which focused on our Scrutiny of partner organisations within the Borough. We received excellent feedback from North West Employers Organisation.

THE YEAR AHEAD

Developing Overview and Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny will as always work closely with the Cabinet to support an effective working relationship through increased joint working and identification of shared priorities.



We are, at the time of writing this report, waiting to hear just what role scrutiny will play within the Localism Act, but I am sure any changes will only enhance the role of scrutiny in local government.

The Localism Act does say that we will see increased powers for local government scrutiny functions in a number of key areas, so we wait with baited breath as to how they have strengthened our role.

WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

Next Year's Work Programme

We are already planning our work for the next 12 months and asking people what they want us to review during the next 12 months. This we are doing via Neighbourhood Forum representatives and the Council's website, where we have a scrutiny form for people to complete and send back to us. These forms are also available at the One Stop Shop.

As the Localism Act is sure to bring changes to the scrutiny function we are keeping the current scrutiny arrangements under review to ensure that they are efficient and effective and reflect both the changing legislative position and the priorities of the Council and its partners – with this in mind we may be changing the way that scrutiny works in Rossendale.

WATCH THIS SPACE!!

HAVE YOUR SAY!

At each meeting, there will be a public question time, where you are able to ask a question of the committee.

Scrutiny can't consider

- Individual complaints
- Individual issues about members of staff
- An individual's planning or licensing application

There is also a scrutiny form available on the Council's website to complete if you have an issue or concern that you would like scrutiny to investigate.

For further information or assistance, please email democracy@rossendalebc.gov.uk or complete the form below and return to the One Stop Shop in Rawtenstall or post to The Business Centre, Futures Park, Bacup, OL13 0BB.

I would like to suggest the following issue/service as part of the Work Programme for 2012/13.

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.....

Please state why you think we should look at this issue

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Name

Address

.....

Tel (optional)

Email