

Scrutiny

Making a difference



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to Rossendale Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13

This is now my second year as Chair of the Scrutiny function at Rossendale and it still continues to be a challenging role. We are now working more closely with the Cabinet Members and Officers, looking at the need to make efficiency savings in a number of important local service areas, including street cleansing and council buildings, which are detailed within the report.

I, along with the Scrutiny Support Officer, meet regularly with the Clinical Commission Group Chairman and Rossendale Commissioning Lead to ensure we are kept up to date on local health services, making sure that we monitor what is happening in the Rossendale Primary Health Care Centre.

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 2013/14.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz McInnes'.

Councillor Liz McInnes
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 monitored our partners, such as Rossendale Transport, Leisure (including Rossendale Leisure Trust and CLAW) and also undertaken reviews of what is available for young people in the borough and also the Domestic Violence Service.

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 Support 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". The signature is stylized with a large, looping 'S' and 'D'.

Councillor Sean Serridge
Cabinet Member for Customers, Legal and Licensing

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN ROSSENDALE

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.

Scrutiny is key to ensuring local people, communities and organisations engage more effectively in the democratic process.

Scrutiny has three committees - Policy and Performance and a Management Committee and all meetings are open to the public.

Scrutiny in addition to holding the Cabinet to account, also reviews policies and performance across the council. The Committee is made up of members from all political parties. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee acts as a co-ordinator and planner of the scrutiny work plans, and also receives presentations from partners.

Scrutiny committees are really important vehicles for challenge, improvement and change within local authorities. The committees are made up of the backbench councillors and co-opted members. Committees do not have any actual decision-making powers but they do make recommendations to the Full Council and Cabinet.

Councillors on the Cabinet cannot serve on Scrutiny, but can be invited as required to give evidence as part of any review of service performance/policy review.

The next few years will be challenging for the Council. It is anticipated that the Council will experience around a 39% cut in its revenue budget by 2014. Over the past two years the Council has saved around £1.5m, but are required to find a further £1.3m of cash savings by 2014. Therefore, a key achievement for the authority will be to maintain and deliver improvements to services, whilst meeting the required savings targets.

In 2012/13 Overview and Scrutiny contributed in a constructive way to support the Council in meeting these challenges by undertaking two savings reviews on street cleansing and accommodation.

Scrutiny has almost always looked inward, being concerned with only the functions that the council had responsibility for, but now scrutiny has evolved into a process that concerns itself with all the actions of organisations that can have an impact on the lives of people in the Borough.

Legislation over recent years has been introduced which gives greater accountability across a range of service providers including, health, police and the voluntary sector and it is right that partners in this process remain accountable and that the quality of services delivered are tested to ensure continuous improvement.

We hope that our work over the next twelve months will reflect on these changes, but at the same time continue to support the Council in any possible savings reviews.

Below is a list of the work of Scrutiny during 2012/13

Key Facts	
• Performance Overview and Scrutiny Meetings	7
• Policy Overview and Scrutiny Meetings	5
• Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Meetings	4
• Task and Finish Groups	3
• Response to Consultations	6

THE COMMITTEES

PERFORMANCE 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.

Presentations to the Committee

East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

The Committee received a presentation from East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust on their proposals to become a Foundation Trust. This would make them an Independent Public Benefit Organisation free from Central Government control and be more accountable to the public and patients. Members were given the opportunity to raise questions and asked to respond to the consultation on an individual basis through the consultation document.

Green Vale Homes

In 2006 the Council transferred its housing stock to Green Vale Homes and therefore the Committee receives an annual presentation from them on their performance.

The Managing Director gave an overview of the £8m improvement work undertaken and explained a number of initiatives which were taking place, including the 'home swapper mutual exchange' and the 'tenant repair cash back scheme'.

Capita

In 2006, Capita commenced a 10 year contract to oversee the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Contact Service on behalf of the Council. Whilst performance against annual set targets was closely monitored by the Council's

Service Assurance Team, an annual presentation was given to the Performance Scrutiny Committee.

Rossendale Transport

Directors from Rossendale Transport now attend on an annual basis to enable the committee to review their business plans and past year's performance, together with financial information.

Quarterly Performance Reports

Cabinet has now designated responsibility of reviewing the integrated performance reports to Performance Scrutiny and for them to report back to Cabinet on underachieving targets.



For some months, the Committee has been concerned about the amount of fuel used by the refuse, recycling and street cleaning vehicles and the need to reduce the amount of fuel used.

The Portfolio Holder responsible was invited to attend a meeting to provide an explanation and explained that all rounds were regular scheduled routes and therefore there was no opportunity of reducing the amount of fuel used whilst rounds were 'static'.

Whilst Officers proposed that fuel indicators should be removed, Members felt that they should continue to be monitored in some form, by looking at such things as procurement, efficiencies or by monitoring the process used.

At the meeting in February, a report was presented to Members which indicated that future monitoring of fuel usage would be removed from the quarterly report and instead be replaced with a business plan action, which would include a narrative update on the average price of fuel purchased per quarter.

Officers from other service areas of underachieving targets were asked to attend meetings to explain the reasons for underachieving and how they would address the issue. Members would continue to review performance indicators during 2013/14.

POLICY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Policy Scrutiny Committee has given its views on 16 policies/reviews and 3 update reports over the last 12 months.

Having had sight of these documents, Members put forward a number of additional recommendations and amendments which would then be presented to Cabinet.

The three updates were requested so that we can measure outcomes and challenge Officers with the 'so what' factor, to ensure that decisions taken have been, or are to be implemented and if not, why not?

There are to be lots of changes occurring within the Council over the next 12 months and Policy Scrutiny has been kept up to date on some of these. They have received updates on a number of proposed public/staff consultations as they are happening, which include:-

- Customer Services Review
- Review of the Democratic Process
- Leisure Trust Review

The above were presented to the Committee due to the financial challenges of the Council and Scrutiny welcomed the opportunity to work alongside Cabinet and Officers to contribute wherever possible.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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

June 2012 – Presentation from INSPIRE and the new abstinence unit opening in Waterfoot.

September 2012 – Presentation on the M3 Project – this provides housing related support in East Lancashire, based in Rossendale, to young people between 16-25 years old, working closely with the Council's Housing Options Team.

The Committee also received a presentation from the Head of Community Services with East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group on the Intermediate Care Programme for East Lancashire – one element being 'the Virtual Ward', which would focus on a management plan for the individual, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Health and social care teams would work together to enable nurses to link into social care services and vice versa.

December 2012 – Police and Community Safety Partnership - The Police and Justice Act 2006 requires Councils to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee with responsibility for examining crime and disorder issues with powers to hold the Crime and Disorder Partnership to account for the joint delivery of their statutory duties.

February 2012 - Discussion and comments on the Council's budget for 2013/14

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	7	95%
Policy Scrutiny	5	88%
Management	4	82%

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 and the Chair of the Clinical Commissioning Group to keep us updated on future proposals.



The new Rossendale Primary Health Care Centre opened its doors in August 2010 and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and the Scrutiny Support Officer are regularly kept up to date on the performance of services provided within the health centre, particularly the activity within the Minor Injuries Unit, which opened in April 2012 and Birthing Centre, which opened in December 2011.

The Minor Injuries Unit has exceeded its expectations with an estimated 1,000 patients attending per month.

The Birthing Centre is gradually improving on the number of births, which at the present time stands at 34 births for 2012.

We will continue to work closely with the Clinical Commissioning Group Chair and Rossendale Commissioning Lead to monitor the health provision for Rossendale patients.

WORK OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

It is anticipated that the Council will experience around a 39% cut in its revenue budget by 2014. Over the past two years the Council has saved around £1.5m, but were required to find a further £1.3m savings by 2014. Therefore, it was agreed to use the scrutiny process as part of the savings review to look at potential savings to some service areas.

This year we have undertaken two pieces of work requested by Cabinet and Officers, looking at how savings could be made to Street Cleansing and also Accommodation – One Stop Shop proposals to move to Futures Park.

They also looked at the new changes to the Welfare Reforms.

1. Street Cleansing



Members understood that street cleansing was a high profile, front facing service with a substantial level of spend. The Task Group was aware of the financial pressures and the need to make savings, whilst still needing to ensure the same level of collections and cleanliness.

The purpose of the task group was to challenge the current position and if possible maintain customer satisfaction within a reduced budget.

Members of the group shadowed town centre caretakers to gain a greater understanding of their way of working on a daily basis.

The Group was made aware of the day to day operational activities of all areas within the operations team.

In relation to litter bins throughout the Borough, of which there are 687, the Group was informed that not all are used on a regular basis. It was therefore agreed that there was a need to look at how these could be reduced, and to determine a new timetable of emptying these bins to reduce costs.

With regard to dog bins, there are currently only 22 designated dog bins in the Borough. Whilst the group understand there would be cost implications for increasing in the number of dog bins, a suggestion was made to produce stickers to convert existing additional unused litter bins (as identified in the above paragraph) into dog waste only bins.

As this group was established as part of the savings review, no formal report has yet been produced and a draft interim report was agreed by Members of the task group to take forward as part of the Refuse, Recycling and Street Cleansing

Review being undertaken at present. The report will go to Scrutiny members in July/August.

2. Accommodation - One Stop Shop



A 'light touch' piece of work was undertaken, looking at the proposals for moving the one stop shop, based in Rawtenstall, to Futures Park, Bacup.

Whilst not all members are happy about the relocation, it was agreed that in these difficult financial times, the way the council serves the residents of Rossendale is extremely important, with thousands of people approaching the council each year with a range of issues.

It is important that people are treated professionally and courteously, recognising there will be occasions when staff need to deal with residents in stressful situations and difficult circumstances.

Some 20% of customers contact the Council on a regular basis and of the 20% only 6% use face to face contact at the One Stop Shop with 55% using the telephone and 39% using the website. Customers had been consulted on the proposals to relocate to Bacup.

The new location would combine the call centres of Capita, the Operations Team at Henrietta Street and other similar customer service functions which already exist at the One Stop Shop in Rawtenstall.

Scrutiny members were informed that the move to Bacup would save around £250,000 in capital building costs and approximately £35,000 in annual running costs.

Concern was raised by scrutiny members that the needs of people in outlying areas, such as Rising Bridge needed to be considered. At the present time the staff who work at the One Stop Shop have surgeries in Whitworth due to the distance from Rawtenstall for some people. The same will happen for people in Rising Bridge and other outlying areas once the move to Bacup is complete. Other suggestions from scrutiny members included increasing the use of STAN the van in these areas.

The Group agreed to the proposals to relocate to Bacup on the understanding that alternative building/s be found for surgeries around the Borough at

designated times. They also indicated the need to ensure there would be appropriate communications in place to highlight the new enhanced service in Bacup.

3. WELFARE REFORMS TASK AND FINISH GROUP (PHASE 1)

Due to the number of changes taking place with the welfare reforms over a period of 18 months, it was agreed to look at the subject on a phased basis as follows:

Phase 1

- New Council Tax Support Scheme
- Bedroom Tax
- Social Fund

Phase 2

- Benefit Cap
- Implementation of Universal Credit (which would not affect Rossendale until April 2014)
- Pension Credit

All these changes could have a detrimental affect on such things as the potential for an increase in domestic violence; households as opposed to individual people; implications on drug/alcohol dependency and child poverty.

The task and finish group has only just commenced this piece of work and is already learning about the effects these could have on local people.

Direct Payments - The Government plans to merge a number of means tested benefits including Housing Benefit, Income Support and Job Seekers Allowance into a new single benefit - the Universal Credit. Apart from a small number of exceptional cases, Universal Credit will be paid monthly in arrears as a single payment to the household.

Under these plans they also wants to see many more social housing tenants receiving the money in their hand rather than opting to have their benefit paid direct to their landlord. Our Task and Finish Group report will explain in more detail what this would mean to the people of Rossendale.

We are continuing to look at these proposals further to find out more about what they would mean to Rossendale residents and the Council, with a report being presented to Cabinet.

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.

- Lancashire Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy
- Packaging for Smoking
- Public Health Consultation
- Lancs Fire and Rescue Service Performance Report and Action Plan
- Local Authority Health Scrutiny Consultation
- QEII Challenge
- Job Centre relocation

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 agreed 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.



Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group

We have received a positive response to the recommendations from the Project Manager of STAR Centre and welcomed the opportunity of partnership working with the Council and other relevant bodies to develop a long term development plan which the STAR could be commissioned to deliver.

Young People's Services Task and Finish Group

This service is provided by Lancashire County Council and the Cabinet Member for Young People responded to the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, providing a response to our recommendations which highlighted the work being undertaken by various young people services.

THE YEAR AHEAD

Scrutiny is changing in 2013

It was agreed by Full Council in February that scrutiny will change the way it is working. We will reduce the committees and number of meetings from June 2013.

Policy and Performance Scrutiny would be combined to become **Corporate Scrutiny Committee** and Overview and Scrutiny Management, which receives presentations would become **Partner Scrutiny Committee**, still receiving presentations from its Partners (GVH, Capita, Police, Leisure Trust, Rossendale Transport, and Health).

Reports of Task and Finish Groups will be presented to the appropriate Committee (internal reviews would go to Corporate Scrutiny, whilst external reviews would go to Partner Scrutiny).

WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

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. Scrutiny forms are also available at the One Stop Shop or by completing the form at the end of this annual report.

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 2013/14.

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.....

Please state why you think we should look at this issue

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

Name

Address

.....

Tel (optional)

Email