

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Annual Report 2021/22 and
Work Programme 2022/23**

Foreword from the 2021/22 Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, Councillor Janice Johnson



This report highlights the activity and work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period of 2021/22 and the expected programme of work for 2022/23.

The committee has been extremely busy during 2021/22, which is reflected in the list of policy items, performance reviews and external scrutiny which has been undertaken, as well as the task and finish group. I am also pleased to highlight how scrutiny has made a difference at section 6.

It is important for scrutiny members to be involved in decisions at an early stage to ensure they influence the decision making process and play an important role as a 'critical friend,' and the report highlights which policies, plans and strategies have come before the committee for pre-decision review.

This work will be strengthened further over the coming year and officers will be requested to consult with the committee at an earlier stage where new policy development is concerned in order for the committee to provide valuable feedback and be involved as part of the initial scoping and consultation stage. In addition to this, external training will be provided for committee members and there will be a more focussed and manageable work programme by introducing new ways of working, for example, committee presentations will be submitted in advance of agenda publication, committee updates will be provided by briefing note rather than committee attendance and officers will be asked to provide an executive summary in their committee reports highlighting the key messages.

As always, I would like to thank all members and co-opted member of the committee for the contributions they have made throughout the year, in addition to supporting officers and those external to the Council who have provided us with their knowledge and expertise to assist us with our committee and task and finish work.

Message from Councillor Sean Serridge – Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services 2021/22



The overview and scrutiny process ensures that both Council services and those services of its partners, are delivered in an appropriate way.

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to support and challenge the Cabinet and provides assurance in respect of policy development and review, acting as a 'critical friend'.

Both councillors and officers continue to work together to ensure the best provision of services for the people of Rossendale.

Annual Report 2021/22

1. Background

- 1.1 Overview and scrutiny is a way of achieving open and democratic accountability for the provision of public services. Local authorities operating an Executive Leader and Cabinet Model have an overview and scrutiny function which is carried out by non-Cabinet members who act as a critical friend to the Cabinet to hold them to account. In Rossendale the committee is politically balanced and made up of 10 councillors and one co-opted member. Overview and Scrutiny is not a decision making committee, but is there to monitor and influence those that are, i.e. the Cabinet. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee report their work back to the Cabinet who then decide whether recommendations will be accepted, and if not, explain their reasons for their decision.
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a role in performance monitoring, and also policy development and review. The committee also undertakes more in-depth reviews by establishing task and finish groups. These are usually comprised of five politically balanced councillors (non-Cabinet members), who review specific issues and make recommendations for change and improvements, for example, in policy or service provisions. Task and finish groups are limited to a maximum of two operating at any one time to ensure there are sufficient resources to undertake an effective review.
- 1.3 Overview and scrutiny is not a mechanism for the investigation or settlement of individual complaints, as the Council has a separate complaints/member enquiry process for this. Nor can the committee look at individual planning or licensing decisions.
- 1.4 The committee welcomes suggestions for investigation and an online form is available throughout the year where suggestions can be put forward. Any suggestions made are considered as part of the work planning process for the Annual Work Programme.
- 1.5 The Council continues to work in line with statutory guidance and the Constitution, and where possible the chair, vice-chair and relevant officers attend North West Employers' Scrutiny Networks to keep up to date on the latest developments in scrutiny.

2. Internal scrutiny

Policy scrutiny

2.1 Pre-decision

During 2021/22 the committee was consulted on a variety of strategies, policies and plans. Feedback and recommendations were sought on the following prior to a decision being made:

- Digital Strategy
- Corporate Plan
- Sanction and Prosecution Policy
- RIPA Policy
- Health and Wellbeing Plan

- 2022/23 Council Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Capital Programme 2022/23 - 2025/26 and Capital Strategy 2022/23
- Single Use Plastic Strategy
- Rossendale Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Assessment and Strategy

Performance scrutiny

2.2 Quarterly Performance Reports and Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)

The committee continued to monitor quarterly performance reports (which now incorporate the quarterly update on the use of RIPA). If required, the committee can call a relevant senior officer to the committee meeting to answer questions and provide further clarification, or matters can be scrutinised in more depth through the Performance Management Task and Finish Group and fed back to the next committee. During 2021/22 the Head of People and Policy provided the quarterly updates to the committee and provided further clarification where requested.

2.3 Performance reviews and ongoing monitoring

The committee received a variety of performance updates during 2021/22 with some items being part of the work programme and some being brought to Overview and Scrutiny for a specific reason for discussion. This internal review and monitoring activity included:

- Clean and Green Update – this item was requested as part of the work programme in order to gain an overview of the service and key challenges including enforcement, and to examine the ‘clean and green’ improvement plan including; waste collection, fly-tipping and recycling.
- Visitor Economy Strategy – this item was included in the work programme and provided an update on the progress towards the five priorities of the Visitor Economy Strategy since its approval in December 2020.
- Employability – this item was included in the work programme and provided an update on the progress towards getting local people into paid work.
- Equality Report and Workforce Profile – this item is required to be reported to the committee on an annual basis to review the Council’s workforce profile.
- Local Government Ombudsman Annual Letter and Council Feedback Update – this item is required to be reported to the committee on an annual basis and reviews the annual breakdown of formal complaints and compliments..
- Climate Change Strategy Update – this item was requested as part of the work programme to review progress against year 1 of the action plan and to provide an update on the Climate Change Conference.
- Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) – full Council agreed that this item would come before the committee to allow members to review the information being reported for the period 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 following the adoption of the Local Plan. Council also agreed that going forward, the AMR reports would be presented to the committee on an annual basis.

3. External scrutiny

The committee received a number of presentations and updates from external organisations, which are summarised as follows:

3.1 Leisure

In July 2021 the Chief Executive of Rossendale Leisure Trust reported on the action plan and agreed to attend later in the year to provide an update on progress against actions, as well as providing additional information requested by the committee including progress in recruiting to the new governance positions. This information was brought back to the committee in March 2022, where the Trust also presented their annual report and shared a video highlighting key achievements over the last 12 months.

3.2 Lancashire County Council Highways

In November 2021 Lancashire County Council Highways provided a briefing for members on road maintenance and also their preparations in advance of the winter season. They responded to specific questions from members regarding the road repair programme, the criteria used to formulate the plan, and also timescales for commencing works where temporary road closures had been issued. They also attended the January Committee to update members on the Transport Asset Management Plan and inform how repairs were prioritised.

3.3 Lancashire Constabulary

As set out in the Overview and Scrutiny terms of reference, the committee acts as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee under the requirements of the Police and Justice Act and related statutory guidance from the Home Office. Lancashire Constabulary attend the committee each year to give a presentation on performance and progress against crime indicators. Inspector Valentine attended in January 2022 to provide the annual update and answered questions from committee members, in addition to providing an update on the 101 service and performance statistics.

3.4 Foodbanks

Foodbanks who had received government funding were invited to attend the January committee to keep committee members informed of their work. RAFT (Resourceful Action for Transformation) updated members on how government funding had been spent, the number of food parcels delivered and informed how they helped meet individual needs through their varied activities. The committee thanked them for their hard work during the covid pandemic and recommended that full Council commend them for their work over the last 10 years. Council commended their work at its meeting on 31st January and agreed to present RAFT with a certificate of achievement.

3.5 Credit Unions

Bacup Credit Union and First Choice Credit Union attended the February committee and provided an update on staffing, volunteers, membership numbers, details of savings and loans, and also back office improvements being made such as moving more facilities online and making them more accessible, particularly in response to the covid pandemic. They also informed of other value added activities such as providing community support to other groups.

3.6 Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice (Rossendale and Hyndburn) also updated members on their work at the February committee. They informed how they were funded and explained how Council funding assisted them in attracting additional funding from other sources. They reported on their outcomes and explained how value for money was calculated, including the added benefits to the Council by easing pressures on services such as homelessness and the payment of Council Tax. They also informed how partnership working benefitted customers, e.g. working with the Gas Energy Trust.

4. **Health scrutiny**

4.1 At the time of writing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Health and Leisure is the East Lancashire representative for the Lancashire Leaders Group on Lancashire County Council Health and Wellbeing Board and also represents the Council on the Rossendale Health and Well-being Partnership and Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee.

4.2 The Rossendale Health and Wellbeing Partnership is open to any councillor to attend and issues of concern can be raised via the Portfolio Holder for Health and Leisure for any of these meetings.

5. **Task and finish group work in 2021/22**

5.1 GP Practice Appointment Accessibility

This work took place through task and finish in a day in January 2022, with the initial information gathering and agreement of the terms of reference taking place during October/November 2021. The final report was agreed at the March committee meeting with the following recommendations which we also agreed by the Cabinet:

No.	Recommendation	Who by:	When:
1.	To develop a robust communications strategy to get key messages out via the Primary Care Network and partner organisations.	Rossendale surgeries	Jul 2022
2.	Rossendale Council to help promote key communications on social media, including information on care navigation and the appointments process.	RBC Communications	Jul 2022
3.	To develop Patient Participation Groups to connect practices with patients/communities and find out what improvements can be made.	Rossendale surgeries	Jul 2022
4.	Councillors to have involvement with Patient Participation Groups and provide feedback and connect them with relevant participants.	Rossendale councillors	Jul 2022
5.	Promote the Health and Well-being agenda, including promoting recreation, leisure and self-empowerment to help alleviate non-physical issues (such as mental and social health) and link into	Rossendale Health and Well-being Partnership/ Rossendale Connected/ RBC	Dec 2022

	relevant activities and organisations such as pride groups.	Communities Team	
6.	Explore the use of S106 funding and Community Infrastructure Levy to assist with building NHS capacity, and if viable include reference in relevant planning strategies.	Planning	Jul 2022

5.2 Suicide

This work took place during 2019/20 and outstanding actions have been monitored on a continual basis. To date, eleven of the twelve recommendations have been achieved. Work will continue to be monitored through to completion of all outstanding actions and recommendations. During 2021/22 it was confirmed that recommendations 4 and 5 had been completed. Recommendation 4 was for the Council's health champion to liaise with the Samaritans. This has been achieved through the Lancashire Suicide Prevention Partnership, which is attended by the Portfolio Holder for Health and Leisure and also the Mental Health Champion. Recommendation 5 was to have facilities available for hosting training and awareness events, and various rooms are available to host such events. Work has also progressed on recommendation 7. Safeguarding training for taxi drivers has recommenced and the training provider has been asked to include suicide awareness as part of the online training course.

5.3 Copies of task and finish group reports are available on the council's website via the link below:-

https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/10718/task_and_finish_group_reports

6. **How has scrutiny made a difference?**

6.1 Overview and Scrutiny continues to perform the important function of holding the executive (the Cabinet) to account, carrying out task and finish work and reviewing policies and strategies before implementation. For 2021/22 the following is worth noting:

- The committee continued to meet and carry out its business during the Covid pandemic and members of the public can still observe meetings remotely or attend in person if they register to ask questions.
- Quarterly performance monitoring – as part of the quarter 2 performance monitoring, the committee requested that street cleansing routes be shared more widely to keep both councillors and members of the public informed of the routes and timetable. This information has now been shared with councillors. Officers were also asked to consider whether the routes could be incorporated into future bin collection notices and this is currently being reviewed.
- Digital Strategy – the strategy was recommended for approval and agreed at the Council meeting in July. The committee also recommended that a funding paper be brought back within three months detailing the projects, timescales and associated costs. This update was provided at the October meeting

(Digital Strategy First Year Delivery Plan) where the committee asked officers to consider their comments particularly regarding staffing capacity, appropriate training, and keeping information up to date and accurate should the projects in Year 1 of the delivery plan be agreed and implemented.

- Climate Change Strategy Update – following approval of the strategy by Cabinet July 2020, an update was provided to the committee on the work achieved to date and work in progress. The committee requested that the Equalities Champion check the draft Carbon Reduction Grant application forms to ensure relevant monitoring information was being captured at the right point. The committee also asked officers to check whether S34 notices could be extended to include evidencing suitable oil disposal and report back on vehicle efficiency for those using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). These points were considered and will be included in a Corporate Management Team report on expanding HVO and a note detailing the outcome will be sent to all members.
- Rossendale Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Assessment and Strategy – the strategy was recommended for approval and agreed at the Council meeting in March 2022. At the March committee meeting details were also requested as to why the consultants had not included the sport of rounders in the assessment. An update was provided following the meeting that rounders was typically a summer sport, played on existing football and cricket pitches which were included in the assessment. It was also confirmed that when the strategy was being updated, the inclusion of rounders would be specifically mentioned to the consultants and Sport England.
- Policy development – the committee was consulted and provided feedback on policies before they were approved by Full Council or Cabinet and this included the Corporate Plan and annual budget reports. The following policies were revised prior to approval following recommendations made by the committee:
 - o Sanction and Prosecution – the policy was recommended for approval with the inclusion of additional information suggested by the Portfolio Holder, and also with minor revisions to some of the terminology. The revised policy was agreed at the Cabinet meeting in October 2021.
 - o RIPA – the committee recommended some minor revisions to ensure the terminology was gender neutral. The revised policy was agreed at the Cabinet meeting in October 2021.
 - o Health and Wellbeing Plan – the committee recommended some minor revisions to the plan to ensure it was more inclusive and also provided clarification on statutory partner organisations and community consultees. They also requested a yearly progress update following implementation: to review success and continued relevance of the principles and priorities. The new plan and priorities with the revisions were approved at the Council meeting in December 2021.
- Suicide task and finish work - it is excellent to note that Public Health have stated that across Lancashire, Rossendale is being promoted as an exemplar model for our action plan and the steps being taken to address suicide. The

Council's Communities Team was also invited to attend a Local Government Association (LGA) presentation to discuss the action plan with other Lancashire districts. As a result, Rossendale's model is now being used as a template for other districts.

2022/23 Work Programme

7. Introduction

- 7.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to produce and agree an Annual Work Programme which sets out the expected work to be carried out in the coming year.
- 7.2 As well as outlining the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the programme should also identify proposed work to be undertaken by task and finish groups, of which there can be two running at any one time.

8. Cabinet involvement

- 8.1 As well as being able to make work programme suggestions, Cabinet has previously resolved that the two main Council grant recipients (Citizens Advice and Credit Unions) provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on their work and these groups continue to attend annually.

9. Standing agenda items

The Council's Constitution outlines the items Overview and Scrutiny considers on a regular basis. In addition, Overview and Scrutiny can look at other non-key decisions/updates as required. The items outlined in the Constitution are detailed below:

9.1 Routine monitoring of the performance of the Council

To review on a quarterly basis the Performance Report and invite officers of the Council to attend a future meeting if their service area is under-achieving on its target. Alternatively, if a service area is falling behind on their targets, the Performance Management Task and Finish Group may be re-convened to look into the matter.

9.2 Policy development

- a) To deal with emerging policy and assist the Council in reviewing and developing policy as detailed in the Forward Plan.
- b) Review and scrutinise decisions taken internally by the Cabinet, individual Cabinet members or officers of the Council.

9.3 Scrutiny of the Council's budget

To be consulted and make recommendations on the Council's annual budget setting.

9.4 Complaints/compliments

- a) To monitor formal complaints received by the Council
- b) To receive information on the number of compliments received for each service area
- c) To monitor Ombudsman enquiries via the annual letter from the Local Government Ombudsman.

- 9.5 Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)
To deal with any relevant Councillor Call for Action requests and determine the appropriate course of action.
- 9.6 Call-In
To scrutinise decisions referred under the Council's Call-In Procedure.
- 9.7 Forward Plan
To monitor the Forward Plan and agree those policies to be scrutinised prior to decision by Cabinet/Full Council.
- 9.8 To act as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee
To review local performance and progress against crime indicators.
- 9.9 External/partner scrutiny
To receive information from external organisations and partners whose operations affect the area to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working (with particular emphasis on those who receive funding from the Council).
- 9.10 Leisure scrutiny
To monitor the funding and legal agreements agreed with Rossendale Leisure Trust and receive financial/performance monitoring reports.
- 10. Drafting the 2022/23 Work Programme**
- 10.1 The draft work programme in the table below is based on updates requested at previous committees, items identified from the Forward Plan and the standing items outlined in the terms of reference and as summarised in section 9.
- 10.2 Although the work programme is formally agreed, it may be amended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as required. The table at section 12 sets out the basic agendas and planned reports/updates going to each committee. It is important to ensure that there is room for task and finish group reports and for any other items or policies, which may be added to the Forward Plan during the year.
- 10.3 A meeting was held with the chair and vice-chair and officers on 13th April to discuss the draft Work Programme and plan how to implement the agreed items. This document was presented to Corporate Management Team on 26th April for advice, and comments regarding the items and suggested timescales. Following these consultations the draft work programme for 2022/23 at section 12 has been proposed.
- 11. Conclusion**
- 11.1 The programme provides members with a clear plan of work and engages with our partners and grant recipients. The work programme is a living document and will be amended throughout the year as necessary.

11.2 Details of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings for 2022/23 can be found on the Committee Schedule on the Council website:
<https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/>

12. Work Programme 2022/23

Date	Topic	Proposed areas in scope
Jun	Quarter 4 performance report and RIPA update) (standing item)	To scrutinise the performance of the council's services and corporate projects
	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and Work Programme (standing item)	To examine the previous year's progress and review the draft work programme for 2022/23
Jul	Climate Change SPD (policy scrutiny)	To scrutinise the supplementary planning document (SPD) with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examining implementation • Discussing how the SPD will be reviewed
	Housing Strategy (policy scrutiny)	To be involved in the development of a new Housing Strategy (pre-decision): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine what is required to be included • Make suggestions for additional inclusions
	Annual Report - Corporate Plan Update (standing item)	To scrutinise the annual report with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructively challenging specific objectives and priorities • Reviewing the action plan and performance monitoring
Sep	Quarter 1 performance report and RIPA update (standing item)	To scrutinise the performance of the council's services and corporate projects
	Equality Report and Workforce Profile (standing item)	To scrutinise the workforce profile in relation to equalities.
	Ombudsman's Annual Letter Annual Council Complaints Review (standing item)	To scrutinise the Council's performance in dealing with/responding to complaints.
	Climate Change Annual Update (performance scrutiny – update via briefing note)	To scrutinise the progress made against the aims and objectives of the strategy and monitoring of actions.
Nov	Digital Strategy – year 2 projects (performance scrutiny)	To scrutinise the progress against the delivery plan including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring project targets against the delivery plan • Examining how the remainder of strategy and delivery plan will be implemented

	Health and Well-being Plan – year 1 review (performance scrutiny – update via briefing note)	To scrutinise the Rossendale Health and Well-being Plan with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the plan and community partners are improving health outcomes for residents • Monitoring outcomes against the action plan • Constructively challenging the specific health objectives and priorities
	Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) (performance scrutiny)	To annually scrutinise the council’s AMR report prior to publication
	Council Tax Support Scheme (standing item) - if any revisions are made to the scheme	To scrutinise any revisions to the Council Tax support scheme
	Quarter 2 performance report and RIPA update (standing item)	To scrutinise the performance of the council’s services and corporate projects
Jan	Lancashire Constabulary Annual Update (external scrutiny – statutory standing item)	To scrutinise the effectiveness of external partners in improving the lives of Rossendale residents with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the partner is improving outcomes for residents e.g. crime outcomes • How effectively are partners using any council funding (where applicable) • How the council can work more effectively with partners in the future
	Update on GP practice appointment accessibility recommendations – update via briefing note)	To scrutinise the progress toward achieving the task and finish group recommendations
Feb	2023/24 Council Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (standing item)	To scrutinise the draft budget for 2023/24 with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of resources • Planned fees and charges
	Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2023/24 (standing item)	To scrutinise the draft Capital Strategy and Capital Programme for 2023/24 with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of resources • Planned projects
	Citizens Advice Annual Update (external scrutiny – update via briefing note)	To scrutinise the effectiveness of external partners in improving the lives of Rossendale residents with a specific focus on:

	Rossendale Credit Unions Annual Update (external scrutiny – update via briefing note)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the partner is improving outcomes for residents e.g. well-being • How effectively are partners using any council funding • How the council can work more effectively with partners in the future
Mar	Rossendale Leisure Trust Annual Report and Annual Update (external scrutiny)	To scrutinise the report against the action plan with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the partner is improving outcomes for residents e.g. health, leisure, culture • Examining how the 2022/23 plan will be implemented • Performance monitoring against the 2021/22 action plan
	Quarter 3 performance report and RIPA update (standing item)	To scrutinise the performance of the council's services and corporate projects
	Single Use Plastic Strategy Annual Update (performance scrutiny – update via briefing note)	To scrutinise the progress made against the aims and objectives of the strategy