

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 May 2013

DRAFT ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2012-13

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN - COUNCILLOR PINES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the end of each Municipal Year, the Chair of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee for that year reviews the work of all overview and scrutiny bodies and provides a report back to Council.

The draft report for the 2012-13 Municipal Year is attached so that The Overview and Scrutiny Committee can add its comments before it is finalised for presentation to Council on 17 July 2013.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee considers the draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2012-13 and suggests any additions or amendments for consideration by Council.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND DETAILED CHANGE PLANS  
(RELEVANCE TO):

Scrutiny has a key role in ensuring that the Council is efficient and effective.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Scrutiny is undertaken within the existing budgets of the Council, although costs are not separately identified.

RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

None

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

Draft Winchester City Council Annual Scrutiny Report 2012-13



**Winchester**  
City Council

# Annual Scrutiny Report

2012-13

### Introduction

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee keeps an overview of how Cabinet has delivered the priorities and aims of the City Council. It can scrutinise any decision made by the Cabinet or by Council Officers to ensure that it was delivered within the City Council's budget and policy framework for the benefit of the District's residents. The Committee is also able to 'call-in' a decision that Cabinet had made, or had yet to make, that was outside the agreed budget for that year and that was likely to cost over £50,000. The Committee has taken a lead role in developing the Capital Programme, General Fund Budget and Sustainable Community Strategy. It was also consulted on the Council's 'Change Plans'.

During the 2012/13 Municipal Year, the Committee has managed a programme of task-and-finish Informal Scrutiny Groups (ISGs) led by six appointed 'scrutiny leads'. These groups provide opportunities for non-executive Members to potentially influence new Council policy, including in response to new legislation. They also undertake in-depth investigations into areas of the Council's work (including those functions delivered in partnership) to ensure that quality, good value services continue to be delivered to those who live, work or visit Winchester and its District. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee then considers ISG recommendations for referral onwards to Cabinet or Portfolio Holder (via the Portfolio Holder Decision Notice process), whose response is then monitored to ensure these are implemented, wherever possible, without delay.

The Committee has also been consulted on some major Council projects. These have included the further development of shared IT infrastructure, the Community Infrastructure Levy draft charging schedule, the new Council depot and a requirement for publicly accessible online performance indicators. On several occasions, the Committee has exercised its right to consider 'calling-in' items of unplanned expenditure related to other significant areas of work.

The Committee particularly welcomes engagement with residents and other community representatives during its public participation session. During 2012/13, local residents commented on the Council's communication and consultation with regard to proposals for redevelopment of land in their neighbourhood for new Council housing. Representatives from Winchester Action against Climate Change (WinaCC) and from Winchester Area Community Action (WACA) also took the opportunity to address the Council with regard to agenda items under consideration.

In response to some concerns raised by elected Members, as Chairman, I arranged for representatives from two of the Council's major contractors to be questioned by the Committee on the performance of the contracts. This proved a very successful scrutiny exercise in providing assurances to Members that sufficient resources were in place to make any necessary improvements.

During the forthcoming year, The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will continue to take an active interest in scrutinising services to residents and ensuring that the Council's major products (including the Council's Council house building programme) are delivered in a timely manner with maximum benefit to residents, for the best value for money. The Committee will no doubt be consulted on further opportunities for efficiencies in response to the continuing economic challenges facing local government.

## THE ROLE OF SCRUTINY IN THE COUNCIL

Winchester City Council operates a 'strengthened' Leader and Cabinet Executive model. Members of the Cabinet manage the majority of the Council's business, while scrutiny bodies oversee the discharge of the Council's work.

The role of scrutiny is to review, challenge and develop what the City Council does, making sure the right decisions are being made by Cabinet, in line with the general policies set by full Council, for the benefit of the Winchester District and its residents and businesses.

The Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 required the Council to designate a scrutiny body as its 'Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee'. It could also consider individual matters related to crime and disorder issues referred from the local level. This role is undertaken by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Petition organisers also have the right to request that The Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the steps that the Council has taken in response to a petition.

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## THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2012/13

**Chairman: Cllr Chris Pines**

### (i) Holding Portfolio Holders to account

Portfolio Holders were questioned as and when necessary on individual items. These included:

- The future use of Avalon House, Winchester
- The use of developer contributions for new affordable housing
- Performance information relating to the operation of the Community Safety Partnership
- The development of a shared and consolidated IT Infrastructure with Test Valley Borough Council
- Proposals for a stock condition survey of Council houses
- Repairs and refurbishment of River Park Leisure Centre
- Possible capital investment in new youth facilities being investigated by North Winchester Youth & Community Action
- Proposals to help improvement of the Guildhall's trading account
- A virement subsequently identified as necessary to complete the Local Development Framework (LDF) process
- Changes to Council Tax Support and Council Tax
- Provision of Grants to Voluntary Organisations
- The Preliminary Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule
- The Council's Capital Programme and use of a Property Acquisition and Development budget
- Welfare reform and 'under occupation' of Council Houses
- Proposals for a loft conversion scheme for the Council's housing stock

**(ii) Challenging decisions and the use of 'call in' powers**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the call-in of the following items of unplanned expenditure:

- The Square, Winchester Phase 2 – Great Minster Street (supplementary estimate of £60,000).
- Council House building programme and additional staffing requirements (supplementary estimate in the General Fund of £95,715 in 2012/13 (£147,958 in a full year) noting that recharges to the HRA will increase by £227,616 in 2012/13 (£266,102 in a full year))
- Estate Improvement Works – Stanmore (supplementary estimate of £300,000)
- Stock Condition Survey (supplementary estimate of £300,000)
- Works on Abbey Mill, Winchester (exempt)
- New Depot, Barfield Close, Winchester (exempt)
- Shared IT Infrastructure (supplementary estimate of £217,000 over four years)
- Potential home loss payments re Victoria House Extra Care Scheme (virement up to £80,000)
- Revised budgets – Maintenance, Improvements, and New Build Programmes (virement up to £90,000)

In each case, the view of the Committee was that there was sufficient information available for Cabinet or Council to come to a decision and no benefit would be gained from delaying the decision being taken.

**INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUPS – 2012/13**

The following batch 3 ISGs were appointed, the majority of which have now completed their investigations:

- Review of the Statutory Basis of City Council ISG
- The Impact of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO)
- Impact of the Localism Act on the City Council and our Communities ISG
- Access to Services in the Market Towns and Rural Areas ISG
- Provision of Public Transport in Town and Rural Areas ISG

The Committee also appointed the following batch 4 ISGs to commence their work in due course:

- Making Member Involvement and Decision Making More Effective ISG
- The Council's ability to implement ISG recommendations ISG
- The Guildhall as a Commercial Venue ISG
- Access, Exclusion and how we address it ISG
- Review of the Museums Service ISG
- Consultation ISG

The Committee also considered the final reports of the following ISGs:

- Leader Funding ISG
- Local and National Performance Indicators and their value to the Council Informal Scrutiny Group
- Localism ISG
- Project Integra and Recycling ISG
- Public Access to Data and Information via the Winchester City Council Website ISG

An archive of all the previous in-depth scrutiny reviews undertaken by ISGs is accessible via the Council's website [via this link](#).

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