

COUNCIL

15 July 2015

DRAFT ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2014-15

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
- COUNCILLOR COOK

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RECENT REFERENCES:

OS126 – Draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2014-15 – 1 June 2015

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.

At its meeting held 1 June 2015, The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Report and agreed to some additions to be made to the version to be presented to Council on 15 July 2015. This is attached as an Appendix to this Report.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council notes the Annual Scrutiny Report 2014-15.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO 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 2014-15



**Winchester**  
City Council

# **Annual Scrutiny Report**

## **2014-15**

## **1. 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.

## **2. 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 £100,000. 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'.

## **3. GENERAL WORK**

During the 2014/15 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 and respond 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 the relevant Portfolio Holder (via the Portfolio Holder Decision Notice process), whose response is then monitored to ensure these are implemented, wherever possible, without delay.

At its meeting on 27 October 2014 the Committee agreed that the current system of appointing batches of Informal Scrutiny Groups each year would be replaced by a rolling list of potential scrutiny group topics. This would allow flexibility for issues raised during the year to be looked at in depth and in a timely manner throughout the municipal year.

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The Committee has also been consulted on some major Council projects. These have included submissions to the Local Government Boundary Commission on the future size of the Council, the Council's Role in Public Health, the Provision of Museum Services by Hampshire Cultural Trust and the Hampshire Community Bank which contributes to supporting local businesses.

The Committee particularly welcomes engagement with residents and other community representatives during its public participation session. During 2014/15, local residents commented on:

- Silver Hill Regeneration (Less Exempt Appendices) (CAB2603)
- River Park Leisure Centre: Public Representation (Less Exempt Appendices) (OS112)
- River Park Leisure Centre: Options for Further Consideration (CAB2628)

In addition, a number of local residents addressed the Committee with regard to the Silver Hill Judicial Review decision following the High Court Judgement in relation to the Silver Hill development. As a result of the judgement, a decision was taken to carry out an independent external review into the process.

During the forthcoming year, a review of the Council's own scrutiny processes will be carried out, to ensure that the Council's major projects are delivered efficiently and with maximum benefit to residents, achieving the best value for money. The Committee will no doubt continue to be consulted on further opportunities for efficiency savings in the delivery of its services, in response to the continuing economic challenges facing local government.

### **4. THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2014/15**

#### **(i) Holding Portfolio Holders to account**

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

- Submissions to the Local Government Boundary Commission on the Future Size of the Council (CAB2593 refers)
- Capital Expenditure Outturn 2013/14 (CAB2594 refers)
- Gold Standard for Homelessness Prevention (CAB2596 refers)
- Housing Revenue Account 2013/14 Outturn (CAB2597(HSG) refers)
- Hampshire County Council – Consultation of Future Operation of Household Recycling Centres (OS103 refers)
- Capital Strategy 2014 (CAB2610 refers)
- Performance Monitoring Update – Portfolio Plans Mid Year 2014/15 (OS110 refers)
- Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 to 2019/20 (CAB2606 refers)
- Performance Monitoring Update – Portfolio Plans Mid Year 2014/15 (OS115 refers)
- Draft Portfolio Holder Plans 2015/16 (CAB2633 refers)
- General Fund Budget 2015/16 – Capital and Revenue Considerations (CAB2629 refers)
- River Park Leisure Centre – Options for Further Considerations (CAB2628 refers)
- Members' Allowances – Recommendations of Independent Remuneration Panel (CAB 2635 refers)
- Winchester City Council's Role in Public Health (OS120 refers)

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- Treasury Management Strategy 2015/16 (CAB2648 revised refers)
- Budget and Council Tax 2015/16 (CAB2647 refers)
- Housing Revenue Account 2015/16 Budget and Business Plan 2015/16 – 2044/45 (CAB2652 (HSG) refers)
- Community Safety Partnership – Performance Update (OS117 refers)
- Complaints Received by the Council 2013/14 (OS122 refers)
- Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Draft Recommendations for Winchester (CAB2687 refers)
- Silver Hill – Review of Project Position (CAB2675 refers)

### 5. INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUPS – 2014/15

During 2014/15 the Committee received final reports from the following, which were agreed and forwarded to Cabinet and/or Portfolio Holder for implementation:

- Museums ISG (previously established as part of Batch 4)
- Fuel Poverty Reduction ISG (OS108 refers)
- Flooding ISG (CAB2638 refers)
- How the City Council responds to Domestic Violence ISG (OS114 refers)
- How we respond as City Council to Homelessness ISG (OS121 refers)
- Abbey House ISG (OS118 refers)

And progress reports on the recommendations of the following ISGs:

- Localism ISG (OS97 refers)
- Access to Services in Market Towns and Rural Areas ISG – 12 month review of recommendations (OS107 refers)
- Public Transport ISG – 12 month review of recommendations (OS106 refers)
- River Park Leisure Centre ISG – Interim Report (OS113 refers)

The Committee agreed, at its meeting on 15 September 2014, that 12 month reviews of Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) recommendations would be brought together into a single report and presented half-yearly. It was anticipated that this would contribute towards supporting good agenda management.

As a result of this, at its meeting on 27 October 2014 the Committee considered a 12 month review of progress on the recommendations of the following ISGs (OS109 refers):

- Review of Statutory Services ISG
- Guildhall as a Commercial Venue ISG
- Council's Ability to Implement ISG Recommendations ISG
- Public access to Data and Information via the Council's website ISG
- Houses in Multiple Occupation ISG

On-going/outstanding ISGs brought forward to 2015/16 for appointment as follows:

- River Park Leisure Centre ISG

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

### **6. CHAIRMAN'S RESIGNATION**

As a result of the controversy over the Silver Hill development and the judgment made in the High Court about the legality of the Council's actions, the Chairman, Councillor Chris Pines, resigned at the meeting held on 16 February 2015.

He explained that he resigned because the general public might consider that The Overview and Scrutiny Committee should have done more to influence the Cabinet decision not to seek a public tender for the 2014 scheme.

Because he resigned with immediate effect at the start of the meeting, the Committee had to appoint a Chairman for the meeting, which is why I was appointed. This appointment was endorsed at the subsequent meeting and had been confirmed at the Annual Council meeting for the current year.

Members of the Committee express their appreciation for the work done by Councillor Pines during this period as Chairman.

**Cllr Simon Cook - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman 2014-2015**