Introduction

In this autumn 2015 Overview and Scrutiny Newsletter we provide an update on the latest developments in Overview and Scrutiny and provide a flavour of the work that will be undertaken over the winter months.

Overview and Scrutiny in Cheshire East

Overview and scrutiny committees play an important role in monitoring the performance of the Council to ensure that the Council policies are thoroughly considered and implemented effectively. We now have six Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Each committee has 8 members, and they meet once every 8 weeks apart from Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee which has 15 members. Details of the current activities of each of the committees are highlighted below.

Committee members choose which matters they wish to investigate within the context of their policy area. They can do this as a whole committee, or they can set up smaller task and finish groups to investigate matters in more detail. Overview and scrutiny committees can also invite people with specialist knowledge to assist them and can commission expert advice. Overview and scrutiny is about helping to improve services. In Cheshire East, this is done by engaging with and collecting evidence from a wide a range of groups and individuals. Overview and scrutiny committees welcome suggestions for scrutiny reviews from all sources.
Overview and Scrutiny Activity 2015/16 – The story so far….

**Corporate**

Chairman Councillor Margaret Simon

**Budget and Performance**

One of the main functions of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to monitor the budget and overall performance of the Council. It does this on a quarterly basis and was recently pleased to learn that the Council at this year’s mid-point is projecting its smallest overspend since Cheshire East was created in 2009.

**Parking Outside Schools**

Congestion around schools and the tensions created by inconsiderate parking is a common problem and highly emotive issue. This is a national problem and Cheshire East has many hotspots where the safety of pedestrians in the vicinity of schools is a concern. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed to assist the Communities portfolio holder to address this is Cheshire East. This review is expected to start in November and will look amongst other things at enforcement arrangements to control on-street parking in the vicinity of schools during pick-up and drop off times.

**Children and Families**

Chairman Councillor Rhoda Bailey

**Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny recently decided to continue a piece of work started under the Chairmanship of Councillor Phil Hoyland to review the Council’s arrangements to protect young people from Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Sadly, Councillor Hoyland died during the initial investigations but the task and finish group is committed to completing this work which will be in tribute to Phil who worked tirelessly to improve the Council’s child protection
arrangements and promote the ‘voice of the child’ in the work of children and family services.

**Corporate Parenting**

The Council has for some time been pushing to raise the profile of corporate parenting. The term "corporate parent" is not one which has a formal legal definition. However, the term recognises that the local authority must have the same interest in the progress and attainment of looked after children as any reasonable parent would have for their own children. This is not just about making sure that Councillors are aware of their responsibilities as ‘corporate parents’, but to ensure that the safeguarding of children in care is at the forefront of their thoughts and actions. A number of training sessions have been provided for members in the past. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee has however decided to review the Council’s corporate parenting arrangements to see if our arrangements are fit for purpose and to investigate if there are any changes that we could bring about to improve matters.

**Ofsted Inspection**

The committee recently reviewed the official Ofsted inspection report into the Council’s arrangements relating to the protection of children, looked after children and care leavers. Ofsted also reviewed the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board. The Ofsted review took place over a 4 week period starting on 6 July 2015 and concluded that the service requires improvement.

The committee has agreed to liaise with the Director of Children Services to determine the level of subsequent scrutiny activity to ensure that the necessary measures are put in place to address issues highlighted in the report.

**Communities**

Chairman Councillor Gordon Baxendale

**Tatton Park**

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be attending a tour of Tatton Park to see first hand the improvements made by Tatton Park Enterprises, which is an arms length catering company which provides catering services from the Gardeners Cottage tea room/restaurant and the Stables restaurant at Tatton Park.

**Community Hubs**

The Committee will also be reviewing the progress made in regard to how Community Hubs are shaped and developed by local communities, to the right
services in the right place, at the right times. The Hubs are centres that deliver for those in need, with a wide range of outreach early intervention and prevention services, to protect our vulnerable residents. Community Hubs share their basic core offer, but their wider offer to the community is evidence led and determined locally. Each centre is part of a network of complementary buildings and facilities, at a neighbourhood, town, locality and borough-wide level.

As part of that review Members visited the two pilot schemes in Crewe and Knutsford in November.

**Sexual and Domestic Violence**

The Committee is undertaking a review of Sexual and Domestic Violence. Members aim to discover why it was decided not to have a single specialist domestic violence court in Cheshire and how the court process will be improved without this in place. The group will also look at the sexual violence/abuse police incident reporting process, specifically to investigate:

- why domestic abuse reports to the police in Cheshire East are the lowest in Cheshire
- in the national context, why reporting levels in Cheshire are low generally compared to similar constabularies elsewhere.

The group will also be reviewing progress to sustain funding for high risk domestic violence services (Council based) and will use practical examples to review the journey of victims of sexual violence/abuse through the system.

**Pest Control**

A decision by the Communities portfolio holder to change the Council’s pest control service was ‘called in’ for reconsideration by the Communities Committee in August. After hearing evidence from the portfolio holder, and officers, the Committee decided to not ask the portfolio holder to review the decision, which meant that the decision could be implemented immediately.

Full details of the ‘call in’ procedure can be found in the Constitution and on the Council’s website.
**Environment**

Chairman Councillor John Wray

**Waste and Recycling**

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitors the performance of the ASDVs at ANSA and Orbitas through quarterly performance reports. Members recently undertook a tour of the ANSA facilities and were pleased to see the progress made since their visit last year, especially the improved facilities for staff at West Park, Macclesfield.

The Committee will be shortly undertaking a review to reduce the incidence of Fly Tipping across the borough. Terms of reference and membership will be agreed shortly, but if you have any information to share, please get in touch.

**Jobs Regeneration and Assets**

Chairman Councillor Hayley Wells-Bradshaw

**Apprenticeships**

The Government has announced a target of 3 million apprenticeships nationally by the end of the current Parliament - a significant increase on current levels. Through a task and finish group, Jobs Regeneration and Assets Overview and Scrutiny Committee is working to ensure that the aims of the Council and businesses across the Borough of leading the way in providing good quality apprenticeships which benefit businesses and the economy and provide opportunities to our local young people and are being implemented. The Group will assess how the Council is planning to increase the number of apprentices we provide within our own workforce and ensure we provide a high quality apprenticeship programme so that we can then export to businesses and other organisations across the Borough.
Devolution of Assets to Towns, Parishes and Community Groups

In July the committee considered how the transfer of assets such as civic halls and public toilets parks etc from the Council to Town and Parish Councils and community groups was working. In September 2011, Cabinet had approved the transfer of 50 assets to local town and parish councils in line with new opportunities presented in the Localism Act 2011. The Committee was satisfied that progress in transferring assets had been good, however the committee had suggested that the list of assets available for transfer may need to be revisited four years on.

Section 106 Agreements

Recently councillors have expressed much interest in having a greater understanding of the Section 106 process which require developers to make financial contributions to the Council though the planning process to mitigate specific impacts of development.

and how members and town and parish councils can be more involved. This has led the Committee to setting up a task group which will consider the issue and report back to Cabinet with recommendations.

Health and Adult Social Care

Chairman Councillor Jos Saunders

Ambulance Services

In January 2016 the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee intends to bring important health and social care partners together to consider how ambulance services in the borough can be improved, particularly in relation to achieving response time targets. The Committee feels that, particularly in our many rural areas, the borough is not receiving the same level of service to large centres like Liverpool and Manchester. The meeting with service providers and commissioners will consider how improvements can be made to the outcomes for residents.

Monitoring Respite Care Delivery

In August the Committee ‘called in’ a Cabinet decision in relation to the delivery of respite care services. The Committee chose to not ask Cabinet to review its original decision, but agreed to monitor the process of implementation, to ensure that the outcomes expected from the decision are being achieved. The Committee is due to receive a report on the progress being made to commission the necessary services at its November meeting and will consider requesting periodic updates on performance once the new services are put in place.
**Dementia Re-ablement Service**

In November the Committee hosted two sessions for councillors on the Dementia Re-ablement Service. This is a service funded by the Better Care Fund which helps people who have recently been diagnosed with early onset dementia to link them with services and community groups that can support them, and their carers, to manage their condition and live well and independently for as long as possible. During the session members also took part in a dementia awareness session and became Dementia Friends. The Committee received excellent feedback from members for the sessions.

**Leisure Services**

Over the previous two months the Committee has also looked at several elements of leisure services. In September the Committee received a performance report from Everybody Sport and Recreation (ESAR) which runs the Council’s leisure facilities. Members also attended two site visits. In September members visited Macclesfield Leisure Centre to see the work that the Lifestyle Group are doing with some of our young people. In October members visited the building site for the impressive new Crewe Lifestyle Centre which is due to be completed early next year and will host a variety of health, care and leisure services in one place, enabling them to work better together and benefit from the great facilities and central location.
Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Committee dates for your diary:

Overview and Scrutiny meetings are publicly advertised and everyone is welcome to attend. Most meetings take place at the Council’s Headquarters at, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach. Please check the Council’s website for full details.

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<th>Committee</th>
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<td>Thursday 7 April 2016</td>
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<td>Health and Adult Social Care</td>
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<td>Thursday 3 March 2016</td>
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<td>Communities</td>
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<td>Thursday 17 March 2016</td>
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<td>Children and Families</td>
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<td>Environment</td>
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To find out more

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Or call the Scrutiny team, on 01270 686468