

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20



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Chair's Introduction



Councillor S Galton

Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee – (OSMC) 2019/20

Up until the cancellation of formal scrutiny meetings in March 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, 2019/20 had been another busy year for scrutiny at Southampton City Council.

For the first time in a long period the OSMC and the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel were able to appoint parent governors to attend and contribute to the wide ranging discussions of the two bodies. Independent members provide a different perspective to those of elected members and I know that their contributions have been appreciated by all in attendance at the various meetings.

In May 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny in local and combined authorities. The guidance seeks to ensure that local authorities are aware of the purpose of overview and scrutiny, what effective scrutiny looks like, how to conduct it effectively and the benefits it can bring.

The OSMC reviewed the statutory guidance in June 2019 and reflected on the approach to scrutiny in Southampton to ensure that it is operating in accordance with published guidance. Whilst the Committee were not complacent, and recognised that improvements can be made, there was consensus amongst members that appropriate challenge is welcomed in Southampton and that the principles of effective scrutiny are embedded in the organisational culture of the Council.

As identified earlier the Covid-19 lockdown brought a premature closure to formal meetings of the various scrutiny committees and panels in 2019/20. However, throughout the lockdown informal mechanisms were employed to ensure that the scrutiny Chairs were able to have oversight of key developments, to request specific information for scrutiny members, and to enable meetings to recommence virtually as soon as possible.

The pandemic is the reason why this report is briefer than usual and is being presented to Council in November rather than the usual meeting in May. Apologies for the delay in producing this annual report and for not being able to fully represent the breadth of issues considered by the various scrutiny panels over the municipal year.

I am proud that despite the challenges presented to the scrutiny function the Tackling Childhood Obesity Inquiry was able to agree a final report for presentation to Cabinet in August, the HOSP was able to informally scrutinise developments across health and social care settings, including care homes, during the lockdown, and the reporting of performance across Children and Family Services continued as usual. There were no uses of Call-In during 2019/20.

I am grateful to members of the various scrutiny panels for their hard work and contributions throughout the year. I am also grateful to all the local groups, national organisations and individuals who have attended, made presentations and provided evidence at scrutiny meetings, and to council officers and Cabinet Members for their attendance.

The Purpose and Functions of Overview & Scrutiny

Decision making context

The Full Council of 48 councillors approves the policy framework which sets out the key policies and programmes for the main services provided by the Council. In February each year Council meets to set the Council Tax for the following year.

The Executive make decisions relating to services provided by the Council, except for those matters which are reserved for decision by the full Council, planning and licensing matters which are dealt with by specialist regulatory panels. The Executive is made up of a Leader, elected by Council, and his or her appointed Cabinet Members.

The Scrutiny function helps to inform the decision making process and improve the way the Council works. Scrutineers assess what impact the Executive's policies and plans will have on the city and its residents.

Scrutiny is a process for:

- Holding the Cabinet, chief officers and senior members of staff to account for the discharge of its functions by examining, challenging and, if necessary, requesting changes to Executive Decisions made but not yet implemented.
- Scrutinising and reviewing policies and practices within a cross-service remit, assisting in the development of such policies and practices and scrutinising policy outcomes – e.g. the implementation of strategic priorities.
- Reviewing decisions and policies made by the Executive and considering whether they are right for the city.
- Assessing the council's performance against its planned targets and monitoring critical success factors.
- Reviewing the work of other partnerships and public sector organisations in the city, particularly the Safe City Partnership and health providers and commissioners.
- Championing issues of local concern to residents and contribute to policy development and service improvement.

Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC)

The OSMC is a parent committee that manages the overview and scrutiny process and meets on a monthly basis. The membership of the OSMC is appointed for the municipal year at the Annual Council meeting in May.

There are a number of Scrutiny Panels that support the work of the Executive and the council as a whole. The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel carries out a work programme of scrutiny inquiries approved by the OSMC. These arrangements allow citizens to have a greater say in council matters by holding public inquiries into matters of local concern. These member led inquiries lead to reports and recommendations which advise the Executive and the council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery.

In addition the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel undertakes the statutory scrutiny of health and adult social care agencies in Southampton, and the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel scrutinises services for children and families in the city, including education.

The OSMC also monitors the decisions of the Executive and can 'Call-In' a decision which has been made by the Executive but not yet implemented. This enables them to consider whether the decision is appropriate.

Councillor Call for Action

Enables all councillors to refer single ward issues, or 'local government matters', to the OSMC.

Scrutiny Panels 2019/20

- Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Children and Families Scrutiny Panel
- Tackling Childhood Obesity Scrutiny Inquiry Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Councillor S Galton

Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) - 2019/20

Committee Members (April 2020)

Councillor Fuller (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Bell

Councillor Bunday

Councillor Cooper

Councillor Fitzhenry

Councillor Harwood

Councillor Whitbread

Councillor Windle

Appointed Members – Church Representatives

Mrs Catherine Hobbs

Mr Rob Sanders

Parent Governors

Mrs Nicola Brown

Mr Francis Otieno

Mrs Claire Rogers

Before Covid-19 brought a premature end to OSMC meetings, a number of strategic issues were the subject of repeated scrutiny from the Committee in 2019/20.

Green City Charter and Green City Delivery Plan

Following the Call-In in 2018/2019 the Committee, at meetings in October 2019 and February 2020, once again considered the development of the Executive's approach to address some of the most pressing environmental issues affecting us today.



When considering the Green City Delivery Plan the Committee highlighted the importance of target setting and the regular reporting of progress made on the Green City Plan, including the performance of carbon reduction activities, and progress being made by signatories to the Green City Charter.

Estate Regeneration

The regeneration of estates in Southampton remained an issue of interest for the OSMC. The Committee were provided with an outline of the plans behind the Executive's ambition to deliver 1000 council homes by 2025, as well as a draft of the project plans for the long-awaited redevelopment of Townhill Park.

The Committee encouraged progress at pace, whilst urging the Administration to incorporate the aspirations within the Green City Charter and Delivery Plan into the council homes for the future project, and to return to the OSMC agenda when the Executive have developed their plans for funding the Townhill Park estate regeneration programme.

Holding the Executive to account

Whilst the Committee prioritised a number of issues for detailed scrutiny the OSMC continued to undertake the key role of holding the Executive to account. In 2019/20 this was demonstrated by oversight of the transfer and performance of services from Capita to the Council; scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Strategy; the performance of the Safe City Partnership, and, the closure of Glen Lee care home.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel



Councillor Bogle

Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 2019/20

Panel Members (April 2020)

Councillor White (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Bell

Councillor Houghton

Councillor Prof Margetts

Councillor Noon

Councillor Payne

Despite losing the April 2020 meeting to the pandemic, the 5 meetings of the HOSP reflected the various challenges impacting on health outcomes across Southampton. This included, at the February 2020 meeting, an early discussion on Covid-19 planning across the Southampton health and care system.

Continuing Healthcare (CHC)

In August 2019 the Panel considered the complex issue of Continuing Healthcare (CHC), the name given to a package of ongoing care that is arranged and funded solely by the NHS for people who are not in hospital who have complex ongoing healthcare needs. Concerns were raised about the discrepancy between the number of referrals and those determined to be eligible for CHC. The Panel welcomed the review of processes, and the decision to provide additional training to support staff in acute and community settings. The Panel will revisit this issue at a future meeting.

Primary Care Estates Review

Southampton GP practices deliver around 1.4 million appointments per year, operating from about 40 sites across the city. In 2019 the CCG commenced a programme of work to deliver estates plans for primary care services on a locality basis, commencing with the east of the city. The Panel engaged with the programme twice in 2019/20 and will continue to seek to influence proposals as the programme considers opportunities for development and improvement of the estate.

Adult Social Care Transformation

The Adult Social Care Improvement Programme was the subject of scrutiny in October 2019. The transformation journey the service is on, including the LGA Peer Challenge findings, the proposed investment in staff and quality and the new 'Making Social Care' Partnership Board were all considered by the HOSP. The ambition was welcomed by the Panel but, as identified in the Peer Review, the challenge for services remains 'getting the basics right' on a consistent basis.

Regular agenda items

Following challenging conversations in 2018/19 the Panel, in 2019/20, reviewed progress on the performance of the Hampshire Wheelchair Service; Ophthalmology Services at Southampton General Hospital; Hospital discharge as well as the development of suicide prevention plans and the preparation underway to manage winter pressures on NHS services.

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Long Term Plan developed by the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) was considered by the Panel alongside the Southampton Health and Care Plan. Delivering against these partnership plans will be key to addressing some of the challenges facing the city, many of which will have been exacerbated by Covid-19 and the lockdown implemented to contain the spread of the virus. Covid-19, and the expected increase in health inequalities, will inevitably dominate agendas of the Panel moving forward.

Children and Families Scrutiny Panel



Councillor Taggart

Chair of the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel – 2019/20

Panel Members (April 2020)

Councillor Mitchell (Vice-Chair)
Councillor J Baillie
Councillor Chaloner

Councillor Guthrie
Councillor Laurent
Councillor Mintoff

Appointed Members – Parent Governors

Mrs Nicola Brown
Mr Francis Otieno
Mrs Claire Rogers

Church Representatives

Mrs Catherine Hobbs
Mr Rob Sanders

The Panel continued to use performance data to scrutinise the safeguarding of children in Southampton. This item was prioritised by the Panel and became the first item on each agenda following the significant increase in demand for safeguarding services from January 2019.

The Panel sought an explanation for the dramatic spike in demand, and raised concerns relating to thresholds and risk when the service rapidly addressed the backlog in safeguarding assessments. The Panel continued to seek assurances that the child’s best interests were the primary factor in decision making and to challenge assumptions about the recruitment of social workers.

The scrutiny of the dataset also resulted in more detailed oversight of a number of areas of concern for the Panel. Our request for written explanations of datasets has been met by officers and this allows for more detailed scrutiny with a greater understanding by the Panel of the service context.

Child Exploitation

The rising number of children identified as being missing encouraged the Panel to invite representatives from Hampshire Constabulary and the Council’s MET Hub (Missing, Exploited, Trafficked) to the January 2020 meeting. The Panel sought to improve their understanding of child exploitation in Southampton and to scrutinise the multi-agency response and compliance with local procedure and national legislation.

Whilst the Panel commended the MET Hub for the positive feedback from Ofsted for the partnership activity, concerns were raised that, due to resource constraints, the service was only able to provide intensive specialist support to children at high risk of exploitation and that children identified as medium risk may not be getting the support they need to reduce risk of exploitation.

Ofsted Inspection

In January 2020 the Panel were able to have a brief discussion on the key findings from the Ofsted Inspection that had been published a fortnight before the scrutiny meeting. The intention was to undertake detailed scrutiny of the report, and the developing action plan in response to the findings, at the March 2020 meeting. The pandemic led to the March meeting being cancelled with no other meetings of the Panel able to be held in the 2019/20 municipal year.

The findings from this inspection, and other independent reviews, will feature heavily in 2020/21 meeting agendas. The Panel will continue to recognise and champion good practice and to call out actions and performance that have a negative impact on outcomes for children and young people in Southampton.

Scrutiny Inquiry Panel



Councillor McEwing

Chair of the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel – 2019/20

Panel Members (March 2020)

Councillor Houghton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Coombs
Councillor Harwood

Councillor Prof Margetts
Councillor Thomas
Councillor Vaughan

Between 13,000 and 13,700 children aged between 2 and 17 years old are estimated to be either overweight or obese in the city. The consequences of childhood obesity on health can affect the quality of our children’s lives, their education and their life chances. In later life, these obesity related health conditions can reduce their productivity and shorten their lives.

Given the scale of the challenge the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee recommended ‘Tackling Childhood Obesity’ as an appropriate subject for the 2019/2020 scrutiny inquiry.

Consultation

The Panel undertook the inquiry over 6 meetings and received information from a wide variety of organisations and individuals. This included the Leader of the Council, PHE, academics from the Universities of Southampton, Cambridge and City – University of London, Energise Me, Solent NHS Trust, City Catering, Bristol City Council, Leeds City Council, Testlands as well as SCC officers.

Findings and conclusions

Information presented to the Inquiry Panel identified that:

- The role of the environment, and how it shapes eating and physical activity behaviours, has been identified as fundamental to the increase in levels of obesity we see today.
- Initiatives across the settings where Southampton’s children go to live, learn and grow are helping to create a health promoting culture, championing healthy food choices and active lifestyles. However, these initiatives have not been able to reach a critical mass to impact on the scale of the childhood obesity problem that exists in Southampton.
- Obesity is complex with many different, but often interlinked causes, tackling childhood obesity cannot be achieved through single sector measures or themes, or short-term plans.
- Southampton needs to make tackling childhood obesity everybody’s business and to commit partners in the city to develop and implement policies which promote healthy weight across the life course, as well as mitigate the effect of policies which do not support healthy weight.

Recommendations

The final report contains 16 recommendations in total which, if implemented, the Panel believe will help to tackle childhood obesity in Southampton over the long term.

Cabinet

The inquiry report was presented to Cabinet in August 2020. A formal response from the Executive to the recommendations is expected to be considered at the December 2020 Cabinet meeting.

The final report of the Inquiry Panel can be accessed here:

http://www.southampton.gov.uk/images/tackling-childhood-obesity-in-southampton_tcm63-430655.pdf

Getting Involved

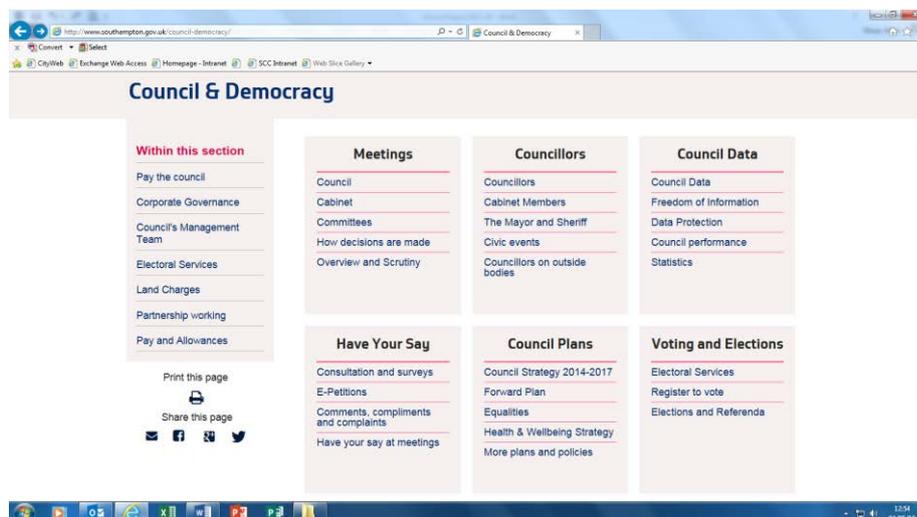
How can I get involved?

There are a number of ways in which the public and interested organisations can get involved.

- **Attend a virtual meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee or a Scrutiny Panel.**
All scrutiny meetings are currently being held virtually and are being live-streamed on the Council's website. Only on rare occasions, when certain types of confidential information is being discussed, are members of the public not allowed to view the proceedings.
- **Raise issues with your Councillor and request Overview and Scrutiny to consider as part of Councillor Call for Action.**
- Give your feedback to inquiry meetings as part of evidence gathering.

Details of forthcoming scrutiny meetings, agendas, reports and minutes can be obtained from the City Council's website at:

<http://www.southampton.gov.uk/council-democracy/meetings/scrutiny/default.aspx>



Providing written evidence

Scrutiny inquiries can consider written evidence and members of the public, community groups, or other key stakeholders can write in to bring evidence to the attention of Inquiry Panel members. Inevitably, scrutiny inquiries have only a limited amount of time, so they may not be able to hear oral testimony from all interested people.

Written evidence provides an alternative way to receive evidence from key stakeholders, policy makers, service providers, service users and community groups. Written evidence may put forward a particular perspective of the issue being considered, or may highlight evidence to help the investigation. It can also put forward questions for witnesses which may be taken up by members of the Panel during the discussion.

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