

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23



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Chair's Introduction



Councillor Fuller

Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee – (OSMC) 2022/23

The scrutiny function in Southampton continues to seek new ways to engage with the public and fulfil the role of the "critical friend" to the decision makers within the council and our local partners. In 2022/23 every scrutiny meeting has been live streamed and recorded enabling more people to view the proceedings and respond to the various issues raised.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel has responded to local concerns by scrutinising dental services, elective waiting lists and feedback from critical inspections of South Central Ambulance Service and mental health services by the Care Quality Commission.

The Children and Families Scrutiny Panel has welcomed the increased stability in Children's Services and, following feedback from peer reviews, has challenged the Cabinet Member and Senior Management Team to prioritise improving the quality of practice and delivering better outcomes for children and young people in Southampton.

The Protecting, Preserving and Promoting the River Itchen in Southampton Scrutiny Inquiry generated significant public interest and has been well received by those who participated in this important piece of work. The extensive inquiry benefited from contributions from key partners and community / voluntary organisations that share a passion for the Itchen River. The final report is scheduled to be presented to the OSMC and Cabinet in June 2023.

This year, as well as undertaking scrutiny of the forward plan and contributing to a number of Council strategies, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has understandably committed additional time to scrutinising the Council's finances. Whilst this approach at times proved frustrating, scrutiny retains a key role in monitoring the budgetary position of the Council and this task is more important than ever given the Council's financial predicament.

Encouragingly, once again the public have been in attendance in significant numbers at scrutiny meetings this year. In particular, at meetings of the Inquiry Panel additional seats had to be found to accommodate members of the public who wanted to engage in the process. Such occasions continue to demonstrate the relevance of scrutiny and it remains a vital ingredient in local democracy that must be supported and valued.

The importance of the scrutiny function was referenced within the review undertaken by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny on the Council's approach to governance and decision-making. The report, considered by the Governance Committee, contained a couple of minor actions for the scrutiny function to deliver but provided assurances regarding the Council's scrutiny arrangements and the thresholds for the use of call-ins.

I am grateful to members of the various scrutiny panels for their dedication and input throughout the year. I am also grateful to the local groups, national organisations, and individuals who have attended meetings, either in person or virtually, and provided evidence for elected members to consider. I am also appreciative of the continued support from council officers and Cabinet Members to effective scrutiny in Southampton. Long may this continue.

The Purpose and Functions of Overview & Scrutiny

Decision making context

The Full Council of 51 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 full Council, and planning and licensing matters which are dealt with by specialist regulatory panels. The Executive is made up of a Leader, elected by Council, and their 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 contributing 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 2022/23

- Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Children and Families Scrutiny Panel
- Protecting, Preserving and Promoting the River Itchen in Southampton Scrutiny Inquiry Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Councillor Fuller

Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) - 2022/23

Committee Members (March 2023)

Councillor Houghton (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Cooper

Councillor Guthrie

Councillor Moulton

Councillor Savage

Councillor Shields

Councillor White

Councillor Winning

Appointed Members – Church Representatives Parent Governors

Mrs Catherine Hobbs

Mr Rob Sanders

Mr Francis Otieno

This year presented a contrast to last year’s Committee. There were no uses of the Call-In procedure, scrutiny of the Council’s finances was a focus for the Committee, and a different approach was taken to engaging with the development of new Council strategies. However, similar to previous years, when the Committee discussed issues that resonated with the public the Council Chamber was crowded with residents who wanted to engage with the democratic process.

Portswood Broadway

In February 2023 proposals to close Portswood Broadway to through traffic were considered by the OSMC and a passionate audience of residents and shopkeepers. Concerns relating to the impartiality of the consultation survey, the accuracy of the traffic counts, the limited modelling undertaken, and the impact of the proposals on Thomas Lewis Way and the viability of the district centre were raised.

Following the discussion the Executive reflected upon the issues presented and agreed to incorporate the Committee’s recommendations within the second phase of consultation that is due to commence in the summer of 2023. Given the public interest in the scheme I anticipate the Committee will be keen to return to this initiative in the next municipal year.



Scrutiny of Council Finances

In recognition of the precarious financial position of the Authority, the Committee tried on numerous occasions to engage with the Cabinet Member in an informed discussion on the Administration’s plans to address the considerable financial challenges facing the Council.

The Committee were repeatedly frustrated by the obfuscation from the Cabinet Member and his unwillingness to clarify the approach that the Executive were seeking to adopt and the options that had been rejected.

Moving forward, it is imperative that the Committee continues to hold the Executive to account as it works to deliver a balanced budget. Quarterly scrutiny of financial outturns and savings targets must become standing agenda items reflecting the gravity of the current situation.

Bus Fares Petition

A petition calling for £1 bus fares across Southampton was one of many highways and transport items considered by the Committee this year. The Enhanced Bus Partnership, an update on the Transforming Cities Fund, Portswood Corridor, E-Scooters, fees for Council public electric vehicle chargers, enforcement of moving vehicle violations and the introduction of evening parking charges all featured on OSMC agendas in 2022/23.

The agenda items reflected changes in legislation, successful funding bids, Executive decisions and behavioural changes enabled by technological advances. With national decisions imminent on E-Scooter policy and contentious local transport schemes still to be determined, it is likely that this trend will be repeated in the next municipal year.

St Mary's Leisure Centre

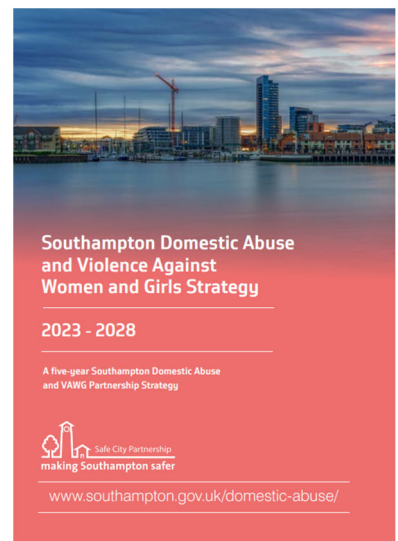
Following the decision to close St Mary's Leisure Centre the issue returned to the OSMC agenda when the Administration opted to recommence leisure services from the centre in August 2022. Since re-opening attendances at St Mary's Leisure Centre have been disappointing and it has required considerable financial support from the Council. It is hoped that the proposed procurement of a long-term operator of the facility will reduce the cost to the taxpayer because, up to now, value for money associated with this political decision has yet to be evidenced.

Strategies and Policies

The Committee had the opportunity to contribute to a number of Council policies and strategies in 2022/23. This included the Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Strategy, the Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and the Household Waste and Fly Tipping Policy.

To enable scrutiny to become key consultees, and to influence the Council's approach, OSMC has engaged with the draft documents at an earlier stage in the process. This has allowed for more open discussions and the opportunity for stakeholders to attend meetings to advocate for specific actions.

This change in emphasis has been welcomed by the Committee, the Executive and officers and has resulted in more cross-party support for the strategies when they have been presented to Council for adoption.



Key issues for 2023/24

I expect the Committee to continue to utilise the forward plan to schedule timely conversations with Executive Members, thereby enabling public engagement on key issues, and open and transparent decision making to ensue. This remains a strength of our approach in Southampton.

Looking ahead, I would like to see the publication of performance indicators that would enable the OSMC to hold the Executive to account for the delivery of objectives outlined in the Corporate Plan. The Executive have not published any Council wide performance data in 2022/23 that can be scrutinised by the OSMC, alongside the published financial performance. This reflects badly on the Council and cannot be regarded as good practice.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel



Councillors Professor Margetts / W Payne

Chairs of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 2022/23

Panel Members (March 2023)

Councillor White (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Guest

Councillor Houghton

Councillor Noon

Councillor Shields

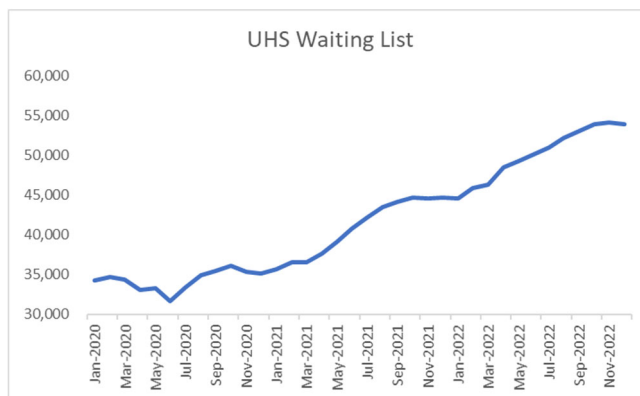
Councillor Windle

Pressure on health and care services, resulting in challenges accessing services for Southampton residents, provided the focus for a number of meetings of the HOSP in 2022/23. At the points of highest demand this winter, nearly all hospital beds were occupied in University Hospital Southampton (UHS), and across the wider Hampshire and Isle of Wight area. This is in addition to the significant pressure experienced by urgent treatment centres, GP practices, minor injuries, social care and ambulance services.

Elective waiting times

In February 2023 the Panel received an update around elective waiting times in Southampton. The UHS waiting list continues to grow and as of December 2022 stands at just under 54,000 patients. The waiting list continues to grow despite UHS delivering approximately 106% of activity (e.g. appointments and surgeries) compared to pre-pandemic levels.

At the end of December 2022, the average wait from referral to first appointment in the trust is 11 weeks. However, 2 week waits (suspected cancer patients), and urgent referrals have a lower average wait in line with their clinical priority.



UHS waiting list for patients awaiting treatment, December 2022

At the meeting the Panel reviewed the plan to improve waiting times developed by the acute alliance, which is a group of the four acute hospitals in Hampshire and Isle of Wight, working closely with the Integrated Care Board.

The plan includes the development of the new Elective Hub at Winchester scheduled to open in 2025 and the creation of new and expanded community diagnostic centres.

NHS Dentistry

Southampton's residents continue to struggle to access NHS dental services, and, reflecting feedback to Healthwatch Southampton, access to dental services is a key concern for local people. To make matters worse, a number of dental practices delivering dental services through NHS dental contracts have terminated their contracts in our area, opting to only treat patients privately.

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board (ICB) now has delegated responsibility for dentistry, alongside pharmacy and optometry. At the December meeting of the HOSP the Panel were informed that additional NHS dental services have been commissioned in Shirley and Woolston. The Panel also discussed the ICB's initial priorities to address the challenges, these include ensuring appropriate oral health strategies are in place, and building relationships with providers, addressing their concerns and supporting them with their services and estates.

Reflecting the concerns of our residents, the Panel have asked to be kept updated as this work progresses, and we expect dental services will return to the HOSP agenda next municipal year.

South Central Ambulance Service



In August 2022 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published an inspection report on South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SCAS) and changed its overall rating to inadequate.

The CQC’s report highlighted serious failings in leadership, culture, and performance. The Panel paid tribute to the hard work and commitment of the frontline staff who work tirelessly, in often trying circumstances, to deliver compassionate care to the people with whom they had contact, but sought, from the Chief Executive, an explanation for the failings identified. The Panel’s discussion focussed on the agreed Trust Improvement Plan which includes targets for improved performance for 999 and 111 call handling and ambulance response times.

SCAS Southampton performance - August 2022

Times show hrs:mins:secs	Southampton			England	
	% of all calls	Mean average	90 th centile	Mean average	90 th centile
Category 1	5%	07:52	12:50	9:08	16:20
Category 2	55%	42:22	1:31:08	42:44	1:33:20
Category 3	23%	3:35:33	8:28:46	2:16:23	5:41:13
Category 4	2%	4:22:26	10:00:06	2:56:39	7:27:56
Category 5	15%	Hear and treat calls, no crews sent to scene			

Adult Social Care (ASC) – Performance and transformation

Adult Social Care services remain under significant pressure. A greater number of people are making requests for assistance and where statutory services have to provide resources the needs identified are increasing in complexity due to increased frailty and co-morbidities.

To provide oversight of this dynamic environment, this year the Panel agreed to undertake scrutiny of ASC performance on a quarterly basis. The performance scrutiny has been considered alongside scrutiny of the transformation programme established to deliver services that are sustainable, person centred, clear and confident in practise and delivering good quality care.

Performance scrutiny has already identified data discrepancies and moving forward it will enable the Panel to monitor, review and analyse outcomes for some of the city’s most vulnerable adults.

Key issues for 2023/24

The Panel will continue to oversee Project Fusion, the programme of work to create a single new NHS Trust to provide community, mental health and learning disability services across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Monitoring will resume of the delivery of agreed improvement plans by Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust and South Central Ambulance Service, following critical reports from the CQC.

Away from operational developments, structural reforms and reviewing the delivery of the new Integrated Care Strategy, the Panel may also wish to consider how the Council is embedding a Health in All Policies approach in Southampton to help address the widening health inequalities in our city.

Children and Families Scrutiny Panel



Councillor Winning

Chair of the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel – 2022/23

Panel Members (March 2023)

Councillor Laurent (Vice-Chair)
Councillor A Bunday
Councillor Denness

Councillor D Galton
Councillor W Payne
Councillor Vaughan

Appointed Members – Parent Governors

Mr Francis Otieno

Church Representatives

Mrs Catherine Hobbs
Mr Rob Sanders

With a full complement of senior managers and leaders now in place, an increasingly permanent workforce and Destination 22 being rolled out, this year has seen a much-needed increase in stability for Children’s Services in Southampton.

The Panel, utilising the regular analysis of the Children Services and Learning (CSL) performance dataset, sought to scrutinise areas where performance was a concern; where services were under increasing pressure; or, where new services had commenced, such as the Young People’s Service and the new Early Help offer.

Quality of practice

Despite a reduction in temporary staff and a comprehensive training programme being rolled out via the Workforce Academy, the Panel were informed on a number of occasions that children and families in Southampton were not getting consistent and high-quality services from CSL.

At March’s meeting the performance report identified that 53% of cases audited in February were rated as Requires Improvement, indicating the need to improve the quality of practice. This reflects the wider issue of quality assurance raised by Ofsted during the focused visit in November 2022. The visit identified that the quality of audits, and of how effectively they, and the wider quality assurance framework, are used to understand and improve the quality and impact of practice with children and their families, was an area for improvement.



In response to Ofsted’s and the Panel’s concerns, at the January 2023 meeting the Panel reviewed the new CSL Quality Assurance Framework to understand how the revised practice standards are to be embedded into service delivery to improve the quality of practice. Improving the quality of practice is fundamental to reducing demand by, for example, limiting the high number of re-referrals into safeguarding services, lowering the cost of services and delivering better outcomes. Given its importance I anticipate this will be a key focus of the Panel in 2023/24.

Outcomes for Looked After Children

Reflecting our collective Corporate Parenting responsibilities, the Panel continued to focus on outcomes for Southampton’s Looked After Children in 2022/23. Plans to reduce NEET levels, improve educational attainment, intervene early to reduce the demand for specialist mental health services and provide sufficient places for our Looked After Children were scrutinised this year.

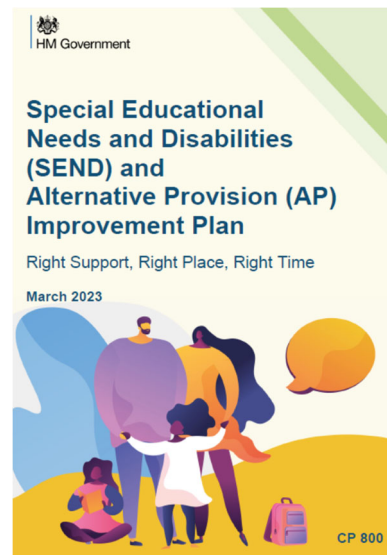
The discussion with the Virtual Headteacher identified that, in 2021/22, 243 pupils who attended the Virtual School had moved school in the year. This represented a 38% increase from the previous year, mostly due to a change in care placement.

Placement stability is recognised to be a key factor in enabling positive outcomes for Looked After Children. For this reason, the Panel have repeatedly championed and challenged the development of new children's homes in Southampton to enable more of our looked after children to be accommodated in the city. Progress delivering this corporate priority will continue to be monitored by the Panel in the next municipal year.

Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The number of Southampton pupils with Education Health and Care Plans is expected to increase from 1,826 in 2021 to 3,408 in 2029. The transformation plans that will enable the needs of this growing cohort to be met in mainstream schools and specialist provision were scrutinised in 2022/23, alongside the Government's SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan.

Children with SEND transitioning from Children's to Adult Services was identified as being an area where improvements need to be made. It is proposed that a discussion involving Adult Social Care and Children's Services and Learning officers is scheduled next year to examine opportunities to address the problems currently being experienced.



Improving the skills of the Panel

To support the relatively inexperienced Panel to understand the complex range of services overseen by the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel, and to improve their scrutiny skills, a number of bespoke training sessions were organised for the Panel in 2022/23.

In November the Local Government Association delivered a workshop to the Panel on 'Effective Scrutiny of Children's Services.' This session proved so popular that plans are being made, subject to the agreement of the Chair in 2023/24, for the Panel to pilot the full LGA training and development offer designed to support councils to improve the effectiveness of their scrutiny of children's services.

Key issues for 2023/24

I have already referenced a number of areas where I anticipate the Panel will want to explore in greater detail next year. The most critical of these is the quality of practice being delivered in Southampton. It will also be essential that the Panel challenges the Cabinet Member and Senior Management Team on delivering value for money and identifying savings to address budget overspends.

Next year the Panel should also challenge the service to improve outcomes for children in Southampton. Currently outcomes remain inconsistent and there is much more to do before the Panel can be confident in the quality of the services that children in Southampton receive. The service transformation has built the foundations upon which improved outcomes can be delivered. This year performance has stabilised, the expectation must be that next year performance will improve.

Scrutiny Inquiry Panel



Councillor Savage

Chair of the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel – 2022/23

Panel Members (March 2023)

Councillor Moulton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor A Bunday

Councillor Cooper
Councillor White

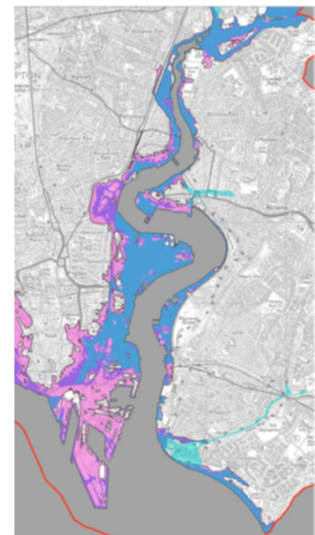
The River Itchen has been the lifeblood of Southampton since Roman times, it divides the city in two and is an important natural and commercial resource.

It is a globally important river of significant ecological interest. Areas of the River Itchen in Southampton are identified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) and, as the Itchen meanders through Southampton, it does, in places, offer opportunities for communities to access the waterfront and enjoy being by the water.

Marinas, wharves, and quays are located at the lower reaches of the river and businesses line its banks. In Southampton the river is also used by numerous clubs involved in water sports as well as SWAC (Southampton Water Activities Centre) and Woodmill Activity Centre.

However, the river is subject to use by numerous, and, at times competing interests that can create pressure on the natural environment and tensions between users. Climate change is also impacting the river. The Itchen corridor is a flood risk zone whilst drought is an increasing concern with water being extracted upstream to provide for our growing demands.

Given the importance of the River Itchen to Southampton, and concerns about its health and resilience, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee recommended at the September 2022 meeting, that an inquiry focussing on protecting, preserving and promoting the River Itchen in Southampton be undertaken by the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel.



Key:
Present Day Flood Zone 2&3
Tidal flood risk by 2085
Tidal flood risk by 2122

Tidal flood risk in Southampton

Consultation

The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel undertook the inquiry over 6 evidence gathering meetings. The Panel received information from a wide variety of organisations. including Wessex Rivers Trust, Natural England, The Environment Agency, Southern Water, ABP, Ocean Infinity, MDL Marinas, Hampshire Chamber of Commerce, Business South, British Canoeing, Glasgow City Council, Thames21 and Solent Forum.

As well as Southampton City Council officers representing various departments, the Panel also received evidence from numerous voluntary, community and recreational groups who are passionate about the River Itchen in Southampton.

Findings and conclusions

Information presented to the Inquiry Panel identified that:

- The River Itchen is an asset to the city that should be cherished and nurtured.
- Despite, as eloquently put by Graham Linecar from SCAPPs, *'the river giving the city its identity and a sense of place'*, he, like many, are of the view that the River Itchen in Southampton is under appreciated and is taken for granted.
- Despite its huge heritage, wildlife, ecological and recreational value this precious open space within Southampton faces multiple threats from pollution, from increasing restrictions to access, and from development.
- The threats identified leave the river's health in the balance. A healthy river that supports abundant flora and fauna enhances our health and wellbeing, encourages recreation and active community support, and increases the desire to be by the river thereby increasing investment and economic prosperity.
- Reflecting the concerns raised and the evidence presented, a different approach to the river is required. An approach that recognises the value of the River Itchen to Southampton, where the focus is on investing in the health of the river and a high quality river environment rather than, as has historically happened, exploiting the river.
- Fortunately, a number of timely developments mean that this is an opportune moment to commit to the new approach. The most significant of these being the refresh of the Local Plan and the opportunity it presents to guide planning applications and shape the city as a place to 2040 and beyond.
- Progress has been made, and if these opportunities are harnessed there is the potential to rise to the challenges set and to have a fluvial and tidal river that is closer to being of high ecological status; a distinctive waterfront that is well-designed, attractive, sensitive to the character and context of the area which also protects and enhances the natural environment; and a river that effectively links people, places and habitats.

Recommendations

The final report, approved by the Panel on 20th April, contains 20 recommendations in total which, if fully implemented, the Panel believe will contribute significantly to protecting, preserving and promoting the River Itchen in Southampton.

The recommendations reflect key issues presented during the inquiry relating to:

- A healthy and resilient river
- A vibrant river
- A connected river
- Strategic management and partnership working.



Cabinet

The inquiry report is scheduled to be presented to the OSMC and Cabinet in June 2023. A formal response from the Executive to the recommendations is expected to be considered by Cabinet in the summer.

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

[Protecting, Preserving and Promoting the River Itchen in Southampton - Final Report](#)

Getting Involved

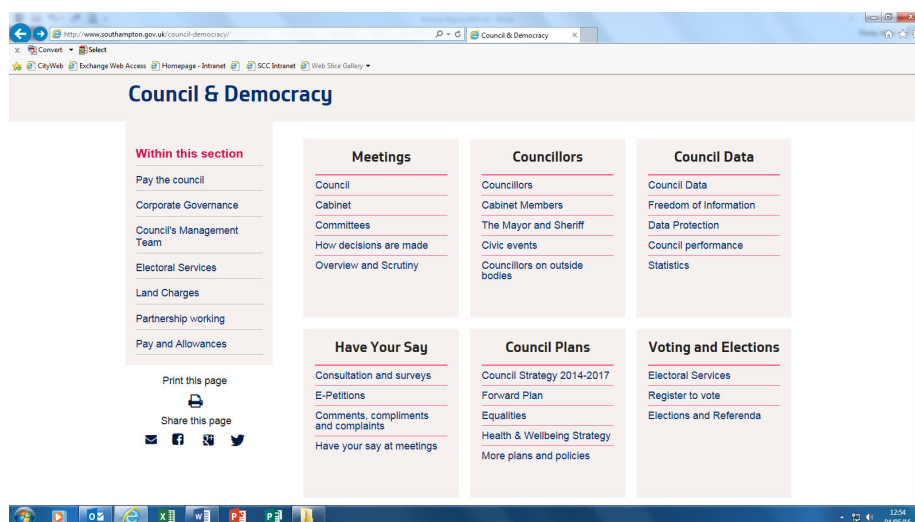
How can I get involved?

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

- **Attend a meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee or a Scrutiny Panel.** All scrutiny meetings are held in public and anyone is welcome to attend to listen to proceedings. Meetings are currently usually held in the Civic Centre. Only on rare occasions, when certain types of confidential information is being discussed, are members of the public not allowed to attend. All scrutiny meetings are also live streamed on the Council's website.
- 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:

[Scrutiny at Southampton](http://www.southampton.gov.uk/council-democracy/)



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.

Address: Democratic Services – Municipal, Floor 1, Civic Centre

Email: mark.pirnie@southampton.gov.uk

Telephone: 023 8083 3886