

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

# OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

## ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22



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# Chair's Introduction

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## **Councillor Fielker**

### **Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee – (OSMC) 2021/22**

This year has seen a return to in person scrutiny meetings, quickly followed by a return to virtual meetings and finally the establishment of hybrid meetings. In whatever format the meetings have taken place this year has been a challenging one for the Council's scrutiny function.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel has understandably focused on the impact of the pandemic on health outcomes and services, alongside championing the role of the Place (Southampton) in the development of the new Integrated Care System.

The Children and Families Scrutiny Panel has been scrutinising the transformation of Children's Services and Learning whilst continuing to analyse monthly performance data to ensure that service providers are held to account for the outcomes they are delivering.

Over six meetings the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel conducted an extensive inquiry into the accessibility of Southampton with the final report scheduled to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Cabinet in June 2022.

This year the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has repeatedly locked horns with the Executive over its approach to decision making. Scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that local government remains transparent, accountable and open, resulting in improved policies, services and public confidence. The ability of scrutiny to undertake this role effectively is dependent on the Executive following agreed processes that have been respected by various administrations over the years.

At the start of the municipal year a number of key decisions proceeded straight to Council without touching the forward plan or a Cabinet agenda. This resulted in scrutiny being bypassed altogether, and with it the opportunity for the Committee to engage the public in key decisions. Following these events, a request was made to the Leader to commit to the open and transparent decision making that has served this Council well and is expected from our residents.

In addition, the Executive have taken a number of decisions without the availability of the information required to make an informed assessment of the options available. Taking decisions that are informed by evidence is a fundamental ingredient in good decision making. The absence of such information resulted in the call-in of three decisions in 2021/222, the highest recorded in a year. A number of these could have been avoided if due process had been followed and I therefore welcome proposals for external oversight of the Council's governance processes to address these concerns.

I am grateful to members of the various scrutiny panels for their dedication and input throughout the year. I am also grateful to all the local groups, national organisations and individuals who have attended meetings, made presentations and provided evidence, and to council officers and Cabinet Members for their attendance. A special thanks must also be given to IT and Democratic Services for their proactive and flexible approach ensuring that, once again, we were able to undertake a full programme of scrutiny meetings.

# The Purpose and Functions of Overview & Scrutiny

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## 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 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 2021/22

- Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Children and Families Scrutiny Panel
- Accessible Southampton Scrutiny Inquiry Panel

# Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

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**Councillor Fielker**

**Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) - 2021/22**

## **Committee Members (March 2022)**

Councillor Savage (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Chaloner

Councillor Cooper

Councillor Fuller

Councillor Guthrie

Councillor Kaur

Councillor Stead

Councillor Vaughan

## **Appointed Members – Church Representatives**

Mrs Catherine Hobbs

Mr Rob Sanders

## **Parent Governors**

Mrs Nicola Brown

Mr Francis Otieno

In 2021/22 there were more meetings of the Committee than usual, the meetings were often longer than previous years and many were particularly lively, reflecting the issues being considered. In response to public interest and Covid regulations the thirteen meetings were also held in a variety of settings, including two meetings in the Guildhall.

## **The use of Call-In**

As identified in the introduction to this report the Committee called in three decisions in 2021/22, contributing to the high number of meetings this municipal year. As Chair I understand that the impact of the call-in procedure diminishes with repeated use but I stand by my decisions and can justify each employment of the process.

In September the decision to dispose of land at Lime Street Retail site for the development of new premises for Hope School was called in. The Committee did not oppose the principles behind the decision but expressed concerns that the data required to evidence the demand for an increase in primary school places in the city had not been undertaken in advance of the decision being taken by Cabinet, and therefore the Executive could not fully understand the potential impact of a new two form entry school on existing primary schools in the city.

In November the Committee called in the proposal to offer long leasehold tenants on Northern Above Bar the opportunity to extend their lease or purchase the freehold. The rationale for this decision was to encourage the Administration to follow the usual process for property disposals of waiting for the S.123 best consideration report before taking a report to Cabinet thereby reducing the potential financial risk to the Council.

Through Hope School and Northern Above Bar a pattern emerged of an Administration making decisions without key information being available. I recognise that the Executive's role is to make decisions but the decisions should be informed by evidence.

The final call-in was the decision to close St Mary's Leisure Centre. Reflecting the community support for the asset the Committee recommended that Cabinet find a partner to keep the leisure centre open for community use.



## City Development

On a number of occasions, the Committee invited the Cabinet Member to attend a meeting to discuss milestones for the major developments in the city. Leisure World, Toys R Us and Starboard Way all featured on OSMC agendas in 2021/22. The Committee welcomed progress being made moving these projects closer to fruition but continued to advocate for the inclusion of affordable housing units in the planned city centre developments alongside a cohesive vision for the schemes that comprise the Mayflower Quarter development.

## Transport Initiatives

Southampton's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) was considered at the October 2021 meeting. The BSIP is the first phase towards the Council establishing an Enhanced Partnership with the local bus operators. It sets out the aspiration for buses and how Southampton will look to bid for a share of the national funding.

The Committee questioned the ambition within the plan to improve journey times, increase patronage, and make buses a more attractive travel option. Unfortunately, in April the Council were informed that Southampton was not one of the 40% of authorities which submitted plans that would benefit from funding allocated by the Government in the initial phase.



The Integrated Transport and Highways Capital Programme was discussed in November. Of particular interest was the decision to include up to £250k to be spent on Lordswood Close, an unadopted road. As the Council has no legal responsibility towards unadopted roads the Committee sought to understand why the Administration were proposing the utilisation of stretched resources on improving roads in Southampton that the Council is under no obligation to maintain or repair.

## Looking ahead

Firstly, I would like to thank the Leader for attending so many meetings of the Committee this year. He willingly stood in for Cabinet colleagues who, with regularity, offered their apologies and were not in attendance to discuss with the Committee items in their portfolio.

Moving forward 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. Despite repeated requests the Executive have not published any Council wide performance data in 2021/22 that can be scrutinised. This reflects badly on the Council.

This lack of transparency is also behind my next request which is to have fewer items that require discussion in private session of the Committee due to being identified as confidential. Whilst I recognise it is appropriate that certain items are considered in private, on a number of occasions reports could have been drafted in such a way as to allow for public debate in open session without the need to exclude the public.

Thankfully, when discussing issues such as the reopening of Bedford Place to traffic, Hope School and St Mary's Leisure Centre, the public have been in attendance in significant numbers at scrutiny meetings and have been able to engage in the decision-making 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.

# Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel



**Councillor Prior**

**Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 2021/22**

**Panel Members (March 2022)**

Councillor Bogle (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Guest

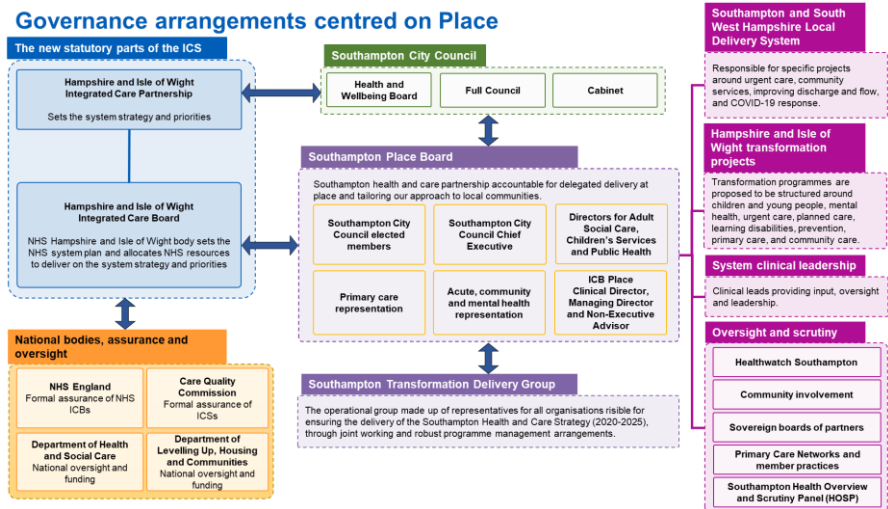
Councillor Professor Margetts  
Councillor Stead

The growing pressure on health and care services in Southampton, alongside consideration of the emerging Integrated Care System provided the main focus for the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel in 2021/22.

**Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care System (ICS)**

Developments regarding the Integrated Care System, the statutory arrangement which brings together local authorities, providers and commissioners of NHS services and other local partners to plan and improve health and care services to meet the needs of their population, were considered at four of the six HOSP meetings in 2021/22.

The Panel recognise that benefits can be achieved by working at scale, and that the delivery of certain services is best undertaken on a Hampshire and Isle of Wight level, but remain unequivocal in their support for the majority of decisions to be made and finances to be held at a ‘place’ level, which in our area will be Southampton.



Reassurances have been provided regarding the primacy of local, place-based decision making and accountability. The Panel will however continue to advocate for a strong Southampton voice in decisions that impact on the health of our residents and will maintain oversight of ICS developments moving forward.

**Pressure on the NHS and Adult Social Care**

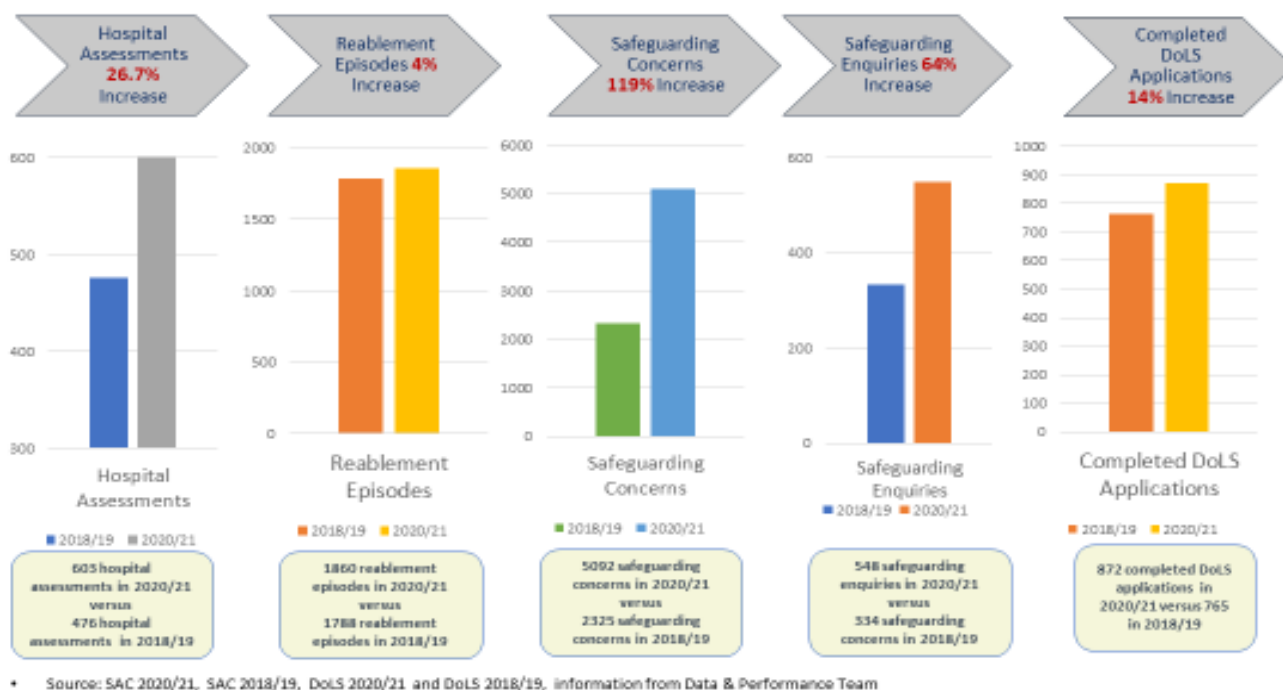
In 2021/22 local NHS services saw a marked increase in non-COVID-19 related demand for care. Visits to the Emergency Department at UHS were significantly higher than normal, mental health services were exceptionally busy and in primary care GP practices continued to work hard to safely deliver care to the population of Southampton despite increasing demand for their services.

Pressure on health services were exacerbated by high staff absence rates impacted by sickness or self-isolation related to Covid-19, as well as workforce shortages impacting on the delivery of services across social care, acute, community, metal health and primary care services.

The Panel discussed with system leads the steps that were being taken to relieve the pressure on the NHS and reduce growing waiting lists. A key challenge remains improving patient flow safely by discharging patients out of hospital in a timely way.



With regards to adult social care demand is routinely exceeding local supply and the average length of time required to arrange a new care home placement or package of home care has trebled in the last 6 months. Care providers in Southampton reported significant challenges recruiting and retaining staff, and staff absence due to sickness and/or self-isolation and Covid-19 outbreaks also had an adverse impact on access to the supply of care services. To mitigate the challenges targeted support has been provided to home care providers but, as identified below, the system is struggling to manage the increased need and demand across all areas.



### Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

This year the Panel took the opportunity to discuss with the Trust’s Chief Executive the findings from two independent reports into the performance of Southern Health. In December the HOSP considered “Right First Time”, published by NHS England and Improvement. The report examined the progress that the Trust had made since the tragic deaths of five people who were in the care of Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust in the period 2011-2015, as well as looking at steps required for the Trust to achieve the “Gold Standard” and to “Get it right first time, every time”.

This was followed by consideration of the Trust’s CQC inspection report in April. Disappointingly the Trust’s overall rating was reduced to requires improvement from good. The CQC found evidence of progress and good practice however, the inspectors also highlighted the challenges that teams have faced due to staffing pressures and in delivering services during the pandemic.

### Key issues for 2022/23

I anticipate a busy year for the HOSP in 2022/23. Information is beginning to emerge on the impact of the pandemic on health outcomes and this will need to be analysed alongside forthcoming proposals to address the widening health inequalities in our city.

The planned development of the RSH and Western Hospital sites should commence next year and the Panel will be keen to scrutinise progress. In addition, the system pressures and the structural reforms that have already been referenced remain pressing and, due to their importance in achieving the objectives contained within the Southampton Health and Care Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, require effective oversight by elected members.



# Children and Families Scrutiny Panel

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**Councillor Guthrie**

**Chair of the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel – 2021/22**

**Panel Members (March 2022)**

Councillor Paffey (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Bell

Councillor Laurent  
Councillor Mitchell

**Appointed Members – Parent Governors**

Mrs Nicola Brown  
Mr Francis Otieno

**Church Representatives**

Mrs Catherine Hobbs  
Mr Rob Sanders

Since the last Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report a huge amount has happened as services supporting children and learning across the city lay the foundations for significant improvements in practice. Scrutinising this improvement journey has been a focus of the Panel this year.

To enable the Panel to have oversight of service transformation, as well as responding to areas of concern or risk, the Panel meetings were themed in 2021/22. However, to provide context for the various agenda items, the Panel continue to use performance data to scrutinise children’s services in Southampton. This detailed analysis of monthly data remains pivotal to holding services to account for the outcomes experienced by vulnerable children and young people across the city.

## **Unregulated Placements**

At the inaugural meeting of the year the Panel considered the findings from Ofsted’s focused visit in May 2021. A number of strengths were identified by Ofsted but the Inspectors identified two areas for priority action: effective and rigorous senior management oversight of children in care who are placed in unregistered settings, at home with their parents or with connected carers in emergency circumstances and effective management oversight of services to care leavers.



Ofsted’s concern about unregulated placements mirrored the conclusion reached by the Panel when considering the wider issue of placement sufficiency at the March 2021 meeting. The Panel requested an audit of the use of unregulated placements to be undertaken by Children’s Services and Learning. This audit was scrutinised by the Panel alongside the Ofsted focused visit report. A priority action plan is now in place to address this issue, including more robust management oversight and scrutiny of these placements.

## **Post 16 provision, participation and NEETs**

At meetings in September 2021 and March 2022 the Panel considered issues relating to educational attainment and attendance. The Panel expressed concerns about the future of Post 16 education provision in the city and re-iterated their support for a city-wide solution to address the long-standing challenges in the sector that are detrimental to outcomes across the city.

The impact of the pandemic on NEET figures in Southampton resulted in the Panel recommending that officers liaise with comparable local authorities to identify how they were able to reduce NEET levels during the pandemic. A discussion with colleagues at Bristol City Council resulted in Southampton adopting their approach with the establishment of a new ‘Learning Hub’ with the aim of strengthening the offer for young people by bringing providers and practitioners together. The Panel will monitor progress in reducing the level of NEETs moving forward.

Children being educated outside of a school setting was an issue frequently discussed by the Panel in 2021/22. As with most local authorities the number of children being educated at home has risen since the start of the pandemic. The Panel welcomed the additional steps that the Council has introduced to address safeguarding concerns but recognise the importance of the forthcoming legislation if the Council are to be given the powers required to allay the concerns raised by the Panel and nationally by the Children's Commissioner.

### **Health – Care experienced children**

In November 2021 the Panel invited representatives from Solent NHS Trust to attend a meeting to discuss Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), with a specific focus on support for our care experienced children and young people.

Demand for CAMHS continues to rise in Southampton with referrals from April to June 2021 87% higher than the corresponding period in 2019. Due to the increasing demand waiting times for initial assessments are increasing, with an average wait of 15 weeks (November 2021). The Panel welcomed the enhanced provision of mental health support to schools and are aware that the CAMHS strategic plan was refreshed in 2021 but, alongside wider issues with regards to health assessments for care experienced children, the Panel emphasised the importance of improving access to mental health and wellbeing services for young people in Southampton.

### **Service Transformation**

To address performance challenges, Children's Services have been undergoing a substantial re-design this year underpinned by enhanced quality assurance processes. Initiatives include:

- The launch of the Destination 22 service transformation programme
- The launch of 'Making the Difference' practice framework and workforce academy
- The launch of a new case management system – Care Director
- Review of the local threshold document
- Creation of a Children and Young People's Strategy, supported by eight underpinning strategic plans
- UNICEF welcoming Southampton to the Child Friendly Cities and Communities programme

In their scrutiny of these initiatives the Panel have expressed their support for the service transformation and recognise that the collective will to improve is backed up by robust actions and programmes. However, whilst it may be unreasonable to expect performance to improve in the short-term, 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 is building the foundations upon which improved outcomes can be built but substantial challenges remain, particularly the creation of a permanent workforce to provide consistency of care and relationships. This will be essential for the service to make the required advances during 2022/23.

### **Looking ahead**

With a full complement of senior managers and leaders now in place, I am hopeful that we are beginning to turn the curve. With line of sight visits proposed enabling Panel members to undertake site visits and attend meetings with officers in the Children's Services department, there is an expectation that the Scrutiny Panel will be in a position to notice and celebrate the improvements whilst continuing to call out actions and performance that have a negative impact on outcomes for children and young people in the city.

# Scrutiny Inquiry Panel

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**Councillor Vaughan**

**Chair of the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel – 2021/22**

## **Panel Members (March 2022)**

Councillor Rayment (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Coombs

Councillor Guest

Councillor Streets

Over 1 in 5 people in the UK are disabled. That is over 14 million people in the UK living with a disability. It is a number that has continued to rise as people are living longer and treatments and technology in healthcare improve.

Spectrum Centre for Independent Living estimate the number of disabled people living in Southampton to be approximately 37,500. This includes people with physical, sensory, intellectual, psychological, emotional, age related and hidden impairments.

The National Disability Strategy identifies that disabled people's aspirations for their lives are no different from non-disabled people's aspirations. However, the strategy recognises that disabled people's everyday experience is very different from non-disabled people.

### **Every day, many disabled people:**

- wake up in a home that is not adapted to their needs
- rely on an unpredictable transport network to get out and about
- navigate inaccessible and inflexible workplaces or education settings
- use unresponsive and fragmented public services that do not meet their needs
- feel excluded from leisure opportunities and socialising
- find themselves barred from exercising rights due to accessibility challenges.

Accessibility is key to inclusive cities. If cities are planned and designed poorly disabled people are further excluded. This exclusion means fewer opportunities for education, employment and involvement in community life. By tackling barriers and building inclusive cities it can enable disabled people, and those with access issues, to access services and contribute fully to public life.

Given the above, and the understanding that making cities accessible can also enable them to benefit from the spending power of disabled people and their household, estimated to be worth £274 billion per year in the UK, the OSMC recommended that an inquiry focusing on improving the accessibility of Southampton be undertaken by the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel.

## **Consultation**

The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel undertook the inquiry over 5 evidence gathering meetings. At the start of each meeting the Panel received a presentation summarising feedback from an Accessible Southampton focus group meeting attended by disabled people.

In addition to hearing from disabled people, the Panel received information from a wide variety of organisations. This included Spectrum CIL, AccessAble, Liverpool City Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Derby City Council, Rose Road Association, Go! Southampton, SO:Let's Connect, transport operators in Southampton, Southern Health as well as officers from Southampton City Council.

## Findings and conclusions

Information presented to the Inquiry Panel identified that:

- Whilst recognising that Southampton is more accessible than many cities, and that improvements have been made, Southampton is not, following the definition of an accessible city adopted by the EU Access City Scheme, a city where all people can live in it and use all things and services without problems.
- Cities such as Chester, Liverpool and Derby have shown what can be achieved when a city prioritises accessibility and develops a culture that helps to facilitate this. Southampton has the opportunity to learn from the good practice identified and use this to inform and guide plans for improving accessibility in Southampton.
- To make citywide changes to accessibility requires a culture of continuous improvement, leadership and engagement with disabled people. It is critical to understand and listen to the needs of our community, to reflect on their perceptions of accessibility and to co-create solutions that bring meaningful changes.
- A number of timely developments mean that this is an opportune moment to make the leap forward this city requires to become more accessible. The most significant of these being the refresh of the Local Plan and the opportunity it presents to commit to making accessibility and inclusion central to future development in Southampton.
- Improving accessibility helps all residents and visitors, not just older and disabled people, and can deliver significant environmental, economic and social benefits.
- GO! Southampton have recently outlined their ambition for Southampton to be an inclusive city that is accessible and welcoming to all. As a City Council we have a moral, financial and legal obligation to disabled people in Southampton, now and in the future, to work with them, and others, to make this ambition a reality.

*“Improved accessibility brings not only reassurance and the necessary support to those who struggle with accessibility, but lasting economic and social benefits to the city” – Cllr Angela Claydon, Lord Mayor of Chester, 2017 EU Access City Award winner*

## Recommendations

The final report contains 24 recommendations in total which, if implemented, the Panel believe will improve the accessibility of Southampton.

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

- The accessibility of Southampton’s built environment
- The accessibility of Southampton’s public transport and related infrastructure
- The accessibility of Southampton’s information and communication
- The accessibility of Southampton’s public facilities and services
- The ownership and culture of accessibility.

## Cabinet

The inquiry report is scheduled to be presented to Cabinet in June 2022. A formal response from the Executive to the recommendations is expected to be considered by Cabinet in the summer.

A draft final report of the Inquiry Panel can be accessed here:

[Accessible Southampton Scrutiny Inquiry - \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/inquiry)

# Getting Involved

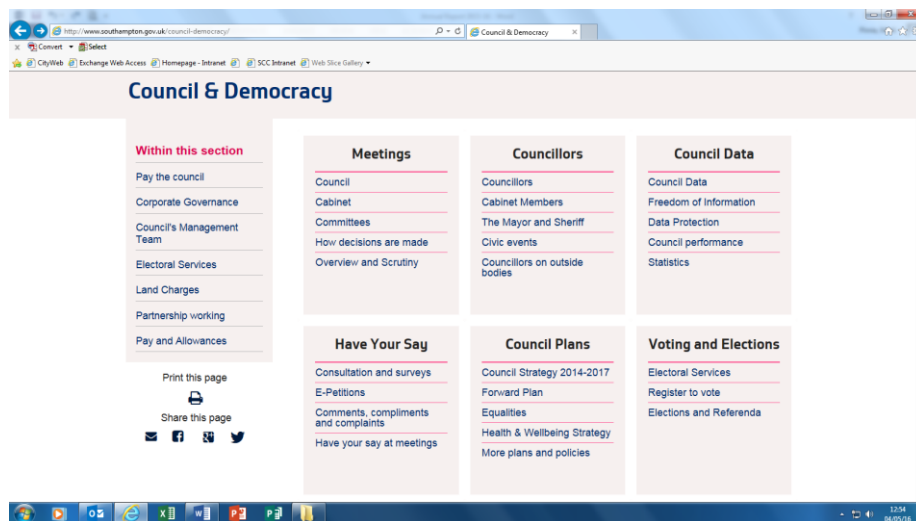
## How can I get involved?

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](#)



## 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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