

<b>Subject:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and Work Programme	<b>Status:</b>	For Publication
<b>Report to:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Council	<b>Date:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> June 2025 16 <sup>th</sup> July 2025
<b>Report of:</b>	Executive and Democratic Services Officer	<b>Lead Member:</b>	Environment and Corporate Services
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment:</b>	Required:	No	Attached: No
<b>Biodiversity Impact Assessment:</b>	Required:	No	Attached: No
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## 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee provide their comments on the Annual Report 2024/25 and Work Programme 2025/26 (Appendix 1) prior to being recommended to Full Council for approval.
- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee make the following recommendation to Full Council:
  - That Council approve the Annual Report 2024/25 and Work Programme 2025/26.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The annual report informs of the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during 2024/25 and section 6 highlights how scrutiny has made a difference.
- The work programme at section 12 details the proposed scrutiny items for 2025/26.

## 3. BACKGROUND

The annual report and work programme are required to be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and agreed at Full Council each year.

## 4. DETAILS

- 4.1 The annual report and work programme summarises the work undertaken during 2024/25 and sets out the proposed work to be carried out by the committee during the coming year in 2025/26. The work programme provides a draft of what is expected to be brought before the committee in 2025/26 and is a working document which allows for fluidity and for new items to be added as required.
- 4.2 The report was sent to Corporate Management Team for their input into the proposed agenda items and timescales for planned work. The committee are now being consulted on the proposed work programme.

## 5. RISK

There are no specific risk issues to consider arising from this report.

## 6. FINANCE

All work must be contained within existing budgets and resources.

## 7. LEGAL

The committee is required to produce an Annual Report for Full Council.

**8. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific policy and equalities implications. All work undertaken by the committee will have regard to equalities and follow Council policy.

**9. REASON FOR DECISION**

To inform of the work carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during 2024/25 and outline of the work to be carried out during 2025/26.

No background papers.

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Annual Report 2024/25 and  
Work Programme 2025/26**

## **Foreword from the 2024/25 Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Councillor Samara Barnes**



This report highlights the activity and work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period of 2024/25 and the expected programme of work for 2025/26.

The committee has been extremely busy during 2024/25, which is reflected in the list of policy items, performance reviews, external scrutiny and task and finish group work which has been undertaken over the course of the year. We are also pleased to highlight how scrutiny has made a difference at section 6.

It is important for scrutiny members to be involved at an early stage to influence the decision-making process and to play an important role as the 'critical friend' to Cabinet. This ensures the Council's policies and procedures are robust and also supports good governance and effective decision making. The report highlights which policies, plans and strategies have come before the committee for pre-decision review and where changes have been implemented to strengthen policies and processes.

This year there has been a more focussed work programme, and where suitable, reports have been circulated for comment and updates have been provided by briefing notes to allow the committee more time to focus its attention on more significant items. Members have also been supported with the addition of member briefings to ensure that members understand the detail and purpose of the reports and policies.

The committee is also committed to continued development, and this year members have participated in external training provided by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. Continued development in scrutiny will ensure we continue to add value in the work we do.

As always, I would like to thank all members of the committee for the contributions they have made throughout the year, in addition to supporting officers and those external to the Council who have provided us with their knowledge and expertise to assist us with our committee and task and finish work.

## **Message from the Lead Member 2024/25 Councillor Adrian Lythgoe**



The overview and scrutiny process ensures that both Council services and those services of its partners, are delivered in an appropriate way and encourages further development and improvements for members of the local community who access these services.

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to support and challenge the Cabinet and provides assurance in respect of policy development and review, acting as a 'critical friend'.

Whilst Cabinet members regularly attend the committee meetings, the updates to Cabinet from the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny has kept Lead Members fully briefed on the work being undertaken. This assists our work in capturing suggestions for further improvement of public services.

Both councillors and officers continue to work together to ensure the best provision of services for the people of Rossendale.

## **Annual Report 2024/25**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Overview and scrutiny is a way of achieving open and democratic accountability for the provision of public services. Local authorities operating an Executive Leader and Cabinet Model have an overview and scrutiny function which is carried out by non-Cabinet members who act as a critical friend to the Cabinet to hold them to account. In Rossendale the committee is politically balanced and made up of 7 councillors and one co-opted member. Overview and Scrutiny is not a decision-making committee, but is there to monitor and influence those that are, i.e. the Cabinet. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee report their work back to the Cabinet who then decide whether recommendations will be accepted, and if not, explain their reasons for their decision.
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a role in performance monitoring, and also policy development and review. The committee also undertakes more in-depth reviews by establishing task and finish groups. These are usually comprised of five politically balanced councillors (non-Cabinet members), who review specific issues and make recommendations for change and improvements, for example, in policy or service provisions. Task and finish groups are limited to a maximum of two operating at any one time to ensure there are sufficient resources to undertake an effective review.
- 1.3 Overview and scrutiny is not a mechanism for the investigation or settlement of individual complaints, as the Council has a separate complaints/member enquiry process for this. Nor can the committee look at individual planning or licensing decisions.
- 1.4 The committee welcomes suggestions for investigation and suggestions can be put forward at any time. Any suggestions received are considered as part of the work planning process for the Annual Work Programme.
- 1.5 The Council continues to work in line with statutory guidance and the Constitution, and where possible the chair, vice-chair and relevant officers attend North West Employers' Scrutiny Networks to keep up to date on the latest developments in scrutiny.

### **2. Internal scrutiny**

#### **Policy scrutiny**

#### **2.1 Pre-decision**

During 2024/25 the committee was consulted on a variety of strategies, policies and plans. Feedback and recommendations were sought on the following prior to a decision being made or prior to further development:

- Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
- Open Space and Outdoor Sports SPD
- Local Housing Allowance Safeguarding Policy
- Infrastructure Funding Statement
- Adoption of Local List of Non-Designated Heritage Assets
- Climate Change Strategy Update

- Corporate Priorities, Budget, Council Tax and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy
- Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2025/26
- Valley Plan 2025-29
- Communications Strategy and Annual Action Plan Update

## **Performance scrutiny**

### **2.2 Quarterly Performance Reports**

The committee continued to monitor quarterly performance reports (which incorporate the quarterly update on the use of RIPA). If required, the committee can call a relevant senior officer to the committee meeting to answer questions and provide further clarification, or matters can be scrutinised in more depth through the Performance Management Task and Finish Group and fed back to the next committee. During 2024/25 the Head of People and Policy provided the quarterly updates to the committee and provided further clarification where requested.

### **2.3 Performance reviews and ongoing monitoring**

The committee received a variety of performance updates during 2024/25 with some items being part of the work programme and some being brought to Overview and Scrutiny for a specific reason for discussion. This internal review and monitoring activity included:

- Annual Equality Workforce Profile – this item is required to be reported to the committee on an annual basis to review the Council's workforce profile.
- Local Government Ombudsman Annual Letter and Council Feedback Update – this item is required to be reported to the committee on an annual basis and reviews the annual breakdown of formal complaints and compliments.
- Health and Well-being Plan Update – this item was included in the work programme as a briefing update and provided the opportunity to review the progress of the Health and Well-being Plan.

## **3. External scrutiny**

The committee received a number of presentations and updates from external organisations, which are summarised as follows:

### **3.1 Lancashire Constabulary**

As set out in the Overview and Scrutiny terms of reference, the committee acts as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee under the requirements of the Police and Justice Act and related statutory guidance from the Home Office. Lancashire Constabulary attend the committee each year to give a presentation on performance and progress against crime indicators. Inspector Plummer attended in January 2025 to provide the annual update and answered questions from committee members. They also provided a specific update on the HMIC Report, Crime and ASB Data for Rossendale, Violence Against Women and Girls Update, Councillor Relationships, Rural Crime Update, Dangerous Dogs and Road Safety Concerns.

### **3.2 Citizens Advice**

In January 2025, Citizens Advice (East Lancashire) provided a briefing for members on their work and range of services offered. They informed how they were funded and expressed their gratitude to the Council for their continued support. They also reported

on their key outcomes and achievements over the last 12 months as well the pressures.

The following key points were noted from the update:

- Over the last 12 months, the Council funding has helped support over 2,600 Rossendale households, with over 1000 issues being related to charitable payments and foodbanks.
- Citizens Advice and the Council worked in partnership to distribute £54,000 of awards and provided targeted advice service through the Household Support Fund to households experiencing financial hardship.
- Citizens Advice has helped maximise the income for the residents that require the help generating financial outcomes of over £1.5 million including benefits, debt rescheduling and energy savings.
- For every £1 spent on the service by the Council, residents benefited by £22.

### 3.3 Leisure

In June 2024 the Chief Executive of Rossendale Leisure Trust (RLT), Samantha Sandford, provided an annual update to the committee and highlighted key achievements as well as the planned ongoing work throughout the year. Members appreciated the improved data and benchmarking information available. It was good to see continual improvements, growth and engagement increasing.

## 4. **Health scrutiny**

4.1 At the time of writing the report, the Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Health is the East Lancashire representative for the Lancashire Leaders Group on Lancashire County Council Health and Wellbeing Board and also represents the Council on the Rossendale Health and Well-being Partnership and Lancashire County Council Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee.

4.2 The Rossendale Health and Wellbeing Partnership is open to any councillor to attend and issues of concern can be raised via the Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Health for any of these meetings.

4.3 In November 2024 the committee was provided with a briefing note update on the Health and Well-being Plan which outlined the progress made to date against the four priorities.

- In relation to the Community-led Mental Wellbeing priority in January 2024 a Mental Health Strategy Refresh was announced by Lancashire and South Cumbria Foundation Trust and Valley Vitality Festival was held in July 2024 to promote family wellbeing.
- In relation to the Physical Activity and Healthy Weight priority, the Physical Activity Big Connect Event took place in November to develop a Physical Activity and Sports strategy, workshops took place to consult on the strategy which is due to launch in January 2025. Partnership programmes continue to promote Cardiac Rehabilitation, Health Coaching, Up and Active and Weight Management. Rossendale Leisure Trust have been awarded The Family Healthy Weight Program contract for the next five years. The Childhood Obesity Workshop was organised in September 2024 to tackle high childhood obesity rates and TaAf programmes continue to deliver weekly wellbeing walks, Park Yoga and Junior Park Run.
- In relation to the Developing Facilities to Support Health and Wellbeing priority, a Leisure Facilities Steering Group was established with stakeholders,

Athletics and Football Development Groups were formed to discuss growth and facilities, funding applications were submitted for projects like a 3G pitch at the Adrenaline Centre, a Community Asset Review was commenced for outdoor facilities and the Playing Pitch Strategy is expected to conclude in November 2024.

- In relation to the Shaping the Delivery of Local Services priority, the NHS have been working with Adult Social Care to analyse all contact with ASC by district and identify those calls which did not need ASC services. This has resulted in funding being made available to districts and the Communities team have worked with the NHS and BPRCVS to put forward a bid for just over £300k for additional community connectors. Also, the Integrated Care Board – NHS – has again made funding available for VCFS organisation in Rossendale to apply for up to £5k.

It was also highlighted that Rossendale Primary Care Networks made funding available to run a series of events promoting vaccinations and health checks such as; Age of Inspiration event, the launch of the Family hub at Haslingden Community Link and the July Vitality Festival at the Valley Academy. In October an engagement event jointly run by the PCN, the Council and Rossendale Leisure Trust was also held at Haslingden Community link promoting health, leisure and council services to the South Asian community of Rossendale. The Portfolio holder for Health, Cllr Barbara Ashworth and Stephanie Thornton attended a meeting of all staff at the Irwell medical practice and Bacup to outline the services the council offers or brokers which can help vulnerable people e.g. the aids and adaptations, minor repairs and Homewise services around warmer homes. The Communities Team has started work with partners on the development of a Better Lives plan – aimed at ensuring all partners are aware of the available services for vulnerable people e.g. Affordable warmth, food, money and debt, homelessness, employment support and family support.

## **5. How has scrutiny made a difference?**

5.1 Overview and Scrutiny continues to perform the important function of holding the executive (the Cabinet) to account, carrying out task and finish work and reviewing policies and strategies before implementation. For 2024/25 the following is worth noting:

5.2 Quarterly performance monitoring:

- Quarter 4 2023/24 – discussions focussed on housing targets, new methodology and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, additional Council savings, empty shops, reviewing town centre areas and also the need for member briefings to discuss complex documents and policies prior to committees. As a result of the discussions, the following action was recommended and actioned as follows:
  - *To introduce member briefings on complex documents and policies prior to the committee so that members can gain a better understanding ahead of the meeting.* This led to a member briefing taking place in relation to the Communications Strategy and Annual Action Plan.
- Quarter 1 2024/25 – discussions focussed on the increase in uptake of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), the policy refresh for DFG last year, and staffing in relation to minor adaptations.



- Quarter 2 2024/25 – discussions focussed on Bacup Market specifically relating to comments received from the Flood Authority, future traders of the market and relocation grants and also the reduction in grass cutting at the cemeteries due to staff shortages and weather conditions.
- Quarter 3 2024/25 – discussions focussed on the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) targets, incentives for empty shops, freedom of information requests and member enquiries. As a result of the discussions, the following action was recommended and actioned as follows:
  - *To look into the possibility of reducing the DFG target.* It was confirmed that this would be discussed with the Housing Team.
  - *To confirm the process for member enquiries and how they are recorded.* In response to this, an email was circulated to all members confirming the following; initial enquiries from members are supposed to go direct to departments (the same way service requests are dealt with) and these are not recorded. It only becomes a Member Enquiry if there is dissatisfaction in the way the original enquiry was dealt with or the enquiry needs escalating (we then record it and handle it in the same way we would deal with a formal complaint).
  - *To confirm how the number of FOI's we receive compares to other authorities and what the requests are made up.* It was agreed that we would try to obtain details from other Local Authorities and feed back to the committee.
  - *To confirm what the Local Government Ombudsman Complaint was regarding.* It was confirmed with members that the complaint was a premature complaint in relation to Council Tax and was referred back to the Council to deal with via the formal complaints process.

5.3 Policy development – the committee was consulted and provided feedback on policies before they were approved by Full Council or Cabinet and this included the annual budget reports. The following policies were revised prior to approval following recommendations made by the committee:

**Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)** - the committee recommended the following and subsequent changes were made prior to Cabinet approval:

- To make any necessary changes or explanations with regard to figures quoted and data presented. This was owing to the lapse of time between the survey and the development of the draft SPD.

**Open Space and Outdoor Sports Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)** - the committee recommended the following and subsequent changes were made prior to Cabinet approval:

- To make any necessary changes or explanations with regard to figures quoted and data presented. This was owing to the lapse of time between the survey and the development of the draft SPD.
- To find out if the calculation by Sport England took account of regional diversity.
- To include *safe and secure for all to use* in the design guidance.
- To look into how accessibility in new facilities could be built into the guidance and reinforced.

- To better reflect the nature of the swimming pools in the figures quoted and explanations given.

**Adoption of Local List of Non-Designated Heritage Assets** – the committee recommended the following amendment was made prior to the consultation process:

- That minor amendments to the draft Local List to be also delegated to Ward Councillors as well as the Head of Planning and Lead Member prior to consultation.

5.4 Feedback monitoring - the Council is constantly reviewing how to improve service, and the following improvements were made during the 2024/25 period:

- Signposting to Lancashire County Council (LCC) and improved public information so customers know who to contact for LCC related complaints.
- Undertaking comprehensive consultation to manage residents' expectations.
- Monthly monitoring of operations complaints e.g. bin collections, parks and open spaces. A new back-office system now provides live data to assist monitoring and will be more efficient in identifying and resolving issues as they arise.
- Improved partnership working in order to promote relevant community events.

## **2025/26 Work Programme**

### **6. Introduction**

- 6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to produce and agree an Annual Work Programme which sets out the expected work to be carried out in the coming year.
- 6.2 As well as outlining the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the programme should also identify proposed work to be undertaken by task and finish groups, of which there can be two running at any one time.

### **7. Cabinet involvement**

- 7.1 As well as being able to make work programme suggestions, Cabinet has previously resolved that Council grant recipients provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on their work. Citizens Advice have continued to provide updates to the committee annually.

### **8. Standing agenda items**

The Council's Constitution outlines the items Overview and Scrutiny considers on a regular basis. In addition, Overview and Scrutiny can look at other non-key decisions/updates as required. The items outlined in the Constitution are detailed below:

#### **8.1 Routine monitoring of the performance of the Council**

To review on a quarterly basis the Performance Report and invite officers of the Council to attend a future meeting if their service area is under-achieving on its target. Alternatively, if a service area is falling behind on their targets, the

Performance Management Task and Finish Group may be re-convened to look into the matter.

8.2 Policy development

- a) To deal with emerging policy and assist the Council in reviewing and developing policy as detailed in the Forward Plan.
- b) Review and scrutinise decisions taken internally by the Cabinet, individual Cabinet members or officers of the Council.

8.3 Scrutiny of the Council's budget

To be consulted and make recommendations on the Council's annual budget setting.

8.4 Complaints/compliments

- a) To monitor formal complaints received by the Council
- b) To receive information on the number of compliments received for each service area
- c) To monitor Ombudsman enquiries via the annual letter from the Local Government Ombudsman.

8.5 Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)

To deal with any relevant Councillor Call for Action requests and determine the appropriate course of action.

8.6 Call-In

To scrutinise decisions referred under the Council's Call-In Procedure.

8.7 Forward Plan

To monitor the Forward Plan and agree those policies to be scrutinised prior to decision by Cabinet/Full Council.

8.8 To act as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee

To review local performance and progress against crime indicators.

9.9 External/partner scrutiny

To receive information from external organisations and partners whose operations affect the area to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working (with particular emphasis on those who receive funding from the Council).

8.10 Leisure scrutiny

To monitor the performance of Rossendale Leisure Trust as included in the Work Programme.

**9. Drafting the 2025/26 Work Programme**

9.1 The draft work programme in the table below is based on updates requested at previous committees, items identified from the Forward Plan and the standing items outlined in the terms of reference and as summarised in section 9.

9.2 Although the work programme is formally agreed, it may be amended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as required. The table at section 12 sets out the basic agendas and planned reports/updates going to each committee. It is important

to ensure that there is room for task and finish group reports and for any other items or policies, which may be added to the Forward Plan during the year.

- 9.3 This document was presented to Corporate Management Team on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025 for advice, and comments regarding the items and suggested timescales. Following these consultations the draft work programme for 2025/26 at section 12 has been proposed.

## **10. Conclusion**

- 10.1 The programme provides members with a clear plan of work and engages with our partners and grant recipients. The work programme is a living document and will be amended throughout the year as necessary.
- 10.2 Details of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings for 2025/26 can be found on the Committee Schedule on the Council website: [committee schedule](#)

Date	Topic	Proposed areas in scope	Suggested Approach
Jun	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and Work Programme	To examine the previous year's progress and review the draft work programme for year ahead.	Report for comment
	Rosendale Leisure Trust Annual Report and Annual Update (external scrutiny) - confidential	To scrutinise the report against the action plan with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How the partner is improving outcomes for residents e.g. health, leisure, culture</li> <li>Examining how the 2024/25 plan will be implemented</li> <li>Performance monitoring against the 2023/24 action plan</li> </ul>	Committee presentation/ report
	Valley Plan Outturn Report	To review the annual update with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific objectives and priorities</li> <li>Reviewing the action plan and performance monitoring</li> </ul>	Report for comment
	Cabinet and Council reports	Note reports for Cabinet and Full Council.	Report for comment
Jul	Recycling and food waste	Scoping to be completed prior to the scrutiny day.	Scrutiny in a day
Sep	Quarter 4 performance report	To scrutinise the performance of the council's services and corporate projects.	Report for comment
	Workforce Profile Report	To scrutinise the workforce profile in relation to equalities.	Report for comment
	Ombudsman's Annual Letter Annual Council Complaints Review	To scrutinise the Council's performance in dealing with/responding to complaints.	Report for comment
	Cabinet and Council reports	Note reports for Cabinet and Full Council.	Report for comment
	Temporary accommodation	Scoping to be completed prior to the scrutiny day.	Scrutiny in a day
Oct	Leisure review	Scoping to be completed prior to the consultation.	Consultation
Nov	Quarter 1 performance report	To scrutinise the performance of the council's services and corporate projects.	Report for comment
	Cabinet and Council reports	Note reports for Cabinet and Full Council.	Report for comment
	Regeneration review	Scoping to be completed prior to the scrutiny day.	Scrutiny in a day

Jan	Lancashire Constabulary Annual Update (external scrutiny)	To scrutinise (as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee) the effectiveness of external partners in improving the lives of Rossendale residents with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the partner is improving outcomes for residents e.g. crime outcomes</li> <li>• How effectively are partners using any council funding (where applicable)</li> <li>• How the council can work more effectively with partners in the future</li> </ul>	Committee Presentation
	Quarter 2 performance report	To scrutinise the performance of the council's services and corporate projects.	Report for comment
	Citizens Advice Annual Update (external scrutiny)	To scrutinise the effectiveness of external partners in improving the lives of Rossendale residents with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the partner is improving outcomes for residents e.g. well-being</li> <li>• How effectively are partners using any council funding</li> <li>• How the council can work more effectively with partners in the future</li> </ul>	Briefing note
	Cabinet and Council reports	Note reports for Cabinet and Full Council.	Report for comment
Feb	2026/27 Council Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy	To scrutinise the draft budget for 2026/27 with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation of resources</li> <li>• Planned fees and charges</li> </ul>	Committee report
	Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2026/27	To scrutinise the draft Capital Strategy and Capital Programme with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation of resources</li> <li>• Planned projects</li> </ul>	Committee report
	Cabinet and Council reports	Note reports for Cabinet and Full Council.	Report for comment
Mar	Quarter 3 performance report	To scrutinise the performance of the council's services and corporate projects.	Report for comment
	Cabinet and Council reports	Note reports for Cabinet and Full Council.	Report for comment