

# **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Annual Report 2020/21 and  
Work Programme 2021/22**

**FOREWORD FROM THE 2020/21 CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY,  
COUNCILLOR JANICE JOHNSON**



This report highlights the activity and work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during 2020/21 and the expected programme of work for 2021/22.

It has been an unusual year which has impacted greatly on the committee's ability to carry out task and finish work. However, we have continued to meet and to make recommendations on reports and engage with our external partners.

I am grateful for those external to the Council who gave up their time to attend meetings and who have contributed to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**MESSAGE FROM COUNCILLOR SEAN SERRIDGE – PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR  
CORPORATE SERVICES 2020/21**



The Overview and Scrutiny process ensures that both Council services and those services of its partners, are delivered in an appropriate way.

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'.

Rossendale has faced an unprecedented situation this year with the impact of the Covid pandemic, and the Cabinet is grateful to the committee for continuing to meet and carry out its work.

## Annual Report 2020/21

### **1. Overview and Scrutiny**

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny process is a way of achieving open and democratic accountability for the provision of public services.
- 1.2 Local authorities operating a Cabinet and Scrutiny model have a Cabinet made up of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet members who are appointed by the Leader to specific portfolios.
- 1.3 The Overview and Scrutiny function is carried out by non-Cabinet members and in Rossendale there is one politically balanced committee made up of 10 councillors and one co-opted member.
- 1.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is supported by Committee and Member Services and the Head of People and Policy, who is the Corporate Management Team lead on Overview and Scrutiny.
- 1.5 Overview and Scrutiny is not a decision making body, but is a body which monitors and influences 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, why not.
- 1.6 In Rossendale the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a role in performance monitoring, and councillors to scrutinise detailed performance reports on a quarterly basis.
- 1.7 Scrutiny members/non-Cabinet members undertake reviews which are called task and finish groups. These are usually made up of 5 councillors who are asked to look in-depth at particular issues and make recommendations which may suggest a change in policy or service provision.
- 1.8 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. Nor can Overview and Scrutiny look at individual planning or licensing decisions.
- 1.9 Overview and Scrutiny welcomes suggestions from councillors and the general public regarding issues that could be investigated. Committee and Member Services consult with the public, councillors and managers each year and their suggestions are considered for the Annual Work Programme.
- 1.10 The Council continues to work in line with statutory guidance and the Constitution, and the Chair, Vice-chair and officers attend Scrutiny Networks where possible.

## 2. Internal Scrutiny

### 2.1 Quarterly Performance Reports

The committee continues to receive quarterly performance reports. If the committee feels a service area's performance requires further investigation, then the relevant senior officer can be called to committee. If councillors feel it necessary once the officer has attended, then the Performance Management Task and Finish Group may be reinstated to scrutinise matters further.

### 2.2 Pre-decision Scrutiny

The committee received a variety of reports during 2020/21 with some of them being part of the work programme and some being brought to Overview and Scrutiny for a specific reason and discussion, including:

- The Council's formal budget-setting process, the committee examined the 2021/22 budget proposals.
- Annual Equality Report.
- Local Government Ombudsman Annual Letter and Council Feedback (Complaints) Update.
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) update – Overview and Scrutiny committee is required to have a quarterly update on the use of RIPA. This was done verbally in the Chair's update and is timed to coincide with the quarterly performance reports. It should be noted that the Chair is not able to give specific details if RIPA has been used and all enquiries should be directed to the Monitoring Officer.

## 3. External Scrutiny

3.1 The committee received a number of presentations from external organisations, which are summarised below:

### 3.2 Victim Support

In July 2020 the Police and Crime Commissioner's Victims and Vulnerable People's Lead attended the committee and provided members with an update on domestic abuse services within Rossendale. The lead agreed to participate in the Council's planned Covid task and finish work.

### 3.3 Rossendale Together Barnfield (RTB)

The Chief Executive provided members with an update on the RTB partnership in October 2020.

### 3.4 'To act as the Council's Crime & Disorder Committee'

As set out in the Overview and Scrutiny terms of reference, the committee monitors crime and disorder issues and under the Police and Justice Act and related statutory guidance from the Home Office on the scrutiny of crime and disorder, Lancashire Police are invited to the committee each year to give a presentation on performance and progress against crime indicators. Inspector Clarke attended in January 2021 and answered questions from committee members.

3.5 Leisure Update  
Rossendale Leisure Trust (RLT) presented their annual update in March 2021 as part of a dedicated Partner Scrutiny Committee.

3.6 Partner Scrutiny Committee  
The March 2021 meeting was a dedicated Partner Scrutiny Committee and received the following updates:

- Bacup Credit Union
- First Choice Credit Union
- Citizens Advice
- RLT and Community Leisure Association Whitworth (CLAW)
- The Whitaker

#### **4. Task and finish group work in 2020/21**

4.1 Task and finish groups are established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to conduct an in-depth review of any service, policy or issue that affects the borough. These groups are usually comprised of five politically balanced councillors (non-Cabinet members) and at the first meeting a chairperson and terms of reference are agreed. 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.

4.2 Covid  
Owing to the impact of Covid, the committee put on hold its task and finish work during 2021 to allow officers, members and the Council's partners to assist with being part of the local support effort for residents.

4.3 Suicide Rates  
This work took place during 2019/20 and an update report was presented to the committee in June 2020. The report updated members on the actions carried out to date and it is intended to revisit any outstanding actions in 2021/22.

4.4 Copies of task and finish group reports are available on the council's website via the link below:-  
[https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/10718/task\\_and\\_finish\\_group\\_reports](https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/10718/task_and_finish_group_reports)

#### **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 2020/21 the following is worth noting:

- The committee continued to meet and carry out its business during the Covid pandemic.
- Policy development – the committee was consulted on and provided feedback on policies before they were approved by Full Council or Cabinet and this included the annual budget reports.
- By June 2020, nine of the twelve recommendations of the Suicide Task and Finish Group had been achieved including:
  - o The council signing up to ‘Time to Change’ and promoting the ‘6507’ project.
  - o Offering and encouraging appropriate training through relevant providers to all staff and partners in line with the developing training matrix.
  - o Zero Suicide Alliance training was raised with business leaders.
  - o Promoting the Samaritans’ 116 123 number.
  - o Promoting the appropriate use of language around suicide.
  - o Raising the issue on agendas at Community Partnership meetings.
  - o Ensuring a member of council staff continues to attend the Suicide Prevention and Self Harm Reduction Strategy Group.
  - o Raising awareness through digital means and social media.
  - o Feeding back the actions taken to Lancashire County Council (LCC) Public Health so that these actions may be measured.

## **2021/22 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 Each year a local consultation is undertaken with managers, councillors and members of the public, who are asked to contribute suggestions to help develop the work programme. Contributions can be made via social media, the Council’s website, democracy email and a hard copy form is also available in the One Stop Shop. The online scrutiny form also allows people to submit ideas at any time throughout the year.
- 6.3 As well as outlining the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the programme also identifies 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 the two main Council grant recipients (Citizens Advice and Credit Union) provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on their work and these groups continue to attend annually.

## **8. Health Scrutiny**

- 8.1 At the time of writing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Health and Leisure represents Rossendale Council on the East Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Partnership and LCC Health Scrutiny Committee.
- 8.2 The Rossendale Health and Wellbeing Partnership is open to any councillor to attend and issues of concern can be raised via the Portfolio Holder for Health and Leisure for any of these meetings.

## **9. Standing agenda items**

- 9.1 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:

### **9.1.1 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.

### **9.1.2 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.

### **9.1.3 Scrutiny of the Council's budget**

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

### **9.1.4 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.

### **9.1.5 Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)**

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

### **9.1.6 Call-In**

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

### 9.1.7 Forward Plan

The Forward Plan is tabled at each meeting for information and allows members to review which items are going to Cabinet for decision.

## 10. Consultation feedback

10.1 As noted at 6.2, consultation took place using various means from the end of March to mid-April, and the suggestions received are detailed in the appendix.

10.2 A meeting was held with the chair of Overview and Scrutiny, opposition representative, Corporate Management Team (CMT) lead and committee officer on 21<sup>st</sup> April at which the suggestions were discussed and a plan of how to implement them agreed. This document was presented to CMT on 4<sup>th</sup> May for their comments and also ask for their suggestions regarding appropriate timescales. Following these consultations the draft work programme for 2021/22 at 13 has been proposed.

## 11. 2021/22 Work Programme

11.1 The draft work programme in the table below is based on previous agendas, updates required from previous task and finish groups, new suggestions from the consultation and the standing items outlined at section 9.

11.2 Although the work programme is formally agreed, it may be amended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as required. The table at 13 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.

## 12. Conclusion

12.1 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.

12.2 Details of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings for 2021/22 can be found on the Committee Schedule on the Council website:

<https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/>

13. The draft programme for the meeting agendas is detailed below. Items in *italics* are suggestions from the work programme consultation.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Proposed areas in scope</b>
June	<i>Clean and Green Update</i>	To discuss the Operations Service with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An overview of the service and key challenges including enforcement</li> <li>• Examining the 'clean and green' improvement plan including; fly-tipping, recycling, litter and improving parks</li> </ul>
	Digital Strategy	To scrutinise the strategy with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examining how the strategy will be implemented</li> <li>• Discussing the action plan and how the success of the strategy will be monitored</li> </ul>
	Quarter 4 performance report and RIPA update	To scrutinise the performance of the council's services and corporate projects
	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and Work Programme	To examine the previous year's progress and review the draft Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2021/22.
July	Partnerships improving the lives of local residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lancashire County Council</i></li> </ul>	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. road maintenance and gritting</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>
	<i>Visitor Economy Strategy</i>	To scrutinise the progress of the borough's strategy with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress in implementing year 1 of the strategy's action plan</li> <li>• Understanding the post Covid recovery of tourism businesses</li> </ul>
	<i>Rossendale Works</i>	To examine progress of the Rossendale Works programme with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programme's progress in getting local people into paid work</li> <li>• The key outcomes from the programme to date and future plans</li> </ul>
	<i>Climate Change Strategy Update</i>	To scrutinise the progress of the council's strategy with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress in implementing year 1 of the strategy's action plan</li> <li>• Discussing plans of the use of the council's new carbon fund</li> <li>• Understanding plans for the Autumn climate change conference</li> </ul>

Sept	Partnerships improving the lives of local residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group</i></li> </ul>	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. health and leisure</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>
	Improving health outcomes	To scrutinise the draft Rossendale Health Strategy with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussing and approving the proposed health prioritising</li> <li>• Constructively challenging the specific strategy objectives</li> </ul>
	Play Strategy	To scrutinise the strategy with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examining how the strategy will be implemented</li> <li>• Discussing the action plan and how the success of the strategy will be monitored</li> </ul>
	Quarter 1 performance report and RIPA update	To scrutinise the performance of the council's services and corporate projects
	Equality Report and Workforce Profile	To scrutinise the workforce profile in relation to equalities.
	Ombudsman's Annual Letter Annual Council Complaints Review	To scrutinise the Council's performance in dealing with/responding to complaints.
Nov	Partnerships improving the lives of local residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lancashire Constabulary</li> </ul>	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>• Providing an update on the 101 service</li> <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>
	<i>Town centres</i>	To discuss progress on improving town centres with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bacup – progress on the 2040 Board and the Heritage Action Zone</li> <li>• Rawtenstall – public realm improvements and Covid recovery</li> <li>• Haslingden – the heritage lottery fund project</li> </ul>
	Council Tax Support Scheme	To scrutinise any revisions to the support scheme.
	Quarter 2 performance report and RIPA update	To scrutinise the performance of the council's services and corporate projects

Jan	Partnerships improving the lives of local residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rossendale Leisure Trust (including CLAW, Ski Slope and The Whitaker)</li> <li><i>Together Housing</i></li> </ul>	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. health, leisure, culture and housing</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>
	<i>Housing</i>	To examine key housing challenges facing residents with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current approach to homelessness and the scale of the problem locally</li> <li>Private rented sector – the problems for local residents and the challenges of private sector accommodation</li> </ul>
Feb	2022/23 Budget	To scrutinise the draft budget for 2022/23 with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocation of resources.</li> <li>Planned fees and charges.</li> </ul>
	Quarter 3 performance report and RIPA update	To scrutinise the performance of the council’s services and corporate projects
March	Partnerships improving the lives of local residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Citizens Advice Bureau</li> <li>Credit unions</li> <li><i>Food banks</i></li> </ul>	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. health and well-being</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>