

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny: Annual Report 2013/2014



What is overview and scrutiny?

Wiltshire Council is run by councillors elected by the people of Wiltshire. A small number of them form the cabinet which sets the direction, determines the priorities and takes the important decisions often referred to as the Executive. The councillors in the cabinet hold powerful positions and it is important that they are held to public account for their actions. This is done through a system called overview and scrutiny and is undertaken by the non-executive councillors. This is common to most local councils. They ensure that decisions are taken based on good evidence including the views of those with an interest in the matter and are in the best interests of the people of Wiltshire. Overview and scrutiny is selective in what it looks at so that it can add value to the most important services provided by the council, its partners and contractors. Wherever possible it helps to shape policy through early discussions as well as scrutinising proposals before they are finally agreed. A list of the matters which will be considered by overview and scrutiny is published in its **forward work programme**.



How do we do it in Wiltshire?

There is an overview and scrutiny management committee and three specialist select committees covering the following main service areas:

- Health (including the NHS, public health and adult social care)
- Environment (including highways, waste and transportation)
- Children (including education, vulnerable children, youth services and early years)

The management committee, as well as co-ordinating the work of the select committees, covers internal services such as finance, performance and staffing. Most of the work is done by small groups of elected members from across the political parties reviewing single specific issues in detail. These then report to the select committees and make recommendations for improvement to the cabinet and others as necessary.

Focus

The work programme focuses on the commitments given by the council in its Business Plan 2013-2017 and approaches its work in the following way:

- Better outcomes for the people of Wiltshire
- Adds value to the way decisions are reached
- Works constructively with the cabinet
- Challenges positively as a critical friend
- Bases its findings on good evidence
- Learns from others

Overview and scrutiny management committee



Cllr Simon Killane



Cllr Roy White

“We are pleased that overview and scrutiny is playing such a valuable and worthwhile role in helping the council make the right decisions for the people of Wiltshire.”

Key items we have looked at

...and what we have achieved

OS development

Created a positive environment for contribution, influence and constructive challenge of council priorities by non-executive councillors and responding to the recommendations of the independent review.

Business planning

Helped to define the council’s main priorities in its Business Plan 2013-2017 and how they will be supported.

Financial planning

Challenged how the budget is set and investments and savings made. Also reviewing performance and risk.

Area boards

Helped to enhance the role of the council’s 18 area boards.

Housing allocation policy

Worked with the cabinet to make the changes needed in how social housing will be provided in the future.

Health select committee



Cllr Christine Crisp



Cllr John Noeken

“At the health select committee our focus has been the building of effective working relationships with our partners in order to ensure the delivery of good health services to the people of Wiltshire. We have provided support where necessary but also asked the tough questions which reflect public concerns, and addressed these concerns head on.”

Key items we have looked at

...and what we have achieved

Scrutiny of Wiltshire safeguarding adults board

Ensured that all agencies work together to minimise the risk of abuse to adults at risk of harm. Continuing to improve our safeguarding services to protect the most vulnerable in our communities.

Review of transfers to care

Encouraged all partners to work together to reduce unnecessary delays in transfers to care. Ensuring that public services work together to provide integrated care which works well for individuals, families and carers.

Joint health scrutiny of the SW ambulance service

Monitored the performance of the ambulance service, with specific reference to Wiltshire. Continuing to work with our key public sector partners to achieve positive outcomes for Wiltshire’s communities.

Review of dementia services

Supported the executive and health partners in ensuring that organisations in Wiltshire work together to support people with dementia and their carers and families. Continuing to look at how we can improve and deliver quality services.

Acute hospitals

Worked with our partners and providing confidence to our residents that public services will work well together and do things ‘with’ them, rather than ‘to’ them’.

Children's select committee



Cllr Jon Hubbard



Cllr Jacqui Lay

"At the children's select committee we have been focusing on providing a bright future for Wiltshire's young people with priority being the most vulnerable in terms of safeguarding and those with SEND. Issues that affect every young person and child such as education have also been prominent in our task group's work to fulfil the council's overall priorities and respond to the significant changes that have been made to the council's role in this area."

Key items we have looked at

...and what we have achieved

Safeguarding children and young people

Monitored and challenged improvements in how we protect the most vulnerable children.

Schools and the local authority

Explored how the council can continue to promote excellence in schools as the local authority's role changes.

Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND)

Investigated how the council can help prepare young people with SEND for adulthood and create more inclusive communities.

Positive leisure time activities for young people

Contributed to a major review of how activities for young people will be delivered in the future.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

Worked with our partners to reassure our residents that public services will work collaboratively and efficiently to deliver better outcomes for the children of Wiltshire.

Environment select committee



Cllr Alan Hill



Cllr Peter Edge

"The environment select committee has been involved in a range of issues that affect the local environment in Wiltshire. We strive to address all issues from the people's perspective and make valuable contributions to ensuring that the best outcomes are achieved to make Wiltshire an even better environment to live in."

Key items we have looked at

...and what we have achieved

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Supported the executive in establishing a viable rate for CIL to support development. Using planning powers to maintain the vitality of market towns and local high streets.

Waste

Ensured that the new contract delivers the most effective and efficient waste service, including that a growing proportion of waste is recycled.

Air quality

Encouraged all services to address the provision of good air quality and integrate public health; ensuring that Wiltshire's air quality is at a good level.

Balfour Beatty Living Places Highways and Streetscene contract

Monitored the implementation of the contract, with a focus on customer feedback and contributing to everyone living in a high quality environment.

Car parking review

Supported the executive in its review of car parking and the involvement of local communities in car parking management. Helping to develop sustainable, community-based local transport.

How is overview and scrutiny supported?

The non-executive councillors run overview and scrutiny but are supported in their work by a team of four officers. They sit within the wider corporate office of the council which supports all aspects of decision-making. The team ensures that the councillors have all the necessary information and evidence they need and can speak to those people that have a direct responsibility or interest in the matter. This can include making arrangements to hear from service users and going on site visits. The team does research and writes reports on behalf of the select committees and task groups.

Events during the year

Wiltshire Council is an active member of the national and south-west overview and scrutiny networks. It regularly speaks to others about how things can be done better. It is open to learning and has held a number of related training events including attendance at the Centre for Public Scrutiny annual conference.

Overview and scrutiny was independently reviewed during the year and it was recommended that it should increase its attention on focusing on better outcomes for the people of Wiltshire. Questions are now being asked in every overview and scrutiny review about the impact on service users and local communities of the council's proposals. It also asks questions about how things can be done better so that more can be done with less.



Looking forward

Overview and scrutiny will spend more of its time in supporting delivery of the council's key priorities of:

- protecting the most vulnerable in our communities
- boosting the local economy – creating and safeguarding jobs
- supporting and empowering communities to do more for themselves.

It will do this by focusing its reviews on challenging and encouraging progress on the things that need to be done to act on these priorities. The Business Plan sets out these actions and a number of intended outcomes. Further consultation is planned to ensure that overview and scrutiny stays on the right path and is successful in making a difference. This will be done by ensuring that the cabinet delivers on its stated priorities and by helping to shape improvements for the future on behalf of the people of Wiltshire. Overview and scrutiny is aware that much can be done through doing things differently in order to achieve service improvements even in a tough financial climate.

These are challenging but exciting and rewarding times for overview and scrutiny.

Want to know more?

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Information about Wiltshire Council services can be made available on request in other languages and formats such as large print and audio.

Please contact the council by telephone: 0300 456 0100, or email: customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk