

People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Annual Report 2016-17

Foreword

It has been a privilege to chair this committee over the last year, working alongside proactive, enthusiastic members from all parties, and supported by very knowledgeable officers. The last year has seen exciting changes and challenges to the way that the overview and scrutiny committees work - a symbiotic relationship, though, ensured that no duplication occurred and that decisions did not simply move a problem from one service area to another. Scrutiny members worked across all committees, joining working parties and task and finish groups on issues where they had useful knowledge and experience, or simply a personal interest.

Being member led was imperative, enabling the committee to own and develop its own work programme, a flexible, living document that is reactive to the events and issues around us. For example, we scrutinised the possible impact of “Brexit” on levels of hate crime in the county, and although no increase was evidenced we will continue to monitor this.

A fresh way of focusing scrutiny has been to use “Outcomes Based Accountability”, a key methodology designed to get from ‘talk to action’ quickly, as the methodology actively encourages appropriate, timely, evidence based action to deliver improvement. OBA tries to use plain language and common-sense methods that everyone can understand.

It has worked well by directly involving those that have a key role to play in improving outcomes. It starts by getting colleagues and partners talking about a particular problem and discussing the ‘causes and forces’ at work behind the issue. Once these are properly understood, clear actions can then be agreed and assigned to help tackle and address any gaps. It was evidenced at the **Quality and Cost of Care** inquiry day, attended by all stakeholders: Commissioners, the NHS, the CCG, the CQC, providers, Healthwatch and service users. Not only was it beneficial for the panel of committee members to be able to ask focused questions to aid their understanding of the key issues, but also for the stakeholders themselves for it was the first time they actually had the opportunity to listen to each other’s issues and perspectives, which they found very helpful. It was a huge success which has informed further scrutiny.

I am looking forward to another year of scrutiny and a continued focus on improving outcomes for Dorset’s people.

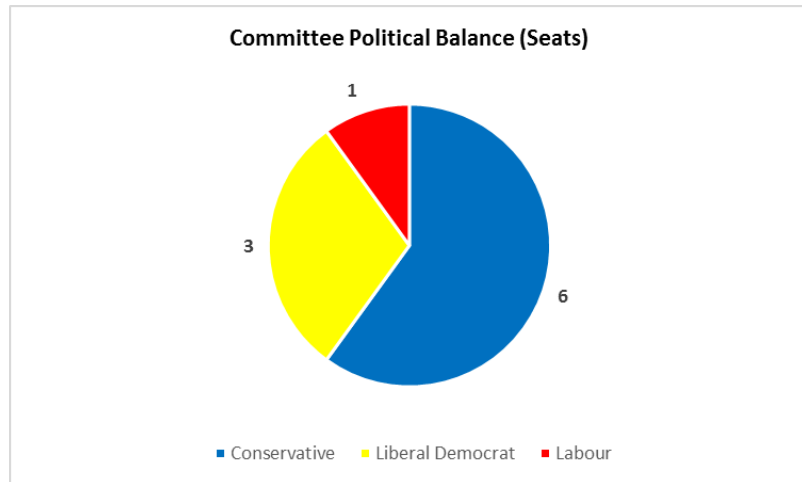


David Walsh

Chairman, People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Committee Membership 2016-17

David Walsh (Chairman)
 Steve Butler (Vice-Chairman)
 Ronald Coatsworth
 Barrie Cooper
 Frederick Drane
 Spencer Flower
 David Jones
 Ros Kayes
 William Trite
 Kate Wheller



Background: Outcomes Focused Scrutiny

In April 2016 the County Council adopted a new Corporate Plan based on the outcomes that we are seeking for Dorset's people – that they are **safe, healthy and independent**, and that they benefit from a **prosperous** economy. Underpinning this is the firm commitment to work as One Council, alongside our partners and communities, to ensure the best possible outcomes for Dorset's people, even as the available resources diminish.

New approaches to service delivery require new approaches to overview and scrutiny. Scrutiny at the council historically reflected the directorate structures and were based around children's services, adult services and environment services. While this worked to an extent, its focus on services rather than outcomes meant no committee had oversight of thematic, cross-cutting issues, like independence. Senior leaders – both councillors and officers – were keen to break out of this model and focus on strategic outcomes, with greater involvement from local residents and partners.

To take this forwards, in 2015 a member-led "Task and Finish" review of the County Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements was established, and in February 2016 the council agreed that the future committee structure should be based on the new outcome focused Corporate Plan. Instead of focusing on a single directorate, as the old Overview Committees had done, three new Overview and Scrutiny Committees would each champion one or two corporate outcomes.

Three new committees were formed:

- Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee: *To ensure that people in Dorset are **safe**.*
- People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee: *To ensure that people in Dorset are **healthy and independent**.*
- Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee: *To ensure that Dorset's economy is **prosperous**.*

Our councillors also decided to separate the 'audit' and 'scrutiny' functions, so the former Audit and Scrutiny Committee became the Audit and Governance Committee. This committee's primary purpose is to assess the governance, financial, performance, internal control and risk information from right across the authority. A new Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, comprising the Chairmen of the four new committees, was created to bring oversight and coordination to the whole process.

The rationale for the work was that councillors wanted to make sure that our committee system reinforces the corporate plan and uses the outcomes framework to ensure we work as one organisation to improve the lives of residents and communities (and also that they have a say in assessing how well this is done). It is a major change from how we worked historically, but changing the focus of each committee means meetings, debates, recommendations and decisions are aligned with the corporate plan, helping councillors and officers alike focus on what makes a real difference.

The changes also place councillors in the position of proactively *leading* investigations on the issues *they* want to consider, instead of our more traditional approach of officers taking the lead and deciding which reports are required.

The new committees met for the first time in June 2016. This Annual Report summarises the progress of the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee during its first year – the committee's purpose, the work it has been directly involved in, and the contributions it has made towards improving outcomes.

Purpose of committee

Delivering good outcomes for the residents and communities we serve through a constructive, proactive and objective approach to the consideration, scrutiny and review of policies, strategies, financial and performance issues.

Overview

- To review and develop policy at the Committee's own initiative or at the request of the Cabinet or the Public Health Joint Board and make recommendations to the Cabinet, Joint Committee or the Full Council.
- To oversee major consultations and make recommendations to the Cabinet, Joint Committee or the Full Council.
- To give advice on any matters as requested by the Cabinet or the Joint Committee.

Scrutiny

- To hold the Executive to account through a process that seeks and considers necessary explanations, information and evidence to ensure good outcomes for our residents and communities.
- Through proactive scrutiny inquiry work, to contribute to improving the lives of our residents and communities, through an active contribution to the Council's improvement agenda.
- To scrutinise key areas of strategic and operational activity and, where necessary, make recommendations to the Full Council, Cabinet or Joint Committee in respect of:
 - i) Matters which affect the Council's area or its residents
 - ii) Performance of services in accordance with the targets in the Corporate Plan or other approved service plans

- iii) Providing a clear focus on finding efficiency savings in accordance with requirements in the Council's financial strategy
- iv) Monitoring expenditure against available budgets and, where necessary, making recommendations to the Cabinet or the Joint Committee
- v) Considering proposed budget plans, service plans and any other major planning or strategic statements and making recommendations to the Cabinet or the Joint Committee

Specific responsibilities for the Committee are:

To exercise a proactive and effective overview and scrutiny of functions to ensure the effective delivery of the following two outcomes in the Corporate Plan:

People in Dorset are HEALTHY

- Children and families know what it means to be healthy and happy
- People adopt healthy lifestyles and lead active lives
- People enjoy emotional and mental wellbeing
- People stay healthy, avoiding preventable illness as they grow older
- People live in healthy, accessible communities and environments

People in Dorset are Independent

- Families are strong and stable and experience positive relationships
- Children and young people are confident learners and are successful as they grow into adulthood
- People remain happily independent and stay in their own homes for as long as possible
- People are part of inclusive communities and don't feel lonely or isolated
- People who do need help have control over their own care.

Key Outcomes: *What have we achieved and influenced?*

In order to try to give a flavour of the types of issues and the work that comes before the Committee for its consideration, the following provide examples of focussed and targeted assurance and scrutiny work which has been undertaken by the Committee during the year.

Quality and cost of care

The Committee looked at the growing challenges around the quality and cost of nursing and residential care, and discussed ways to better promote independence and community resilience. An Inquiry Day was held on 13 February 2017, involving the Council's quality improvement team, commissioners, providers, inspectors, service users, carers, Healthwatch, the Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group and the Care Quality Commission.

Afterwards the Interim Director for Adult and Community Services reported on the day's findings to the committee, highlighting the key issues and themes that had been identified, and updating members on the joint commissioning of a new contract for home care and residential care for older people by the County Council and the CCG which would be in place by December 2017. This was trying to address issues of price, demand and service quality.

The committee decided to set up a Working Group to look at staff recruitment and retention, training, key worker accommodation, staff benefits, respite care and joint working with other authorities. The Group would also look at work undertaken in Somerset, where small groups of carers organise services for local people and review the contract between the County Council and Healthwatch to ensure that their profile relating to the quality of care was high enough. Members agreed to accept the invitation from a Care Home provider to visit its properties. The Interim Director reported on the *Proud to Care* Campaign which was being run across the South West to address recruitment issues and which included the possible introduction of Care Worker 'Oscars'. She suggested that the Working Group might like to consider this as part of their review. In addition, a further Working Group was proposed which would address the issue of insufficient information and advice, in particular for self-funders, and also consider access to information for those living alone and in isolated areas.

With regard to the integration of health and social care, and whether the Better Care Fund had resulted in any positive change, members agreed that this was a worthwhile area for future scrutiny. They noted that it would be possible for the Committee or a Working Group to invite representatives from other organisations and interested parties to take part in such a review in order to improve outcomes for residents.

Hate crime

During the year the committee received two reports by the Assistant Director for Design and Development in Children's Services on hate crime in Dorset – firstly, to review the Council's response to hate crime and its legal duty to address discrimination, and secondly, to consider the latest report on the number and type of reported incidents of hate crime in the county.

The number of crimes was relatively low; while there had been an increase in incidents in all areas, numbers appeared to be falling again. Although figures given for incidents in Weymouth and Portland were the highest, as the largest conurbation in Dorset more incidents could be expected and officers agreed to include rates per 1,000 people in future reports so as to better reflect different demographics. Members discussed the report in detail and expressed concern about the possible increase in hate crime since the 'Brexit' referendum, and asked for regular updates so that the situation could be monitored.

Members were particularly concerned about the increase in hate crime against people with physical and learning disabilities and mental ill-health. The Children's and Adults Safeguarding Boards, and the Community Safety Partnership, were aware of this and more work was being done to look at the local impact of such crimes. The Assistant Director suggested that the

Committee might like to hold an Inquiry Morning to consider current and planned activity which helped the Council, working together with Dorset's Safeguarding Boards, the Community Safety Partnership, the Police and other partners to reduce hate crime and incidents. Members supported this and nominated an inquiry panel to scope the review with support from officers.

The Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme

The committee also discussed a report by the Director for Children's Services which provided an update on the Dorset Syrian Resettlement Programme. Twelve unaccompanied children had been resettled in Dorset already, and it was noted that members had corporate parenting responsibility for any refugees under eighteen years old. The Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills said she would progress corporate parenting training for all members to help them to better understand this responsibility.

Up to ten Syrian refugee families were due to be resettled in Dorset by December 2017. The report described the process for identifying the right resources to support them during their first year, including housing, health services, school places and English lessons. Part of the settlement programme was to identify areas where there were schools with vacancies, so as not to add to pressures on oversubscribed schools. The important part played by the Dorset Councils Partnership and the Voluntary and Community Sector in the resettlement programme was emphasised. The committee asked for an update in 12 months' time to review progress.

Social isolation and community capacity

The Committee was keen to look at ways of helping to overcome social isolation and focus on the Council's work with communities, social capital and community development. The Head of ICT and Customer Services gave a presentation showing how digital technology could help to build community capacity, and showed a video about how social media could be used to get people to respond more quickly to emergencies.

Members acknowledged the part that digital technology could play in addressing social isolation and helping to build community capacity. The contribution that local members could make in helping communities to identify those in need and how to help them was also recognised. Examples of where this was already happening were given. It was also suggested that digital technology might help tackle current transport issues currently being addressed through the Holistic Transport Review. Members recognised that some invest-to-save funding might be needed to build community capacity, and that they had a role to play in sharing best practice with their communities.

Attention was drawn to some areas where broadband coverage was poor and the difficulties this posed for children's education, and those living in the more remote areas. A previous Policy Development Panel on Broadband had made eight recommendations to the Environment Overview Committee which could be further reviewed and scrutinised. They also noted that broadband take up was lowest in the most deprived areas. There was concern that local members were still not routinely being informed of action being taken in their divisions.

Whilst acknowledging the complexity of the issue, it was agreed that a Task and Finish Group should be established to look at setting up a pilot project in a deprived and isolated area where digital take up was lower, with a view to potentially rolling this out across Dorset. The Partnership for Older People Programme (POPPs) would be integral to this, and the Members' ICT Group would need to be made aware of the Task and Finish Group's work. Officers were asked to identify possible areas for the Group to concentrate on.

Community Offer for Living and Learning

During the year the Head of Early Help and Community Services presented two reports on progress with the Community Offer for Living and Learning. These included a draft business case for the proposals that reviewed how and where service users and local communities

could access services in future. The approach required working with community organisations and other public services, with pilot areas to explore and develop the approach suggested in Weymouth, Portland, Beaminster, Blandford, and possibly Ferndown.

It was emphasised that this was not just a property programme, but an initiative to enable local communities to help themselves. The future direction would be for more multi-functional buildings and fewer single purpose buildings. Further details would be developed through engaging with councillors and partners in pilot areas. One member commented on the importance of a 'one stop shop' to some people who needed to access a range of information quickly.

Members welcomed the efficient use of the Authority's resources, both people and buildings - and agreed that the proposals, if managed appropriately, would serve the community well and reduce expenditure. When considering how members could be further engaged in the process, it was agreed that a members' working group would be useful.

Mobile Library Service

The Head of Early Help and Community Services presented a report asking members to consider options for how mobile library services would be provided in the future. The County Council's Medium Term Financial Plan included savings for the library service and changes to the mobile service were therefore necessary.

The report considered the impact of any change on members of the public. Members were advised that the report's proposal would allow the County Council to focus the remaining mobile libraries on people unable to access the library service in any other way. For example, the service to residential homes and sheltered accommodation units would be maintained. Working with the Dorset Partnership for Older People Programme (POPP), isolated communities in rural areas had been identified, and it was proposed that POPPs would be further mobilised to help deliver services to these people. The use of Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) volunteers would also be extended. Consultation with the public and communities had been carried out during April and May 2016 and the Head of Early Help and Community Services reviewed the highlights of the consultation responses and advised that the unusual implementation timescale (December 2016 to March 2017) was to ensure that no service was withdrawn until an alternative community-led solution was available.

Members sought reassurance that services to the most vulnerable and isolated would continue, and they were satisfied that steps would be in place via the use of community groups, RVS, POPP or friends and neighbours before any services were withdrawn. They asked officers to speak to existing staff to identify vulnerable people to ensure that no one 'slipped through the cracks.' There was general acknowledgement that communities had to reclaim responsibility for their services and members were asked to encourage community schemes.

Registration Services

The Committee discussed the recommendations of the Policy Development Panel on the future of Registration Services. The Assistant Director for Early Help and Community Services highlighted the success of the Service, which was self-funding, and reminded members that the Panel had been established not only to tackle budget pressures, but also to address forthcoming legislative changes to marriage ceremonies.

On the basis of the Panel's work, the committee recommended that the service be developed in a more customer focussed way, through six office locations across Dorset (at Blandford, Bridport, Dorchester, Ferndown, Wareham and Weymouth) and outreach services at Gillingham, Sherborne and Swanage, subject to Town Council support being secured.

They also asked that officers be encouraged to develop a schedule of fees and charges based on a full cost recovery model in relation to ceremonies. They recommended that the 'Tell Us

Once' service for deaths should be retained, but the service for births be withdrawn as demand for this was much lower.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Committee was asked to scrutinise a report by the Chief Executive on the future of Local Government in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole prior to it being considered by the County Council on 26 January 2017. The Chief Executive summarised: previous discussions of the subject at County Council meetings; the *Case for Change* report from PricewaterhouseCoopers; the financial analysis from Local Partnerships; the results of the public consultation; and the involvement of the Shaping Dorset's Future Group and the Leaders and Chief Executives Group, which had led to a common approach being agreed by all nine local authorities on the sustainability of local government in Dorset. Each of the councils would consider the report in January 2017. On the basis of the evidence, the report recommended the creation of two new unitary authorities, one based on Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and one on East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland.

A range of views were expressed during the debate, and the following recommendations were agreed:

"That regard be paid to Christchurch Borough Council and, should that council so request, that Dorset County Council support the inclusion of Christchurch in the new Shire authority."

And:

"That the preparatory work with Town and Parish Councils begun by the Shaping Dorset's Future Group is further developed to enable a clear process by which downward devolution of powers to third tier authorities can be timetabled and managed."

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that these additional recommendations and members' comments would be considered by the County Council on 26 January 2017.

Corporate Plan: Outcomes Focused Monitoring

In line with its new focus on the County Council's Corporate Plan outcomes that people in Dorset are Healthy and Independent, the committee received a report giving data and commentary on a number of priority areas relating to health and independence in Dorset.

Members welcomed the report, because it provided areas of interest and concern and helped to identify areas for future scrutiny. There were initial discussions about SEN transport, rising levels of young people self harming, the need for psychological health education in schools and increased mental health services for children.

Following the meeting, two of the committee members met with the Senior Governance and Assurance Manager and completed a scoping report to help identify items for scrutiny for consideration at the Committee's next meeting. At that meeting, the issues identified in the scoping report - mental health, elderly care and delayed transfers of care – were added to the forward plan, to be considered by the committee when it convened following the May County Council elections.