

Brighton & Hove Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2011/2012

information sharing regarding vulnerable adults

street access issues

services for adults with
autistic spectrum conditions

dual diagnosis

dignity at work

dementia

20 miles per hour speed limits

budget 2011/12

retail sector

children & alcohol

disability issues

cultural provision for children

climate change adaptation

in-year budget reductions

environmental industries
gp led health centre

older people & community safety

services for victims of
sexual violence

private sector agents

renewable energy potential

winter service plan

students in the community

traveller commissioning strategy

school exclusions



Brighton & Hove
City Council

Foreword by Councillor Gill Mitchell

Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission

Welcome to the 2011/12 Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report. Casting an eye back over the last year there have been some notable successes. This report sets out the highlights including:

- The scrutiny panel that shadowed the development of the Traveller Commissioning Strategy showed scrutiny in its best light – engaging with residents and partners to help develop an improved strategy for the city;
- Work with retailers has highlighted where the council needs to focus its support for this important element of the city's economy;
- The budget scrutiny process allowed in-depth questioning of all Cabinet members and challenged proposals constructively.

Since May 2008 overview & scrutiny has provided cross-party challenge to the Leader and Cabinet; this role is set to evolve as the council moves to a committee system.

It has been my pleasure to chair the Overview & Scrutiny Commission over the last four years, during which time scrutiny members can be proud of the contribution they have made to the city.

The last four years have seen 24 detailed reviews; over 300 witnesses have provided their expertise free of charge and over 95% of our recommendations have been agreed.

It is important to thank all those who have given their time, knowledge and views over the last year. Without them meaningful scrutiny would be impossible.



Councillor Gill Mitchell
Chair, Overview & Scrutiny Commission 2008-2012

Overview & Scrutiny Committees 2011/12



Overview & Scrutiny Commission (OSC)
Councillor Gill Mitchell



Culture, Tourism & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee (CTEOSC)
Councillor Vanessa Brown



Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)
Councillor Sven Rufus



Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee (CYPOSC)
Councillor Stephanie Powell



Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee (ASCHOSC)
Councillor Ken Norman



Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee (ECSOSC)
Councillor Warren Morgan

Winner of the 2012 Good Scrutiny Award for Innovation – Traveller Strategy Scrutiny Panel

The national Good Scrutiny Awards were established by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) to:

“...celebrate the often unheralded work of the scrutineer [and] positively publicise the ...value of scrutiny’

Brighton & Hove’s Scrutiny Team won, for the second year running, the Good Scrutiny Award for Innovation. The award came back to Brighton & Hove for the Traveller Strategy Scrutiny Panel.

Shadowing the development of a new Traveller Strategy for the city, the review gave scrutiny members the chance to be involved in the development of a complex and controversial strategy at the pre-decision stage. Dr Aidan McGarry from the University of Brighton chaired the panel, alongside Councillor Dee Simson, Councillor Leo Littman, Councillor Alan Robins.

The panel heard from 30 witnesses including all three Brighton & Hove City MPs, the editor of the Argus, travellers, residents, the police, council officers and advocacy groups, as well as visiting the Horsdean transit site and proposed permanent site. The panel welcomed the Strategy as a significant step forward in meeting the needs of this disadvantaged group while balancing the needs of the settled community. They made 27 recommendations on how to strengthen the draft Strategy.

Cabinet member Councillor Pete West thanked the panel:

‘Your recommendations have led to a number of improvements to the Strategy & action plan which will ultimately benefit both Travellers and the settled community.’

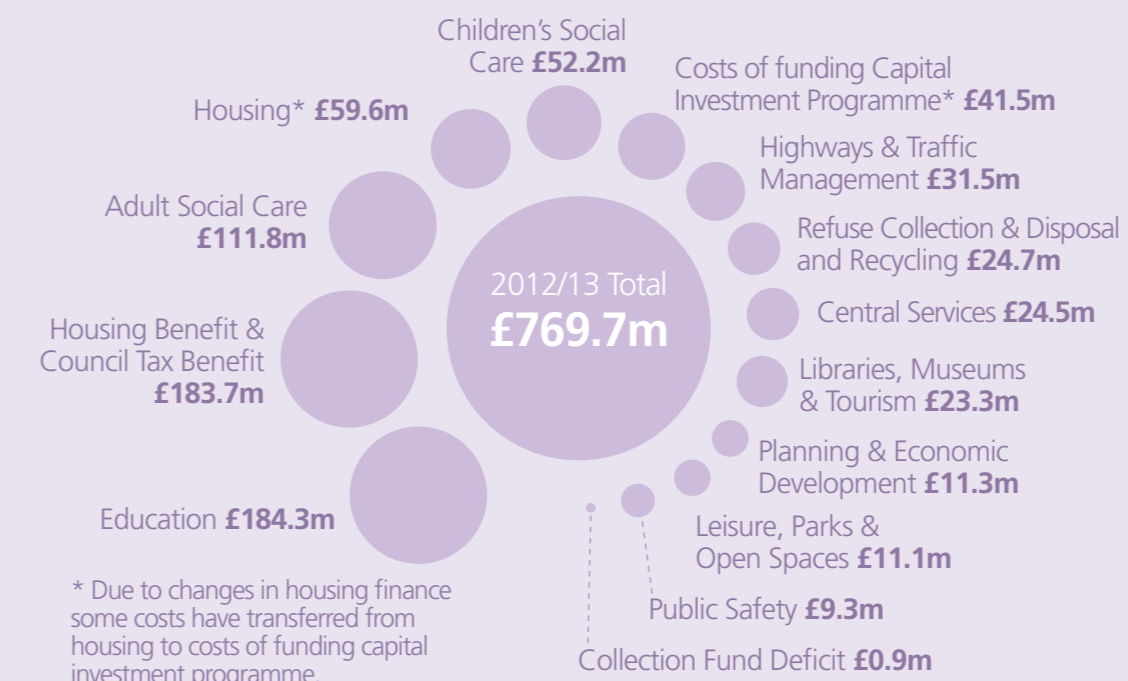
The panel’s final report made a further 22 recommendations and 10 statements, on issues ranging from the local media to improving educational outcomes. Their aim was to help deliver the 19 outcomes of the Strategy.

Resources & Finance

Making the best use of resources, in a time of financial pressure, was a key focus of Overview & Scrutiny Commission (OSC) work this year.

The Budget for 2012/13

A scrutiny panel highlighted key areas of concern, challenged decisions and asked in-depth questions about the impact of budget changes. Two members from each political group, along with a co-opted community & voluntary sector representative held six meetings to quiz each Cabinet member in turn as to their budget priorities, impact of savings and spending assumptions.



Intelligent Commissioning

In 2011/12 OSC members reviewed the Intelligent Commissioning pilot programmes, and how Intelligent Commissioning has become embedded across the council.

In a challenging session scrutiny members questioned the senior management team of the council, and senior representatives from partner organisations as to what difference Intelligent Commissioning has made to the city.

The meeting can be viewed at http://connect.brighton-hove.public-i.tv/site/player/pl_v7.php?a=70180&t=0&m=wm&l=en_GB#indx

Information Sharing Regarding Vulnerable Adults

The city has many vulnerable adults. Whilst some of them are known to the council and relevant agencies, others are in danger of falling through the gaps. This inquiry looked at how information is shared regarding vulnerable adults and what improvements could be made while maintaining confidentiality requirements.

Children & Young People

The Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee focused upon:

- The future of special educational need provision
- School performance and partnership working
- The Child Poverty Strategy
- The performance and impact of academies in the city
- Young carers' provision
- Summer 2012 holiday provision plans

Two workshops were held to consider the draft Youth Services Strategy with members focusing upon budgets and areas of service commissioning. The final Youth Services Strategy was agreed at Council in January 2012.

Following concerns presented to CYPOSC by a number of parents, a survey has been commissioned to better understand people's experience of services provided for children and young people with autistic spectrum conditions. A report will be brought back in the autumn with the survey results.

Significant changes relating to the Youth Justice Plan were looked at by members including a major service restructure, commissioning arrangements, service priorities and future funding.



Environment & Community Safety

The Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee (ECSOSC) covered a wide range of topics including:

- The risks of flooding and sea defences at a member workshop on future plans and resources, as well as visiting Brighton Marina to gain a greater understanding of the issues.
- Asking robust questions about the replacement of our current fleet of vehicles. Issues raised included the need to reduce both CO₂ emission, and costs, whilst maintaining a flexible and 'fit for purpose' fleet of vehicles.
- Raising ongoing concerns about the accessibility of taxis within the city. After some initial work the Licensing Committee were asked to continue to develop a taxi licensing policy to improve services for disabled passengers.

- The Waste Management Strategy Review was discussed. Areas covered included: food waste, overall recycling rates, comparator information and cost, which then formed the basis of comments sent on to the executive.

- The draft Community Safety, Crime Reduction & Drugs Strategy was thoroughly reviewed. Questions were raised including how well community safety is integrated into the work of the council as a whole.

- Parking officers brought latest information and data on areas such as vehicle ownership and travel patterns to two dedicated ECSOSC workshops; comments and questions from the members helped to prompt the establishment of the current Citywide Parking Review.

ECSOSC members investigated details of the street lighting review currently under way, focussing on key areas such as maintenance, energy efficiency, light pollution and cost. Members agreed this was an area for future monitoring.

Health & Wellbeing

The most pressing issue for Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) this year has been the plan, by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT), to reduce significantly the number of acute in-patient mental health beds it provides at Mill View Hospital. The Trust intends to reduce capacity on the site by 18 beds – more than 20% of its total beds in the city.

The SPFT argues that, by improving its community mental health services it can reduce the number of people being admitted to hospital; and, by streamlining its discharge procedures and working more closely with supported housing commissioners and providers, it can ensure that patients are discharged in a timely fashion, reducing average lengths of stay. Taken together, these measures, it is claimed, will mean that fewer beds are needed locally, enabling the Trust to reduce beds without impacting on the quality of services it delivers or routinely placing people out of area.

HOSC members accepted SPFT's argument, in theory, but were keen to test whether, in practice, local services could actually cope with this level of bed reduction. The HOSC therefore lobbied for, and was successful in achieving, the establishment of an independent clinical taskforce to monitor the impact of a temporary bed reduction at Mill View.

The clinical taskforce, chaired by Dr Becky Jarvis, Brighton & Hove GP lead for mental health, has been actively monitoring a range of measures; including out of area placements, bed occupancy rates, admission and re-admission rates, length of stay, delayed transfers of care, incidents and complaints, the effect of seasonal variations and the impact on community health teams of bed reductions.

Currently, SPFT's performance is slightly below the target requirements – targets will have to be achieved consistently for three months or more before the taskforce will consider approving closure. The HOSC is closely monitoring the work of the taskforce and will not itself approve any permanent closure until members are confident that there is no adverse impact on local services.

The Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee undertook a substantial body of work relating to the future of community meals, making a series of recommendations for improvements. Support for adults with learning disabilities was also considered along with safeguarding.

On the housing front, members focused their efforts on the repairs contract and concerns regarding performance. Housing allocations were also scrutinised.

Culture & Economy

Culture, Tourism & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee (CTEOSC) had significant input into the draft Annual Libraries Plan. A scrutiny workshop was held for members of CTESOC, along with the Cabinet member and the Leader of the Council. Key concerns raised by members included:

- The range and selection of books
- Maintaining a library presence in local communities (community libraries & Jubilee Library)
- Opening hours and accessibility

CTEOSC members attended a scrutiny workshop on the draft Seafront Strategy. The strategy was at an early stage and members had a wide ranging discussion on the key issues. The strategic priorities identified were:

- Maintenance
- Establishing different zones e.g. the Artists Quarter
- Madeira Drive

A report on the Withdean Sports Complex Masterplan was brought to CTEOSC in September 2011. Officers were keen to get some early feedback on members' views of the future of the Withdean Stadium, a key sports site in the city. The future of the Stadium forms part of a wider sports facilities strategy for the city and was discussed at some length.

Support for the Retail Sector Scrutiny Panel

Councillors Mitchell, Mac Cafferty and Carol Theobald looked at how the council can best support this crucial sector. The panel heard from 17 witnesses at the public and private meetings. There were 20 on-line submissions on live chat, eight e-mails and 17 tweets. Common issues emerged including: the increase in parking charges, the challenging level of business rates and rents, street markets, the need for a town centre strategy and town centre manager support, more flexibility with planning regulations and the introduction of retail quarters.



Call-Ins

Call-in is a mechanism to directly challenge an executive decision prior to it being implemented. Three call-ins were held in 2011/12.

Downland Management – OSC considered a request from Councillor Peltzer Dunn regarding management of the Downland Estate, and whether the Cabinet report had contained sufficient financial information for a robust decision to be made. OSC members voted to refer the decision on Downland Estate Management back to Cabinet for reconsideration on the following grounds:

- There was inadequate consultation carried out prior to the decision being taken
- The financial implications of the decision had not been properly assessed

In reconsidering the issue the Cabinet took the same decision as before – stating that there was information sufficient for the Cabinet to come to the decision that was made; specifically, consultation had taken place and the financial implications were explained.

Blatchington Mill Hockey Pitches – OSC considered a request from Councillor Mitchell regarding loans to Blatchington Mill School for the development of hockey pitches and whether enough information on the risk to the

council had been presented to Cabinet. Following debate, OSC decided not to refer the decision back to Cabinet.

Citywide Parking Review – ECSOSC considered requests from Councillors Pissaridou and Peltzer Dunn for a call-in based upon perceived flaws in the consultation and on the proposed timetable. ECSOSC resolved that the decision should be called in, and referred it back to the Cabinet for reconsideration requesting that. The CMM meeting consider separately the decisions on the Citywide Parking Review and the programme of other reviews and consultations.

In reconsidering the issue the Cabinet member confirmed this original decision.



Looking forward

With the introduction of a committee system, the role of scrutiny will evolve. A reduction from six to two committees, and from over 35 to 10 meetings per annum will enable us to focus on specific pieces of work that support the new system of governance.

Health scrutiny will continue to be important, this statutory duty being undertaken by a Health & Wellbeing Committee (HWOSC). Major structural changes within the health service will offer the opportunity for HWOSC to work through a large number of issues.

Scrutiny panels will continue to investigate issues in depth. This mechanism still exists for members and partners to look at some of the more intransigent issues facing the city. Both OSC and HWOSC will have commissioning roles, prioritise which panels should be undertaken.

At present the Trans Equality Scrutiny Panel is at the start of its work. Councillors Mac Cafferty, Cobb and Morgan are being joined by a trans female and trans male on this important review.

In addition to scrutiny panels members will be able to choose from an extensive menu of options to examine issues and support decision making.

Policy Committees will be encouraged to put forward topics for scrutiny or policy panels, particularly where politically contentious issues may struggle to successfully negotiate the decision-making process.

Overview & scrutiny can also help members to develop a consensus on policies currently being developed – supporting and augmenting the work of the councils policy committees.



Get Involved in Scrutiny...

There are many ways in which you can get involved in Scrutiny. This can be done by:

- 1 Attending a meeting – Most scrutiny meetings are open to the public. Please look at our website to see the dates, times and venues of each scrutiny meeting
- 2 Consultation – During the evidence gathering stage of a review, a range of stakeholders will be consulted. Details of the consultation will appear on our web pages or in a variety of other formats such as in the local newspaper.
- 3 Tell us your views – Please contact us if you have an idea for a Scrutiny review or if you would like to contribute to a current review.

How to contact us

Email us: scrutiny@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Follow us on Twitter: [@BHScrutiny](https://twitter.com/BHScrutiny) to find out about our meetings, give evidence to us, suggest reviews or tell us what you are up to.

Write to us: **Scrutiny Team, Room 128 King's House, Grand Avenue, Hove BN3 2LS**

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