



Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report



Overview and Scrutiny at RBWM

Overview and Scrutiny at RBWM consists of three main panels; Corporate, People and Place. Each Panel is aligned to a core theme of the Corporate Plan, which was adopted in November 2021 and is more closely aligned with the responsibilities of each of the Executive Directors. People and Place have four scheduled meetings a year, with Corporate having six meetings a year due to its wider responsibility and overarching scrutiny role.

There is a requirement for Overview and Scrutiny to submit an annual report each year to a meeting of Council, highlighting the work of each Panel and what topics have been scrutinised. This report gives a brief summary of the work and findings of each Panel while looking to pick out some key areas of positive scrutiny, along with some commentary on what was achieved by the Panel.

The report concludes with some figures of Overview and Scrutiny across the municipal year and further information on how residents can become more involved in the scrutiny process.

Each Panel's membership and remit are outlined below:

Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Panel	
Membership: Councillors Gerry Clark (Chairman), John Story (Vice Chairman), Simon Bond, Karen Davies, Greg Jones, Lynne Jones, Helen Price, Julian Sharpe, Shamsul Shelim, Leo Walters and Simon Werner.	
Responsibilities:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Revenues and Benefits • Library and Resident Services • Human Resources • Information Technology • Legal Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Strategy • Communications • Transformation • Commissioning and Procurement • Performance Monitoring

Place Overview & Scrutiny Panel	
Membership: Councillors John Bowden (Chairman), Helen Taylor (Vice Chairman), Greg Jones, Maureen Hunt, Sayonara Luxton, Shamsul Shelim, Leo Walters, Joshua Reynolds, Mandy Brar, Gurch Singh and Jon Davey.	
Co-opted Members: Margaret Lenton (Wraysbury Parish Council) and Pat McDonald (White Waltham Parish Council)	
Responsibilities:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Infrastructure, Sustainability and Economic Growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhoods • Health Partnerships and Community Development
<p>In addition, when considering matters of crime and disorder the Panel's main objective is to ensure that the Community Safety Partnership is held accountable for the discharge of its executive functions, to enable the voice and concerns of the public and its communities to be heard and drive improvement in public services. In addition to the Panel's broad terms of reference as detailed above, the Panel will be responsible for the overview and scrutiny of the following:</p> <p>To consider the effectiveness of actions undertaken by the responsible authorities on the Community Safety Partnership ('CSP');</p> <p>Make reports or recommendations to Cabinet/Council with regard to those policies developed by the CSP and the effectiveness of the functions managed through the CSP.</p> <p>To consider a number of issues in consultation with the relevant partners on the CSP which reflect local community need and make recommendations to Cabinet.</p>	

People Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Membership: Councillors Sayonara Luxton (Chairman), Maureen Hunt (Vice Chairman), Clive Baskerville, Catherine Del Campo, Gerry Clark, Carole Da Costa, Neil Knowles, Gary Muir.

Responsibilities:

- Adult Services
- Children's Services
- Schools and Education
- Environmental Health
- Housing
- Public Health

The People Overview & Scrutiny Panel shall have powers to deal with routine matters within the functions relating to Adult Social Care, Adult Services general and Public Health Services. The Panel shall have the enhanced review and scrutiny powers in line with provisions in Health and Social Care Act 2012, including power of referral to the Secretary of State for Health.

Ensuring that the council fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities, including child sexual exploitation. This needs to include children's social care and education provision.



Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Review of the Corporate Plan and Performance Reporting

The Panel has been closely aligned to the RBWM Corporate Plan and is involved in the oversight and monitoring of the Plan, ensuring that the 50 goals and objectives are on track. At regular intervals, the Panel has been presented with a summary of the latest position and any areas that are below or off target are highlighted. The Panel has been able to gain reassurance from key senior officers on performance.

Following the July 2022 meeting, the Panel agreed to refer air pollution performance to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel for further investigation. Following a review of the responsibilities of each Panel, the matter was added to the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel work programme. Following the scope of the topic being clarified and agreed by both the Panel and Panel Members from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny, it was decided that a Task and Finish Group would be the most suitable format to consider air pollution. Work on the Group commenced in spring 2023 but was unable to meet before the local election.

In November 2022, the Panel had the opportunity to consider a refresh of the Corporate Plan, a year after it had been adopted. The cost of living crisis was a significant issue for the council and some targets needed to be reconsidered as a result. There was also an opportunity for officers and the Panel to consider performance against all targets in the plan, particularly highlighting the goals which were not being achieved.

Draft Budget Scrutiny Challenge Session

In December 2022, the Panel had an opportunity to scrutinise the draft budget proposals in a dedicated challenge session. Each Executive Director presented the budget proposals for their service areas before the meeting was opened up for a discussion. Councillors scrutinised various areas of the budget:

- How bus services would be funded going forward.
- Ensuring that adult social care services could still support residents who were moved back home.
- Considering how different groups of people would be affected by the budget proposals and how the budget tied in with the RBWM Corporate Plan.
- Understanding the risks and achievability of the savings outlined.
- Considering the level of Council Tax which was proposed to be increased by 5%.
- Discussing the quantity of council tax which went towards adult social care, along with the budget provided for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- The impact on staff at the council and community granted as a result of changes put forward.

The Panel decided to refer the relevant budget lines to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the People Overview and Scrutiny for further scrutiny on these areas. The Panel also provided comments and feedback to Cabinet on the fees and charges in the Budget at the January meeting, this helped to form the final budget which was presented to Cabinet in February 2023. The Panel made a number of comments and recommendations on parking to the Cabinet Member for Finance and these were considered as part of the final budget which was put forward by Cabinet.

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 – 2027/28

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was considered by scrutiny in advance of being considered by Cabinet, to allow for some pre-decision scrutiny. Following approval by Cabinet, the report went to a meeting of Council in September to be adopted. The strategy was a high level look at long term savings, with the main aim to align the strategy with key areas set out in the RBWM Corporate Plan.

The Panel considered the strategy and looked to test the assumptions made by officers. The plan initially did not include reference to the health and wellbeing and climate objective in the corporate plan as they were difficult areas to achieve savings. A recommendation was made to Cabinet and agreed unanimously by the Panel, that the strategy should include reference to these two objectives as they were core parts of the corporate plan.

Equalities

Following a scoping document produced by Councillor Helen Price, it was agreed that the Panel would receive updates on the work of the equalities programme. This took the form of a number of briefing notes which were circulated to Panel Members and allowed them to feedback any comments into the process. The Panel were able to consider two key documents; a review of the Equality Impact Assessment and a refresh of the equality objectives.

Resident Scrutiny Suggestion – RBWM App

A topic submitted by a resident for consideration by the Panel involved the potential of an RBWM App, which residents could use to access council information and services, along with things like the Report It tool. The Panel had initially discussed the idea in the previous municipal year and it had been agreed that officers would take the idea away and explore the viability of an app being produced.

In November 2022, a report was brought back to the Panel. It was noted that due to the reorganisation of the transformation team and the resource available, there would be little benefit to producing a separate app. The website had been configured to work well on phones and officers had suggested that this should be focused on being improved further.

Call In

The Panel considered two call ins over the course of the municipal year, with both items being considered at the same meeting in September 2022. Cedar Tree House was reconsidered by the Panel due to reasons including:

- Officers recommendation not being accepted by Cabinet and the reasons why this had not been accepted were not clear.
- No other sale options had been considered, the property would be sold at a loss.

The Panel debated the item and considered that all options that had been considered on Cedar Tree House. The Leader of the Council clarified that the option of transforming the property into three separate flats was considered as part of the report, this could be reconsidered at the next Cabinet meeting.

The result of the call in was that the matter was referred back to Cabinet, to discuss and reconsider the sale options for Cedar Tree House. Cabinet considered the comments made by scrutiny and agreed to sell the property as a family dwelling for best market consideration, while considering the option to sell as three separate flats.

The second call in considered by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel was on the St Cloud Way site in Maidenhead. The site had been sold to a developer but there was concern amongst Councillors that the amount the council was getting for the site was too low and needed to be reconsidered.

It was explained at the meeting that the land value was different to what had been put forward in 2017 but RBWM was in a contract with the developer to go ahead with the sale, the council could be in breach of contract and incur additional financial penalties should it not go ahead. Members of the Panel questioned the impact of the new land value on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and whether this value would have an impact on other projects and services that the council provided.

Following the discussion, the Panel concluded that the council needed to go ahead with the decision, however they requested further documentation on the land valuation from officers to increase their understanding and oversight of the decision.

Improvements highlighted by Panel Members:

The Panel should look to be involved in policy development from Cabinet and be involved at an earlier stage. Pre-scrutiny would help improve decisions made and ensure that scrutiny was not used when decisions had already been made.



People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Resident Scrutiny Topic – Breastfeeding

The Panel considered a resident scrutiny suggestion on making RBWM a ‘breastfeeding friendly borough’. This was something that had been brought to the attention of the Panel and they agreed that it was something that mothers should be encouraged and supported to do in a safe environment. It was agreed by the Panel that the Public Health team would do a piece of engagement work which focused on interactions with local businesses to understand the current breastfeeding offer of services and venues from across the borough. The Economic Growth team would be part of the piece of work to consider how best to engage with local businesses.

Adult Social Reforms

The Panel has been kept informed of significant changes in adult social care which have been proposed by the government. A significant change affecting adult social care had been due to be implemented in October 2023 but this had now been pushed back until October 2025. The main changes to the service would be its method of review by the Care Quality Commission. Regular inspection had not been a regular occurrence but this would change with a new inspection regime which had been due to start in April 2023. The adult social care service would be rated to be either adequate, inadequate, good, or outstanding.

The Panel agreed that written updates would be provided against the framework to allow scrutiny of how things were going in adult social care. This would allow the Panel to ensure that they had oversight of the reforms as they were implemented and could check progress on any future Care Quality Commission inspections.

Sunningdale Health Hub

NHS Frimley had plans to open a new health hub in Sunningdale and the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel took the opportunity to scrutinise the plans and speak to those at the NHS who were involved in bringing the project forward. The Panel considered the impact that the hub could have on other local GPs and whether the provision was suitable to meet the needs of the local community.

It is expected that the Panel will be kept informed of developments on the Sunningdale Health Hub in the next municipal year as the projects progresses.

Budget

Following the referral at the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel in December 2022, the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel were given the opportunity to scrutinise the budget lines related to the People directorate.

Key areas scrutinised included:

- The schools budget and whether this was adequate for all schools in the borough.
- Why there had been a loss in income from Hackney Carriage Licenses.
- The impact of the domiciliary care contract on the budget.
- Whether pressure on the budget was being felt in different geographical areas of the borough.
- Questioning the removal of non-statutory Family Hub services.

- Considering the financial implications should the number of children in care be increased.
- Understanding how the quality and provision of services would be affected by the savings being proposed.
- Noting that funding would be provided for ensuring that residents were able to thrive at home, rather than at hospital.
- Hearing the value of vital services for residents like Meals on Wheels.
- Clarification on proposed redundancies and how these staff could be redeployed elsewhere in the council.
- The cost of a new case management system.

Following the discussion at the meeting, the Panel agreed to make a couple of recommendations to Cabinet:

- It was recommended that Cabinet used £500,000 of funding from the additional budget settlement to remove the amount of savings required for the non-statutory Family Hub services and create a new growth bid of £20,000 for the Family Hubs to accommodate increasing demand for the service.
- It was also recommended that the savings line to 'move Meals on Wheels to a full costed model' of delivery was removed from the budget.
- Following the Cabinet meeting on 9th February 2023, both of these recommendations were noted and acted on by Cabinet. An additional £670,000 was allocated to the children's services budget to reduce the saving on Family Hubs by £400,000, while an additional £500,000 was allocated to Adult Social Care to allow for the removal of the saving related to Meals on Wheels delivery.

Resident Scrutiny Topic - Air Pollution

The second resident scrutiny topic considered by the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel was around the monitoring of air pollution around the borough and whether this was being done effectively. Officers agreed that the Panel would be informed of 2022 results to ensure ongoing monitoring, while also committing to three additional monitoring stations for PM10 and PM2.5. This would allow the council to consider data and make air quality decisions based on evidence. There were also proposals to use sensor equipment to monitor prevalence within the current five Air Quality Management Areas and then install high cost air quality monitoring units in two locations, should this be appropriate.

Task and Finish Group – Domestic Abuse

Following the adoption of the RBWM Domestic Abuse Strategy, the Panel decided to undertake a piece of work considering whether the strategy meet the needs and supported those residents who were victims of domestic abuse. The work would use a task and finish group format to speak with witnesses, formulate evidence and make recommendations which could then be considered by the Panel.

An initial meeting of the group took place in February 2023 and a way forward was agreed. The group would look to formulate a number of questions which could be used to ask the following groups:

- Survivors
- Perpetrators
- Dash Charity
- Thames Valley Police
- Housing
- Health

Due to the election, the work of the group was paused following this initial meeting and there are plans to resume the group in the 2023/24 municipal year.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Resident Scrutiny Topics

Two resident scrutiny topics were considered over the municipal year by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The first one centred around pollution of the River Thames and what the council could do about it. This was something under the remit of the Environment Agency and the Panel discussed the possibility of inviting representatives from the Environment Agency to speak to the Panel about what they were doing to prevent untreated sewage being released into the Thames.

The other resident scrutiny topic considered by the Panel focused on the River Thames Scheme and flood relief in Wraysbury. The council had initially been part of the scheme but had previously been removed after the required funding could not be provided. It was also noted that the channel section 1 scheme no longer existed so it would not be possible for RBWM to re-join the scheme even if the funding could be identified.

The Panel decided that an alternative project could be scrutinised, on the Datchet to Hythe End Flood Improvement Programme which was in the process of being developed by the Environment Agency and the council. The scope for this topic would be developed in the next municipal year and brought forward on the work programme once it was ready.

Call In

The call in mechanism has been used a number of times by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel over the course of the previous municipal year.

The Electric Vehicle Charge Point Implementation Plan was called in for consideration, as there was significant concern that the consultation had not been run on a completed draft of the plan. The Panel agreed to take no further action on the matter but agreed with officers that they would be sent the final draft of the implementation plan seven days before the public consultation commenced.

In January 2023, the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the South West Maidenhead Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document. The document had been called in due to issues around viability, infrastructure delivery and strategic placemaking. Following extensive discussion from the Panel and speaking to key officers and the Cabinet Member, the Panel decided that the decision had been made lawfully and that no further action needed to be taken.

The final call in of the year was on Maidenhead United Football Club's proposed move from their current stadium at York Road to a new stadium on land at Braywick Park. This was a delegated officer decision which had been taken by the Executive Director of Place Services. The main concerns of the call in signatories was around the lack of a full consultation, poor communication between interest parties and the impact of the loss of a significant amount of green open space for local residents. The Panel agreed to take action and decided to refer the decision back to the decision maker to reconsider the decision that had been made. The Panel recommended that the following concerns were taken into account:

- The date of the valuation for the lease of the site.
- Whether there was full consultation with the public on the proposals.
- Whether the length of time that the lease would last was appropriate.

The Executive Director of Place Services has referred the matter back to Cabinet to make a decision on, particularly given the change in political administration since the call in. This is due to be considered by Cabinet in July 2023.

Budget

Following the recommendation by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel, the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel was given the opportunity to scrutinise the relevant lines of the budget. Key themes and areas scrutinised included:

- Funding for Climate Partnership and the source of this funding.
- The high saving figure for the line-by-line review.
- Recruiting of teams in house.
- Public transport subsidies.
- Operational changes in parks across the borough.
- The £67,000 saving on parking subsidies.
- Cashless parking and the use of the RingGo app.
- Income opportunities across the Neighbourhood Services team.
- Contracts for boat hire on the River Thames.
- Waste operational changes.
- Place Service transformation programme.
- Bringing contractors in house.
- Funding for Parish Councils.
- Economic growth and events across the borough.
- Planning performance agreements.
- Tree maintenance and inspections.
- Fly tipping.

The Panel made a recommendation to Cabinet on the budget. This was for Cabinet to explore all schools in the borough which required funding for school crossing patrols, to consider whether this was a necessary saving.

Thames Valley Police Annual Presentation

A key part of the Panel's remit was around ensuring there was oversight of organisations involved in the Community Safety Partnership, including the police. The presentation allowed the Panel to hear information on the number of crimes investigated, contacts with the public and number of arrests made. Other areas explored included:

- Relationships with businesses in the borough and clamping down on shop lifting.
- Dealing with the traveller community.
- Using funding to provide further community wardens.
- Using the 101 service.
- Dealing with the night time economy.
- The relationship between the police and the CCTV control room.
- The approach to rural policing.

Street Lighting Project

The RBWM Youth Council had contacted the Panel to discuss their concerns about street lighting across the borough. The Youth Council attended a meeting of the Panel to present a report which outlined their concerns and this included locations of where they felt street lighting should be reviewed.

Officers and Panel Members agreed that these areas should be reviewed and a piece of work was conducted to investigate the areas raised. At the following meeting in April 2023, the Panel heard the outcomes from this work from the Head of Neighbourhood Services. Further meetings had been offered with the Youth Council to discuss any issues in specific locations, but it was noted that all street lights were installed and lit to national standards. Should it be required, the Youth Council could present further findings to the Panel and officers on areas that they felt needed to be investigated.

Improvements highlighted by Panel Members:

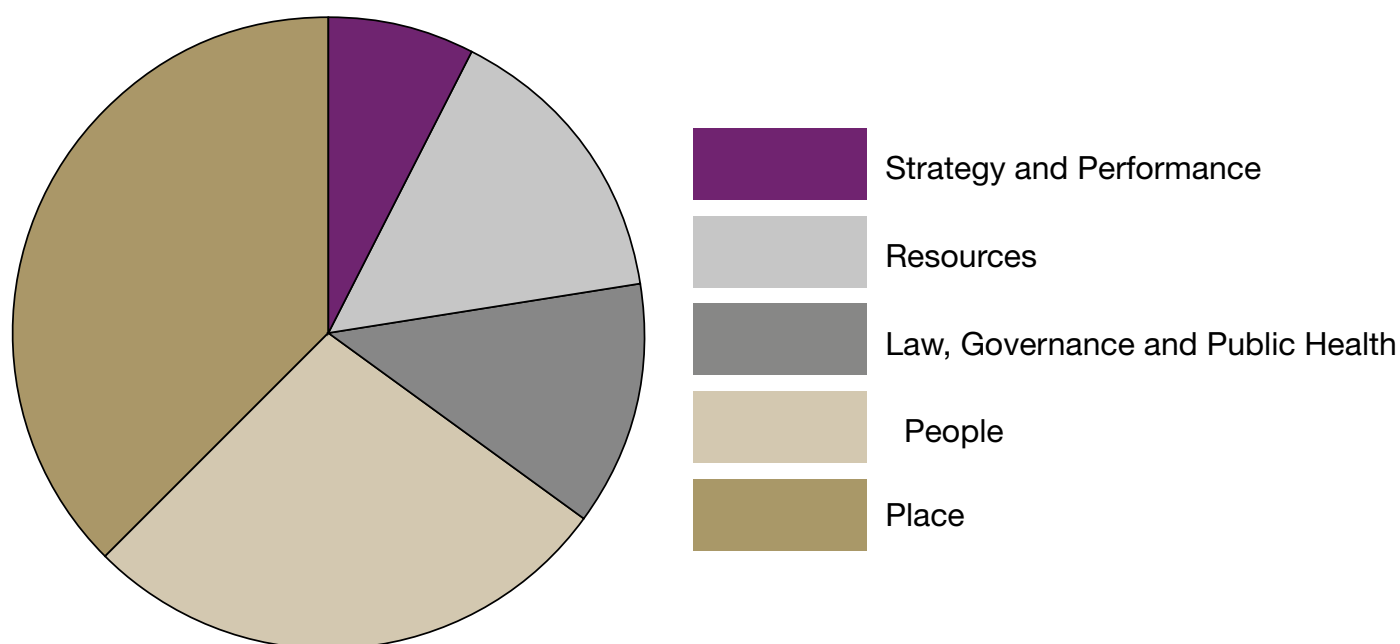
- The budget meeting had been a particular success, despite the meeting being lengthy. Information had been explored, scrutinised and recommendations had been made to Cabinet as a result.
- An opportunity could be explored to include residents feedback from the consultation as part of the budget scrutiny process.
- The project on street lighting which had been scrutinised in collaboration with the Youth Council was another success, the Panel were interested in working with the Youth Council again in future.



Overview and Scrutiny in Figures

	Corporate	People	Place
Number of meetings held	7	4	7
Total meeting time	17 hours 30 minutes	9 hours	16 hours 45 minutes
Number of substantive agenda items	16	11	9
Number of recommendations made to Cabinet	2	2	3
Number of call ins considered	2	0	3
Total number of YouTube views	980	577	1,337

A total of 40 different officers have been involved in Overview and Scrutiny meetings this year, split by the following directorates:



Get involved in overview and scrutiny

You can get involved in the work of overview and scrutiny at the council in a number of ways:

- Attend a public meeting, either in person or via YouTube, of any of our Panels.
- Register to speak at a scrutiny meeting.
- Contact your local Councillor with your views.
- Suggest a topic for consideration by scrutiny [on our website](#).