



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Gloucestershire County Council
Scrutiny Annual Report
2015

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Foreword

Brian Oosthuysen
Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny
Management Committee



Scrutiny in Gloucestershire has continued to develop since we adopted a new structure back in 2013.

Local Government is a place of exciting change and, in the devolution discussions taking place nationally and locally, scrutiny once again has to adapt to ensure it continues to add value to decision making and is on hand to respond to public concern.

Good governance is central to making new arrangements work. With Gloucestershire bidding for more powers, responsibility and financial certainty locally, it is vital that the scrutiny arrangements are in place to ensure transparency and accountability.

But this is not just about structures; it is about us as councillors having the skills and tools to be 'scrutineers'.

Gloucestershire has a strong history of successful scrutiny and our recent review of scrutiny reinforced these successes, while also looking at how we can improve.

Through task group work, one day sessions and workshops, as well as visits to see services on the ground, members have shown real flexibility in choosing the right approach tailored to the specific issue in order to deliver real outcomes.

I believe the examples provided in this annual report demonstrate scrutiny at its most constructive and critically challenging.

We have demonstrated that when it comes to tackling the issues that make a real difference for local people, that our 'external scrutiny' is very effective. We have called in a diverse range of public agencies, individuals and groups to really get underneath issues.

But this document is not just about listing achievements. We must continue to develop our critical friend role within the council and be a partner and key consultee in the decision making process. This is the area that scrutiny needs to continue to work on to ensure we remain on top of developments

I would like to thank all members who have been involved in scrutiny in whatever form, but particularly the Chairs of all the committees Cllr Iain Dobie (Health and Care), Cllr Rob Bird (Environment and Communities), Cllr Tim Harman (Children and Families), Cllr Roger Wilson (Police and Crime Panel), Cllr Paul Hodgkinson (Gloucestershire Economic Growth) and Cllr Nigel Robbins (Audit and Governance) for their hard work and support. I would also like to thank the officers throughout the County Council for the support they provide to members

This report, its examples, and its self evaluation, should provide the confidence that scrutiny in Gloucestershire can take this next step.

Jane Burns
Director: Strategy and Challenge
Corporate Lead for Scrutiny



In late 2014 we reviewed our scrutiny processes and members endorsed the structures in place. Members have been keen to build on Gloucestershire's scrutiny principles with a series of suggestions for how to further develop our practices.

Scrutiny Chairs have continued to meet to take this forward and we have strengthened our relationship with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) with a visit from their new Chief Executive in the summer.

Now, at the end of 2015, scrutiny faces a positive challenge in the form of the opportunities presented by devolution.

The proposals to strengthen local governance include new scrutiny and audit committees to ensure accountability. The precise detail will be developed over the coming months. They will be based on the CfPS's principles of good governance. Scrutiny in Gloucestershire has demonstrated in the past a real appetite to adapt structures and mechanisms to make them fit for purpose. I know that members will work with us to make sure the new arrangements are too.

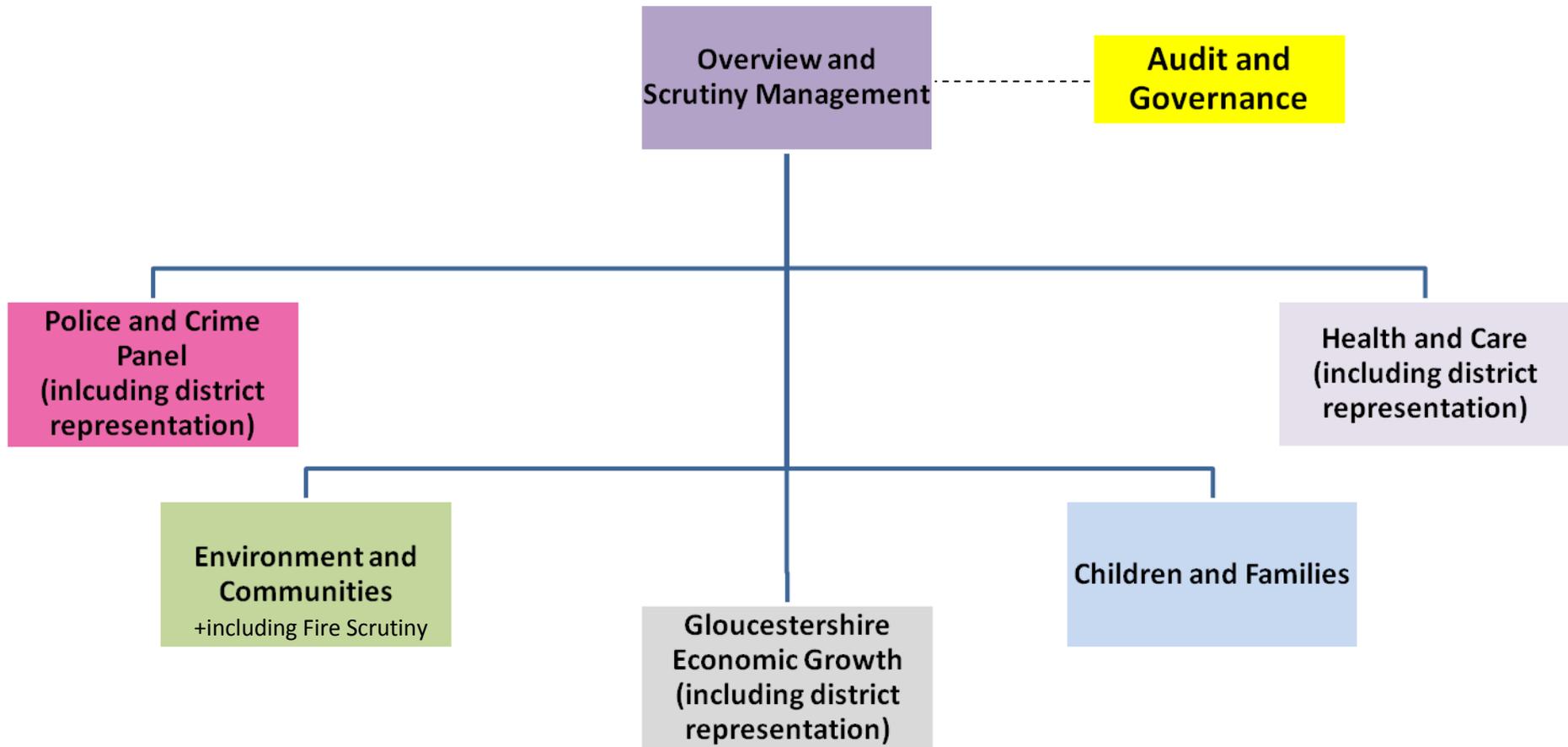
Partnership working is at the heart of public sector Gloucestershire. This report gives examples of the joint scrutiny across Gloucestershire through the Joint Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, Joint Health and Care Scrutiny Committee and Joint Police and Crime Panel. These

arrangements have served Gloucestershire well. We want to build on the strength of their current work and respond to new circumstances.

This report, then, is a testament to how members have embraced joint working and prioritised activity in areas where they can add value and work in the best interests of the people of Gloucestershire. As the devolution discussions gather pace, scrutiny is well prepared to meet this new challenge and embrace the opportunities it provides.

On behalf of the officer team, I would like to thank scrutiny members for their interest and commitment to scrutiny.

Scrutiny Structure



Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee

The committee is responsible for managing the council's overview and scrutiny process and ensuring that it is operating effectively and is making a difference for local people. It is also the 'home' committee for support service.

The membership of the committee includes the chairs of the other overview and scrutiny committees and they report on their committee's activities at each meeting. The role of the committee also includes commissioning task groups, determining call-ins of cabinet decisions and considering appeals against petition responses.

Chair- Cllr Brian Oosthuysen
Vice Chair – Cllr Shaun Parsons
Lead Members – Cllr Dobie, Cllr Guyton,

Senior Democratic Services Adviser -
Stephen Bace
stephen.bace@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Tel: 01452 324204

Jane Burns, Director: Strategy and Challenge

Children and Families Scrutiny Committee

The committee is responsible for overview and scrutiny of matters relating to children and young people. Its remit covers a wide area including schools, children's centres, adoption and fostering, child protection, childcare, early years education and advice to families.

Chair – Cllr Tim Harman

Lead Members – Cllr Lesley Williams, Cllr Chris Coleman, Cllr Richard Leppington

Senior Democratic Services Adviser –
Andrea Clarke
andrea.clarke@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Tel: 01452 324203

Linda Uren, Commissioning Director;
Children and Families

Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee

The committee is responsible for overview and scrutiny of environment related issues. Its remit covers a wide area including highways, waste management, planning, transport and climate change. It also includes scrutiny of the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, emergency management, trading standards, registration service and coroners, as well as libraries and lifelong learning.

Chair – Cllr Robert Bird
Lead Members – Cllr John Cordwell and Cllr Graham Morgan.

Senior Democratic Services Adviser –
Joanne Moore
joanne.moore@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Tel: 01452 324196

Nigel Riglar, Commissioning Director:
Communities and Infrastructure

Stewart Edgar – Chief Fire Officer

Health & Care Scrutiny Committee

The committee is responsible for the overview and scrutiny of health and adult social care services and public health. The committee (on behalf of the local authority) is a statutory consultee for any significant health service change proposals in Gloucestershire. When (health) service changes are proposed the committee will offer constructive challenge to ensure that proposals are properly thought through, in particular that they are clinically led, to ensure that they are to the benefit, not detriment, of the people of Gloucestershire. The committee has co-optees from all the district councils.

Chair – Cllr Iain Dobie
Vice Chairman – Cllr Roger Wilson

Senior Democratic Services Adviser –
Andrea Clarke
andrea.clarke@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Tel: 01452 324203

Margaret Willcox, Commissioning
Director: Adults
Sarah Scott – Director of Public Health

Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel

The Police and Crime Panel is a joint body of the local authorities served by Gloucestershire Police. The Panel is to maintain a regular check and balance on the performance of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The functions of the panel are to be exercised with a view to supporting the effective exercise of the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The panel is under a duty to support, as well as challenge, the Commissioner.

The local authorities have appointed thirteen councillors to be Panel members. The panel has also co-opted two independent members. Gloucestershire County Council is host local authority for the panel and will provide administrative and other support to the panel and its members.

Chair – Cllr Roger Wilson
Vice Chair – Cllr Barry Kirby

Senior Democratic Services Adviser –
Stephen Bace
stephen.bace@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Tel: 01452 324204

Stewart Edgar, Operations Director

Audit and Governance Committee

The committee provides independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment. It assesses the Authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment. The committee also oversees the financial reporting process and ensures that Members maintain high standards of probity in their public life by

carrying out investigations in respect to allegations of misconduct by a Member or co-opted Member.

Chair – Cllr Nigel Robbins

Democratic Services Adviser – Andrea Griffiths
andrea.griffiths@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Tel: 01452 324206

Jo Walker, Director Strategic Finance
Jane Burns, Director: Strategy and Challenge

Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee

The committee is responsible for reviewing the decisions of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee. It is also responsible for reviewing the overall impact and delivery outcomes of the Gloucestershire Strategic Economic Plan and to make recommendations to the Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Community Interest Company and Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee on issues and improvements. All district councils have co-opted on to the committee.

Chair – Cllr Paul Hodgkinson

Senior Democratic Services Adviser –
Joanne Moore
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Tel: 01452 324196

Nigel Riglar, Commissioning Director:
Communities and Infrastructure

What does Scrutiny in Gloucestershire look like?

Scrutiny Principles

The Council has in the past been acknowledged nationally for its innovative approach to scrutiny and it is important that we build on this moving forward. The Council's scrutiny principles are highlighted below:

- a) Tackle the issues that make a real difference for local people.
- b) Make sure that reviews are scoped properly at the outset – identify the issue, links with Council priorities, timeline, witnesses and lines of enquiry. The Council has adopted a 'one page strategy' for this purpose.
- c) Ensure that the terms of reference for scrutiny reviews are realistic and not too wide to allow for any effective outcomes. Good scrutiny reviews are 'narrow and deep' not 'broad and shallow'.
- d) Task groups should be set up for a specific purpose and not continue indefinitely for ongoing monitoring of a particular issue.
- e) Adopt a flexible approach to meet the needs of the subject. Each issue is different and the approach needs to be tailored accordingly.
- f) Be pragmatic – there is little point in committing valuable member and officer time to scrutiny reviews where there is no realistic possibility of delivering any change.
- g) Set up monitoring arrangements to check on progress against recommendations after 6, 12 and 18 months.

Review of Scrutiny

In November 2014 a review was undertaken of the new scrutiny structure after the first year of the new Council

Amongst other things it identified:

- Motions at full Council was now acting as the driver for a number of task groups
- That members need to be prepared to 'walk the ground' to understand the issues and meet with officers and partner organisations outside meetings.
- There was a good mix of internal and external issues, with members picking up issues that really interest the public
- Scrutiny of outside agencies had proved successful, delivering a number of positive outcomes
- Some members were using formal committee meetings as opportunities to raise local issues
- A need for more 'select committee' type meetings to allow more focus on specific issues
- Some service areas did not get sufficient coverage and more 'meeting time' may be required for some committees. Some members brought up the Fire and Rescue Service as an example.
- OSMC should focus on budget, performance and risk issues. It had an important role in co-ordinating the scrutiny process and approving the terms of reference for reviews.
- Member briefings are a critical part of the overview and scrutiny process to allow members to understand the issues.

- Clarification of the difference between Cabinet advisory groups and scrutiny task groups. Scrutiny task groups provide an opportunity for non – executive members to have an independent look at an issue
- The way in which public services were provided was becoming more complex. Local authorities were entering contractual arrangements that covered more than one area, sometimes in partnership with public agencies outside Gloucestershire. Appropriate mechanisms needed to be put in place to allow proper scrutiny of these arrangements.

These comments have been taken on board and over the past 12 months scrutiny has continued to develop and mature. Scrutiny has been carried out through the following methods:

- Time-limited task groups
- Intensive one day sessions with public agencies, pressure groups and other interested parties.
- Workshops to explore particular issues
- ‘Select committee’ type meetings
- Visits to see services on the ground
- Arranging ‘back to the floor’ days for members
- Briefing sessions from officers
- Events organised by public agencies
- Lead member meetings
- Chief Fire Officer’s regular report to Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

Scrutiny, making a difference

Over the course of 2015, members have carried out scrutiny of a wide variety of topics and issues through committee meetings, time-limited task group work, workshops and briefings. This report contains some examples, detailing outcomes from the work and demonstrating where scrutiny has made a difference.

Apprenticeships

What's it about?

Following a motion at full Council a task group was set up to establish how the Council could best persuade and encourage businesses across Gloucestershire to recruit even more apprentices.

Having conducted in-depth research into the situation of apprenticeships, schools, employers and providers, the task group focused on two key areas:

- Shaping the work of Gloucestershire County Council in supporting employment and skills through the Youth Employment & Skills (YES) campaign – a £1 million fund aimed at developing the range of skills and careers available to young people in Gloucestershire.
- Influencing the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership (GFirst) in supporting young people and employers to engage with apprenticeships.

How has it made a difference?

The task group noted that part of the Local Enterprise's strategic economic plan was the creation of an "apprenticeship clearing house". The task group recommended that this specification should include a requirement that there be a single senior role responsible for the promotion and support of apprenticeships across the county driving the project role as a hub. This project should take on a pro-active role in approaching employers, schools and students

The task group recommended that a positive message on apprenticeships should reach children and parents early in their school career. As a result of this recommendation, the booklet distributed in September 2015 included a section specifically targeted at year 8/9 secondary school pupils.

As a result of a recommendation, a recently retired local head teacher has been hired in order to work with schools to understand how to better promote apprenticeships.

To ensure that the LEP's project can find its feet and make a positive impact on apprenticeships in the county, the Task Group recommended the setting up of a "pump priming" project, using Council funds marked for the promotion of skills and training for young people.

The task group also wrote to all Head-teachers and Board of Governors in Gloucestershire to request that in each school a Governor be nominated to take responsibility for overseeing the quality of apprenticeship skills and careers advice at each school in the county.

Audit and Governance

Members have carried out work across a wide remit, including approval of the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2014/15 and the Annual Governance report from Grant Thornton, the council's external auditors.

Officers were asked to act upon recommendations within external audit reports on Gloucestershire County Council and the Pensions Fund, with the committee ensuring transparency and accountability following up on progress. An external Quality Assessment for Internal Audit had also been completed and the service received an outstanding rating.

Further work has been carried out considering the Internal Audit Charter, Freedom of Information Annual Report and Risk Management report. The committee also received a report detailing the Council's arrangements for handling complaints including the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review and Annual review of the code of conduct for members.

Barriers to Cycling

What's it about?

Following a motion to full council at its meeting on 10 September 2014, the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of 'potential barriers to cycling' on cycle routes across Gloucestershire. Atkins Highways and Transportation Consultants were subsequently commissioned to undertake a

study of the 'major barriers to cycling' including 'possible solutions'.

How has it made a difference?

Having considered the outcomes from the study at its meeting on 14 January 2015, the committee requested additional work be undertaken, extending the study to include barriers to cycling in rural areas. The study report, plus the outcomes from the ongoing additional work, were fed into the Local Transport Plan Review.

The committee will receive an updated report at its meeting on in January 2016.

Canal and River Trust

What's it about?

A request was made for Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee to consider proposals for remote controlled bridges along the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal. Members received a presentation from the Waterways Manager for the Canal and River Trust. Members noted the outcomes of the recent consultation.

How has it made a difference?

Representatives from Longney and Epney, Elmore and Arlingham Parish Councils were invited to express their concerns, culminating in a request for 'Severn Voice' to submit a statement to the committee after the meeting. The committee noted concerns about the impact of the proposals on road traffic accessing the bridges and requested consideration of a report on the outcomes of the Sandfield Bridge Trial at a future meeting.

At the meeting on 4 November 2015, members noted the positive outcomes following a recent meeting involving Severn Voice and the Canal and River Trust.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection Reports

Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (GHNHSFT) and Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust (GCS)

What's it about?

These reports are an important mechanism in identifying how well the NHS Trusts in

Gloucestershire are delivering services to the public. The CQC inspection regime uses 5 key questions when inspecting services to identify the final rating – is the service safe; effective; caring; responsive to patients' needs; well-led?

The rating for both Trusts is 'Requires Improvement'. It is important that the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee understands what this means in terms of services and how the Trusts are responding to the outcomes from the Inspection(s).

How has it made a difference?

The CQC Inspector(s) who had been involved in the inspection process attended the committee meetings to present their findings and respond to members' questions. The Chair(s) of the Trust(s) informed the committee as to how the actions identified by the CQC would be taken forward.

The committee felt assured that the Trusts both welcomed and have responded positively to their inspection. The Trusts are required to submit a Quality Improvement Plan to the CQC and the committee will monitor these as part of its regular quarterly performance monitoring work.

Children and Families Committee Safeguarding Framework

What's it about?

The Children and Families Scrutiny Committee uses this framework to guide members through the Safeguarding Process. The framework not only ensures that members cover all areas of Safeguarding policy, but also ensures that the committee has the opportunity to debate and discuss safeguarding with front line officers from the council and partner organisations.

How has it made a difference?

For example, when receiving an item on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) the committee was able to debate this issue directly with Detective Superintendent Atkinson from the Gloucestershire Public Protection Bureau, along with the Director of Children's Services and other key officers. Members were able to hear first hand the situation in Gloucestershire, how the Police develop the intelligence picture of the local situation, and what the Police and partners are doing to address issues relating to CSE. This also led to a Members Seminar (open to County and District Councillors as well) on CSE which was very well received.

This approach means that committee members can link the outcomes of debates into upcoming safeguarding items. This is particularly useful when it meets with the Independent Chair of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board (GSCB) to consider their Annual Report.

Devolution

What's it about?

Overview and Scrutiny Committee members have been kept updated on developments with regards to the changing strategic partnership landscape and the Gloucestershire Devolution Bid.

In May 2015 members were briefed on the economic growth landscape and the wider ever-changing partnership landscape, including the role of Leadership Gloucestershire. By September 2015 the discussion had moved forward with members being provided with an update on the 'We are Gloucestershire' devolution bid. This bid was owned and led by the County Council, District and Borough Councils, Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Police and Crime Commissioner/ Constabulary.

How has it made a difference?

The members understood the short timescale in which to bring the bid together. The committee valued the opportunity to be updated and scrutiny's role in helping to publicise to all members and partners the journey Gloucestershire was going on.

A wider Devolution Event was held at Gloucestershire County Council in October which all members were invited to.

Fastershire Broadband

What's it about?

Fastershire is a partnership between Herefordshire Council, Gloucestershire County Council and BT to build a future proof world class broadband network for the two counties. The Fastershire Broadband Project Team continues to update Environment and Communities Scrutiny members on current issues.

How has it made a difference?

Members noted the progress being made throughout the various stages of the project, including an update on the current position of the BT contract and the work by private investor Gigaclear to provide 'Fibre to Premises' to 6,500 premises in the Cotswold District by 2017.

Responding to concerns about communication/progress reports to residents in areas where fibre broadband/cabinets had been sited, but no further action taken, the Fastershire Broadband Team advised members to refer to the Fastershire Broadband website www.fastershire.com as a key point of communication, and to advise the residents in their divisions to register personal interests on the website to receive regular updates/newsletters.

By continually monitoring progress, scrutiny members have been able to raise the concerns of the residents they represent and ensure that the project is delivering its intended outcomes.

Fire Scrutiny workshop

What's it about?

A workshop was held entitled 'Using effective scrutiny to work together for a safer Gloucestershire'. Supported by the Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny, the aim of the workshop was to review the current practice of fire scrutiny at the County Council and whether it created as much impact as it could, to consider the key national and local policy issues for fire services over the medium and long term, and to explore and agree how scrutiny can aid policy making and service planning.

How has it made a difference?

The workshop proved useful in recognising the important relationship between Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) and the County Council, as well as the role scrutiny has in supporting the operation and development of GFRS.

Members appreciated the attendance and report of the Chief Fire Officer to meetings of Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee, but felt that the report could highlight concerns in addition to recording achievements.

Concerns identified by officers would be shared with members as appropriate.

Members considered alternative approaches to scrutiny, including workshops and visits to fire stations.

Future of Community Hospitals

What's it about?

The Community Hospitals in the county are recognised as a valuable and vital community asset. Going forward the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (GCCG) and Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust (GCS) want to ensure that these assets are used effectively to best support the local communities. The GCCG established a Transforming Community Hospitals Group to take this matter forward

The GCCG has recently commenced a review of community services in the Forest of Dean. This is about developing a plan for high quality and affordable community and social services in the Forest of Dean locality. This will encompass all community services including the community hospitals

How has it made a difference?

It is important that the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee is fully informed on this activity not least because should the outcome of this work result in any proposals relating to a substantial or significant variation in service the committee will need undertake it's statutory duty as laid down in regulations. As community leaders it is also important for members to be fully briefed to ensure that they can keep their local communities informed.

Gloucestershire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2015-2020

What's it about?

The Health and Care Scrutiny Committee had been concerned with the data relating to suicide and self harm for some time, particularly as Gloucestershire data indicates that it is above the national average in this regard. Members therefore wanted to receive the prevention strategy in order to be assured that the strategy is robust and the action plan fit for purpose.

How has it made a difference?

The committee had a robust debate on this matter with the Lead Commissioner and the Chief Executive of the 2Gether NHS Foundation Trust. The committee felt that the strategy was comprehensive and that the objectives were clearly stated. Members were pleased to note the number of partners/agencies involved both in the development of the strategy and in the delivery of the action plan.

The committee remains concerned but recognises the commitment to this work across agencies. The committee will receive an update on progress against the Suicide Prevention Plan on an annual basis.

Health and Care Scrutiny Performance Management

What's it about?

The committee receives quarterly reports on Adult Social Care, Public Health and NHS performance targets. These reports are a useful tool informing members on both good and poor performance. The committee has adopted different approaches to investigating performance issues and range from workshops to visits to committee debate.

How has it made a difference?

Stroke Care Pathway – Following concerns raised at a committee meeting elected members visited this care pathway to see for themselves how the process worked. They were able to discuss their concerns directly with the Clinicians such that they have a better understanding of the issues. A follow up to this work is in place.

South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWAST) – The committee has been concerned about response times in the rural areas for some time. In order to better understand the challenges on the front line and gain a more holistic understanding of the service committee members have visited the SWAST Clinical Hub in South Gloucestershire. This has enabled members to hear and see directly how 999 calls are received and vehicles despatched. It also gave them the opportunity to discuss issues directly with the Trust Chair and the Director of Delivery. Some members have also undertaken a ride-a-long on an ambulance to gain a full front line experience. Members have also undertaken a spotlight on SWAST performance at committee.

Workshops – In order to better understand the performance frameworks across both the NHS and Adult Social Care and Public Health the committee is holding two workshops. This will enable members to gain a clearer understanding of the drivers for the performance targets; and inform their lines of questioning at committee.

Drug and Alcohol Performance – The committee undertook a deep dive on this performance area in response to ongoing concerns. The Director of Public Health, Lead Commissioner and Outcome Manager explained and clarified activity in place with the provider to address issues; and also explained the process going forward regarding the re-commissioning of this service. Committee members were reassured that officers and the Cabinet Member are aware of the issues and have robust plans in place to manage them.

Committee debate – There are ongoing concerns regarding the performance of the Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS) and the committee invites the provider to committee meetings to challenge their performance on this matter.

By using these different approaches members have been able to gain a better understanding of the issues, which supports their lines of questioning at committee, and also helps members to develop a more holistic understanding of the issues around adult social care, public health and NHS services..

Highways

What's it about?

The Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee received an update on highways issues from the Lead Commissioner: Highways Authority and Amey Accounts Director.

How has it made a difference?

Members reiterated concerns about communications and the timeliness of programmed works. Responding to concerns, officers assured the committee that any outstanding issues would be taken seriously and that members would be advised of dates of the programme of monthly meetings with local highways managers.

A Highways Seminar was held in July 2015 to update members on the delivery of the highways services in Gloucestershire, the performance of the Amey contract and council's highways strategy. In addition, the Highways Development Management team gave a presentation on the council's role as a statutory consultee on the local planning process. There is a regular item at full Council meeting for members to consider performance.

Hospital Discharges

What's it about?

On 16 December 2014, the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee held an extraordinary meeting in response to statements made by the Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (GHNHSFT) in the local media relating to the timely discharge of medically stable patients, and the knock on to the urgent care system.

How has it made a difference?

The committee instructed the Chairs of all the Health Trusts in the county, the Chair of the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group and the Cabinet Member for Older People to meet, dissect the issues and agree a way forward for all partners to work together for the benefit of the people of Gloucestershire. A meeting did take place in December 2014 and a consensus statement was produced.

In March 2015 members were updated on progress, with it reported that partners were working well together for the benefit of patients and some of the identified actions were already having a positive impact on the service. The report received by the committee showed a clear purpose and commitment to improve.

The committee continues to monitor progress through its quarterly performance monitoring.

Living Wage

What's it about?

Following a motion at Full Council, Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee set up a review pay, terms and conditions that employees working on behalf of the County Council receive, assessed the merits and costs of paying all low paid employees working on behalf of the Council the Living Wage, investigated the use of zero contract hours by Council contractors and looked

to establish whether or not the practice of black listing members of Trade Unions occurs in Gloucestershire.

Since the motion was formulated, the national picture changed considerably with the proposed introduction of a 'National Living Wage' in April 2016.

How has it made a difference?

Members felt that it was important to clarify the position of those staff directly employed by the Council. Members were pleased to report that, from the evidence they had seen and individuals they had spoken to, that the Council followed best practice.

Members were able to provide clarity on the limitations the Council has in being able to influence contractors and noted the relevant legislation.

Members explored the uncertainty regarding the wider implications of the introduction of the National Living wage, particularly the potentially significant impact on the Health and Social Care Sector. The task group have passed on the concerns of Care Providers to the Local Government Association.

The group recommended that the implications of the National Living Wage are considered as part of the Council's budget setting process.

Mental Health Workshop

What's it about?

Both Children and Families and Health and Care Scrutiny committees have been concerned with children and young people's access to mental health services for some time. Whilst there has been a lot activity in this regard at the national level members agreed that it was important to gain a fuller understanding of the local position.

How has it made a difference?

Members met with the Joint Lead Commissioner (GCC and GCCG) the Clinical Director and Service Director of the 2Gether NHS Foundation Trust (2G) Children and Young People Services (CYPS) and the 2G Director of Engagement and Integration to receive information and debate the issues. This enabled members to understand what was available to children and young people and the direction of travel for the service.

The Future in Mind Local Transformation Plan has now been submitted to the Department of Health and it will be important to understand whether, in the long term, this makes a difference at the front line.

Mobile Infrastructure

What's it about?

A representative from Broadband UK gave an update to the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee on the Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP) undertaken by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Members were informed that this publically funded project aimed to consider how best to provide mobile phone coverage in areas currently receiving no coverage.

How has it made a difference?

Expressing concerns about the impact of limited mobile coverage in parts of Gloucestershire, members requested information on the 'not spot' areas identified as having no effective mobile phone coverage, and the survey work undertaken by Shropshire Council in addressing a similar issue in another rural part of Britain.

It was suggested that officers involve County Councillors in developing an evidence base from which to demonstrate concern about poor mobile phone coverage in Gloucestershire, including seeking information on the decommissioning of mobile phone masts within their divisions. It was also suggested that Town and Parish Councils be included in the review process.

Officers were requested to invite mobile phone operators to a future meeting, combined with an invitation to BDUK to give an update on the Mobile Infrastructure Project. Members were advised that the project, which was due to end in March 2016, might not necessarily demonstrate that it was economically viable to provide mobile phone coverage in some parts of the county.

Permanence Planning

What's it about?

Children and Families Scrutiny was aware of the recent comments in the press by Judge Wildblood of the Bristol Family Court relating to

Gloucestershire care proceedings practice, particularly relating to delay in achieving permanence for some children, particularly those in Section 20 arrangements (Children Act 1989 (a child living in accommodation provided by the local authority with the parents' agreement because the parents are struggling to cope). The committee felt that it was important to understand the context to and background to these comments, particularly as Judge Wildblood has previously spoken very positively about adoption practice in Gloucestershire.

How has it made a difference?

The committee received a detailed presentation from the Operations Director Children's Safeguarding explaining the decision process and the activity commissioned to understand what the underlying issues are and how these can be addressed. This included an independent audit of 100 cases (by an ex-Ofsted Inspector). The initial findings from this audit indicate that there is some uncertainty as to whether parents fully understand the meaning of a section 20 agreement, and the effectiveness of the Independent Reviewing Officer escalation process.

Members felt assured that officers were actively addressing this matter. The committee would be inviting the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service to a future meeting to better understand its role in this process; and was pleased to note that Judge Wildblood has agreed to meet with the Operations Director Children's Safeguarding to discuss the matter.

Police and Crime Panel

Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel have been working with the Commissioner's Office to clarify the level of information they wish to receive and to identify where they can add value. As a result of work planning sessions, members have been receiving more financial monitoring information.

Members have received updates on the new operating model of the Constabulary and the increased role that mobile working will play. The Panel will continue to monitor the implementation of this model and hold the Commissioner to account.

The Panel receives a quarterly highlight report which provides a great deal of information on the activities and projects funded by the

Commissioner's Fund. These projects all deliver outcomes that fit in with the Police and Crime Plan. At each meeting the panel receives an update from one of the six priority leads. The Panel will also be identifying areas for 'deeper dive' reviews of activity.

Each February the Panel meets to consider the Commissioner's budget and the precept.

Recruitment and Retention of Children's Social workers

What's it about?

A task group was requested to look to diagnose some of the challenges in retaining children's social workers, to test the robustness of the current recruitment and retention strategy and to make recommendations on actions that should be taken to improve. Members met with senior officers in Children and Families, Safeguarding, as well as ICT and Property. In addition, Members met with representatives from Essex County Council to understand the changes they are making. Most importantly, they met with social workers on the ground.

How has it made a difference?

The report from the group made recommendations to help create a working environment to help the council retain our social workers and make Gloucestershire County Council a desirable place to work. It also made recommendations to help us recruit social workers, in particular to start a conversation around increased investment in the context of the difficult financial decisions we as a Council have to make going forward.

Safeguarding – Child Sexual Exploitation

What's it about?

Child Sexual exploitation is not limited to any particular geography, ethnic or social background. It has destructive and far reaching consequences for victims, their families and society. It involves young people being offered incentives to participate in sexual acts. Protecting children is a collective, multi-agency responsibility. The Children and Families Scrutiny committee was pleased to welcome the Head of Quality (Children and Young People), a Detective Superintendent and CSE Co-ordinator

to the committee to engage with members on this important matter.

How has it made a difference?

The committee was informed as to how the Police gather intelligence to develop the profile of an area. Members also understood that the CSE Exploitation Commissioning Strategy had been developed with reference to the recommendations of the Jay report.

The committee agreed that elected members could play a key role as community leaders, raising awareness of the work being carried out. The committee felt reassured by the discussion and the active progress across partnerships and the committee received the annual report from the Independent Chairman of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Board.

Tidal Lagoon Power

What's it about?

In December 2014, Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) announced plans for a tidal lagoon programme to help meet future energy needs for a greener and cleaner UK. A tidal lagoon incorporates hydro turbines through which the sea moves to generate electricity.

Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee felt that it would be useful for all members to receive further information on this.

How has it made a difference?

Tidal Lagoon Power attended an information session for County and District members and County Council officers, along with representatives from adjoining local authorities and key local stakeholders. The session was aimed at helping attendees better understand the potential benefits and impacts for Gloucestershire.

Members were informed of the proposals that had been developed so far for the Severn Estuary, Newport project and the other proposed lagoon developments. In addition there was a question and answer session and details were provided of the potential environmental, ecological and economic implications.

Vulnerable Children and Young People Ambassadors

What's it about?

The Children and Families Scrutiny Committee were pleased to welcome four of the Ambassadors for Vulnerable Children and Young People to a meeting. These young people had become Ambassadors as having experienced the care system and/or commissioned services first hand they wanted to support other young people and to improve the system.

How has it made a difference?

The committee was impressed with the enthusiasm, commitment and openness of the Ambassadors. Committee members welcomed the challenge from the Ambassadors that when the committee received reports to consider and question whether the voice of the child was reflected and when discussing social care practice with staff members to elicit whether their practice ensured that the voice of the child was heard

The committee also agreed to co-opt an Ambassador on to the committee. This is proving to be very beneficial to committee debates and ensuring that the voice of the child is central to the committee's work.

Looking ahead: What's next for Scrutiny in Gloucestershire?

There are a number of scrutiny reviews that have been established and will be due to report in 2016.

Access to the Forest of Dean

What's it about?

The Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee acknowledged that the Forest of Dean District was vulnerable to the geographical restrictions imposed by the River Severn and noted the impact of new development. It was noted that access was limited to two main road links and a single rail link, with members expressing concern about increased congestion and the impact on business and tourism. Members agreed to set up a task group looking to widen the council's understanding of issues affecting access to and from the Forest of Dean District, to consider the impact of new development on access routes and to consider the economic impact of issues affecting access routes.

How will it make a difference?

At the task group meeting in September 2015, members received a presentation from Highways England on the lifespan of the First Severn Bridge and information on the future of the Severn Crossings, including toll arrangements. Having noted the information, the task group agreed to utilise the Forest of Dean extract of the Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP) Consultation Document 2015-2031 to progress the review.

The task group is due to report in March 2016, including details of its recommendations to the Local Transport Plan Review Consultation Document.

Climate Change

What's it about?

Following a motion at full Council, it was agreed to set up a task group to review the conclusions and recommendations of the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5). The task group aimed to understand what was meant by mitigation and adaptation strategies and to reflect on and evaluate what the Council had achieved so far in

addressing climate change. In addition it would consider the council's role in developing strategies to address climate change to develop a 'low carbon economy' and to reduce greenhouse emissions.

How will it make a difference?

The task group has been keen to engage with partners and businesses and have sent a survey out to local businesses and are considering the responses. The group is due to report in early 2016 with a report which will review the conclusions of the Fifth Assessment Report and look to make recommendations on further action that can be taken by the council, local businesses and communities to address climate change and to establish the 'low carbon economy'

Community Pubs

What's it about?

In response to a motion to Gloucestershire County Council on 26 November 2014, the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee considered an economic analysis of the local pub and restaurant sector, including the contributions pubs and restaurants make to the Gloucestershire economy. A cross party task group was established in July 2015.

Following discussions with non-profit organisation 'Pub is the Hub', representatives from the organisation met with members to discuss how they could support the review, including offering to undertake strategic mapping of Gloucestershire to identify priority areas. The organisation had worked for several other local authorities during the past 15 years in attempts to support and encourage local pubs to diversify and better serve local communities. The organisation also provides workshops and assistance to local communities to apply for grants.

How will it make a difference?

Working with the 'Pub is the Hub' organisation, the group aims to provide support to local community groups who wished to register local pubs as an asset of community value and make recommendations to the Secretary for Business, Innovation and Skills, Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Partnership and relevant business organisations. The task group is due to report in

European Union Referendum

What's it about?

The UK is set to have a referendum by the end of 2017 on whether or not to remain a member of the European Union. Members agreed at a meeting of Full Council to set up a task group to establish and identify the social, economic and cultural benefits and disadvantages that the UK's membership of the EU has on Gloucestershire.

How will it make a difference?

The review will have a number of themed one day sessions that will provide the opportunity for partners to engage with members and discuss the issue.

The group will then compile a comprehensive report that will be presented to full Council, all partner agencies, the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and be made available to the residents of Gloucestershire prior to the referendum.

Fracking

What's it about?

At the full Council meeting in October 2015, members asked to refer a motion on fracking (hydraulic fracturing for shale gas) to scrutiny. The motion expressed concern about fracking 'adding to climate change' and it particularly focussed on the impact on the Forest of Dean.

At the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting in November 2015, the committee agreed that an all member briefing would be held on 13 January 2016, followed by the planned committee meeting at the slightly later start time of 1.30 pm.

How will it make a difference?

The aim of the briefing would be to assist members in their understanding of issues relating to hydraulic fracturing and other energy extraction options, (unconventional hydrocarbons), before debating the motion later the same day.

Taking scrutiny forward at GCC



We are fortunate in Gloucestershire in having a committed and engaged group of councillors who recognise the value of overview and scrutiny. Strong partnerships have been formed between GCC and the six district councils. The contributions made by district councillors on the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee, Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee and Police and Crime Panel are one of the reasons why scrutiny in Gloucestershire is held up nationally as best practice.

It was particularly pleasing that the Centre for Public Scrutiny recognised the impact of our work at their annual conference in June 2015. GCC received an award for the review undertaken by a scrutiny task group set up to look at the social and economic impact of the pilot badger cull. This was an incredibly challenging piece of work carried out by a cross-party group of eight members led by Cllr Paul McMahon. The recommendations of the task group reached as far as Westminster with three members being invited to meet with the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

It's important though that we are not complacent and we not only build on our strengths but also look for opportunities that arise through the devolution agenda. With this in mind, we have established a scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs group and this will be an important sounding board in shaping future accountability arrangements

Simon Harper
Head of Democratic Services