

Scrutiny at Buckinghamshire County Council

Making a Difference

Annual Report 2015/16

Foreword

Scrutiny at Buckinghamshire County Council is undertaken by four Select Committees, each with its own remit. As the Chairmen of the Select Committees, we are delighted to present our Annual Report for 2015/16.

Scrutiny plays a vital part in local democracy by holding decision-makers to account, contributing to policies as they are developed and by looking into issues of concern for residents across Buckinghamshire. We know that the best services to residents are provided when we work well together with other organisations, and so we don't just look at the Council's services but at partners too.

In this report you will find a summary of some of the key pieces of work we have done during 2015/16 and the difference that we have made and you can hear us talk about the year through short videos at www.buckscc.gov.uk/scrutiny.

Our Inquiries this year have included a wide range of topics ranging from 15-minute Care Visits to Flooding; and from Preventing Child Sexual Exploitation to Rent in Advance.

Our Select Committees are cross-party and non-political. We gather evidence from a wide range of sources, presenting our recommendations for change to decision-makers and taking time to monitor implementation of all agreed recommendations.

This year 91% of the recommendations we made were accepted by decision-makers and 71% of the recommendations we made last year have either been implemented or are on track for completion.

We welcome and value the contribution that members of our communities have made to the work of the Committees. Any member of the Buckinghamshire community can attend a meeting, watch our webcasts, provide evidence for Inquiries or suggest topics for us to look at. You will find more information on how to get involved at the end of this document.

Finally, we would like to thank all Councillors who have contributed to scrutiny this year, Cabinet for their support of scrutiny, and all the officers, co-optees, partners and public who contributed valuable evidence and support throughout the year.

We hope 2016/17 proves to be as successful.



David Carroll, Chairman,
Transport, Environment
and Communities Select
Committee



Angela Macpherson,
Chairman, Health and
Adult Social Care Select
Committee



Brian Roberts, Chairman,
Finance, Performance and
Resources Select
Committee



Val Letheren, Chairman,
Children's Social Care
and Learning Select
Committee

What is scrutiny?

Buckinghamshire County Council operates a Cabinet system. This means that 8 of the 49 elected Councillors are responsible for the majority of decisions. Scrutiny is an important way in which the remaining Councillors can hold these decision-makers to account.

Scrutiny in Buckinghamshire County Council is undertaken by four Select Committees. These Committees are made up of elected Councillors who are not part of the Council's Cabinet, together with co-opted representatives from relevant local organisations.

Each Select Committee has a different area of responsibility and each examines local services across the public sector.



Making a difference in 2015/16

Our Inquiries

getbucks

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Committee recommends raft of measures to prevent sexual exploitation in Bucks

545L, 5 NOV 2015 | UPDATED 545L, 5 NOV 2015 | BY CAMILLA GOODMAN

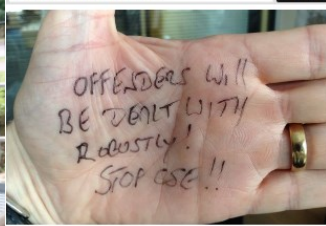
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The decision to carry out the review was made following the publication of serious reviews into events in Oxford and Rotherham.

Although much work to address the knowledge gap around CSE is already taking place in Bucks through the Safeguarding Children Board's 'R U Wise? 107' campaign, committee members decided the focus of their inquiry would be on the prevention of CSE in Buckinghamshire.

2 Police release F...



Flooding in Buckinghamshire 2013-14: Lessons Learned

A report by the Buckinghamshire County Council's Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

TEC Select Committee Members: Mrs P Birchley (Inquiry Chairman), Mr T Butcher, Mr D Carroll (Committee Chairman), Mr W Chapple OBE, Mrs L Clarke OBE, Mrs A Daves, Mr P Gonn

Agreed by TEC Select Committee: 17 November 2015

Buckinghamshire County Council

Buckinghamshire County Council
Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

Inquiry Report: Approved for publication on 11 August 2015

15 Minute Care Visits in Buckinghamshire

Council reveals budget plans to make savings

BUCKS County Council's independent budget scrutiny select committee has published its 16 recommendations for the coming year.

Other recommendations include:

- To review the charging policies for all home to school transport users to ensure maximum income generation opportunities are explored, and to undertake a public consultation on any proposed changes to the allocation of existing budget spending into services that support vulnerable children and adults are prevalent.
- To identify gaps across all council employees and work across the

BUCKS County Council's independent budget scrutiny select committee has published its 16 recommendations for the coming year.

Other recommendations include:

- To look at alternative ways of delivering the Youth Counselling Service without cutting the service completely.
- To undertake an appraisal to assess the cost and benefits of providing the fostering and adoption service in different ways including exploring the potential for outsourcing.

The committee's report will be presented to the cabinet on February 15, 2016/17 to be agreed by the full county council at its meeting on February 18.

Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee

This Select Committee scrutinises children's social care and the education of children and adults. It gathers evidence from a wide range of partners, which this year have included:

- the Police
- drug and alcohol misuse services
- sexual health services
- schools
- RUSafe, and
- the NHS

Since the negative Ofsted rating in 2014, the Committee has been tracking improvements of children's social care. This year it has focused on recruitment and retention, child sexual exploitation, fostering and adoption and counter-radicalisation (Prevent agenda).

Key Achievements

- ◇ A successful Cyber-Safety conference in Aylesbury, held as a direct result of a 2014/15 Inquiry and which looked at issues like cyber-bullying and online grooming
- ◇ As a result of the same Inquiry, web resources on cyber safety have been developed and a lead officer for cyber-safety identified.

Preventing Child Sexual Exploitation

After publication of the Serious Case Review of events in Oxford, Select Committee looked in depth as what is being done to prevent child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Buckinghamshire.

The Committee heard from a range of partners, victims and the parent of a victim. The Committee looked at some difficult issues and made recommendations for improvements.

An important success was Thames Valley Police's agreement to roll out the Hotel Watch scheme across Buckinghamshire. The scheme links hotels and guest houses to help protect vulnerable children.

The Committee will be receiving its first update on progress in April 2016 and will do more work on children missing from home or education - issues known to be potential indicators of CSE.

Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

This Select Committee has a wide remit covering transport, environment and communities services and issues.

This wide remit leads to a varied and interesting work programme. Over the past 12 months the Committee has looked into:

- legal highs
- country parks
- Transport for Buckinghamshire's performance indicators
- The devolution of services to Parish and Town Councils.

The Committee has also helped with the development of strategy in key areas including:

- Local Transport Plan 4, and
- Options for the future delivery of the Library Service.

Key Achievements

- ◇ A new Integrated Transport Unit will be operational from April 2016 as a result of an Inquiry into public transport
- ◇ A number of pilot projects are being run to identify and meet the transport needs of communities in a more innovative and cost-effective way
- ◇ Improved systems are being introduced to manage and monitor S106 contributions, following the S106 Inquiry in 2015

Flooding in Buckinghamshire: Lessons Learned

The Inquiry looked at whether there would be a better flood response from partners in the County as a result of lessons learned from the floods in 2010.

The Inquiry heard from:

- Residents (directly and by online survey)
- The Environment Agency
- Thames Water
- District Councils
- Bucks and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue

The Committee also went on site visits to some of the affected areas.

The Inquiry gave Councillors confidence that lessons had been learned although they also want to see:

- ◇ Quicker and more co-ordinated reaction from agencies on the ground
- ◇ More work to promote Community Emergency Plans, and
- ◇ Continuing focus by partners on the overall picture

In July 2016 the Committee will be given a 6-month progress report on recommendations.

Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee

The Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee looks at all areas of the Council's strategic performance, financial management and corporate issues, with the work programme driven mainly by the results of the annual Budget Scrutiny process.

In 2015/16 the Committee reviewed and challenged a number of key strategies including:

- Income Generation
- Digital Strategy
- Contract Management Framework.
- Future Shape
- Transformation of Day Services for Adults
- Asset Strategy Review (focused on the Agricultural Estate)

The Committee also reviewed the progress on recommendations from:

- the 2015/16 Budget Scrutiny Inquiry
- Member Accountability Inquiry
- the Crisis Support Inquiry

Key Achievements

- ◇ In-depth scrutiny of the Council's budget proposals. As a result of some of the agreed recommendations:
 - The Youth Counselling Service now has transitional funding
 - Alternatives to Council support will be sought for the Duke of Edinburgh scheme
 - Options for the best model and income generation for the Educational Psychology Services will be investigated

Rent in Advance

This issue was initially highlighted during the Crisis Support Inquiry in 2014/15, which found that some Buckinghamshire residents were unable to access rented accommodation because they weren't able to raise the money needed to secure the property.

Over three months in 2015, the Committee's Inquiry Group talked with:

- housing officers from all the District Councils
- the Wycombe Rent-in-Advance Working Group
- local Credit Unions and
- other key local charities.

The Inquiry's recommendations were all agreed by Cabinet.

As a result, the Council has is working on a new countywide emergency loan fund. The £50k fund will include provision for borrowing money for rent-in-advance. A pilot scheme is due to be launched in 2016.

Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

The Health & Adult Social Care (HASC) Select Committee covers all NHS services received and the Council's public health and adult social care services. These Council services form the largest area of the local authority's budget.

This year the Committee has looked into a wide range of topics including:

- Adult and children's mental health services
- Buckinghamshire Care
- Female Genital Mutilation
- The Better Care Fund
- The Care Act and the Care Market
- Public Health services
- Frimley Hospital Trust

Key achievements

- ◇ The Keogh review of quality of care in hospital trusts: Recommendations have been incorporated into Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust's Improvement programmes.
- ◇ Gaps in NHS dentistry provision: The NHS Southern Region has acknowledged gaps in provision of NHS dentistry in Buckinghamshire and recognised that further analysis is needed across the region.
- ◇ Day Centre Reconfiguration: Reviewed whether the new day centres are meeting the needs of a broad range of users. This will be revisited in 2016/17.
- ◇ Inquiry into the accessibility of services for adults with learning disabilities.

15 Minute Care Visits in Buckinghamshire

This Inquiry checked whether the Council's use of 15 minute visits could meet the care needs, dignity and wellbeing of service users.

The Inquiry Group gathered evidence from:

- Frontline carers and service users
- Observing 27 care visits across Buckinghamshire
- An audit of care plans.

The Inquiry found that 15 minute visits could have a place as part of a person's overall care package, with care being delivered in a dignified manner. The Committee were clear that any personal care tasks should be included in longer visits and not in 15 minute visits.

The Inquiry also raised the issue of pay for travel time and as a result care providers winning bids for Council contracts have agreed to pay travel time for staff.

Joint Scrutiny

The Select Committees work together where it makes sense to do so. This year for example the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee and the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee have started to look at recruitment and retention of social workers.

Each year a major piece of scrutiny takes place in January when the Council's proposed budget plans are scrutinised in detail. The way we examine the budget plans has been recognised as national good practice.

This year the Chairmen of the Select Committee joined members of the Finance and Performance Committee on an intensive three-day Inquiry. The Council is facing a difficult financial time and Budget Scrutiny set out to make sure that plans were watertight and deliverable.

Budget Scrutiny 2015/16

As a result of Budget Scrutiny:

- ◇ **Transitional funding was provided for the Time to Talk youth counselling service to help the organisation move to alternative funding arrangements in the longer term**
- ◇ **The Council will investigate all options for the Educational Psychology Service to find the best delivery model for the future**
- ◇ **The Council will explore other ways to keep the valued Duke of Edinburgh scheme running in schools**

2016/17: The year ahead

Children's Social Care & Learning Select Committee

- A more focussed look at the social care improvement plan, with sessions on:
 - ◊ the workforce
 - ◊ fostering and adoption
 - ◊ ICT
- The Prevent agenda,
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Early help and the role of Children's Centres.

Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

Thematic meetings will allow more time to look in-depth issues including

- The recruitment and retention of the adult social care workforce
- The Care Market
- Systems Resilience
- Maternity Services
- Locality working and integration

Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

- HS2
- Modern slavery
- Transport, Economy, Environment Business Unit Plan
- Museum Trust review
- England's Economic Heartland strategic alliance
- An energy from waste update

Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee

- Agricultural and property estate
- The delivery of all budget savings, particularly through the Digital Strategy
- Shared services with London Borough of Harrow
- The Council's training programme and gaps in skills
- Shortlisted inquiries into the delivery plans for Income Generation; and the Council's property portfolio

Getting Involved

The Council welcomes the public's involvement in scrutiny because public services are provided to help improve local lives. There are a number of ways in which anyone who lives, works or studies in Buckinghamshire can get involved in the work of scrutiny at the County Council.

Suggest a topic

Any member of the public can suggest topics for the Select Committees and are welcome to do so by using the online form or emailing democracy@buckscc.gov.uk

Contribute to an inquiry

Scrutiny work is improved by the involvement of local people. To have your say on any current scrutiny inquiry, please email democracy@buckscc.gov.uk

Public Questions

Public Questions is an opportunity for the public to put their question or point of view on any issue that has an impact on their local community or the county as a whole. For more information, visit the Council's website (which also gives information on other routes for individual issues).

Come to a meeting

Select Committees are open to the public and anyone interested simply needs to turn up at the meeting. Dates of all meetings are on the Council's website.

Watch a webcast

The Select Committees are webcast and can be watched live or up to six months after the meeting on the Council's website.

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