

Scrutiny at Buckinghamshire County Council

Making a Difference

Annual Report 2016/17

Foreword

It has been a very busy and exciting year across the four Select Committees and as Chairmen of the Select Committees, we are delighted to present our Annual Report for 2016/17.

The Select Committees continue to hold decision-makers to account, contribute to policy development and look at issues of concern for residents across Buckinghamshire. Our Select Committees are cross-party and non-political and our overall aim is to improve outcomes for our residents through the work of the Select Committees.

In this report you will find a summary of some of the key pieces of work and key achievements during 2016/17 from across the four Select Committees and the difference that we have made. Our Inquiries this year have included a wide range of topics ranging from the hearing the voice of the child to sustainable school travel; and from income generation to the hospital discharge process.

Hearing the views of the public is vitally important in our work and this year we have used a number of techniques to gather evidence including: resident and service user surveys; live questions during the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry; and focus groups.

We welcome and value the contribution that members of our communities have made to the work of the Committees. We hope this will continue next year and more people will get involved by attending a meeting, watching our webcasts and submitting questions, providing evidence to an Inquiry or by suggesting topics for us to look at. You will find more information on how to get involved at the end of this document.

This year 90% of the recommendations we made were accepted by decision-makers and 84% of the recommendations we made last year have either been implemented or are on track for completion.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the hard work of the previous Select Committee Chairmen, Val Letheren and Angela Macpherson. We would like to thank all Councillors who have contributed to scrutiny this year, Cabinet for their continued support of scrutiny and to all officers, co-optees, partners and public who contributed valuable experience and support throughout the year. We hope 2017/18 proves to be as exciting and successful.



Bill Chapple OBE, Chairman,
Finance, Performance and
Resources Select Committee



Brian Roberts, Chairman,
Health and Adult Social Care
Select Committee



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



Dev Dhillon, Chairman,
Children's Social Care
and Learning Select
Committee

What is scrutiny?

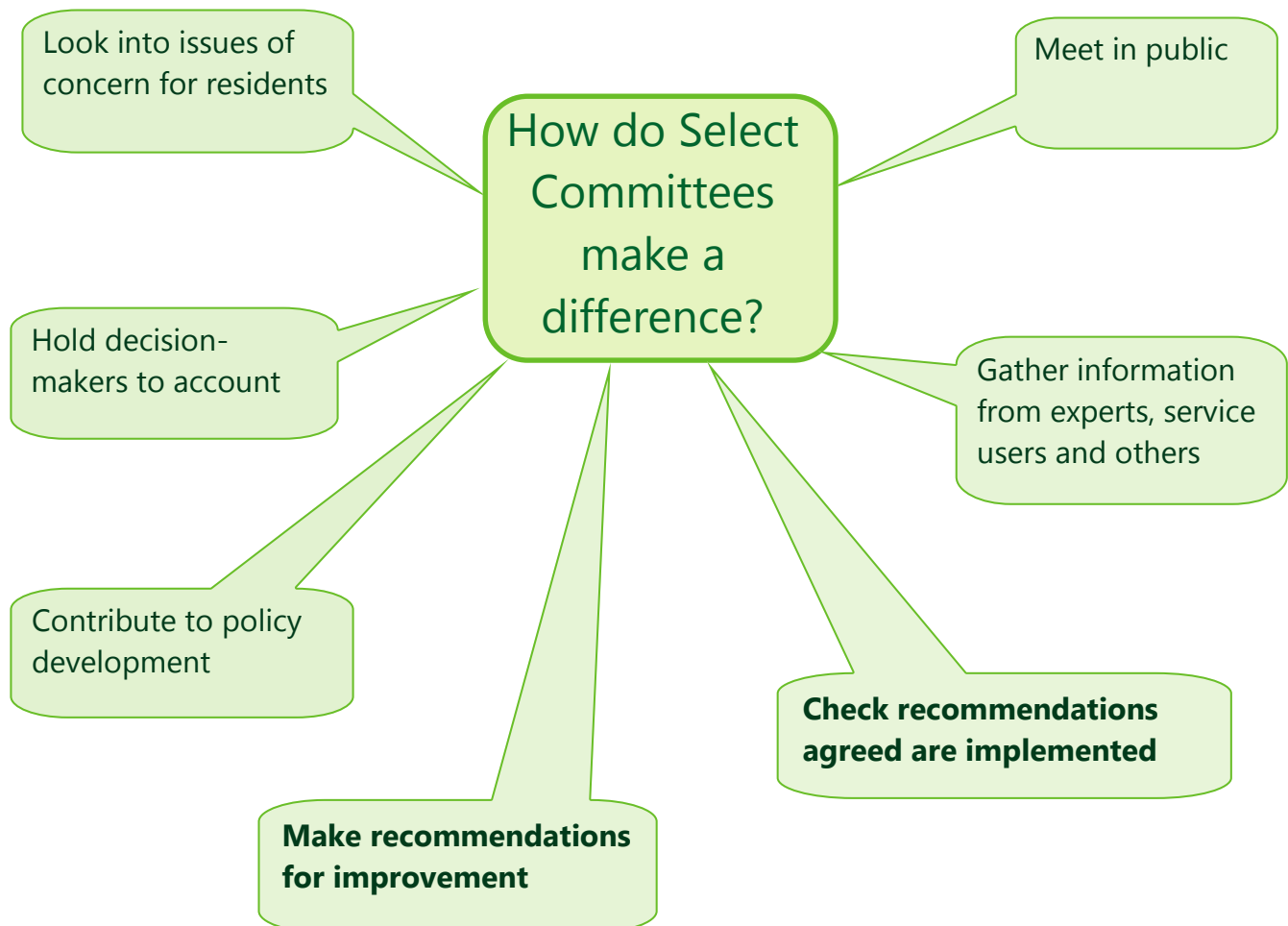
Scrutiny is an important part of local democracy and provides the legal power for Councillors to look into issues of concern for residents and to hold decision-makers to account for the decisions they are making.

Although scrutiny can't make decisions, it makes recommendations for improvement to decision-makers. Within the Council, this is the Cabinet but as scrutiny can look at services provided by other organisations, it often makes recommendations for partners.

There are also specific powers for scrutiny to hold the NHS to account ('health scrutiny')

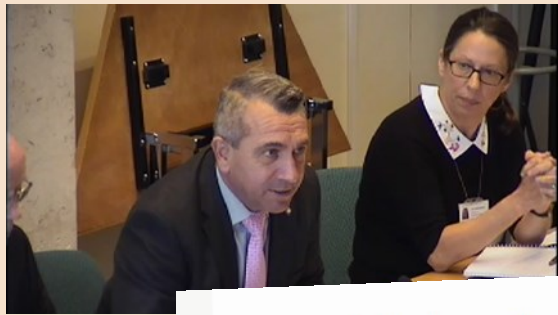
Scrutiny in Buckinghamshire County Council is undertaken by four Select Committees. These Committees are made up of elected Councillors who are not part of the Council's Cabinet, together with co-opted representatives from relevant local organisations.

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



Making a difference in 2016/17

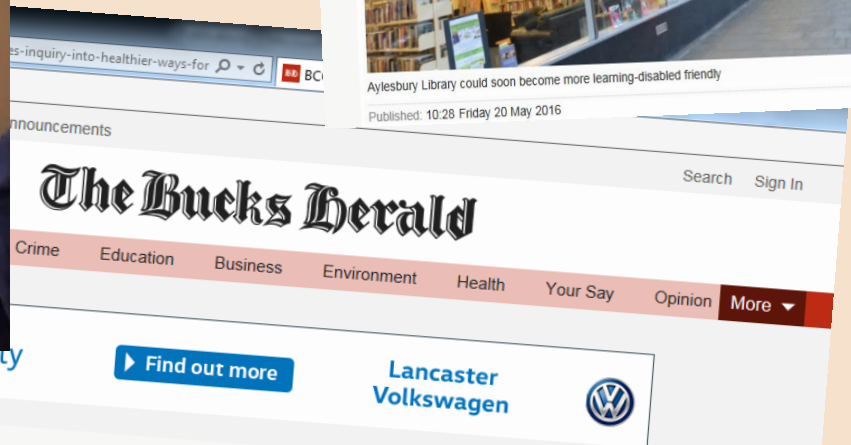
Committees in Action



Inquiry into learning disabilities hears evidence of 'unhelpful' transport providers – while changes at Aylesbury Library could spearhead service improvements



Aylesbury Library could soon become more learning-disabled friendly
Published: 10:28 Friday 20 May 2016



BCC launches inquiry into healthier ways for parents, children and carers to make the school journey



Making a difference in 2016/17 Committees in Action



County Councillors in Bucks are having to justify their budget plans during an intense 3 day scrutinisation by a cross-party committee.

Among the things being looked at is the proposed council tax hike of 3.99% that is said to be necessary to deal with 'expenditure pressures'.

For example it's expected that government grant money for schools in Bucks will be significantly reduced. The County Council anticipate a drop of £3.8m per year in the Education Services Grant by September 2017.

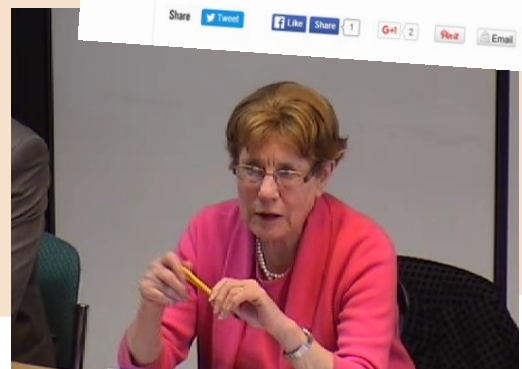
The council report also highlighted that demand for adults and children's social care services is increasing.

Suggests
County and NH service integration

The Health being brought in



Report stopping blockin
12 recommendations have been made to the Council



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 has included Barnardo's, RU Safe, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, The National Youth Advocacy Service and Buckinghamshire Learning Trust.

The Committee has heard directly from families and children and young people through surveys and attending a Youth Voice event. Committee Members also undertook fact finding visits to a number of Children's Centres across the County to meet staff, parents and children.

During the year, as well as tracking improvements in children's social care, the Committee has also focused on child sexual exploitation, educational attainment and provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Key Achievements

During 2016/17 recommendations made in the Committee's "Preventing Child Sexual Exploitation" Inquiry have been implemented, including

- ◇ the production of a tool-kit now used widely in primary schools to help foster resilience in pupils and
- ◇ the rolling out of training and briefings for Members on spotting the signs of child sexual exploitation.

The Committee has continued to monitor progress in implementing the recommendations from its 'Narrowing the Gap' Inquiry into educational attainment, which continue to have a positive impact. For example the recommendation to focus resources on improving phonics in early years to improve literacy led to improving attainment for disadvantaged children in this area.

As a result of a recommendation in the "Voice of the Child and Young Person" Inquiry, improvements have already been made to the website for children and families to include easy access to the new "Mind of My Own" (MOMO) app which allows children to give their views quickly and easily from their phones or computers.

Listening to Children and Young People

Listening to and acting upon the views of children and young people is an important priority for the Council.

During the autumn, the Committee looked in depth at the extent to which the views of children and young people influenced the way children's services were planned, commissioned and delivered and how easy it was for children and young people to give their views to the Council.

As a result of this review, 8 recommendations for improvement were made and these were all agreed in full or in part. The Committee will continue to monitor the implementation of all the recommendations during the coming year.

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:

- modern slavery
- country parks
- Transport for Buckinghamshire's performance indicators
- The devolution of services to Parish and Town Councils.
- Buckinghamshire and Surrey Joint Trading Standards Service

The Committee has also helped with the development of strategy in key areas, such as the Safer Bucks Plan.

Key Achievements

- ◇ **S106 Inquiry 2015** — A Section 106 Officer has been appointed and improved systems introduced to manage and monitor S106 contributions.
- ◇ **Flooding Inquiry 2015** — an all Member Briefing on Emergency Planning was held and a more co-ordinated approach to the supply of sandbags in a flood event has been agreed with district councils.
- ◇ **Economic Development Inquiry 2016** — a user friendly guide for the public and Members 'Economic Development in Bucks' was produced and the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP will now report annually to Council.

Sustainable School Travel in Buckinghamshire

The Committee has recently completed an Inquiry into Sustainable School Travel in Buckinghamshire.

Evidence was gathered from Council officers, Head Teachers, parents, local residents, pupils, Police, Fire and Public Health.

The Inquiry team was impressed to learn that Buckinghamshire is recognised for its innovative solutions to promoting sustainable travel to school and reducing car use, but has made recommendations to make it easier for more children to travel to school without the use of the car



The Inquiry findings will be reported to Cabinet in April 2017.

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 2016/17 the Committee reviewed and challenged a number of key strategies including:

- Income Generation
- Digital Strategy
- BSP Business Plan
- OD Shared Services with Harrow
- Budget Savings monitoring
- Property Review

The Committee also reviewed the progress on recommendations from:

- the 2016/17 Budget Scrutiny Inquiry
- The Rent in Advance Inquiry

Key Achievements

- ◇ **2016 Budget Inquiry** — Alternative ways of delivering the Duke of Edinburgh Awards and Youth Counselling have been identified, which makes the services more financially sustainable.
- ◇ **Rent in Advance 2015** — BCC has initiated a rent in advance loan scheme in partnership with the Credit Unions to support Buckinghamshire residents.

Income Generation

This issue was initially highlighted during the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry in 2016.

An Inquiry was launched to consider whether enough was being done to identify opportunities and increase income across the Council, and to identify what, if anything, needed to be put in place to maximise income generation opportunities.

In December 2016, the Inquiry reported to Cabinet and made a number of recommendations including:

- That governance arrangements are put in place to ensure oversight and delivery of Income Generation targets across the Council.
- That a mechanism is established by which income generation information, best practice and support can be shared across all Business Units, including skills development resources.

As a result, one of the Council's senior management team has been named as the organisation's Income Generation 'Champion' and a network of Income Generation Champions has already been established across all Business Units.

Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

The Health & Adult Social Care (HASC) Select Committee covers all NHS services received by Buckinghamshire residents 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 reviewed and challenged a number of key areas including:

- Oral Health
- Maternity Services
- System Resilience
- Pharmacy
- The Better Care Fund
- Public Health Services
- Musculoskeletal Services
- Vascular Services

Key achievements

- ◇ As a result of recommendations in the Committee's Accessibility and Promotion of Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities Inquiry, updated training has been given during 2016 to operators providing transport services to people with learning disabilities to improve access and experience for users .
- ◇ Key recommendations made by the Committee about implementing more robust monitoring to ensure policies around care visits are adhered to have been fully implemented during 2016 so that care is delivered in a dignified manner and meets the needs of service users.

Hospital Discharge

This inquiry was set-up to review the Hospital Discharge process to include performance around delayed transfers of care across the whole system. The Inquiry group felt that the move towards more integrated health and social care services provided an opportunity to review the current discharge process to see which areas require more focus and resource in order to create a seamless patient pathway in the future. Evidence was gathered in different ways through speaking directly to frontline health and social care professionals.

Recommendations have been made to:

- Standardise and computerise patient paperwork across the system.
- Improve the Patient, Carer and Family Voice in the decision-making process.
- Develop a Trusted Assessor role to speed-up the assessment process.
- Speed up the introduction of seven-day working to reduce pressure across the system.

A joint response to the recommendations is currently being developed by the County Council, Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust and the Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Joint Scrutiny

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

Although the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry is led by the Council's Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee, the Chairmen of the other three Select Committee join the Committee on an intensive three and a half day Inquiry.

The Council is facing a difficult financial time and scrutiny of budget plans is vital to make sure that plans are realistic and achievable. To achieve this, the Leader of the Council and each Cabinet Member were questioned in detail by the Committee on the budget proposals for their portfolio area.

The Budget Inquiry meetings were held in public and webcast live. This year, as an innovative approach, members of the public were invited to submit their questions for individual Cabinet Members via Twitter, which further enhanced transparency and public accountability. The Committee was able to ask over 25 questions on behalf of Buckinghamshire residents.

Budget Scrutiny 2017/18

Budget Scrutiny made 14 recommendations, 11 were agreed and 1 was agreed in part. Highlights of the agreed recommendations include :

- ***Cabinet will now receive specific quarterly progress reports on income generation to make sure the Council is maximising resources which can be used to help the most vulnerable residents***
- ***An additional £350,000 per annum will be invested in the gully maintenance regime to reduce the risk of flooding across the County***
- ***No further reductions in the number of Local Area Technicians will be made within the next three years, maintaining this vital local resource***

In addition, the Budget Scrutiny process has increased Members' understanding of the budget pressures in all service areas and will inform the ongoing work programmes of each of the Council's Select Committees.

Public Involvement in 2016/17

Public involvement in scrutiny is an important part of the Select Committee's work.

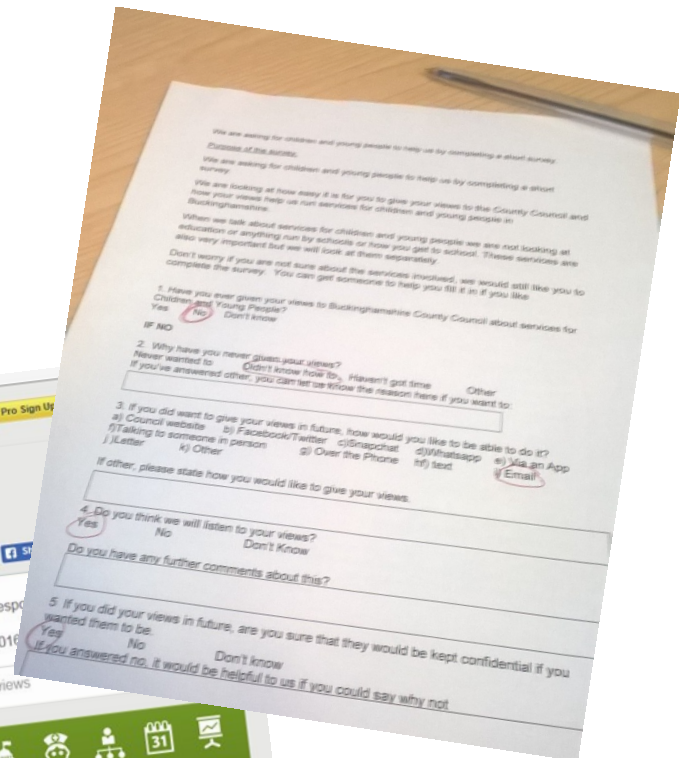
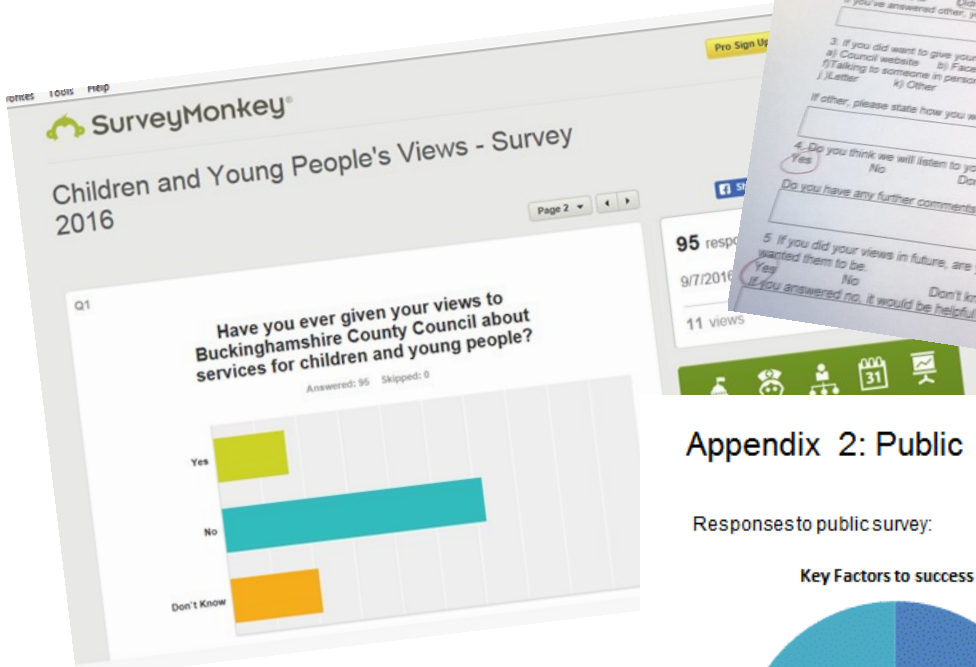
In 2016/17 members of the public have been fantastic in responding to our calls for evidence. Buckinghamshire residents have helped with our work in a number of ways, including:

Filling out surveys to give us views on reducing car journeys to schools and on the ability of young people to influence services

Submitting live questions for us to use when challenging Cabinet Members about their budget plans

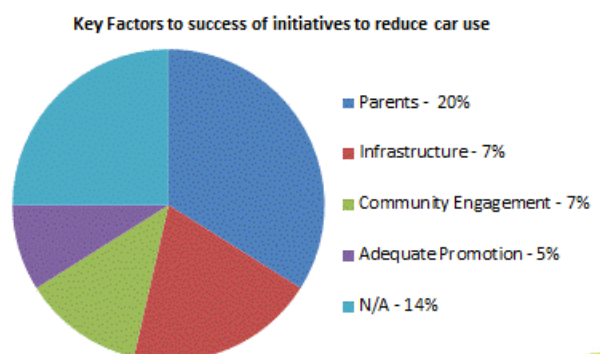
Junior Road Safety Officers providing written and video evidence for our School Travel Inquiry

Providing information through a survey, video and views gathered through Young Carers to help with our Voice of the Child Inquiry



Appendix 2: Public Engagement Results

Responses to public survey:



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.

Follow us on Twitter  @BucksDemocracy

