

Annual Scrutiny Report

2018-19



Making a difference

Foreword

This year has been a busy year across the four Select Committees. The Chairmen of the Select Committees are delighted to present our Annual Report for 2018/19.

The Council has a long history of robust and mature scrutiny, developed over the years. This model continues to be highly regarded by Members, acting as a 'critical friend' and holding decision makers to account, whilst also contributing to policy development and looking at issues of concern for residents across Buckinghamshire. Our Select Committees are cross-party, non-political and the overall aim is to improve services and outcomes for residents.

In this report you will find a summary of some of the key pieces of work and achievements during 2018/19 from across all four Select Committees, including the difference we've made locally. We have completed formal inquiries on Child Obesity, Permanent Exclusions, Support for Carers and Budget Scrutiny for 2019.

In addition, we have trialled a number of new approaches to scrutiny, promoting early engagement with the Select Committees in the development of policy, for example, the freight strategy and capital and investment strategy were both discussed at meetings ahead of Cabinet agreement. Also Select Committees have been working collaboratively with service areas to provide a 'sounding board' ahead of consultations or major service changes, such as Early Help and Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Hearing the views of the public is vitally important to scrutiny. This year we have received public questions at all Select Committees and we actively encourage public participation at all opportunities. We hope more people will get involved, there is more information on how to do this at the end of this document.

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



David Watson, Chairman,
Finance, Performance and
Resources Select
Committee



Dev Dhillon, Chairman,
Children's Select
Committee



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



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

What is scrutiny?

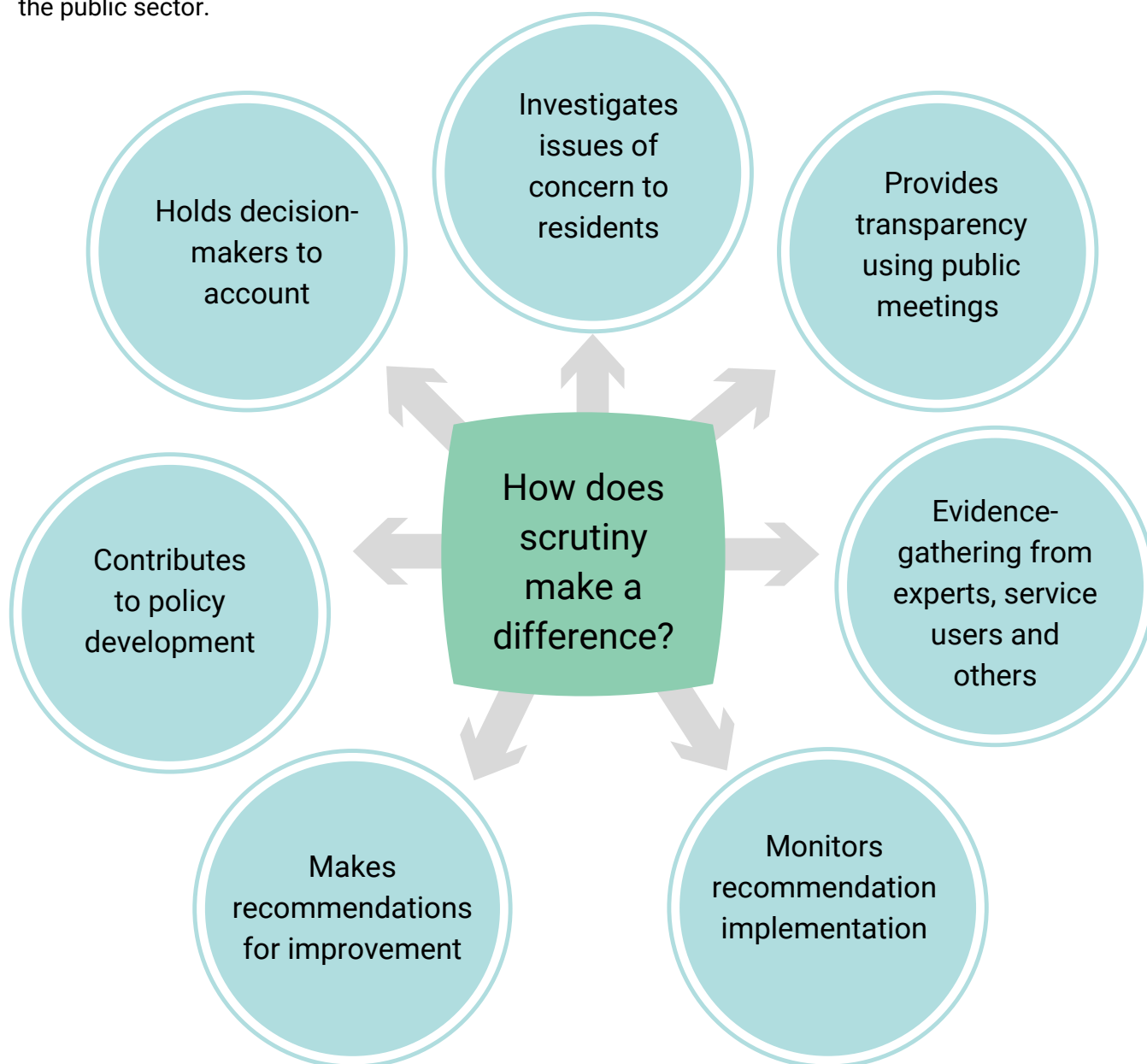
Scrutiny is an important part of local democracy and provides the legal power for Councillors to look into issues of concern for residents, holding decision-makers to account for the decisions they are making.

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 within 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.



Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

The Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee holds health and social care decision-makers to account and acts as a critical friend to the health and social care sector. Part of the Select Committee's work is around challenging proposals for health and social care service change to ensure the best possible outcomes for Buckinghamshire residents. This year the Committee has reviewed and challenged a number of areas including:

- Winter resilience across the whole system
- Local medicine supplies (in light of Brexit)
- Director of Public Health's Annual Report
- Integration of health and social care (progress towards integration by 2020)
- Lace Hill health centre development in Buckingham (keeping a watching brief)
- Potential impact of Government Green Paper on social care funding (awaiting publication)
- Adult Social Care Transformation Plans
- The NHS long-term plan (including the impact locally)
- Development of Primary Care Networks
- Development of services at the community hubs at Marlow and Thame
- Recommendation monitoring of the Hospital Discharge Inquiry (12 months on)

Committee Members continue to attend health and social care events, including the Hospital Trust and Clinical Commissioning Group joint AGM in July, both Trust and CCG Board meetings and attendance at a debrief meeting around the changes to repeat prescriptions which provided an opportunity to feedback on the issues raised by the Health and Adult Social Care.

Key achievements

- Prepared a statement for inclusion in the Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust's annual quality account 2018/19 (May 2018).
- Prepared a response to South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust's annual accounts 2018/19 (June 2018).
- Responded to Adult Social Care's Short Breaks strategy consultation (July 2018).
- Child Obesity Inquiry – the report and recommendations were presented to Cabinet in October 2018 (11 recommendations of which all were accepted, 3 partially). The progress on implementing the recommendations is due to be reviewed by the Committee in June 2019.
- A Task & Finish Group was set up in January to undertake pre-decision scrutiny around the proposal for residential short breaks (respite) for older people and adults with a learning, mental, sensory or physical disability. This is ongoing and will be reported to Cabinet in June/July time.

Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

Support for carers - 1 day evidence gathering

This inquiry was set up to gain a greater understanding about the current level of support for carers (from children to adults) across the system – health, social care, local communities and schools. A full day of evidence gathering took place on Tuesday 30 October 2018 and a report with recommendations will be presented to Cabinet in May 2019.

Recommendations included:

- Creating a single point of access for all carers with signposting to all relevant services;
- Developing a single assessment form to be accessed by all key organisations to reduce duplication;
- Ensuring all carers have contingency plans in place and that these are reviewed regularly as part of the carer assessment reviews;
- Further development of the GP Carers Award with the aim of increasing the number of accredited GP practices in Buckinghamshire;
- Development of a training programme for the Integrated Care System to help identify and support carers who are employees within the system.

NHS plans to reduce elderly patient visits to hospital



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Green light for plans to tackle childhood obesity in Bucks



Published by Local Democracy Reporter Jasmine Rapson at 5:40am 30th October 2018.



Plans to tackle childhood obesity in Buckinghamshire were given the green light this week, after it was revealed hundreds of children under the age of five in the county are overweight.

“Just to say we hugely appreciate being included in this report. It was good of you to think of us. Thank you. I never expect anything and will continue to do our work as I believe it is needed and we are getting results”

- **Director of Empower to Cook in response to the Child Obesity Inquiry**

Children's 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 who offer commissioned services. The Committee continues to closely monitor the performance of children's social care and education services in Buckinghamshire. This year it has focussed on:

- Educational attainment
- The school's side-by-side project
- New safeguarding arrangements (BSCB)
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder provision for children and young people
- Early help
- Home to school transport reforms
- Permanent exclusions
- The Ofsted Improvement Plan
- Social Care Transformation Plans
- Looked after children and care leavers
- Elective home education
- Child sexual exploitation

The Committee has visited the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and also met with social workers across various locations within Buckinghamshire. A planned inquiry into placements has just been agreed by the Committee. It is intended that the information gained from the inquiry will assist the new Council and its Members to understand this costly and complex area. Two Members of the Finance, Performance and Resources Committee will be co-opted onto the inquiry, as placement costs are such a significant element of the Children's Services budget.

Key achievements

Parent Governor Representatives (PGRs)

We are pleased to announce that we have two new Parent Governor Representatives, who represent secondary and primary schools within Buckinghamshire. Our PGRs offer external scrutiny and first-hand knowledge of the modern day problems faced by schools and children in education. We are one of the few councils who has managed to accrue this representation and we look forward to seeing the difference this makes to educational scrutiny in 2019/20.

Home to School Transport cuts criticised by parents



Published by Local Democracy Reporter, Local Democracy Reporter at 12:46pm 2nd December 2018.



A council consultation into plans to cut school transport has been criticised for not being accessible for parents who have children with special educational needs (SEND).

Mum, Sarah Hodges, told members of Bucks County Council's (BCC) children's select committee (November 27) that she struggled to attend the evening consultation sessions as it is difficult to arrange care for her daughter.

BCC launched a consultation on the overhaul of the service in October after growing pressures saw the

Plan to tackle social care recruitment crisis in Bucks



Published by Local Democracy Reporter, Local Democracy Reporter at 7:25am 29th January 2019.



The director of the county council's children's services has assured councillors there are robust plans in place to hire social care staff to tackle challenges recruiting in the department.

This week children's social care leaders were grilled on Glaston's latest monitoring report for the falling service - which found current social workers have been left with large caseloads due to a high turnover of

Children's Select Committee

A reduction in permanent exclusions

Following the permanent exclusion inquiry recommendation monitoring, where all except one recommendation was accepted by Cabinet, it has been noted that permanent exclusions within Buckinghamshire have decreased. Teachers and parents now have more information available to try to reduce the likelihood of a child's exclusion from school.

Giving local families a voice and protecting vulnerable children

The Committee has remained dedicated to ensuring that Buckinghamshire's most vulnerable families have had their concerns voiced about a number of key decisions this year. This includes changes to Early Help and Home to School transport. The Committee will continue to hold decision makers to account and ensure that alternative provision and solutions are realistic, ensuring that all children have fair access to service provision and education.

Reducing exclusions of vulnerable groups in schools a priority, says BCC



Published by the Mix96 News Team at 5:45am 19th October 2017.



Bucks County Council say reducing the number of permanent school exclusions is a key priority for their education strategy over the next four years.

They added that there will be an increased focus on positive outcomes for vulnerable groups.

It's after government stats revealed the number of permanently expelled black and mixed ethnicity students is about three and a half times higher than for white kids.

The stats

Percentage of permanent exclusions by ethnicity for Buckinghamshire (%)

- Asian - 0.14
- Black - 0.42
- Chinese - 0.00
- Mixed - 0.40
- White - 0.12
- Other - 0.00

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/ UPDATED: Challenge to Bucks Children's Centre closures rejected

UPDATED: Challenge to Bucks Children's Centre closures rejected



Published by the Mix96 News Team at 5:39am 2nd February 2018. (Updated at 2:02pm 2nd February 2018)



UPDATE

A Buckinghamshire County Council committee has rejected a challenge over plans to close children's o

The call-in has been discussed for over two hours today, mostly around the process the Council took consulting people on their early help plans.

This means the plans will now go ahead, but with some recommendations to change things slightly.

EARLIER

Bucks County Council is today responding to a challenge of their decision to close 35 Children's C around the county.

Earlier this month proposals for an 'early help service' run from up to 9 hubbed centres was approved.

Three councillors called that decision in - which means the decision could be reversed.

Finance, Resources and Performance Select Committee

The Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee considers all areas of the Council's strategic performance, financial management and corporate issues, with the work programme often driven by the findings of the annual Budget Scrutiny process. In 2018/19, the Committee reviewed and challenged a number of key strategies including:

- Capital and Investment Strategy
- Technology Strategy – Smarter Buckinghamshire
- Customer Service Standards Review

Members also received updates on progress in the areas of workforce, property & assets and undertook a mid-year review of costs and savings in Adult Social Care and Children's Services, which are the Council's highest areas of spend.

Budget Scrutiny

The Budget Scrutiny Inquiry undertaken in January remains the focus of the Select Committee's annual Work Programme. Meetings were held on 8th, 9th and 10th January 2019 and the Leader of the Council and each Cabinet Member were questioned on their draft budget proposals. Meetings were webcast and questions from the public received via email and social media channels were also asked by the Chairman.

Following the three day intensive session, the Committee met privately to consider and develop their key findings and recommendations. The Budget Scrutiny report, including ten recommendations was presented to Cabinet on 11th February – nine of the ten recommendations were accepted fully or in part and changes were made to the final Budget agreed by County Council as a result, including:

- Additional funding added to the County Council's Unitary Reserve.
- An additional £750,000 added to the Legal budget for Children's Services for 2019-20.
- Additional funding for gully cleaning and weed management would be maintained.



"It's probably the most thorough scrutiny of the budget, anywhere in the country, certainly of any County Council... It's really one of the key elements of our democracy within the Council, that we have that scrutiny process" -
Cllr Martin Tett

Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

The Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee Members have reviewed, monitored and challenged a wide range of interesting areas this year, including:

- Prevent Duty (Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015) - The Council's approach to fulfilling its duties and responsibilities to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism
- TfB Annual Report and performance
- Museums Trust
- Draft Freight Strategy review
- Modern Slavery
- Sustainable school travel
- Local Enterprise Partnerships review
- Street lighting performance
- High Speed 2
- Gully cleansing and drainage maintenance
- Community safety priorities
- The growth agenda in Bucks
- Energy and future demand
- DEFRA 25 year Environmental plan and key policy decisions

Key achievements

Modern Slavery Inquiry Recommendation Monitoring

Completed at the end of last year, this inquiry was an excellent example of proactive pre-policy scrutiny. It examined the national emerging issue of Modern Slavery and the role and new responsibilities of the Council.

Outcomes: At the six month inquiry recommendation monitoring review, the Committee was impressed with the dedication of officers to drive this work forward and the significant progress that had been made towards implementing the recommendations. In particular they heard that:

- The Council had over 500 people trained on modern slavery, recognising the signs and how to report it.
- It had published a Modern Slavery Statement.
- The policies in relation to vulnerable children and adults had been enhanced.
- Most significantly, a local victim support service had been established. This was highlighted as a key gap by the police during the inquiry. The service has already been instrumental in supporting the police in identifying and supporting victims, increasing referrals to the national referral mechanism and helping to facilitate the arrests of a number of offenders.

"The collaborative approach between the Committee, Cabinet Member, officers and partners, was instrumental in the success and positive outcomes achieved as a result of the inquiry and dedication of the officers to drive this work forward." - **Committee Chairman**

Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

Household Recycling Centre Policy Review – Pre-Consultation Workshop

As an area of significant review and public interest, the Cabinet Member sought the ‘critical friend’ challenge of the Committee at the early stages of this policy review. The Committee felt that scrutiny could strengthen the process through reviewing the planned approach to the public consultation to ensure that it was fit for purpose. Through an open and collaborative discussion with officers, the Committee highlighted some simple areas to further strengthen the consultation process (primarily around information provided) so that residents were well informed, and the process would meet the recognised principles underpinning effective consultation.

Street Lighting and Gully Cleansing and Drainage Maintenance – Focussed Committee Meetings

These two areas were highlighted within the TfB annual report as underperforming at the start of the year. The Committee agreed key lines of inquiry for each and examined issues in detail within topic focussed committee meetings. Members reviewed performance, recent and planned improvements and were able to identify a number of simple recommendations to ensure that further improvements were driven forward over the coming year. The Committee wrote to the Cabinet Member, highlighting recommendations, which will be monitored and reviewed later in the year.

Looking ahead

In March 2019, the Committee held a detailed and informative workshop with input from lead officers within the service areas to inform the development of the 2019/20 work programme. Members were briefed on the key areas of priority, key challenges, major service reviews and consultation and national emerging policies/issues. Emerging issues that were highlighted for further consideration included:

- Weapon Crime (crime and disorder remit)
- Air Quality and Open Spaces
- Skills of the future – to create a thriving economy
- Devolution
- High Speed 2 – Community Engagement
- Bucks Strategic Infrastructure Plan and corporate governance of the growth agenda

“The inquiry helped shape and develop effective ways of working, efficient processes, raised awareness, understanding and the profile of this important issue, through a positive, proactive and collaborative approach to the scrutiny work.” - **Cabinet Member for Community Engagement**

Promoting Scrutiny

The scrutiny function at Buckinghamshire County Council is supported by an experienced and dedicated Committee and Governance Team.

During 2018-19, the team facilitated the varied work of the four Select Committees and worked to raise awareness of scrutiny throughout the organisation, highlighting its added value in supporting service improvement and providing a voice for Bucks' residents.

The team provide training to officers across the Council on working with Members. The team have revamped this to ensure that it showcases how to engage with scrutiny and highlights the benefits of early engagement with Members. In addition, a Member News launched to support staff in getting to know Members and to gain valuable insight into the diversity of their role.

The team support Members in striving to improve public engagement and participation. Plans are underway to utilise marketing expertise from within the team to transform the current web pages, ensuring that they are logical, better structured and require less clicks for the public to find content. Finally the team have contributed to discussions with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) on new scrutiny guidance for Local Government which is due to be published shortly, and have attended various conferences and networking forums in order to support national and local practice improvement ideas.

Following discussions with colleagues nationally, the team have been trialling innovative approaches, particularly championing pre-decision scrutiny work. The Select Committees play a valuable role in supporting well-informed, meaningful decision-making and acting as a voice for service users and residents. The Committees provide effective, timely, supportive and constructive 'critical friend' challenge to Cabinet Members and help to continue delivering service improvement.

Public engagement

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:

Get informed

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.

Get involved

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

Ask a public question

Public questions are 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).

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