

To: Overview and Scrutiny Commission
7 April 2022

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021-22
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Council's Constitution requires the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to submit an annual report to the Council on overview and scrutiny activities and their outcomes. The attached draft report informs councillors of progress made in respect of the operation and development of overview and scrutiny in Bracknell Forest during 2021-22.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the 2021-22 draft annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission be submitted to Council for adoption.**

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 To meet the requirements of the Constitution.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The activities of overview and scrutiny in 2021-22 are summarised in the draft annual report at Appendix A. The outcomes of individual reviews are reflected in the report.
- 5.2 Overview and scrutiny has established a structure that allows activity to better align with the themes of the Council Plan. The function has reviewed and delivered against a work programme that supports the council objectives over the period. The Commission has reviewed its arrangements for health scrutiny and introduced changes to clearly signal when it is formally considering health matters, and has scrutinised the budget and monitored the performance of all council departments through the Council Plan Overview Report.
- 5.3 Overview and scrutiny will continue to evolve the positive changes that support effective contribution to the Council Plan, with particular focus on maintaining momentum following a pause due to the pandemic. The Commission will continue to develop its programme management role to deliver the work programme in line with council objectives and available resources.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 The Scrutiny function has an important role to play in providing local accountability and transparency in decision-making. It was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 primarily to serve as a check and balance on Executive powers. Subsequent legislation has conferred on councils the responsibility for scrutinising local NHS Trusts, the work of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, and other partners, such as the Environment Agency. It sits alongside the council's Standards regime in delivering the accountability that constitutes one of the Seven Principles of Public Life.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Statutory Scrutiny Officer

- 6.3 The annual report highlights the work of the council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission and panels and the outcomes of this work. Overview and scrutiny has exercised its functions in order to support the development of policy within the council, to scrutinise the council's financial proposals and to improve services the council and its partners provide with the overarching objective of seeking to benefit local communities. Through the continued disruption of the pandemic, the strength of scrutiny is its focus on the long-term development of the council and how the council can meet its communities' needs.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Throughout all scrutiny activity councillors are reminded to consider what equality impacts there may be, and review activities are delivered in a way that avoids barriers to wider involvement e.g. timing of review activity, length of reviews and access to information. As part of the scoping process for each review an initial equalities screening is explicitly undertaken and a full equalities impact assessment undertaken if required.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 Effective scrutiny is important to the successful functioning of local democracy by securing the efficient delivery of council services and driving improvements. A robust work programme is essential in order to ensure that overview and scrutiny activity contributes successfully to the work of the council. Poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership and/or service failure.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The recommendation in Section 2 above is expected to:

Have no impact on emissions of CO₂.

The reasons the council believes that this will have no impact on emissions is that there is no direct link between the recommendations in this report and carbon emissions. Each individual review will assess the impact of climate change, including carbon emissions with details provided in the review scope.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.7 The recommendation in Section 2 will have no direct impact on health and wellbeing.

However, the activities of the Commission, which are reflected in the annual report, have a positive effect on health and wellbeing through the health scrutiny function it performs. In addition, each individual review assesses the impact on health and wellbeing with details provided in the review report.

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

Councillor Robert Angell, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Robert.Angell@bracknell-forest.gov.uk