Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19
An Introduction to Scrutiny

Overview and scrutiny is a statutory function – a power by which back-benchers hold the executive to account, and a duty to review policies and services on behalf of the public. Scrutiny holds an equal status with Cabinet and provides an independent examination of Council decisions. It ensures the accountability of Cabinet and other public organisations and has an important role in challenging and informing policies and decisions, promoting transparency, and involving the public.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny identifies the four principles of effective scrutiny, in that it:

1. Provides ‘critical friend’ challenge to executive policy-makers and decision makers
2. Enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities – and is open to the public
3. Is carried out by ‘independent minded governors’ who lead and own the scrutiny process – and is informed by the careful gathering of evidence and based on full deliberation and discussion
4. Drives improvement in public services

Scrutiny in Redbridge

This report covers activity during 2018/19, within the governance arrangements agreed by Council in May 2017, which resulted in a strengthened scrutiny function, synchronised to the Council’s management and operational arrangements. This established a scrutiny function comprising of the following scrutiny bodies:

- **Overview**
  - Education Scrutiny Panel
- **People**
  - External Scrutiny Panel
- **Place**
  - JHOSC
- **Health**
- **Strategy & Resources**

The process for developing this model reflects learning from previous governance arrangements and allowed for a rebalancing of scrutiny activity, with condensed pre-decision scrutiny, undertaken by Overview Committee, counterbalanced by an additional emphasis on the policy development role of scrutiny through the Scrutiny Committees and Panels. Providing an efficient scrutiny function relies on scrutiny activity not being duplicated, and the development of effective work programmes for each scrutiny forum will ensure this.

Following a review of ways of working in Scrutiny in September 2018, proposals were agreed to further strengthen the Council’s scrutiny function, enabling it to take a larger role in policy formation and to undertake shorter, more focussed Task and Finish Groups, and for greater influence on the Executive.

Whichever form governance takes, there is a need for accountability and transparency, and a strong and effective scrutiny process can underpin this. The strength of scrutiny is that it encourages cross-
party discussions, is often objective, and focuses on evidence-based recommendations towards better outcomes for residents and the provision of local public services.

**Scrutiny Committees**

**Overview Committee** has a particular emphasis on undertaking pre-decision scrutiny. Meeting prior to Cabinet, the Committee has the opportunity to call reports on the Cabinet agenda for consideration, question the relevant Cabinet Member on their reports, and provide comments to Cabinet to consider as part of its decision-making process. Although Overview Committee has the power to call all items from the Forward Plan for pre-decision scrutiny, during the year discussions with the Chair and Spokespersons have focused to ensure that consideration is given to the most important and significant items, taking into account scrutiny of items by other Council bodies. As such, the Committee can consider a range of issues, including updates on petitions.

**Scrutiny Committees** are responsible for Policy Development – contributing to the development of Council’s policies and strategies. To be effective, this should be early in the policy / strategy development process to ensure that the views of Members are built in at an early stage. To ensure that there is no duplication, the Scrutiny Committees do not have a pre-decision scrutiny role (this is covered by the Overview Committee, as above). In addition, each Scrutiny Committee considers relevant Budget proposals (initial / new savings proposals, growth and capital), pertaining to the remit of the scrutiny committee.

**Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee** contributes to the development and effectiveness of the Council’s cross-cutting and corporate strategies and policies and scrutinises and reviews performance. In addition, it scrutinises the Council’s management of its financial resources. During the year the Committee considered:

- Budget Strategy and Proposals (relating to the remit of the Committee)
- Treasury Management Strategy and Mid-year Strategy Review
- Capital investment strategy
- Corporate Debt Management Strategy
- Customer Services

**People Scrutiny Committee** contributes to the development and effectiveness of the Council’s strategies and policies relating to adult and children’s social care, youth justice and health and social care integration and scrutinises and reviews performance. During the year the Committee considered:

- Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Commissioning
- Policy for Managing Provider Failure
- Transforming Care Partnership Progress
- Budget strategy and proposals
- Ofsted inspection of SEND services
- Future provision of Children’s Centre Services
- Budget Strategy and Proposals (relating to the remit of the Committee)
- People Matter
- Future Provision of Children’s Centre Services
- Health and Social Care Integration
- Children and Adult’s Workforce Development
- Update and Action Plan on Ofsted Focused Visit for Care Leavers
**Place Scrutiny Committee** contributes to the development and effectiveness of the Council’s strategies and policies relating to the environment and sustainability; regeneration and economic growth, transport and parking; crime and policing; housing and neighbourhoods and leisure and entertainment and green spaces, and scrutinises and reviews performance.

During the year the Committee considered:

- Homelessness Strategy
- Article 4 Directive- Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Budget Strategy and Proposals (relating to the remit of the Committee)
- Highways Capital Works Programme and Strategy
- Revenue and Capital Budget and Council Tax
- Our Streets Strategy Update
- Parking Strategy

**Health Scrutiny Committee** discharges the Council’s functions under section 244 of the National Health Service Act 2006 and the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 and, in so doing, to carry out scrutiny of health bodies or health service providers and to review policy direction in relation to health matters, including public health. The Committee received updates from NHS partner organisations over the past year in the following subject areas:

- **Barking Havering and Redbridge University Trust** (King George and Queen’s Hospitals) Update on Finance and Performance
- **Clinical Commissioning Group** (CCG / BHR CCGs) Community Urgent Care Consultation – Consultation and update regarding proposals for changes to services in Barking Havering and Redbridge, including the walk in service at Loxford Polyclinic in South Ilford
- **Partnership of East London Co-operatives** Performance Update - following an inadequate rating by the Care Quality Commission of Emergency and Urgent Care Centre Services at King George Hospital
- CCG Update on Primary Care Services
- **Barts Health NHS Trust (Whipps Cross Hospital)** Update - Blood Services in Wanstead
- CCG Update - Spending Money Wisely Consultation
- Healthwatch Redbridge Update
- **North East London Foundation Trust** (NELFT) Priorities
- NELFT – Equity of Provision of Intermediate Care Services
- Scrutiny update - NHS Trust Performance Data
Outer North East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ONEL JHOSC)

The ONEL JHOSC was established in 2006 by the London Borough Councils of Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest. Essex County Council and Healthwatch organisations were subsequently added to the membership and Redbridge currently holds three positions on the JHOSC.

It has a remit to scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services that affect two or more boroughs of the group. The Terms of Reference permits boroughs to scrutinise matters individually if required, as such some duplication is anticipated with borough Health Scrutiny Committee work programmes. The following matters were scrutinised by the ONEL JHOSC over the past year (* indicates items that were also scrutinised by Redbridge Health Scrutiny Committee):

- Community Urgent Care Consultation – Consultation and update regarding proposals for changes to services in Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge, including the walk-in service at Loxford Polyclinic in South Ilford*
- New **NHS 111** Contract (a site visit was undertaken in November 2018)
- BHRUT - Improving cancer care (regarding proposed closure of Cancer Chemotherapy Services at King George Hospital
- BHRUT Cancer Services Update (following the closure of Cancer Chemotherapy Services at King George Hospital
- Health Based Places of Safety
- Healthwatch Havering Update - Services for People who have a Visual Disability
- Healthwatch Havering Update - Inpatient Meals at Queen’s Hospital
- Healthwatch Redbridge Update - Hospital Discharge Pathways
- **East London Health and Care Partnership** - East London Local Maternity System
- BHR Clinical Commissioning Groups – Presentation from Single Accountable Officer
- BHR Clinical Commissioning Groups – Presentation on Financial Recovery Programme
- East London Health and Care Partnership - NHS Long Term Plan
- NELFT Street Triage Service
- **RAMFEL** - Access to Healthcare by Vulnerable Migrants

**Scrutiny Panels**

The Council has two Scrutiny Panels – in effect sub-committees of Scrutiny Committees:

- External Scrutiny Panel is a sub-committee of Place Scrutiny Committee
- Education Scrutiny Panel is a sub-committee of People Scrutiny Committee
**External Scrutiny Panel** scrutinises crime and disorder matters (statutory function), public transport matters and existing or future potential partner and external organisations, including but not limited to the Police, the Probation Service, the Fire and Rescue Authority and transport providers and to review their performance. The Panel is required at least annually to review both the crime disorder strategy and the strategy for combatting the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances. The Panel received reports during 2018/19 as follows:

- Public Transport
- Flooding
- Community Safety
- Vision Redbridge Culture and Leisure Annual Report 2017/18
- Update on the Redbridge Community Safety Partnership Plan

**Education Scrutiny Panel** undertakes scrutiny of local education authority functions and received reports during 2018/19 as follows:

- Funding Arrangements on Schools Block Funding 2019/20
- SEND High Needs Block Review
- Elective Home Education
- Admission Arrangements for 2020 to 2021
- Ofsted Inspection of SEND Outcome and Action Plan
- School Test and Examination Results
- Future Delivery Model of Services to Schools and Education

**Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups**

Scrutiny Task and Finish (T&F) Groups examine particular policies, programmes or services and can make a positive impact on the performance of the Council, public service providers or partner organisations. They also provide an opportunity for Councillors to really understand subjects and get to the heart of a matter and can also help to increase the level of involvement of the public and other stakeholders in the scrutiny process. The following T&F group was undertaken during 2018/19:
Private Rented Housing Sector – This T&F Group focussed on making community connections between the public, councillors and officers in order to better implement the Private Rented Housing Strategy of 2018, which included provisions to license a greater range of private rented sector housing. Recommendations centred on improving channels of communication between councillors and officers, and ensuring that councillors were empowered to deal with poor quality private rented sector housing in their own wards. The report was presented to Cabinet in May and recommendations will be monitored in 2019/20.

Innovation and outcomes during 2018/19

This has been a year of transition for Scrutiny following the first full year of 2017 governance arrangements and revised ‘ways of working’ in 2018, which led to a more expansive scrutiny role, with less of a focus on pre-decision scrutiny and more of an emphasis on policy development scrutiny.

Particular innovations included:

- **Site Visit to Crossrail – 16 November 2018:** Members of the External Scrutiny Panel, along with scrutiny officers, made a visit to the Crossrail control centre in Romford, including a ride in the driver’s cabin of the new train on the TFL rail and a tour of the control centre in charge of the forthcoming Elizabeth line. The visit helped develop Members’ knowledge of both the ambitious Crossrail programme, and the associated challenges which potentially impact the delivery of a vital transport network for residents and visitors to the Borough.

- **External Scrutiny Panel Engagement Session with School Children – January 2018:** Within the framework of Redbridge Council seeking UNICEF’s Child Friendly City accreditation, and supporting a core scrutiny principle of wider and inclusive engagement, the External Scrutiny Panel was opened to students and the meeting was followed by a question and answer session and activities with staff and Councillors, including the Deputy Mayor – it received an overwhelming response and approximately 100 young people attended. The meeting’s success was thanks to the willingness of all to be involved and their contributions (Scrutiny Panel Members, Cabinet Members, the Mayor’s office and Vision RCL colleagues) and the level of interest and attendance by schools/young people. It also demonstrated how the operations of ‘scrutiny’ can be used to engage the young voice and support the Council’s ambition to make Redbridge a child friendly borough. As part of an ongoing commitment, future engagement of young people will feature within scrutiny work wherever possible.

- **Co-opted Members on Health Scrutiny Committee and External Scrutiny Panel:** Redbridge Council values the diversity of its community and, in keeping with this, members of the public were co-opted onto scrutiny bodies (Health, External and Education) following a fresh recruitment process. These appointments ensure that more perspectives are brought to the elements that are being scrutinised, provide valuable links into different communities and enhances the effectiveness of scrutiny alongside the elected member representatives. An example of where this has been significantly effective is on Health, where input from Healthwatch Redbridge has informed performance monitoring of Intermediate Care and Cancer Chemotherapy Services. It is anticipated that additional co-optees would be appointed in 2019/20 to serve on the People and Place Scrutiny Committees.
Particular outcomes included:

- **Health Scrutiny Committee:** Following the Committees opposition to the closure of the Walk in Service at Loxford Polyclinic in South Ilford, which was replaced by a telephone and online bookable service in September 2018, BHR CCGs adopted a suggestion by the Committee to provide a telephone point at the front reception for residents that continued to present, expecting a walk-in service, to enable them to easily book appointments.

  In February 2019, the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Neil Zammett (pictured right), was invited to speak at a Healthwatch event alongside keynote speaker, Sir Robert Francis QC, Healthwatch England, (pictured left).

- **External Scrutiny Panel:** Members continue to prioritise scrutiny of the joint partnership working by the Council, the Police and other multi-agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour and improve community safety in Ilford Town Centre and South Ilford. This has ensured continuous monitoring of the enforcement activity to address the plight of criminal and unsocial activity affecting residents and the public environment.

- **Scrutiny of the Council’s Budget:** Scrutiny Officers facilitated the process of detailed scrutiny of the Council’s revenue and capital budget and council tax for 2019/20 to 2023/24, which was presented to People, Place, Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committees and the Overview Committee.

**Conclusion**

Through Scrutiny, non-executive Members are well placed to influence decisions to improve outcomes for the residents of the borough despite major economic challenges. There is a crucial role for Scrutiny to ensure accountability and transparency, to be the channel for the community to raise service issues (that are not the subject of individual complaints); and to have them investigated. Scrutiny can ensure the continued provision of high quality, evidence-based evaluation and can provide effective engagement with the public and a ‘problem-solving’ approach.

The financial challenge facing all local government and public sector organisations will have an impact across many areas of service delivery – both within the Council and for its local partner organisations. This will require scrutiny to evolve the approach in 2019/20, in both the way that Scrutiny is undertaken and the expectations of its work programme.

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**GETTING INVOLVED IN SCRUTINY**

Scrutiny activity is ongoing. As always it is crucial to have the public involved in the process. Members of the public can get involved through a variety of means:

- Scrutiny Committee and Panel meetings are open to the public and anyone wishing to speak can register to do so by notifying the Committee Officer before the meeting, or alternatively contact the Scrutiny Team. A list of forthcoming meetings is displayed on the Council website: [www.redbridge.gov.uk](http://www.redbridge.gov.uk)

- Co-opted Members – a transparent and fair process for appointing non-statutory Co-opted Members onto the Committees and onto Working Groups exists. Adverts for any vacant positions are posted on the website and various other arenas inviting members of the public to get involved.

- For future scrutiny topics that Councilors could be scrutinising in the future, consideration is given to suggestions. Please send in any suggestions by emailing or telephoning the Scrutiny Team [scrutiny@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@redbridge.gov.uk)