



Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

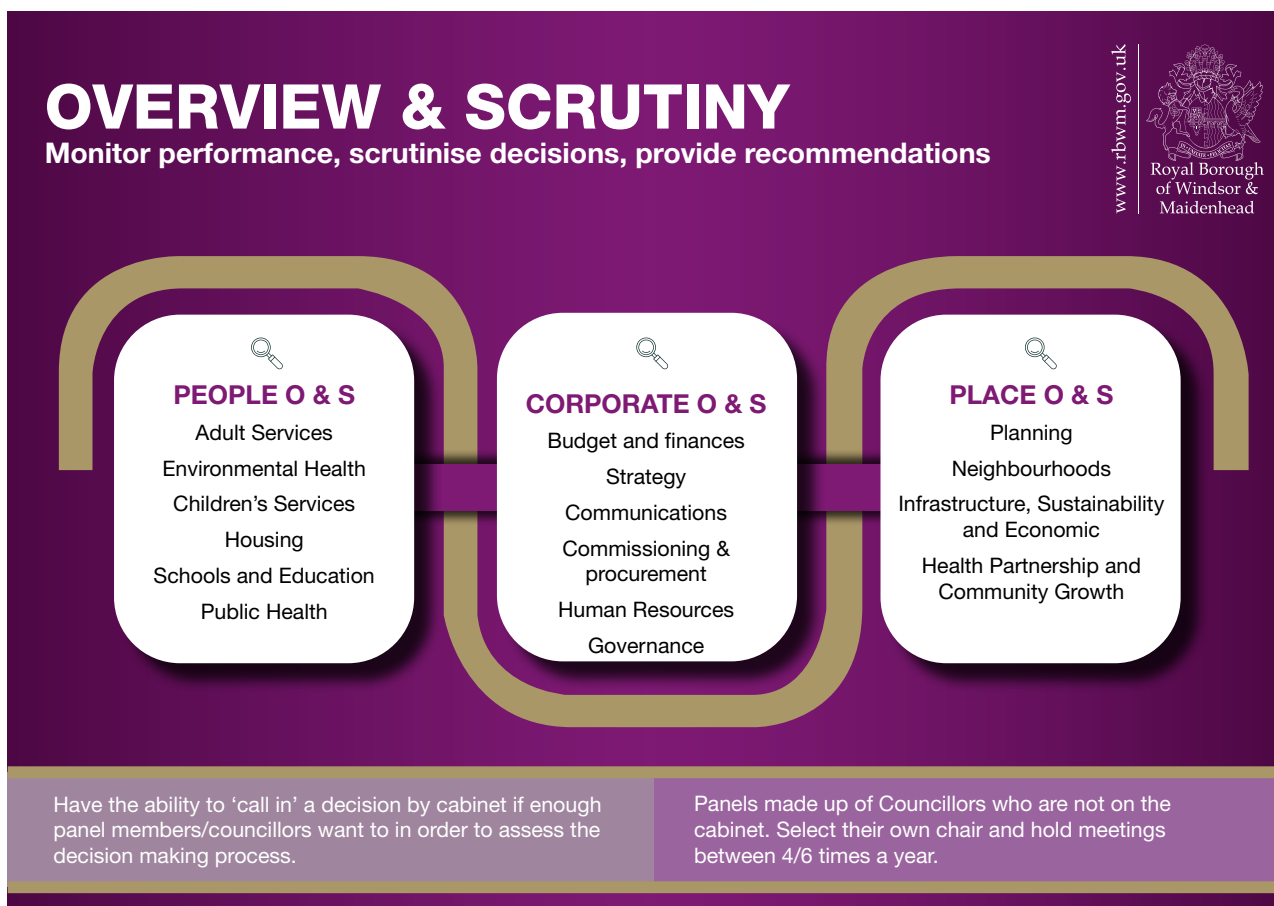
Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report



Overview and Scrutiny at the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (RBWM)

Overview and Scrutiny at RBWM consists of three main panels; Corporate, People and Place. People and Place have four scheduled meetings a year, with Corporate having six meetings a year due to its wider responsibility and overarching scrutiny role. Each Panel is closely aligned to a key council theme and directorate area, which allows each Panel to focus on specific objectives. Items of consideration can vary from one-off reports, regular performance monitoring and deep dive reviews into a specific topic area.

The graphic below provides an illustrative summary of each Panel's remit:



There is a requirement for Overview and Scrutiny to submit an annual report each year to a meeting of Council, highlighting the work of each Panel and what topics have been scrutinised. This report gives a brief summary of the work and findings of each Panel while looking to pick out some key areas of positive scrutiny, along with some commentary on what was achieved by the Panel.

The report concludes with some figures of Overview and Scrutiny across the municipal year and further information on how residents can become more involved in the scrutiny process.

It is also important to be mindful of the recommendations made as part of the CIPFA review into governance at RBWM, which was published in 2020. The review highlighted a number of core failures in financial management and governance which was underlaid with a negative culture between officers and Councillors. The council has implemented an action plan based around the CIPFA recommendations and scrutiny needs to ensure that these actions are carried out and that the failures of the past are rectified.

Consideration also needs to be given to the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny 'good scrutiny guide' which provides a framework for ensuring that scrutiny plays a key and effective role in the governance of a council. The guide shows that weak scrutiny leads to weak governance processes, with three core

principles underpinning this:

- Accountability – an environment where responsibility for services and decisions is clear and where those holding responsibility can and are answerable for success and failure.
- Transparency – the publication, proactively, of information relating to services and decisions to allow local people, and others, to hold policymakers and decision-makers to account.
- Involvement – rules, principles and processes whereby a wide range of stakeholders, including elected representatives, can play active roles in holding to account, and influencing and directing the development of policy.

Councillors sitting on scrutiny are encouraged to consider both of these documents as part of their ongoing work to ensure that there is continued progress on good governance and positive working relationships across the council.

Improvements to further improve scrutiny:

- Providing a stronger link between the Cabinet Forward Plan and scrutiny – discussions have been held with officers from all directorates about involving scrutiny as a key part in the decision making process.
- Encouraging Panel Members to think about areas of concern or interest and ensuring that this is scoped effectively to utilise officer resource and Panel time.
- Considering how to work collaboratively as a Panel, for example a suggestion from Councillor Grove for the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel to have a dedicated Teams channel to encourage Panel discussion and consider direction outside of meetings.
- Encouraging further collaboration between the Chairs of each Panel, to encourage scrutiny symmetry whilst avoiding duplication or repetition.

Statutory Scrutiny Officer – what do they do?

My name is Mark Beeley and I'm the Principal Democratic Services Officer for Overview and Scrutiny. I've been working at the council since September 2019 and I'm responsible for supporting the three Overview and Scrutiny Panels as well as helping prepare the Annual Scrutiny Report. My role also means that I'm the council's dedicated statutory scrutiny officer, but what does this actually mean and what does the role involve?



What does scrutiny mean?

Scrutiny is a core function of the council and ensures that local government is open, transparent and accountable to its residents. The main power of scrutiny is to influence the policies and decisions of the council. Scrutiny does this by gathering evidence, considering key information and questioning officers to make recommendations.

The Cabinet Forward Plan is closely monitored and items of interest will be brought to scrutiny before Cabinet. This allows the Panel to discuss the proposals openly and invite contributions from officers and interested residents. Other items can involve a 'deep dive' scrutiny review on a particular topic of interest, which will have been scoped out by a Member of the Panel. Sometimes, a separate piece of work will require a Task and Finish Group to meet offline to discuss a key, specific topic. A report would then be brought back to the main Panel for agreement before being put before the Cabinet.

What role does scrutiny have on decision making?

Scrutiny has a key role in assisting the executive with decision making to help ensure all options and alternatives have been considered. It should be noted that scrutiny has 'soft' power when it comes to decision making and can only make recommendations on a course of action. While the Cabinet has a duty to respond to these recommendations, they are not required to accept them. Scrutiny should try to ensure that it builds positive relationships with both Cabinet Members and key officers during its work as a 'critical friend' providing local insight and another perspective on what is being proposed.

What role does the Statutory Scrutiny Officer play?

Every council is legally required to have a statutory scrutiny officer. The scrutiny officer is tasked with promoting the role of scrutiny at the council and helping each Panel to bring forward items for consideration, draft recommendations and ensure that these are implemented. One way of promoting scrutiny is through this Annual Scrutiny Report, which highlights the positive work undertaken by the scrutiny function over the past year. The council also publishes the agenda, workplan and reports from scrutiny on its website as well as promoting upcoming meetings through social media posts encouraging public participation.

Appointment of co-optees for 2023-2027

Following the new political term in May 2023, both the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel were required to follow the process set out in the RBWM Constitution to appoint co-optees.

The People Overview and Scrutiny Panel are able to appoint:

- One Church of England diocese representative.
- One Roman Catholic diocese representative.
- Two parent governor representatives (One to represent the primary phase and one to represent the secondary phase).
- One representative from the Regional Schools Commissioner.

From February 2024 until May 2027, the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel have agreed to co-opt:

- Tony Wilson as the Church of England diocese representative.
- Catherine Hobbs as the Roman Catholic diocese representative.
- Poornima Karunacadacharan and David Hicks (sub) as the primary parent governor representatives.
- Noel Wood as the secondary parent governor representative.
- Mark Jervis as an additional co-optee on the Panel, as the Regional Schools Commissioner were unable to appoint a representative.

The Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel are able to appoint:

- One Parish Councillor representing the Northern Parishes
- One Parish Councillor representing the Southern Parishes

From February 2024 until May 2027, the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel have agreed to co-opt:

- Louvaine Kneen as the Parish Councillor representing the Northern Parishes.
- Roly Latif and David Sanders (sub) as the Parish Councillors representing the Southern Parishes.

Further information on the co-optee appointment process can be found in the report available here, which was approved by both Overview and Scrutiny Panels in February 2024 before being formally ratified by Full Council in March 2024.



Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Membership May 2023 – April 2024



Councillor Chris Moriarty
Chair



Councillor Mark Howard
Vice Chair



Councillor David Buckley



Councillor Maureen Hunt



Councillor Helen Price



Councillor Gary Reeves



Councillor Julian Sharpe



Councillor Julian Tisi



Councillor Mark Wilson

Introduction by the Chair of the Panel – Councillor Chris Moriarty

With a new administration, there was a lot of change on this panel in 2023. New members, and a new chair.

So it's fair to say that for the first few months the panel wasn't as active as it could be as new members, myself included, found their feet on this crucial panel, but panel members have more than made up for that in the proceeding months. We've had a number of high-profile documents coming through this panel for scrutiny with a series of in-depth recommendation being sent to the Cabinet which have helped inform decision making. Budget reports, the new Council Plan and specific reports on areas of the RBWM operation that are of high importance to residents have been closely reviewed and challenged to ensure that as a Council we're delivering the best possible service for residents.

There has also been lots of work put into creating a collaborative approach to scrutiny. So many topics that require oversight cut across several O&S panels so I'm pleased that I have been able to meet regularly with the other Panel chairs to look at topics from all panels and agree a way forward that provides the highest level of scrutiny without wasting resource duplicating effort.

I'd also like to thank Stephen Evans and his senior leadership team for embracing the scrutiny that came their way. It would be so easy for discussions like this to become confrontational, or defensive, but the RBWM team have met the questions we ask in the spirit they're intended and that can only be a good thing for residents. I also was pleased to see Stephen celebrate the scrutiny process in the last twelve months as we aim to restore and boost transparency in the RBWM operation.

Cost of Living Review



The first major topic of consideration for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel in the 2023-24 municipal year was carried over from the previous term. A scoping document had been drafted around the support and guidance given by the council in light of the cost of living crisis, particularly if this support was being targeted in the areas of the community which needed it most.

The Panel was given an evidence pack of information, including detailed information on the schemes which were in place, feedback and case studies from Household Support

Fund partners, and statistical data from the Household Support Fund Tranche 3 funding. The Panel were also able to speak to one of the support partners, Citizens Advice Bureau East Berkshire, at the meeting to understand the lived experiences of residents in need of support.

As a result of the meeting, the Panel were able to highlight the good work which had been carried out in supporting vulnerable residents and identified improvements to how the council could look to communicate the scheme to more residents.

Quarterly Assurance Report

A new report has been produced this year encompassing key performance indicators, corporate risk register, audit and workforce insights. The Quarterly Assurance Report (QAR) has been debated at length at two Panel meetings and going forward will be linked with the new Council Plan, following this being approved and adopted in April.

In its scrutiny of the QAR, the Panel agreed a number of actions for officers:

- Confirmation on the future of the Citizens Portal and how data from this source would feed into the QAR reporting arrangements.
- To consider if the number of agency staff used by the council could be included under the workforce.
- Key performance metrics on contractor Tivoli were shared with the Panel.
- Further information requested on how costs in adult social care informed key performance indicators.
- The need to ensure that domestic abuse rates were monitored effectively through the QAR.
- Consideration of how planning enforcement measures can be monitored through the QAR.



Budget Challenge Session

In December 2023, the Panel had an opportunity to scrutinise the draft budget proposals in a dedicated challenge session.

The People Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel held offline meetings in advance of the challenge session, with comments and concerns highlighted to Panel Members. Councillors scrutinised various areas of the budget:

- How robust the Medium Term Financial Plan and the assumptions which had been made by officers were deemed to be.
- It was noted that the level of debt was around £200 million and assurances were requested about how this would be financed and reduced going into the next financial year.
- Concerns about the levels of efficiencies and savings which were proposed from the Place directorate.
- That there should be a great reliance on voluntary groups to carry out non-statutory services and the voluntary sector should be utilised.
- Questions around Community Infrastructure Levy and how this would be spent, as this was not clear to the Panel.

Five main recommendations were put forward by the Panel for consideration by Cabinet:

- 1 Noted the concern of the Panel on the Braywick Leisure Centre defects and encouraged officers to be forthright in negotiations with the contractor to ensure that this was not paid for by the council.
- 2 Ensured that savings were openly communicated so that residents understood why they were being made and what would change as a result.
- 3 Considered a more robust and transparent process around Community Infrastructure Levy, particularly on how funds were being spent.
- 4 Gave further consideration to social housing as there was a lack of comment on this in the draft budget. Consideration should also be given around the viability of the council buying its own housing stock to provide further social housing.
- 5 Ensured that further clarity should be given to local charities, in advance of any proposed changes to the support provided in the 2025/26 budget.

Cabinet responded to each of these recommendations at its budget meeting on 20th February. Councillor Lynne Jones, Cabinet Member for Finance, said that there were regular meetings held with all parties on Braywick Leisure Centre to find a solution. There was a trade-off between description and the volume of information which was published in the budget report. The descriptors in the savings table had been given more focus and this was more transparent than previous budget reports.

The council published data on Community Infrastructure Levy retrospectively in an annual report and the capital bids detailed the funding breakdown on either CIL, S106 or grants. Buying social housing had a significant impact on capital and borrowing, which was not currently possible due to the financial situation. The council were looking into eligibility of Homes England funding, with the preference being to use the balance of S106 monies as a contribution to social housing providers with the council holding nomination rights. On changes to the business rates for charities, current beneficiaries of the scheme had already been contacted and applications had been received for the discretionary scheme. More detail would be provided on the scheme going forward.



Council Plan

Development of the new Council Plan formed a crucial part of the Panel's work towards the end of the municipal year, with the full draft of the plan being scrutinised. The Plan is split into five key aims, with the Panel making recommendations on each key aim along with some overarching suggestions for the full plan. A total of 15 recommendations were made, as shown in the table overleaf:

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

Corporate O&S Recommendation	Response
Overarching	
Define more clearly what is meant by good performance, at a council-level. E.g. number of indicators green/amber.	Assessment against the Council Plan is informed by the agreed monitoring process including Quarterly Assurance Report (QAR), annual report, transformation programme reporting and budget monitoring reporting. It would not be appropriate to assign a percentage of deliverables or KPIs that must be met to consider the plan to be met because some deliverables and KPIs are more critical to the success of our vision and aims.
Include numbering of the Priorities under each Aim for ease of reference.	Numbers have been added to the priorities on the aim page and in the appendix.
All aims: Add 'contractual' to targets where these are included within contract performance metrics.	Contractual measures are now identifiable in the Council Plan.
Aim 1	
Aim 1, priority 4: Contract management and procurement - Strengthen the deliverable	An additional deliverable is included, based on Audit actions. "Implement a contract management framework and associated guidance, and review the published contract register to ensure completeness and compliance with the Local Transparency Code 2015."
Aim 1: Transformation savings Clarity on proportion of savings being delivered through transformation programmes, and the council's progress against these.	New transformation reporting to be included in monthly finance reports to Cabinet.
Aim 1: Consider additional deliverable around accountability to the public, including Report it.	New priority added: "Drive channel shift and improve digital access to services, including the council's website – making payments and transactions easier and refreshing reporting functions." New deliverable added on website and reporting: "Scope further work to improve front and back end system integration, including Report it functions."
Aim 2	
Aim 2, priority 1: Clarify enforcement deliverable "Deliver an improved enforcement policy for businesses, to enable light touch, right touch enforcement along with civil penalties. Aim to prioritise based on risk, encourage self-compliance, with enhanced focus on repeat offenders and those who target the vulnerable."	Deliverable clarified: "Deliver an improved enforcement policy (which incorporates civil penalties) that is transparent proportionate, consistent and targeted at higher risks."

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

<p>Aim 2: Additional metric on fly-tipping enforcement, investigation and prosecutions.</p>	<p>This data is not currently readily available, officers are investigating developing this dataset and related indicators for future reporting.</p>
<p>Aim 2: Consider additional metric on adopt a verge project.</p>	<p>Appropriate metric is not currently available. Project progression will be reported to the Steering Group.</p>
<p>Aim 2: Consider targets for housing metrics, which are currently marked track and report.</p>	<p>This will be taken forward through the new Rough Sleeper Strategy which is coming to Place O&S and metrics will then be re-set.</p>
<p>Aim 2: KPI to be added on strength of relationships with business.</p>	<p>Four KPIs have been included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Square foot of office lettings • Retail vacancy rate for Ascot, Maidenhead and Windsor (3 KPIs) <p>Officers will be supporting the development of the Berkshire Economic Strategy and deliver local actions plans to support economic growth within RBWM. Increasing office lettings indicates success in attracting and retaining businesses within RBWM and the retail vacancy rate is indicative of a thriving town centre.</p>
<p>Aim 2: ‘Broadly’ in metric about food law to be defined in the document. “% of food businesses that are broadly compliant with food law.”</p>	<p>Suggested explanatory note to be added to underneath the KPI:</p> <p>“Note that ‘broadly compliant’ refers to food business establishments whose compliance levels have been assessed as equivalent to a Food Hygiene rating of 3 (generally satisfactory), 4 (good) or 5 (very good) at their most recent food hygiene inspection.”</p>
<p>Aim 3</p>	
<p>Aim 3: Strengthen commitment to our excellent comprehensive schools and high quality education for all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including adding deliverable on maintain and improving standards. • Including additional KPI on % achieving KS2 expected standards for all student (and potentially greater depth). 	<p>Schools and education are referenced in the Leader’s Foreword, the Chief Executive Introduction and performance statistics are included in the Borough in Context as below:</p> <p>“With 93.8% of borough schools rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding, the borough’s educational offer is strong and local educational attainment (73.2% achieving Grades 9-4 at Key Stage 4) betters both the South East (67.5%) and England (65.4%) averages in 2022/23.”</p> <p>Additional deliverable included:</p> <p>“Improve and maintain education provision for all students through targeted improvement support to schools.”</p>
	<p>Two additional KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (combined) at KS2 (Not disadvantaged) • Percentage of pupils meeting the higher standard in reading, writing and maths (combined) at KS2 (Not disadvantaged)

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

Aim 4	
Aim 4, priority 1: Strengthen socio-economic disadvantage deliverable and associated narrative.	<p>Sentence added to Section 5: vision, in the sub-section 'Our commitment to equality...'</p> <p>"We will continue to strengthen our approach to engagement and embed this across the council to ensure that we hear from and respond to residents and other stakeholders, particularly those from hard-to-reach groups and those facing digital exclusion."</p> <p>Socio-economic deliverable from Aim 4, priority 2 to be moved to Aim 4, priority 1 and amended to:</p> <p>"Work with a range of partners to support residents experiencing financial difficulties, with a focus on those most at risk – through targeted financial and practical support including Here to Help, Household Support Fund, Multiply programme and provision of advise to maximise incomes."</p>
Aim 4: Additional indicator on physical activity: In additional to leisure centre attendance.	No appropriate timely metric.
Aim 5	
Aim 5: Complaints: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volume of complaints: include in additional on complaints upheld. • Review target on complaints upheld. Consider decreasing this from 40%. 	<p>The volume of complaints have been included as additional KPIs. In some cases, increases in complaints may indicate emerging issues.</p> <p>The existing complaints upheld target is a stretch target for some services and is not appropriate to make more challenging.</p>

Of these recommendations, a total of 12 were at least partially accepted and the amendments were made to the Council Plan. Other recommendations which were not accepted were considered by the Cabinet and officers, with a response being given on why the recommendation could not be accepted.

The Cabinet were complimentary of scrutiny's work on the Council Plan and helping to shape this key document which laid out the council's priorities over the next four years. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel will monitor progress against the KPIs as part of a refined Quarterly Assurance Report, which will be more closely aligned with these priorities and goals.

**Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Membership May 2023 – April 2024**



Councillor Sian Martin
Chair



Councillor George Blundell
Vice Chair



Councillor Clive Baskerville



Councillor Alison Carpenter



Councillor Jodie Grove



Councillor Asghar Majeed



Councillor Gurch Singh



Councillor Kashmir Singh



Councillor Leo Walters

Co-opted Members: Louvaine Kneen (Bray Parish Council), Roly Latif (Wraysbury Parish Council) and David Saunders (Sunninghill and Ascot Parish Council)

Introduction by Chair of the Panel – Councillor Sian Martin

I am Councillor Sian Martin, Chair of Place Overview & Scrutiny for the municipal year 2023-2024.

Over the course of the year, we covered a range of interesting and crucial topics. There were some topics that stood out for me where I feel the panel really made a difference.

The A308 Speed Reduction involved listening to resident and Bray Parish Council concerns around the volume of traffic and the nature of cyclists and pedestrian movement. Panel members agreed that the speed should be reduced on a section of the A308 from 40mph to 30mph. This was then successfully brought to Cabinet, which assisted them in arriving at the decision to proceed.

The draft Affordable Housing SPD was another interesting agenda item. Affordable housing is much needed within the borough; discussions took place to ensure the SPD was watertight. To better clarify & give context to some of the complexities of affordable housing provision the panel recommended a forward/executive summary was included to residents. This will ensure accurate and appropriate engagement with our residents around this most crucial topic.

Tivoli recently came to present to the panel. Residents are aware of many historic maintenance and grass cutting problems across the Borough and have been vocal in expressing their desire for a better service from our sub-contractors. The panel discussed measures that could be put in place to avoid future issues and ensure a consistent high standard of work. A resident satisfaction survey was suggested to record resident experiences which would then provide useful feedback.

Bike thefts are a problem nationally, and RBWM is not unique to these statistics. The provision of new secure bike storage at Windsor Leisure Centre is a welcome addition by users of the leisure centre, particularly as across the Borough, we want to encourage cycling.

Thames Valley Police also visited the panel to present their Annual Presentation which provided an interesting insight into their handling of crime, retention of officers and their activities at a community level. We wish to further engage with our emergency services to understand better what they are planning for the forthcoming years.

Resident Scrutiny Suggestions - Weekly Bin Collections and Bike Thefts at Windsor Leisure Centre

Carrying forward the work of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel from the previous municipal year, there were two outstanding resident suggested topics. There had been concerns raised around bin collections in the Alexandra Gardens area of Windsor with rats being reported and a connection had been made about the pattern of bin collections. In response, Environmental Health had visited premises in the immediate vicinity to ensure that food waste was being handled correctly and a review had also been undertaken of parks and open spaces.

The other resident suggestion concerned the rising number of bike thefts which had been reported outside Windsor Leisure Centre. The Panel heard that a grant had been secured from Active Travel England and plans were in the pipeline for a new secure cycle storage facility to be installed outside of the leisure centre. Scrutiny of the proposals allowed Councillors to consider the location of the proposed cycle storage unit and how users could be encouraged to utilise the option once it had been installed.



A308 speed limit reduction

This section of the A308, from Monkey Island Lane to the M4 bridge, was a source of concern for both residents and Bray Parish Council. Following a direct request from the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to reduce the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph a report was put together to reach a decision at Cabinet. The Panel requested sight of this report at their September meeting to hear both sides of the debate and agree a recommendation to be taken forward to Cabinet.

The Panel heard arguments for and against the reduction, including from Holyport Residents Association, and it was noted that both officers at the council and Thames Valley Police were against lowering the speed limit. Following the debate, the Panel agreed a recommendation that the speed limit on this section of road was lowered to 30mph.

The consideration of this report was a beneficial way in assisting Cabinet with their decision on the matter, particularly given the number of differing opinions from key groups and individuals.

Thames Valley Police Annual Presentation

A key part of the Panel's remit is around ensuring there is oversight of organisations involved in the Community Safety Partnership, including the police. The presentation allowed the Panel to hear information on the number of crimes investigated, contacts with the public and number of arrests made. Other areas explored included:

- Ensuring the retention of officers in the Thames Valley policing area.
- The night time economy and the need to balance resources between Maidenhead and Windsor.
- Changes in policing legislation around powers on dealing with disruption caused by those that were homeless.
- Issues around pavement parking which had affected certain wards in the borough.
- Policing those who used e-scooters and the impact of this on local communities.



Draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document

The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) had been developed to ensure that RBWM was able to secure an appropriate level of affordable housing on new developments and provide more guidance to developers. The SPD was presented to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel in draft form, before initial discussions at Executive Leadership Team and Cabinet Briefing, and therefore provided a unique opportunity to shape the content of the SPD.

Discussion from the Panel was focused on ensuring that the SPD was watertight and capable of holding developers to account over allocations of affordable housing. It was noted that developers could build affordable housing on a separate site, or provide a financial contribution to the council, but these were only utilised if there were firm reasons why the required level of affordable housing could not be delivered.

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

The Panel put forward a recommendation for officers and the Cabinet Member which requested that a foreword or executive summary was included at the start of the SPD, to help provide useful context to residents who may be unfamiliar with some of the technicalities of the SPD. Officers and the Cabinet Member accepted this recommendation and a foreword was included in the SPD which was agreed by Cabinet to go out to public consultation before adoption.

Tivoli

During the spring of 2023, there were a number of problems with grounds maintenance and grass cutting across the borough. Councillors raised this as a concern, given that a number of residents wanted to hear the response from the contractor, Tivoli, on why this had not been up to the appropriate standard. Over the summer, Tivoli was able to get on top of the problems so scrutiny agreed to review the grounds maintenance contract in spring 2024 to understand what measures Tivoli had put in place to avoid a repeat. The Panel heard from Ian Stockdale-Smith, Regional Director at Tivoli, on staffing levels, the equipment available and the progress made so far this year in RBWM. The Panel understood that relations between the council and the contractor were positive and both sides were working to resolve issues quickly.

Performance Indicators	PI Description	Thresholds	Target	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	Overall Year End	Notes
Play Areas	Percentage of Play Areas completed Satisfactorily	Anything below 100% is amber, anything below 95% is red	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Play Inspections reduced for next Year. Reports to be made available live at all times.
Cemetery Services	Burials and Internments completed within specification	Anything below 100% is Red	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Staffing issues from 2023/24 have been addressed. Team to be closely monitored as new season progresses. Grass Cutting schedules in place for new season.
Cemetery Grass Cutting	Percentage of Work completed	Above 89% Green, above 79% amber, 79% and below red	90%	55%	75%	80%	80%	Issues with Tivoli regarding failings on Grass Cutting 2023/24 has been discussed. New Machinery in place ready to start new season
Grass Cutting - Highways	Percentage of Work completed	Above 89% Green, above 79% amber, 79% and below red	90%	50%	90%	70%	80%	Issues with Tivoli regarding failings on Grass Cutting 2023/24 has been discussed. New Machinery in place ready to start new season
Parks Grass Cutting	Percentage of Work completed	Above 89% Green, above 79% amber, 79% and below red	90%	80%	90%	90%	90%	Machinery issues addressed ready for the new season.
Shrub Maintenance	Percentage of Work completed	Above 89% Green, above 79% amber, 79% and below red	90%	70%	90%	80%	90%	Initial Staffing issues have been addressed for the new season.

Overall, the Panel were satisfied that Tivoli had put appropriate measures in place to support a high standard of work. To supplement this, the Panel agreed that Tivoli would produce a resident satisfaction survey, to ensure that the positive progress outlined by Tivoli at the meeting matched with the experiences of residents across the borough. Tivoli verbal accepted this request and the Panel will reach out to Tivoli in the next municipal year to explore the results of the survey.



**People Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Membership May 2023 – April 2024**



Councillor Helen Taylor
Chair



Councillor Devon Davies
Vice Chair



Councillor Mandy Brar



Councillor Suzanne Cross



Councillor Carole Da Costa



Councillor Jack Douglas



Councillor Genevieve Gosling



Councillor George Shaw



Councillor John Story

Co-opted Members: Tony Wilson (Church of England), Catherine Hobbs (Roman Catholic), Poornima Karunacadacharan and David Hicks (Primary Parent Governors), Noel Wood (Secondary Parent Governor) and Mark Jervis (additional co-optee)

Introduction by Chair of the Panel – Councillor Helen Taylor

It has been an honour to chair the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the year 2023 – 2024, at a time when a new council has been elected, with a desire to improve the way that the O&S panels work. It has been a pleasure to work with the other two chairs, officers, co-optees and all the members of this panel over the last 12 months, who have all contributed with knowledge (both in report writing/content and reading/understanding), asked impressive questions and showed a collaborative will to ask hard questions when needed, make recommendations that might go against the grain and give up their free time for additional meetings when required.

Whilst we have not maybe covered all that we wanted to cover and granted, there have been some hiccups along the way, we have managed to review and deep dive an impressive amount of reports and subjects, as detailed further in this report. With the chairs of these panels also meeting offline to discuss upcoming reports, this meant that work was not being duplicated, items were going to the correct panel (and in some cases several panels) and therefore this ensured all panels are being run to maximum efficiency. It has been a great starting point.

As councillors continue to grow into our roles, the role of the O&S panels will grow too. I am certain that the panels will continue to evolve and make the best use of their panel membership, knowledge, expertise of officers and expand in their ability to contribute to the Council Plan as a whole.

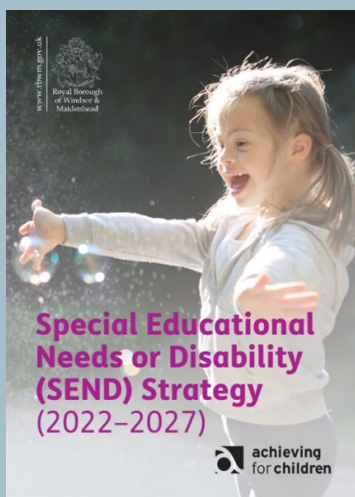
Achieving for Children Annual Reports 2023

The council is the joint owner of Achieving for Children and each year, annual reports on the workings of Achieving for Children are brought to Cabinet. The reports included information on priorities, equalities and the financial accounts. The Panel were able to review the reports and draw focus on matters like the training levels of staff across the organisation, whether recommendations suggested by Ofsted were achievable and what could be done to help children in the borough achieve more.

Children and Young People's Strategic Plan for RBWM

The Children and Young People's Strategic Plan is a key document which sets out the goals and priorities for young people in the borough. There had always been a strategic plan in place, but this version had been developed in partnership with number of organisations and was being promoted widely. The Panel received a detailed presentation from officers on the plan, following a referral being made by the Health and Wellbeing Board.





Deep dive on SEND/Elective Home Education

In the autumn, Councillor Devon Davies, Councillor Mandy Brar and Councillor Jack Douglas put together a scoping document which considered the support given to young people with SEND, young people who were educated at home, and the support which the council provided to parents and families. The scope prepared the Panel to use the February 2024 meeting to carry out a 'deep dive' of the topic.

In advance of the meeting, an evidence pack of information was circulated to Panel Members which responded to many of the key lines of enquiry considered in the scoping document. The session was a success and answers were provided to all questions submitted by the Panel to officers. The deep dive provided further clarity around the support available to the children with SEND and improvements to how this support could be delivered in future.

Task and Finish Group – Domestic Abuse

This Task and Finish Group had originally been established in early 2023 and was referenced in last year's Annual Scrutiny Report. Following the local elections, the Group has met a number of times and invited representatives from the Dash Charity, the BRAVE Project, Health, Housing and the Police to meetings. The Group have been considering how the RBWM Domestic Abuse Strategy fits in with the lived experiences of victims of domestic abuse in the borough.

The Group is now approaching its conclusion and is preparing its report back to the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel. A number of recommendations will then be put forward to Cabinet for consideration.



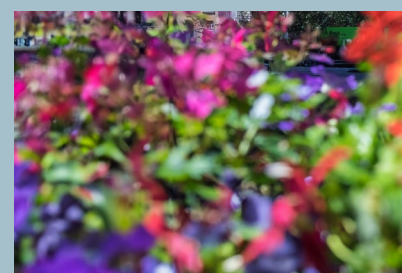
Air Pollution

A report was due to be brought to Cabinet on the potential revocation of the Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) which were in place across the borough. Government policy indicated that the council should look to remove AQMAs once specified targets had been hit for five consecutive years. However, upon reviewing the report, the Panel expressed concerns about removing the AQMAs and the impact this could have on monitoring air pollution in future.

A recommendation was made to Cabinet to not revoke the AQMAs. This was noted by Cabinet and an agreement reached for an air pollution strategy to be finalised and brought forward for adoption before the potential for AQMAs to be revoked would be considered. The Panel also agreed to a piece of work around a task and finish group exploring the AQMAs in more detail, including if they were located in the right areas and the cost implications of maintaining them.

Standards and Quality of Education

The Panel considered a report which set out the progress achieved in schools across the borough over the past academic year. There was a particular focus in the Panel discussion on ECHPs wait times, support for children who were excluded, and the monitoring of schools in addition to Ofsted inspections. Notably, the Panel suggested that the recommendation on the report was amended to also include congratulating staff and pupils, as well as schools, on their continued success. The Panel will be looking to set up a task and finish group to explore the increase in exclusions coming from those with special and educational needs.

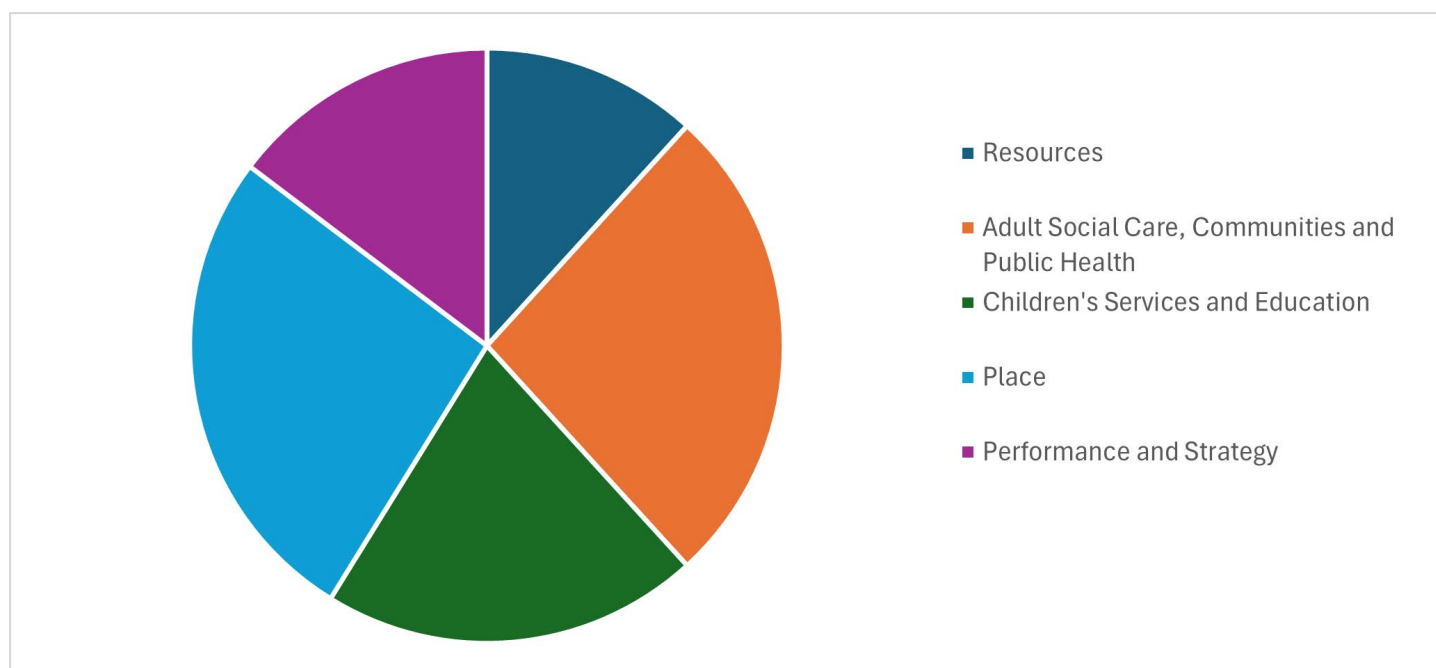


Overview and Scrutiny in Figures

	Corporate	People	Place
Number of meetings held	6	4	4
Total meeting time	15 hours 30 minutes	8 hours	6 hours 50 minutes
Number of substantive agenda items	12	9	7
Number of recommendations made	21*	4	4
Number of call ins considered	0	0	0
Total number of YouTube views	1,031	470	524

*counting each recommendation made on the Council Plan separately.

A total of 35 different officers have been involved in Overview and Scrutiny meetings this year, split by the following directorates:



Get involved in overview and scrutiny

You can get involved in the work of overview and scrutiny at the council in a number of ways:

- Attend a public meeting, either in person or via YouTube, of any of our Panels.
- Register to speak at a scrutiny meeting.
- Contact your local Councillor with your views.
- Suggest a topic for consideration by scrutiny on our website.