



Nottingham
City Council

Overview & Scrutiny **Annual Report**

2011-12



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Introduction

Overview and scrutiny exists to assist in the improvement of governance and public services. It ensures the Council's Executive is publicly held to account for its decisions and actions, and promotes open and transparent decision-making and democratic accountability. It also has a wide remit to explore how the Council and its partner organisations could improve services for the people of Nottingham by:

- Reviewing existing policy and contributing to the development of new policy;
- Acting as a 'critical friend' to those making decisions;
- Holding decision-makers to account for their decisions and actions;
- Challenging performance to ensure that services are meeting the needs of local communities.

This annual report looks at how the Overview and Scrutiny function performed its role in 2011-12 and provides a snapshot of the contribution it made to improving public services.

For 2011-12, following an independent review, the City Council changed the structure of Scrutiny, the principal change being that standing overview and scrutiny committees with broad remits were discontinued in favour of more outcome focussed and time limited task and finish panels with varying membership. The new structure for Overview and Scrutiny comprises:-

- an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to determine and co-ordinate a prioritised work programme and carry out scrutiny of key strategic issues;
- up to three Scrutiny Review Panels at any one time to undertake short, focussed reviews on topics agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to deliver the work programme;
- a Health Scrutiny Panel to scrutinise health issues within the city;
- a Joint Health Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise health issues across the Nottingham conurbation with members from both the City and County Councils;
- a Call-In Sub Committee to review 'called-in' executive decisions. This sub committee met once during the year.

The function was supported by a small team of scrutiny colleagues within Constitutional Services.

To be successful Overview and Scrutiny depends upon active participation, not only from the non executive councillors, but also the input of many others – executive councillors, colleagues, representatives of external organisations, the voluntary sector, interest groups and individual citizens. This year Overview and Scrutiny has been supported by a large number of organisations and individuals including Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service (NCVS), Nottingham Hostels and Liaison Group (HLG), Alzheimer's Society, Carers Groups, Nottingham Crime and Drugs Partnership (CDP), Nottingham City Primary Care Trust, Nottingham Universities Hospitals, staff from the Psychological Therapies Service, Greater Nottingham Members of Parliament, Nottingham City and

Nottinghamshire County Local Involvement Networks, Save Hayward House Day Care Campaign, County Equality Forum representatives, Care Quality Commission, Public and Patient Involvement Groups aligned to the NHS Trusts and the Nottingham Eating Disorders Service.

We offer our sincere thanks to all those who provided us with information, attended meetings and responded to our recommendations.

Contributing to improvement in public services

Adding Value and Making an impact – participation and service outcomes

Through the new structure we have sought to maximise the opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny to be of value to the City Council, our partners and the City of Nottingham. The revised Work Programme ensures that every item has a clear purpose and is focussed on outcomes. The commissioning of Review Panels with a single responsibility to carry out a review has aimed to ensure focus on the matter in hand and provide a clear indication when work was complete. The following are some examples of the impact and outcomes which have flowed from the findings and recommendations of scrutiny activity:

Review of Dementia Early Diagnosis (2010-11)

This review panel aimed to identify actions which could be taken to support local achievement of Objective 2 of the National Dementia Strategy. This was defined as ‘good quality early diagnosis and intervention for all’, helping ensure that all people with dementia had access to a pathway of care that delivered a rapid and competent specialist assessment with an accurate diagnosis, sensitively

communicated to the person with dementia and their carers and treatment, care and support provided as needed following diagnosis.

Participants in the review included GP and carers groups, the Alzheimer’s Society, council colleagues and partners providing support and services.

The review panel’s recommendations included ensuring that information about dementia and good practice in early diagnosis and referral was made more accessible to GPs, patients and carers, requesting that the shadow GP Consortium Board nominated a dementia champion, and suggesting several innovations to consider in remodelling Memory Services provision.

The review panel was not prescriptive in evaluating performance against specific recommendations, but rather, assessed whether the actions taken contributed towards achieving Objective 2 of the National Strategy. Outcomes included a doubling of community-based Memory Services venues, the designation of a GP dementia champion and the consideration of dementia issues as a standing item at GP Executive Board meetings, all in line with the Strategy.

Partner organisations expressed their appreciation of the review panel’s input, especially in respect of helping co-ordinate the ‘journey’ towards the National Strategy standard. The review panel findings will also be reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Review of Alcohol Related Harm (2010-11)

We first reported the recommendations of this review in the Annual Report for 2010-11 but at the time of publication were not able to establish the progress of accepted

recommendations. The scope of the review included reducing the harmful, socially ingrained drinking culture and associated anti-social behaviour, crime and serious ill health in the city with particular regard to hard to reach groups. The focus was to identify and promote more effective messages and measures to reduce harmful drinking and to contribute to a reduction in harmful drinking levels in the City.

One very positive outcome resulting from a recommendation from the Panel, was the establishment of a pilot scheme where offenders who have received a fixed penalty notice for alcohol related disorder attend a three-hour interactive session aimed at highlighting the health and social implications of excessive alcohol consumption. In return for attending, their fine could be reduced from £80 to £40. The pilot commenced in September 2011, run by Nottinghamshire Police in partnership with Framework and the Last Orders Alcohol Service. The scheme has now been permanently extended due to very positive results.

Other recommendations included suggestions that both the Universities in Nottingham worked more closely together to address issues during fresher's weeks, co-ordination of publicity and events. In response both universities agreed to share good practice when it came to providing advice on healthy, safe living and alcohol during fresher's week.

Further responses to the report saw various partners including Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, and the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University agreeing to explore options including obtaining funding and support to undertake research and gather accurate data relating to Emergency Department admissions which are alcohol related.

Review of Budget Consultation with Voluntary Sector (2011/12)

The review was commissioned as a result of issues raised by some voluntary sector organisations about the process for consultation in relation to the Council's 2011-12 budget and a desire by councillors to explore whether lessons had been learnt from previous budget consultation processes. The Panel also wished to examine the plans for consultation on the Council's 2012-13 budget.

The recommendations were all accepted and implemented for the 2011-12 budget consultation process. These included drafting a timetable for consultation on the budget with the voluntary sector to ensure that information and proposals are shared at an early stage in an open two way process with the Leader of the Council and appropriate Portfolio Holder. Representatives of NCVS and HLG confirmed that, as a result of the recommendations, there had been improvements, such as the Small Grants Programme Consultation timetable being published in advance with a workable timeframe with a series of consultation events including 'face to face' sessions taking place in different areas of the city.

This year's events were well attended and positive feedback was received from NCVS and HLG relating to the planning and facilitation of these meetings by colleagues in Neighbourhood Management and Resources. Budget meetings were also held by the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Housing, Regeneration and the Community Sector to discuss the issues and respond to concerns and questions directly relating to the voluntary sector.

Future improvements include widening the scope of consultation to include more than just the voluntary sector organisations which are commissioned to provide services and/

or receive grants from the Council. To achieve this, continued use will be made of the wider channels of communication that already exist within the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) for example the NCVS E-bulletin. Information specific to the VCS is also being posted on the Communities section of the Council's website. New opportunities for wider circulation will continue to be sought out.

The improvements are a direct result in the willingness of councillors, council colleagues and the voluntary sector to engage directly and openly on funding issues especially, during this time of reducing budgets.

Given the positive response to the changes in the consultation process for 2012-13 it is hoped that future consultations will continue to improve and engage the voluntary sector more directly, openly and in good time and that an ongoing dialogue continues to take place with the relevant Portfolio Holder. It is too early to comment on some of the recommendations but progress, outcomes and impact will be reported back in the next Annual Report for 2012-13.

Review of Fuel Poverty (2011-12)

The scope of the review was to look at how the Council was working with its partners to maximise the opportunity to eradicate fuel poverty. It looked at how effectively current action was contributing to reaching the national target to eradicate fuel poverty by 2016. The review looked at what specific actions were being taken to mitigate the potential for increasing numbers of fuel-poor households in the light of rising fuel prices and the current recession and whether there were any further actions that could be taken.

The review panel's recommendations included measures to engage and work jointly with private sector landlords and tenants to reduce fuel poverty, to work more effectively with partners to improve communications, both between partners and with the public, to ensure consistent messages on fuel poverty, that information and training be provided to frontline workers to help identify vulnerable people at risk from the effects of fuel poverty, and to explore negotiating energy deals to benefit City residents.

The review panel recommendations were accepted almost in their entirety by the Portfolio Holder for Energy and Sustainability, who confirmed that the review panel's work had highlighted actions and approaches which would not have been taken forward otherwise. An interim report on implementation is expected in July 2012, and the review panel will reconvene in October 2012 to hear more on implementation, in good time for Winter 2012-13.

Review of Drug Education (2011-12)

This review panel was commissioned by Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look at how effective drug education was in schools in reducing drug use amongst young people, and how those young people who do not attend school were being reached. Specifically, the review looked at how the support provided to schools by the Council and its partners contributes to the effectiveness of drug education.

Following a review involving the CDP, support from Whitegate Primary School and University of Samworth Academy, Compass and the Fairmead Group as well as, colleagues from Nottingham City Council.

The Panel's recommendations included:

- requests to the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder for Area Working, Cleansing and Community Safety to maintain and seek alternative funding for the DrugAware programme;
- developing a conference and other communication mechanisms with partners to share latest developments and good practice with school governors, school staff, parents and pupils and partner organisations on topical local issues including; drug and alcohol abuse and misuse; smoking; the impact of substance misuse on behaviour including anti-social behaviour etc; and
- reviewing the DrugAware programme 12 months after the initial input to schools as part of the package.

The outcome and response to the recommendations will not be available until after publication and will be reported on in the Annual Report for 2012-13.

Health Scrutiny Panel

The Health Scrutiny Panel was established in 2011-12 as a sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Its remit includes undertaking the Council's statutory role in scrutinising health services for and specific to the city, engaging with and responding to NHS consultations, and to monitor the Executive's statutory responsibilities on local Involvement Network (soon to be Healthwatch).

Its work programme for 2011-12 focussed on monitoring NHS transition arrangements and their implications for Nottingham's citizens, and on the ongoing Transforming Community Services

initiative, especially in relation to midwifery, talking therapies and podiatry. The Panel also scrutinised and contributed to Nottingham CityCare Partnership's Quality Account, which is a report to the public from NHS service providers about the quality of their services.

Joint Health Scrutiny

The Joint City and County Health Scrutiny Committee is a long-established and effective partnership arrangement with Nottinghamshire County Council to undertake both Councils' statutory role in scrutinising health services across the conurbation. The City Council was the lead authority for the Committee in 2011-12, providing the Chair and primary administrative support to help deliver a full, challenging and flexible work programme.

Priorities and achievements in 2011-12 included:

Cancellation of operations: Responding to citizens' concerns, media coverage and a request from a group of local Members of Parliament, the Committee investigated, as a matter of urgency, the upsurge in cancellations of non-urgent elective operations by Nottingham University Hospitals Trust. Arising from its scrutiny of the issue, the Committee established a rigorous and ongoing performance monitoring process, both to help ensure that unacceptable levels of cancellations are not repeated, and to address historic underperformance in this area;

Psychological Therapies: the Committee was approached by a group of concerned Psychological Therapies workers and service users, expressing concern about what they considered to be, in effect, the decommissioning of an effective Psychological Therapies service for a vulnerable client group. Whilst the Committee did not find this to be the case, it did

receive assurances from Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust about changing its consultation arrangements and ensuring that service changes took into account clinical need. Although disappointed with the outcome, we received the following feedback **from** the worker/service group lead representative:

‘Despite the outcome, my colleagues really appreciated the chance to share our concerns and it was evident that the committee were listening and taking us seriously’.

Lings Bar and Hayward House: The Committee considered separately two very sensitive issues involving service configuration changes at Hayward House (specialist palliative care) and Lings Bar Hospital (in-patient rehabilitation for older people). In both cases, there were strong local concerns and uncertainty about the nature and implications of the service changes. The Committee provided the key forum where commissioners and service providers explained the changes and where patient group concerns and fears were aired, considered and, in most cases, dispelled.

Health Messages and Eating Disorders: A study group of the Committee, comprising councillors from both authorities, conducted an in-depth investigation into links between health messages and eating disorders. The study group engaged with mental health, public health and nutrition professionals, as well as college counsellors and health visitors.

The study group’s recommendations included requesting that the Secretary of State for Health promote healthy eating framed in a policy which countered eating disorders, urging the promotion of healthy eating via the Health and Wellbeing Board, developing tailored healthy eating messages aimed at particular areas and demographics and focusing on balanced diets rather than prescribed foods within health messages.

Responses to these recommendations have been requested and will be available shortly.

We are pleased that both authorities have expressed their commitment to continue joint health scrutiny arrangements in 2012-13. We believe this reflects the value placed upon the work of the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee by both Councils and our partners across the NHS in the Conurbation.

Reflecting on our experiences and looking ahead

The past year has been one of transition for Overview and Scrutiny during which we adopted our new structure and ways of working. We have worked hard to ensure that every piece of work on our Work Programme has a clear purpose and is likely to achieve real outcomes. A review of the operation of the new structure found that it was working in a way which had resulted in a more streamlined work programme focussed on issues of value and that this in turn had reduced the burden of work on colleagues and councillors allowing them to concentrate on priorities. Allowing time for follow up to recommendations and actions arising from scrutiny, there will be a further review later this year, to assess the impact of Overview and Scrutiny on the services it has reviewed.

However, there is still work to be done to maximise the value that Overview and Scrutiny can add. The new Overview and Scrutiny Structure was not fully embedded until September 2011 following the induction, appointment and training of many new councillors and this, followed by a period of staff changes meant that it was not possible to run as many reviews as councillors would have liked. This, in particular, is something we will be addressing in the coming Municipal Year.

On a positive note, as this report demonstrates, the reviews that did take place were well received and made a positive impact by changing the way the Council and our partners work and engaged extremely positively with a range of citizens, service users, partner organisations and council colleagues.

This last year has seen the new ways of working in overview and scrutiny become embedded and better understood and appreciated. This is a strong platform upon which to build and realise the full benefits envisaged by the function's re-structure.

Contact information

For further information about this report, and anything else related to Overview and Scrutiny, please contact the Overview and Scrutiny Team:

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The City Council's website contains more information about overview and scrutiny in Nottingham including examples of how our work is making a positive impact on public service delivery; and details of current work taking place and opportunities for people to get involved.

Visit www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/overviewandscrutiny

If you require this information in an alternative language, **large font**, Braille, audio tape or text only version, please contact the Overview and Scrutiny Team on 0115 8764296 or 0115 8764304.