



Nottingham
City Council

Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report

2013-14



Nottingham City Council

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013-14

Introduction

Overview and scrutiny exists to help improve 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 through call-in;
- challenging performance to ensure that services are meeting the needs of local communities.

The purpose of this annual report is to review how the Overview and Scrutiny function performed in 2013-14 and provide a snapshot of the contribution it made to improving public services.

The structure for Overview and Scrutiny in 2013-14 was:-

- an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to determine and co-ordinate a prioritised work programme and carry out scrutiny of key strategic issues;
- a series of single session reviews, carried out by review panels, with very focused scopes, mainly comprising operational and partnership working;

- a Health Scrutiny Panel to scrutinise health and adult social care 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 Panel to review executive decisions when requested by non executive councillors. This Panel met once during the year.

The function is facilitated by two Overview and Scrutiny Review Co-ordinators, with support from colleagues in Constitutional Services.

Successful Overview and Scrutiny depends upon active participation, not only from non executive councillors, but also the input of many others including executive councillors; colleagues; representatives of external organisations and partners, including the voluntary sector; interest groups and individual citizens.

This year scrutiny has been supported by many organisations and individuals including: Environment Agency, Severn Trent, The Canals and Rivers Trust, Allotment holders, Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service (NCVS), Nottingham Crime and Drugs Partnership (CDP), Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, Nottingham CityCare Partnership, East Midlands Ambulance Service, Circle, who run Nottingham NHS Treatment Centre, Nottingham City Clinical Commissioning Group and other Clinical Commissioning Groups in south Nottinghamshire, Nottinghamshire Hospice, Arriva who provide patient transport

services, Derbyshire Health United who provide NHS 111, Healthwatch Nottingham and Healthwatch Nottinghamshire, Nottingham Equality and Fairness Commission, and individual patients and users of health services.

The scrutiny review panels commissioned covered a variety of topics and were actively supported by colleagues and partners, who have given time and their expertise to report on topics, but who have also been open to the recommendations made by panels.

We offer our sincere thanks to all those who provided us with information, attended meetings and responded to our recommendations in 2013-14.

Contributing to improvement in public services

Adding Value and Making an impact – participation and service outcomes

We look to maximise the opportunities for Overview and Scrutiny to be of value to the Council, our partners and citizens of Nottingham. With this in mind, the Work Programme is developed to ensure that each review topic has a clear purpose and is focussed on achieving outcomes. This year the commissioning of review panels with a single responsibility and to be completed in a single session has resulted in an increased number of reviews being carried out.

The following are some examples of the impact and outcomes which have flowed from the findings and recommendations of scrutiny activity in 2013-14:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee activity

As part of its remit this Committee looks at strategic issues and partnerships affecting the Council and the City's residents. Major issues involving crime are reported on annually by the Crime and Drugs Partnership (CDP) who reported back on the progress of the targets in the Partnership Plan and the results of the Strategic Assessment 2012/13. With informative data and helpful insights provided by Peter Moyes, Director of the CDP, and his colleagues, the Committee is able to explore the progress and priorities each year.

To explore the Council's and its partners' activities to promote and build the economic climate in the future, the Committee received progress reports on the Nottingham Plan, which includes the strategic objectives of the Council, and on the Nottingham Growth Plan, focusing on its flagship project, the 'Creative Quarter'. The ambition and aims of the Nottingham Growth Plan include fostering enterprise by supporting small businesses, encouraging entrepreneurship, developing a skilled workforce and ensuring local jobs for local people. In response to the information provided, the Committee made the following recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Jobs and Growth:

- to target marketing and communication relating to the financial and other support available for new business start up to minority ethnic groups;
- to remember the importance of district centres such as Bulwell and address issues for these areas as part of the package of regeneration of the City as a whole.

During the year, there was a lot of media attention on the sexual exploitation of children and young people in various

parts of the country, with high profile court cases about the grooming and exploitation of teenage girls. As the Council is a corporate parent and has safeguarding responsibilities, it was appropriate to explore these topical issues and the action being taken by the Council and its partners. Martin Hillier (Nottinghamshire Police), Pete Turgoose (Project Manager – Protect and Respect Project, NSPCC) and Anne Partington (Nottingham City Council Safeguarding) provided reassuring information on the actions being taken by the partnerships and also sought to dispel myths around this topic which have been proliferated in some of the media. It was confirmed that there was nothing to suggest that Nottingham had a particular problem with organised child sexual exploitation. National research suggests, contrary to many media reports, that child sexual exploitation is often more opportunistic and, if at all, only loosely organised. Responding to the information received it was suggested that the Child Sexual Exploitation Cross Authority Group should explore opportunities for raising awareness of child sexual exploitation issues in local communities as well as raising the profile of child safeguarding issues, including child sexual exploitation, amongst all councillors.

Partnerships and the voluntary sector were also examined with a focus on how the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) is being affected by the continuing reductions in budget. The results of the annual State of the Sector Survey were presented by Ferg Slade of Nottingham Community and Voluntary Services (CVS) and Karla Kerr, Market Development Officer for the Council, spoke on the streamlining of investment to the voluntary sector. The VCS is a key partner in delivering many services and a lot of work is taking place to ensure streamlining funding more effectively through Lead Organisations with Service Level agreements in place to ensure that commissioned services are effectively managed. Catherine Cook from Nottingham HLG (an organisation of voluntary

sector organisations working in the homeless, housing, health and social care sectors) reported that some voluntary and community sector groups which deal with health and wellbeing issues were experiencing challenges in understanding, and effectively engaging with the new health landscape. This was particularly so at a strategic level as there is no longer a clearly identified single contact person for voluntary sector issues within the Council. The Committee felt this would be a useful issue to be explored by the Health Scrutiny Panel.

A protocol was developed and agreed between the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Equality and Fairness Commission to formalise how issues could be referred between each body and the process for review of a topic. It was agreed that duplication should be avoided wherever possible and that where appropriate members from either group can be invited to contribute to reviews as there were many shared topics of interest. One topic proposed and accepted as a review topic for scrutiny in 2014/15 is how commissioning and procurement can promote equality.

Lisa Black Head of Revenues, Benefits and Welfare Advice (Nottingham City Council) and Trish Heaton, Chief Officer of Nottingham Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) jointly updated the Committee on how the range of issues citizens are seeking advice about has changed and what provision is in place to help these citizens. During 2013/14 over 3,000 advice sessions were offered, helping 12,549 citizens. The factors driving demand largely relate to welfare reform, for example the introduction of social size criteria and the tightening of benefit sanctions. Given that welfare reform is continuing, the Committee was keen to request that future briefings are provided on the increasing use of food banks, as well as the change from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independent Payments, which will affect Nottingham's citizens.

Scrutiny Review Panels 2013-14

The natural environment and green spaces

This year scrutiny review topics were closely related, ie either supported by the same service or by theme. There was a great deal of interest in how the Council is managing its responsibilities in terms of the urban environment and green and open spaces to promote the wellbeing of citizens by developing more natural environments to live in as well as being custodians of the natural landscape. This resulted in reviews exploring the impact of Ash Die Back, Tree Management Services, Allotments and Managing Public Footpaths on Public Waterways (Rivers and canals).

All the panels were very appreciative of the time and support given by the teams in Parks and Open Spaces to these reviews and the valuable insights provided on how these services are managed and run.

It is clear the Council has an important role in terms of managing the natural environment whilst at the same time ensuring services are being delivered to provide value for money within reducing budgets. The Tree Management Service is an example of where a service has had to review its own provision, cost effectiveness and priorities. This has resulted in outsourcing part of the work to an external provider to maintain the City's green canopy for future generations.

The Council has a statutory responsibility in relation to flood risk management and each year the Environment Agency and Severn Trent attend with council colleagues to discuss recent flooding events, how effectively the agencies work together and how they work with citizens. Ironically, the first meeting had to

be deferred as the representatives were called to an emergency meeting in London following the flood surge events in December 2013, which caused massive damage to coastal regions. Nottingham did not suffer the extensive flooding of areas such as the Somerset levels in the early part of this year but it has suffered localised severe flooding as a result of major storms. On 23 July 2013 there were 26mm of rain in 29 minutes which tracked across the City in a north east direction. Over 100 domestic properties and 30 commercial properties suffered internal flooding and the Highway Services Out of Hours service distributed sandbags and carried out emergency highway repairs and gully clearance. Door to door enquiries took place over a 3 week period of all properties that were known to have flooded to gather data. The Council is leading on the formal investigations, linking in with the local Surface Water Management Plan to investigate causes of flooding. This appears to be mainly the result of surface water interacting with the sewers, so Severn Trent are also supporting the investigation through CCTV and modelling work.

The progress of the implementation of the Gully Cleansing regime was welcomed as a key factor in helping to reduce localised flooding by ensuring gullies are routinely cleaned and inspected, as well as emergency support provided when there are major rain events in high risk areas.

The Panel agreed that next review should take place after these formal investigations have been completed and that the Council could also explore the promotion of the Environment Agency's alert system through the Nottingham Arrow etc. The Panel also wanted to promote education/communication work with community groups in high risk areas. The Panel also recommended that there be an exploration of potential for the service to promote the effective use of flood management products and the possibility of the Council selling them to its residents.

Anti-social behaviour from pet ownership and humans

These reviews included looking at anti-social behaviour of dogs and irresponsible dog ownership, wheelie bins left out on pavements which obstruct pedestrians and wheelchair users etc, and inconsiderate parking around educational establishments, eg blocking driveways and parking in restricted areas during drop off and collection times from schools.

These reviews explored the impact of irresponsible actions by citizens and the role of Council services which tackle these through education and enforcement action where appropriate. Community Protection and other council colleagues supported these reviews as well as external organisations, such as The Dogs Trust and Nottinghamshire Police, who provided insight to promote positive and responsible pet ownership through education and free micro-chipping at Council led events. Education and support are also key features of City Services (Waste Management) and they work in partnership with Community Protection to issue information leaflets as well as issuing Fixed Penalty Notices.

Community Protection and Enforcement play a major role in supporting neighbourhood drives and events as well as taking robust action to discourage people from parking inappropriately around schools and supporting Road Safety colleagues to provide talks to schools.

Scrutiny Review Panel conclusions

The overwhelming message from all the reviews is that all services provided by the Council and its partners are working hard to communicate and educate citizens on a range of environmental issues. This is a challenge given the high turnover of residents in the city in terms of its student

population, as well as new and emerging communities whose first language is not English. It is evident that many services are now carried out in partnership with the voluntary sector, other public organisations such as Severn Trent, the Environment Agency and the Canals and Rivers Trust. More work is needed to communicate with the hardest to reach groups who may not speak English, but also may have very different cultural histories in terms of recycling waste and citizenship for example.

Reflecting on our experiences of Scrutiny Review Panels and looking ahead

In 2013/14 we tested the new approach of carrying out short, sharp reviews in one sitting. While this has resulted in some good focused scrutiny work, we hope that allowing time for some more in depth reviews in the coming year will help to bring greater challenge to the process. Whilst the single session reviews have proved popular, they have not enabled members to explore issues in depth when this would add value to the process and on some occasions Panels would have liked to have had an opportunity to call in more contributors or carry out more research to identify further evidence. It is important to remain focused but to be sure that the appropriate level of challenge is brought to the scrutiny process.

Each year the Committee carries out a workshop exercise where it explores topical and impending issues as potential review topics. Supported by colleagues in the Council's Policy and Performance team, ideas are explored and scoped. The Committee is grateful for the support of these colleagues in providing data, research and information on future legislative changes.

Call-in Panel

The Call-in Panel met on 15 August 2013 to consider a call-in request from non executive councillors on executive decision 0918 - Pay by phone parking zone tariffs, which included setting costs for parking in the different zones of the City. The call-in was on the basis that there had been inadequate consultation prior to the decision being taken and the relevant information, for example the impact of displaced traffic on neighbourhood areas, had not been considered. However, the Panel did not uphold the call-in and agreed that the decision could be implemented immediately.

Health Scrutiny

The Council has a statutory responsibility to review and scrutinise the planning and delivery of health services in the local area and where necessary make reports and recommendations for improvement to organisations which commission and provide NHS funded services. During 2013/14 health scrutiny was carried out by the Health Scrutiny Panel and the Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Joint Health Scrutiny Committee.

Relationship building

In April 2013 there were major changes to the way in which health services are commissioned and overseen. Therefore over the last year health scrutiny has focused on continuing to build good working relationships with its partners in the new health and social care landscape. This has included local Clinical Commissioning Groups, Healthwatch, the Health and Wellbeing Board, public health colleagues within the Council, NHS England Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Area Team, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Scrutiny has proactively developed a working agreement with Healthwatch Nottingham and the Health and Wellbeing Board to identify opportunities to work together and complement each others' roles, making best use of resources, while avoiding duplication in activity. We are already seeing the benefits of sharing information with Healthwatch. Every year councillors have the opportunity to review the performance of providers against their stated priorities for the year and their intended priorities for the future; and then give a formal comment on this for inclusion in each published Quality Account document. This year councillors allocated more focused time to this activity and invited Healthwatch to join in this work. This helped to improve the robustness of comments and positive feedback has been received from providers on this approach.

Scrutinising substantial changes to local health services

Health scrutiny has a statutory role in considering proposals to substantially develop or vary health services affecting City residents. This year that has included changes to community paediatric clinics, closure of an inpatient ward for patients with dementia to refocus services towards a community model of provision and, currently, proposals to remodel Walk In Centre provision in the City to develop an Urgent Care Centre. Councillors are looking at the extent of consultation and engagement on the proposals and whether the proposed changes are in the best interests of local health services.

Reviewing issues of concern in health service provision

Health scrutiny councillors also review and scrutinise health and social care services where there might be issues or concerns about the service experienced by patients and service users. Examples of work that has been undertaken this year include:

- Derbyshire Health United (DHU) provides the NHS 111 service for Nottingham. Following a successful launch of the new service, performance started to decline partly due to insufficient staff to deal with calls and longer than anticipated call lengths. DHU recruited and trained additional staff and councillors were satisfied performance had improved and remedial plans had been put in place. Councillors visited the call handling centre to see the service in action. However, DHU advised that this level of staffing was not sustainable and workforce changes to improve efficiency needed to be implemented. Changes were due to take place by May 2014 and data shows that there has been some decline in performance over this period. Councillors will be following this up with DHU and service commissioners in July to ensure that performance is restored and maintained.
- Concerns were raised about waits for the pharmacy service at Nottingham University Hospitals (NUH). Councillors heard about the way in which the pharmacy service is provided and issues associated with its provision. They also heard about a project taking place to reduce medication waiting times for inpatients, helping to speed up hospital discharges. While NUH was already making improvements to the pharmacy outpatient environment the project had not specifically focused on delays in the pharmacy outpatient service. Councillors highlighted concerns about this to NUH which has undertaken to look at these. Councillors are still gathering more evidence on this issue and due to make recommendations for improvement in early 2014/15.
- There has been a long-standing concern about poor performance of the Patient Transport Service, provided by Arriva. Councillors have spoken to Arriva and service commissioners about issues when the contract commenced in July 2012 but despite reassurances about action plans for

improvement being in place performance has remained unsatisfactory and councillors have heard concerns about the impact of this on service users and organisations such as NUH. The Joint Health Scrutiny Committee expressed its concern and unhappiness directly to Arriva and to commissioners. It is understood that contract penalties have been enacted.

- The Council is now responsible for commissioning the NHS Health Check Programme. Councillors explored what is being done to maximise take-up rates, and because people are targeted via their GP, councillors identified a potential gap in provision for people who are not registered with a GP. Councillors asked public health colleagues to look at how this can be addressed and will be receiving information on this during 2014/15.
- Nationally there has been a high media profile on the quality of care in care homes and care at home services, and locally CQC inspections have identified examples of poor care. Councillors have reviewed the Council's role in commissioning these services and how risks to the authority in ensuring older citizens living in residential care homes receive safe, appropriate and good quality care are being managed. Later in 2014, several months into the new framework for commissioning care at home services, councillors intend to carry out a review of patient experience of care at home services.

Responding to the Francis Report

The Francis Report into failings at Stafford Hospital identified systemic failures in a range of national and local organisations to respond to public concerns, including health scrutiny. Consideration has been given to the implications for health scrutiny in Nottingham and the risks to the local authority. In response councillors attended a joint training session with

Nottinghamshire County Councillors exploring these risks and how to mitigate them.

Another key issue identified in the Francis Report was the way in which complaints are handled by providers. As a result health scrutiny has scrutinised the way in which complaints are handled by Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust, Nottingham University Hospitals Trust, East Midlands Ambulance Service Trust and Nottingham CityCare Partnership, and how these organisations are responding to recommendations from the national review of NHS Complaints Handling. Overall, councillors were reassured by the complaints handling processes in place and that providers were aware of areas for improvement and had plans in place to address these. Several providers have identified complaints handling as a priority area for improvement during 2014/15 and councillors will be interested to see how this develops.

In response to issues highlighted in the Francis Report, the CQC has revised its approach to inspection of health and social care providers and over the last year has piloted new models of inspection. Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust (NUH) was one of the first acute hospitals to be inspected under this new approach. Health scrutiny submitted evidence for consideration by the inspection team and attended the Quality Summit held at the end of the inspection to hear the outcomes for improvement. Councillors have since spoken to the Trust's Medical Director about implementation of the recommendations.

Health scrutiny has also provided evidence to inform the recent inspection of the mental health services and community services provided by Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust. At the time of writing the outcome from this inspection is still awaited.

Contact information

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

Telephone: 0115 8764296 or 0115 8764315

Email: overview.scrutiny@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

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 8764315.