



# **Annual Report 2023/24**

## **Overview and Scrutiny**

# Contents

1. **Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory) and Monitoring Officer Statement**
2. **Roles and Responsibilities**
3. **Performance Review**
4. **Work Programme**

## Statement by the Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory) and the Monitoring Officer

- 1.1 Article 6 of the Constitution requires that an annual report be presented to Council on the workings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, their future work programmes and any proposed amendments to working methods. Accordingly, this report provides the following information:
- (a) Statement by the Monitoring Officer.
  - (b) Performance Review Statistics.
  - (c) Future Work Programmes.
  - (d) Amendments to Current Practices.

- 1.2 The **Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework** (2016 Edition) identifies seven core principles of good governance, with associated sub principles. Of particular relevance is:

### **Core Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management**

**Sub Principle: Managing Performance** Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which provides constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the organisation's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible.

**Action/Response:** There is one Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with its own work programme, which met regularly. There is constructive scrutiny challenge. The use of programmed scrutiny in the decision-making process ensures that Overview and Scrutiny Committees have less need to call-in an item having already had the opportunity to express a view to the decision-maker. Scrutiny recommendations are considered in detail by the Cabinet. An annual report on the work of the committee is presented to the Council's Annual Meeting.

- 1.3 As the Monitoring Officer, I am satisfied that the statutory overview and scrutiny function is operating effectively and has been properly and lawfully exercised in accordance with the Constitution and has contributed to the achievement of the core and sub principles. This is evidenced by:
- (i) The Council has operated one Overview and Scrutiny Committees (the law requires one or more).
  - (ii) Work Programmes have been set and approved and carried out and reported to the Council.
  - (iii) That 11 or more ordinary meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been held during the year.
  - (iv) Policy review and development has been undertaken in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.
  - (v) Reports from Overview and Scrutiny Committees to the executive would ordinarily have been considered by the executive within 4 weeks.
  - (vi) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has exercised call-in.
  - (vii) The urgency procedures have been properly exercised and reported.
  - (viii) Officers and Members have attended Scrutiny Committees to give evidence when required.

1.4 The scrutiny function has operated in accordance with guidelines/protocols to assist in respect of:

- (a) The call-in procedure;
- (b) Chairman's procedure for key question setting and chairmen's meetings;
- (c) The key stages for topic reviews;
- (d) Public submission of topics for review;
- (e) Petitions
- (f) Public speaking at committee; and
- (g) Officer support.

**Harvey Rudd**  
Monitoring Officer

**Louise May**  
Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory)

## The Role and Responsibilities of Scrutiny

- 2.1 The overview and scrutiny function is central to the constitution of the Council. It should act to promote accountability and transparency within the decision-making process.
- 2.2 The key agreed local principles forming the foundation of the overview and scrutiny function at Dover District Council are as follows:
- The focus for scrutiny must be based upon the achievement of outcomes rather than upon process and procedures in order to develop a function that can make a real difference to the Council and the district.
  - That Overview and Scrutiny be positive, objective and constructive, seeking to add value to any service that it considers. Scrutiny should acknowledge good practice where found and recommend improvements where necessary.
  - It is essential that the Council has an active and challenging scrutiny function that reflects corporate priorities regarding the provision of services.
- 2.3 The Council has a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee which provides overview on the exercise and delivery of council services and functions and considers the impact of service delivery across the whole of the public and private sector on the local community.
- 2.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for discharging the functions, some of which are conferred by legislation, in relation to the following matters:

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- (a) Budget and Major Policy
- (b) Call-in
- (c) Performance Monitoring and Improvement
- (d) Petitions referred to the scrutiny committee
- (e) Community Reviews and Accountability
- (f) Public Health
- (g) Major Projects
- (h) Crime and Disorder

### Policy Development and Review

- 2.5 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee exercise the following functions in respect of policy development and review:
- (a) Assist the Council and the executive in the development of its Budget and Policy Framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues;
  - (b) Conduct research and undertake community and other consultation in the analysis of policy issues and possible options;
  - (c) Consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the development of policy options;

- (d) Question members of the Executive and/or Committees and chief officers about their views on issues and proposals affecting the area; and
- (e) Liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that collaborative working enhances the interests of local people.

### **Overview and Scrutiny**

2.6 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will within its terms of reference:

- (a) Review and scrutinise the decisions made by and performance of the Executive and/or Committees and Council officers both in relation to individual decisions and overall performance;
- (b) Review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas;
- (c) Consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants;
- (d) Reconsider decisions made but not yet implemented by the Executive (following the exercise of the right of call-in);
- (e) Question members of the Executive and/or Committees and Chief Officers about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects;
- (f) Make recommendations to the Executive and/or appropriate Committee and/or Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process;
- (g) Review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and local people about their activities and performance; and
- (h) Question and gather evidence from any person (with their consent). Overview and Scrutiny Committee have powers conferred by legislation in respect of requiring certain bodies such as the Executive or Community Safety Partnership members to attend for the purpose of providing evidence in respect of their functions.

## Performance Review

- 3.1 If overview and scrutiny is to be successful it needs to achieve tangible outcomes. These can be achieved through influencing executive decision-making – whether through scheduled scrutiny through the work programme or call-in, influencing partners and outside bodies or raising awareness of issues with members of the council and the wider public.

### Structure

- 3.2 Dover District Council operates a single scrutiny committee model. The number of scrutiny committees maintained by the Council is in line with the Kentish district council average of 1.22 scrutiny committees for those authorities operating executive arrangements.

### Scrutiny Recommendations

- 3.3 During the municipal year 2022/23 a number of recommendations have been made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet and Council, and a summary of the outcomes is shown below:

Overview	Executive Business	Council Business	Total
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	4	0	9

Executive Business	Approved	Amended or Deferred	Rejected	Total	PCT Approved
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	4	0	0	4	100%

Council Business	Approved	Amended or Deferred	Rejected	Total	PCT Approved
Number of Scrutiny Recommendations	0	0	0	0	n/a

- 3.4 One additional recommendation was made to the Dover Joint Transportation Advisory Board in respect of the Fasttrack project.
- 3.5 It should be noted that the reduction in the number of recommendations to the Cabinet arises in part from the culmination of a gradual process over several years from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to no longer making recommendations to the Cabinet where it endorses the original Cabinet decision. Accordingly, recommendations to the Cabinet are now those where a change to the original decision is desired by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.6 The average approval level of recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by Cabinet was 100% (against a target of 80%).

### Frequency of Meetings

- 3.7 There were 11 scheduled meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/24. However, with the cancellation of the 9 October 2023 and 20 May 2024 meeting only 9 meetings were held.

#### **Call-In**

- 3.8 There has been 0 Executive Decisions formally called-in for scrutiny during the course of the municipal year.
- 3.9 It should be emphasised that the number of times the call-in power is exercised has no direct correlation with the efficiency of the Council's overview and scrutiny functions. For example, the use of programmed scrutiny in the decision-making process can ensure that Overview and Scrutiny Committees have less need to call-in an item having already had the opportunity to express a view on a matter to the decision-maker. Additionally, at Dover District Council a post-decision model of scrutiny is used that reduces the need for the use of the call-in function.

#### **Public Speaking at Overview and Scrutiny**

- 3.10 The Council adopted a protocol for public speaking during the municipal year 2008/09. The conclusion drawn from the application of the public speaking protocol to date is that it is functioning properly and that in the absence of public speaking at Cabinet meetings it provides a useful method by which members of the public can directly express their views on Executive matters.

#### **Scrutiny Agenda Setting**

- 3.11 In accordance with Constitution any Member of the Council can nominate an item within the remit of the scrutiny committee for the agenda, although the committee does not have to accept any suggestions.

#### **Public Petitions**

- 3.12 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has received 1 petition during the municipal year 2023/24. The petition related to the restoration of the Wave Sculpture to Deal Pier and following the consideration of the petition, officers advised that steps would be taken to restore the Wave Sculpture.

#### **Budget Scrutiny**

- 3.13 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee conducted its scrutiny of the budget at its 19 February 2024 meeting.

#### **Broadcasting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings**

- 3.14 The broadcast of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings has anecdotally produced very low live viewership numbers – usually single figure. While there is an increase in viewership for the broadcasts posted to YouTube following the meeting, these numbers have also remained low with the overwhelming majority of views taking place in the first 10 days after posting.



## Work Programme

- 4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has developed a one-year work programme and scrutinised a number of issues.
- 4.2 There have been several external organisations or community groups involved in scrutiny (either as an interviewee or by providing documentary evidence) during the municipal year 2023/24. These notably include NHS Kent and Medway, the Port of Dover and Kent Police.
- 4.3 A significant achievement was the attendance by NHs Kent and Medway ICB to discuss dental service provision in the district following the transfer of responsibilities from NHS England. NHS England had previously refused to meet with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.4 Any items not completed during the 2023/24 work programmes will be presented to the meeting of the Committee in June 2024 for consideration for inclusion in the rolling work programme for 2024/25. Any items not selected will be discarded from the work programme.
- 4.5 The work programme is subject to regular monthly reviews by the Scrutiny Committee having regard to the corporate objectives and priorities, public consultation, and other events that may require the Scrutiny Committee to reappraise its work programmes.

### **New Legislation**

- 4.6 Any new legislation affecting overview and scrutiny will be considered and implemented as required.

## Work Programme – Overview and Scrutiny Committee (June 2023 – May 2024)

- Strategic Performance Dashboard – Quarterly
- Provision of Interim Housing and Support for Afghan Refugees via Afghan Relocations and Assistance Programme
- Purchase of New Shared Ownership Housing at Willowbank, Sandwich
- Update on Corporate Complaints Policy
- Adoption of Procurement Strategy 2023-26
- Dover Beacon/Bench Street Projects
- Responsive Repairs, Voids and Associated Services Contract 2011- 2025
- Fasttrack Update
- Regeneration Update
- Public Spaces Protection Order Consultation
- Adoption of Dour Street, Dover Conservation Area Character Appraisal
- Provision of Interim Housing for Ukrainian Refugees via Local Authority Housing Fund
- Dover District Council Community Grants Scheme Arrangements for 2023/24
- Full Structural Survey to Deal Pier
- Green Waste Containerisation Project
- Phlebotomy Services in Deal
- Establishment of Climate and Nature Forum
- Tides Leisure Centre
- Dover Town Centre Regeneration - Bench Street (Westside),
- Dover Town Centre Regeneration - Camden Crescent, Dover
- Update on Hackney Carriage Numbers
- Fees and Charges
- Port of Dover
- Review of On and OffStreet Parking Charges
- Sale of Guide Hut at Land Adjoining 107 Sandwich Road, Whitfield
- Budget and MTFP 2024/25
- Section 25 Report
- EK Service Transition Business Case
- Crime and Disorder Update
- NHS Dentistry Provision in the Dover District
- Renovation of Former Hair Salon to Provide Extended Facilities for Crosslinks Youth & Community Hub at 9 Sheridan Road, Dover
- Dover District Crematorium Project
- Dover Town Centre Regeneration - Roman Painted House and Roman Lawn, Dover
- Your Leisure Additional Funding