

## REPORT FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 1.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee met 10 December and considered:
- **Integrated Plan (IP) proposals 2020/21 – 2023/24: overview of resources, pressures and key issues**
  - **Scrutiny self-evaluation: initial findings**
  - **Update on recruitment, retention and staffing levels in the adult care sector in Hertfordshire**
- 1.2 **Integrated Plan proposals 2020/21 – 2023/24: overview of resources, pressures and key issues**  
Members were provided with a presentation on the Council's budget position and plan, including resources, pressures and key issues, as context for the scrutiny of the budget proposals in January 2020. Councillors were made aware of the anticipated delay in publication of the financial settlement for 2020/21 (SR19) from central government due to the general election and the uncertainty over exact funding available for this period and beyond. Members were reminded that the financial outlook for the Council continued to be challenging and the need to plan ahead beyond 2020/21 with this in mind.
- 1.3 **Scrutiny self-evaluation: initial findings**  
Firstly, many thanks to all Councillors, officers and other representatives that engaged with the scrutiny self-evaluation consultation. The Committee received an update on the initial findings of the scrutiny self-evaluation. This review was conducted by officers in light of new government scrutiny guidance published in May 2019 to identify strengths and areas for development within the scrutiny function. Key areas such as role and purpose, effectiveness, culture, impact and citizen voice were focused on. The majority of the feedback was positive, particularly in terms of collaborative cross-party working; scrutiny of NHS partners and robustness of monitoring the impact of scrutiny recommendations. Some areas for development emerged, including the need for clarification of the process for Member involvement in work planning and prioritisation; strengthened focus on measuring scrutiny impact in terms of the difference it makes to the lives of citizens; and increasing the understanding of the role and purpose of scrutiny with the public and within the Council. I have discussed the findings with officers and they have developed an action plan and begun work to implement changes in response to the findings of this review.
- 1.4 **Update on recruitment, retention and staffing levels in the adult care sector in Hertfordshire**  
Members received an update from the Director of Adult Social Care on recruitment, retention and staffing levels in the adult care sector in Hertfordshire. An outline of the position, pressures and challenges was provided, with Members noting the impact of the closure of a number of London-based care homes on the

care market in the south of Hertfordshire. Recruitment and retention were discussed and information provided on actions being taken to achieve improvements in this area, such as the offer of fixed term contracts for care workers and online activity and visits to schools to generate interest in working in the care sector. Members were made aware of proposals to be included in the 2020/21 Integrated Plan that sought to establish a differential between the national minimum wage and local average care wages.

**1.5** OSC met on 22 and 30 January and considered the **Council's budget IP (Integrated Plan) for 2020/21 – 2023/24**. Members received a helpful and timely update from the Director of Resources on the current financial position, financial trends, actions since the last IP, the Spending Round 2019 and uncertainty around funding after 2020/21. Key points from the IP were also highlighted to Members including planned savings and investments, the proposed 3.99% increase in council tax, capital, reserves and the challenging medium-term position. The importance of keeping our sights on the medium-term view and avoiding short term solutions was emphasised and the key role that transformation would play was highlighted. After this update, the Committee adjourned and members split into groups to scrutinise specific portfolios so that all areas of the authority's work were scrutinised over the day. The Head of Scrutiny has produced a report and recommendations for report to Cabinet on 24 February. Many thanks to all Councillors and officers that took part in this scrutiny event and enabled the process to be carried out meaningfully and thoroughly. Particular thanks go to the graduate trainees that supported this process and whose input was invaluable. I have heard from the IP chairmen that they valued the work of the graduates during the scrutiny and in the lead up to the day.

### **1.6 Scrutiny Seminar**

A scrutiny seminar was held on 27 November on the topic of flooding. Members who attended found it a very useful update and were provided with information on the following topics and an opportunity for questions and answers.

- The County Council's responsibilities as lead flood authority
- How the County Council executes its duties with limited funding and limited power over other authorities or partners
- How effectively partners work together

### **1.7 Training for Scrutiny Members**

We are also reviewing our training for scrutiny members. Officers have developed a programme of lite-bite type sessions, with our Scrutiny Officer, Fiona Corcoran, drawing on her experience from the Centre for Public Scrutiny. These sessions are due to start in March.

**1.8** We ran a half-day training session for scrutiny chairmen on 16 January 2020, which was particularly useful for chairmen of IP scrutiny groups. Feedback from attendees was that the session had been very useful.

### **1.9 Forthcoming Scrutinies**

Officers continue to work on our behalf on the programme of scrutinies:

1. Crime and Disorder: Hate Crime **19 June 2020**
2. Innovation of Learning Disabilities **25 June 2020**
3. Children Looked After **1 July 2020**

4. The People Strategy **9 July 2020**
5. Mental Health of Children in Care topic group will be held in February. Young people from the Children in Care Council have chosen this topic to scrutinise and will make up the membership of this topic group. The meeting is not open to the public or press but the topic group's recommendations will be reported to the scrutiny committees and followed up by the Impact of Scrutiny Advisory Committee.

I and the Vice Chairmen will be looking for volunteers for items 1 - 4 in due course. If you are interested in participating in any of these scrutinies please let us or our Scrutiny Officer, Fiona Corcoran, know.

#### **1.10 Forthcoming Scrutiny Seminars**

The following scrutiny seminars for councillors are planned. All Councillors are welcome to attend:

- Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) **11 February**
- Highways Services Contract **2 March**
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Children **30 April**

**David Andrews**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**February 2020**