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<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	21 May 2013

**Purpose of Report:** To detail the Commission of scrutiny activity undertaken during the municipal year 2012/13.

**Recommended Action:** To note the contents of this report.

<b>Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman</b>	
<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

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## Executive Report

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report outlines the scrutiny activity undertaken by the authority in the municipal year 2012/13. It contains an overview of the year and gives detail on each of the activities undertaken. It includes a commentary, where it is possible to give it, on the value that the activity has added.

### 2. Overview of the last twelve months

- 2.1 The scrutiny structure within West Berkshire Council consists of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC), Health Scrutiny Panel (HSP) and Resource Management Working Group (RMWG).
- 2.2 Over the course of the last year, the three Committees have conducted scrutiny reviews across all areas of the Council, and have regularly reviewed and challenged financial and performance information.
- 2.3 3 decisions were called in to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission for review. These decisions were:
- (1) Item Called-In following an Individual Decision: The introduction of a 50mph speed limit on the A4 Bath Road, Padworth. This decision was referred back to the Portfolio Holder for reconsideration.
  - (2) Item Called-In following an Individual Decision: The introduction of parking charges at the Burdwood Centre Car Park, Thatcham. This decision was upheld.
  - (3) Item Called-in following an Executive Decision: To agree the procedure for Healthwatch commissioning. This decision was upheld.
- 2.4 Four time limited Task Groups were established during the year to consider the following:
- (1) *The Processes in Place for the Repair of Pot Holes.* A Task Group was established following receipt of a Motion to Council by Councillor Keith Woodhams on 22 September 2011 to review the approach of West Berkshire Council to the repair of pot holes in the district.  
*Added Value:* Eight recommendations were formulated for submission to the Executive.
  - (2) *Domestic Abuse.* A Task Group was established to conduct a review into the approach by statutory and other agencies to reported domestic abuse in West Berkshire.  
*Added Value:* Information and views were able to be shared between a broad range of agencies. Twenty-five recommendations were formulated for submission to the Executive.
  - (3) *Housing Allocations Policy.* A Task Group was established following the Commission's wish to see Member involvement in the development of the

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Housing Allocations policy which is required by law. The review is not yet complete.

*Added Value:* Members are able to scrutinise the content of the proposed policy during its development.

- (4) *Adult Social Care Eligibility Criteria.* A Task Group was established from the Health Scrutiny Panel to assess whether in setting its eligibility criteria at 'critical' the Council's operation of the Fair Access to Care Services policy still allows it to meet its statutory duties, and whether the eligibility criteria should continue to be set at critical. The review is not yet complete.

*Added Value:* The Task Group is providing external scrutiny of the process as it occurs to ensure a robust outcome.

- 2.5 The Commission discussed the merits of undertaking scrutiny training during the 2013/14 municipal year and subsequently agreed for this to be arranged.

### 3. Activity in Detail

#### 3.1 Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

- (1) *Preparations for the London 2012 Olympics.* The Commission received two updates on West Berkshire's preparations for the Olympic Games, including information about the Olympic torch route through the district and Cultural Olympiad.

*Added Value:* The Commission was provided with information on the wide ranging activities required to be undertaken by the Council in preparation for and during the Olympic Games and were able to question the approach in a public arena. Members also gained knowledge of the expected activities which were then able to be communicated to a wider audience.

- (2) *Youth Clubs.* The Commission considered how the transfer of youth clubs from local authority control to local communities had been managed.

*Added Value:* Activities for young people have been shown to be a consistently high priority for residents in local surveys up until 2009, and the consideration of youth clubs allowed the Commission to explore an element of this priority in a public arena.

- (3) *GCSE Results.* The Commission considered information regarding attainment levels in GCSE English and Mathematics undertaken in 2012.

*Added Value:* The Commission were also able to discuss the issues arising from the national controversy around the grading of GCSE English papers and consider the subsequent activity that the Council was involved in.

- (4) *Homelessness.* The Commission conducted a review into the approach by statutory and other agencies to homelessness in West Berkshire. The review formed part of a wider consultation being undertaken by the Housing Service.

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*Added Value:* Information and views were able to be shared between a broad range of agencies, both local and national. Twelve recommendations were formulated; four were incorporated into further consultation by the Housing Service, and eight were allocated for specific activity.

- (5) *Youth Justice.* The Commission received an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Youth Restorative Disposal and Youth Cannabis Warning schemes introduced by the police in 2009 and which had proven to be a contributory factor in the drop in the number of young people entering the youth justice system.

*Added Value:* The Commission were able to satisfy themselves of the success of the schemes, and discuss them in a public forum.

The following items were also reviewed by the Commission:

- (6) *Quarterly Performance Reports.* The Commission reviewed the Council's performance reports each quarter, enabling issues to be examined, and recommendations to be made.

Scrutiny reviews initiated and due for completion during 2012/13.

- (7) *Schools and Early Years.* The Commission will contribute to the development of the strategy for managing school organisation that ensures there are sufficient school places and in the right locations to meet demand
- (8) *Fire Service coverage of the West Berkshire area.* The Commission expressed a desire to consider how the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service ensure appropriate coverage of the West Berkshire area following reports that target response times were not being met sufficiently.

### 3.2 Health Scrutiny Panel

- (1) *Anti Child poverty Strategy.* The Health Scrutiny Panel received an information update on the West Berkshire Anti-Child Poverty Strategy, which was published alongside a needs assessment in March 2012 to meet the duties of the Child Poverty Act 2010.

*Added Value:* The Panel were able to consider and question the activities being undertaken in a public forum providing assurance that appropriate steps are being taken to address child poverty.

- (2) *Dignity and Nutrition at RBH.* Following the failure of the Royal Berkshire Hospital (RBH) to take part in the earlier patient survey operated by LINKs, the Panel received assurance that the RBH would undertake this survey in October 2012. The results of the survey were received by the Panel in March 2013.

*Added Value:* The Panel were able to contribute to and provide direction to this public review.

- (3) *Health and Wellbeing Board.* The Panel received information as to the steps being taken to ensure the successful establishment of a Health and Wellbeing Board in West Berkshire.

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*Added Value:* Information about the introduction of the Health and Wellbeing Board was able to be explored and clarified in a public forum.

- (4) *Continuing Healthcare.* The results of an independent review of continuing healthcare in West Berkshire undertaken by South Central Health Authority were received following concern that patients in Berkshire receive some of the lowest levels of continuing healthcare funding when compared to other Primary Care Trusts nationally.

*Added Value:* The Panel were able to review the progress of activities resulting from the review in a public forum and make appropriate recommendations to ensure the action plan is appropriately monitored.

- (5) *PCT Quality Handover.* The Panel examined the PCT's arrangements for the handover of its responsibilities to Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). The information included an overview of healthcare services in Berkshire and set out for successor organisations the key risks, challenges, achievements and ambitions for quality and patient safety in Berkshire, in preparation for handover from the Berkshire PCT on the 31 March 2013.

*Added Value:* The Panel were able to examine the method of transition in a public forum, and question the activities being undertaken to mitigate identified risks.

- (6) *Changes to the West Berkshire Health Service.* The Panel received an update on the role and purpose of CCGs in West Berkshire.

*Added Value:* The information was heard in a public forum.

### 3.3 Resource Management Working Group

- (1) *Asset Management.* The Group received information to explain how the management of the Council's assets was undertaken.

*Added Value:* The Group were able to consider and question the Council's approach in a public forum, making recommendations as appropriate.

- (2) *Financial Monitoring.* Members examined financial reports throughout the year as reported across the Council.

*Added Value:* Members were able to explore and challenge areas of concern in a public forum and provide suggestions directly to officers.

- (3) *Establishment Monitoring.* The RMWG regularly examined the figures reported across the Council on staffing establishment.

*Added Value:* The exercises provided challenge to officers and allowed examination of the Council's establishment in public.

- (4) *Strategic Risk Register.* The RMWG examined the assessment of risk for individual items on the register.

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*Added Value:* The review enabled identified risks to be explored in a public setting. The Group recommended that the risk register be scrutinised on an annual basis.

- (5) *Sickness Absence:* Members received information relating to the management of sickness absence due to stress.

*Added Value:* Members were able to question the approach taken by the Council to this issue.

- (6) *School Academies.* The RMWG considered the effect of local authority maintained schools becoming academies on Council finances.

*Added Value:* The Group were able to consider issues arising from the transfer of schools to academy status in a public forum.

- (7) *Fleet Management.* Members considered the service provided in respect of Fleet Management, assessing the broad spectrum of provision and value for money it offered.

*Added Value:* The provision of the service was able to be discussed in a public forum.

- (8) *Shaw House:* The Group considered the current and potential future use of Shaw House with a view to increasing income generated through its use.

*Added Value:* A number of suggestions for increasing income were made and would be considered by a Task Group established to consider the issue.

- (9) *Blue Badge Scheme.* The RMWG reviewed the operation of new procedures, criteria and rules for the Blue Badge Scheme that were introduced in January 2012.

*Added Value:* The impact of the changes to the Blue Badge Scheme was reviewed in a public forum.

## 4. Recommendation

- 4.1 It is recommended that Corporate Board notes the contents of this report.

## Appendices

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There are no Appendices to this report.