

Title of Report:	Scrutiny Annual Report 2014/2015
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission on 30 June 2015 Council on 2 July 2015
Forward Plan Ref:	C2685

Purpose of Report: To inform the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission of the Scrutiny activity undertaken during the Municipal Year 2014/2015.

Recommended Action: To note the contents of the report.

Reason for decision to be taken: N/A

Other options considered: N/A

Key background documentation: N/A

Published Works: N/A

The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy principles:

- CSP7 - Empowering people and communities**
- CSP8 - Doing what's important well**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Strategy principles by providing a public examination of the Council's decisions and operations.

Portfolio Member Details	
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Implications

Policy:	None
Financial:	None
Personnel:	None
Legal/Procurement:	None
Property:	None
Risk Management:	None
Corporate Board's Recommendation:	Report to proceed to Management Board for consideration.

Is this item relevant to equality?	Please tick relevant boxes		Yes	No
Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community and:				
• Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Will the policy have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Does the policy relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Outcome (Where one or more 'Yes' boxes are ticked, the item is relevant to equality)				
Relevant to equality - Complete an EIA available at http://intranet/EqIA				<input type="checkbox"/>
Not relevant to equality				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position		<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months		<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only		<input type="checkbox"/>

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report outlines the scrutiny activity undertaken by the authority in the municipal year 2014/2015. It contains an overview of the year, giving detail on each of the activities undertaken and 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 size and structure of the Overview and Scrutiny function has remained constant throughout the year, with only small changes in the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.
- 2.2 The Commission has carried out scrutiny on sixteen topics, only one of which was a call-in, perhaps the most high profile and in-depth being the review of the impact of and response to the severe weather experienced during the winter of 2013/14. In addition there was, of course, its standing examination of performance activity and financial outturn.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission notes the contents of the report.

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3. Activity in detail

- 3.1 *Annual target setting.* A small task group was established to review the targets set by the Council for the upcoming municipal year.

Added value. A number of targets were adjusted to take account of the task group's requirement that they be appropriately focussed and provide the challenge necessary to improve the wellbeing of the district.

- 3.2 *Continuing Health Care (CHC).* In April and October the Commission continued its monitoring (begun in November 2013) of the progress being made to address concerns that an undue funding burden was being borne by the Council due to delays in CHC assessments.

Added value. The examination of the subject by the Commission prompted management action to address the systemic difficulties encountered in the assessment process. The Commission and management, both NHS and Council, were satisfied that shortcomings had been addressed and no further scrutiny involvement was required.

- 3.3 *Energy efficiency.* In April 2012, the then Resource Management Working Group (RMWG) considered the Council's energy savings plan and resolved to continue monitoring of activity in this area. On the dissolution of the RMWG, this work was continued by the Commission.

Added value. A recommendation on the protection of the Council's financial investment was identified and progress will continue to be monitored in future years.

- 3.4 *Fairer Contributions Policy.* In response to concerns raised by the Disability Equality Scrutiny Board, the Commission examined the purpose and application of the Disability Related Expenditure section of the Fairer Contributions Policy.

Added value. The Commission made a significant contribution to the revision of the policy, including ensuring that its contents could be easily understood by those affected by it.

- 3.5 *Shaw House.* A task group examined the utilisation of Shaw House.

Added value. The task group examined in detail the draft development plans for Shaw House and identified a number of recommendations for its improvement.

- 3.6 *Benefits reform.* The Commission concluded the review begun in 2013/14 on the implementation of the government's benefits reform programme and its local impact.

Added value. A number of recommendations were identified for consideration by the Executive and Sovereign South + West.

- 3.7 *Children's Services external placements.* In response to a decision made by the Executive, called in by the requisite number of members, the Commission reviewed whether it agreed with the intended actions around the use of media and advertising for external placements for children.

Added value. The Executive's decision was supported but it was also agreed that the effectiveness of the action would be reviewed by the Commission 12 months after implementation.

- 3.8 *Severe winter weather.* The Commission conducted a very large review into the impact of and response to the winter weather that affected the district during the winter of 2013/14.

Added value. A number of local stakeholders were able to provide their views to the review and the Commission contributed a number of significant recommendations to the authority's report that gave an evaluation of the response provided during the severe weather. Periodic monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations will continue in future years.

- 3.9 *Children's Services recruitment and retention strategy.* This urgent item was considered by the Commission in advance of a decision to be taken by the Executive on the adoption of a new strategy for the recruitment and retention of staff in a number of Children's Services teams.

Added value. The recommendations outlined in the report were endorsed and an additional recommendation to review the recruitment role remuneration arrangements was added.

- 3.10 *Affordable housing.* The Commission considered the process for the delivery of affordable housing on new developments.

Added value. The consideration of this topic by the Commission contributed to the wider public understanding of the issues concerned. Following the review, a further piece of work on the process for delivery of affordable housing at the Parkway development was added to the OSMC work programme.

- 3.11 *Homelessness in young families.* A task group examined the causes of the apparent increased prevalence of homelessness amongst young families in West Berkshire.

Added value. The task group identified a number of recommendations for consideration by the Executive.

- 3.12 *Housing allocations policy.* The Commission received a report on the impact of the housing allocations policy, one year on from adoption.

Added value. A recommendation was made for the improvement of the policy, with a further review to be conducted after another 6 months of operation.

- 3.13 *Self insurance fund.* At the request of the Executive Member for Finance, the operation of the Council's self insurance fund was examined by a small task group.

Added value. A revised operating model was developed for implementation.

- 3.14 *Maternity cover in West Berkshire.* Following the publication in the local media of short-term closures to local maternity wards, the Commission heard from the directors of nursing and midwifery at the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust.

Added value. A number of recommendations were identified and it was agreed that progress against the Trust's own action plan would be monitored.

- 3.15 *Children's Services governance.* A task group reviewed the governance arrangements in place for the monitoring and direction of Children's Services activities.

Added value. A number of recommendations for improvement were identified.

- 3.16 *Affordable housing at Parkway.* The Commission examined the process undertaken by the Council for the provision of affordable housing in the Parkway development.

Added value. The review provided the opportunity for public examination of the circumstances surrounding an item of local public and media interest. The Council's procurement processes were identified as areas for further investigation.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission notes the contents of the report.

Appendices

There are no Appendices to this report.

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: Councillor Brian Bedwell, former Chairman OSMC

Officers Consulted: Corporate Board

Trade Union: None
