

Annual Report of the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee 2018/19

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Annual Report provides Council with an overview of the work of the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee undertaken during 2018/19.
- 1.2 Over the course of the year, the work of the Committee was undertaken by its ten members. Attendance at the four formal meetings of the committee across the year is set out in the table below.

Member	Actual Attendance at Meetings	Nominated Substitute
Councillor David Reeve (Chairman)	4	
Councillor Steve Bridger (Vice Chairman)	4	
Councillor Michael Arthur MBE	4	
Councillor Alex Clarke	2	
Councillor Alex Coley	4	
Councillor George Crawford	2	1
Councillor Rob Geleit	3	
Councillor Humphrey Reynolds	4	
Councillor Jean Steer	1	2
Councillor Mike Teasdale	2	1

- 1.3 In June 2018 the Committee considered and agreed its work programme for 2018/19. The work programme was designed to ensure that the Committee met its statutory and local responsibilities and provided the Council with added value and assurance. An overview of the main items is set out below.

Effectively Holding Decision Makers to Account

- 1.4 To support effective, transparent and accountable decision making at the Council, the Committee has the power to review policy committee decisions made but not yet implemented through the call-in procedure and to consider an annual report on the use of delegated powers. Although the Committee did not receive any requests to use its call-in power, in June 2018 the Committee was informed that nineteen significant decisions taken by officers in consultation with Chairmen had been recorded since 20 June 2017 using the delegated decision proforma. The Committee did not raise any concerns regarding these decisions.
- 1.5 In June 2018, the Committee reviewed the work of the local Community Safety Partnership (CSP) undertaken in 2017/18. The Committee was informed that the borough was covered by the East Surrey CSP, the priorities

of which were anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and rural crime. The local Borough Inspector was in attendance at the meeting. He updated the Committee on work undertaken by Surrey Police within the borough during the year.

- 1.6 Lastly, the Committee monitored progress made against the Council's Key Priority Targets 2018/19 across the year. The Committee examined in particular those targets assigned amber or red status, that is, those identified as slightly off target - not a major concern or slippage, and those identified as off target - unlikely to be achieved within the projected year.

Contributing to more Effective Policies, Improving Services, and Improving the Quality of Life for Local People

- 1.7 The Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee has a role to play in securing improvements to Council services and in considering the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Borough. The Committee has the ability to report on any matter which affects Epsom and Ewell as well as its residents.
- 1.8 In June 2018 the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee received a report on the volume and reasons for stage 1, 2 and 3 customer complaints received by the Council during 2017/18. It was informed that in January 2018 the complaints process was changed from three to two stages. The Council received 1,103 complaints during 2017/18, 97% of which were resolved at stage 1.
- 1.9 The main reason for customer dis-satisfaction related to service delivery. Operational Services received 82% (902) of all complaints. In the main, these related to the area of refuse and recycling. The Committee noted that in the summer of 2018 a new collection service was introduced to properties throughout the borough and that this had resulted in a temporary increase in complaints in June and July. As a result of the total volume of complaints received relating to refuse and recycling, active monitoring of missed collection reports was introduced during the year. This new process helped reduce the number of missed collection reports becoming formal complaints.
- 1.10 The Annual Review Letter from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman indicated that just one detailed complaint investigation was undertaken and upheld in the year ending March 2018. Finally, members of the Committee did highlight that on occasion they had not received automated responses to matters reported by means of the 'Contact us' forms on the Council's website; the issue was followed up and resolved by officers.
- 1.11 Also in June 2018 the Committee received an annual report on matters relating to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). The Office of the Surveillance Commissioner had inspected the Council's RIPA procedures and activity through a desk top review in 2017. A set of recommendations were put to the Council in order to 'improve upon what is already sound guidance'. The recommendations made were incorporated into

an amended lawful surveillance policy agreed by the Strategy & Resources Committee in April 2018. The Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee approved the amended policy. One application to undertake directed surveillance was made in 2017/18; this application led to the conviction of a defendant for fly tipping.

Adding Value

- 1.12 In June 2018 the Committee received the Internal Audit Assurance Report 2017/18 which included the Head of Internal Audit's opinion and an assessment of the internal auditor's performance by the Chief Finance Officer. No reports were issued with a 'no assurance' or 'partial assurance' level during 2017/18. The Head of Internal Audit's overall opinion recorded that the Council had an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance and internal control. To ensure it remained adequate and effective, enhancements were identified. The Chief Finance Officer reported that the internal auditors had provided an effective service during 2017/18.
- 1.13 Also at the June 2018 meeting the Committee confirmed the adequacy of the arrangements made for preparing the Council's Annual Governance Statement. The Committee endorsed the 2017/18 Annual Governance Statement prior to it being certified by the Chief Executive and Chairman of Strategy & Resources Committee.
- 1.14 Throughout the year the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee received regular audit progress reports from the internal auditors. These reports updated the Committee on work against the Internal Audit Plan 2018/19. Internal Auditors, RSM, attended each Committee meeting to present their findings and answer members' questions. The Committee sought additional assurance from officers on matters highlighted in two separate audits concerning tree inspections and cyber security.
- 1.15 Progress on the implementation of high and medium internal audit recommendations was reported to the Committee in February 2019. Reasonable progress on implementing the recommendations agreed in the 2017/18 audit programme had been made.
- 1.16 The Committee considered the Council's risk management framework in November 2018. It confirmed that it was satisfied with the arrangements in place for risk management and following review of the Leadership Risk Register the Committee did not raise any risks with the Leadership Team.
- 1.17 Finally, the Committee noted in November 2018 that the contract with internal auditors RSM was due to expire at the end of March 2019. From 1 April 2019 internal audit services would be provided by Southern Internal Audit Partnership following agreement of the Strategy & Resources Committee in September 2019.

Conclusion

- 1.18 The Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee wishes to record its thanks to all those who contributed to the work of the Committee over the year and its particular thanks to RSM for the internal audit service it has provided for a number of years.