

## Annual Report of the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee 2020/21

### 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 2020/21.
- 1.2 The work of the Committee during 2020/21 was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Its meetings scheduled for June 2020 and February 2021 were cancelled. In order for the Committee to meet its responsibilities in relation to receiving the Annual Governance Statement and the Head of Internal Audit Annual Opinion 2019/20, a Special meeting was held on 17 September 2020. Of the three formal meetings held across the year, all were held virtually. Attendance at the three virtual meetings is set out in the table below.

Member	Actual Attendance at Meetings	Nominated Substitute
Councillor Steve Bridger (Chairman)	3	
Councillor Steven McCormick (Vice Chairman)	3	
Councillor Arthur Abdulin	3	
Councillor Nigel Collin	3	
Councillor Liz Frost	3	
Councillor Rob Geleit	3	
Councillor David Gulland	3	
Councillor Colin Keane	3	
Councillor Phil Neale	2	
Councillor Alan Sursham	2	

- 1.3 The Committee considered and agreed its work programme for 2020/21 in November 2020. 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.

### 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 receive an annual report on the use of delegated powers. The Committee did not receive any requests to use its call-in power during 2020/21. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic the Committee did not receive the standard annual report on the use of delegated powers; this report is now

included on the June 2021 agenda. The Committee did however consider a report on the use of delegated powers between 1 January and 31 July 2020.

- 1.5 Concerns had been raised that decisions had been made during the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic through the delegated process, when perhaps they should not have been. Following the agreement of the Chairman of the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee, the Chief Legal Officer established an independent review to assess the compliance of delegated decision making within the stated time period, against the powers relating to general delegation to officers contained within the Constitution (Part 3, section 7).
- 1.6 The review was undertaken by internal auditors, Southern Internal Audit Partnership. It was commissioned on 16 October 2020 and reported on 16 November 2020. The report confirmed that 40 delegated decisions had been made during the specified time. Most of the decisions were delegated decisions involving Committee Chairmen and/or Vice Chairmen. Only three decisions had been taken under urgency powers because either Council or a policy committee was not able to meet or could not meet earlier than the time for a decision to be made. The Committee noted that work was being undertaken to improve the way in which Members are notified of decisions that have been made and look forward to receiving an update on this work at a future meeting.
- 1.7 The Committee met its responsibilities under the Police and Justice Act 2006 by reviewing the work of the local Community Safety Partnership (CSP). It was informed that the Environment and Safe Communities Committee had agreed in July 2020 to establish a new CSP for Epsom and Ewell, as participation in the previous East Surrey CSP was not adequately serving the needs of borough residents. Terms of Reference had been agreed at the CSP's inaugural meeting held in August 2020 at which it also agreed to adopt four priorities, namely:
  - The most vulnerable or those at risk of harm
  - Serious Organised Crime and PREVENT
  - Identifying and tackling crime and antisocial behaviour
  - Improving community engagement.
- 1.8 The local Borough Inspector (Surrey Police being a key statutory partner of the CSP) attended the Committee meeting and provided committee members with a presentation. He updated the Committee on work undertaken by Surrey Police within the borough.
- 1.9 The Committee monitored progress made against the Council's Key Priority Targets 2020/21. 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 significant slippage, and those identified as off target and a major concern and/or significant slippage, respectively. No issues were raised with a policy committee.

## **Contributing to more Effective Policies and Improving the Quality of Life for Local People**

- 1.10 The Committee received an annual report on matters relating to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). The Act and the Codes of Practice issued under section 71 regulate the way in which the Council conducts surveillance for the purposes of law enforcement. The Committee was informed that there were no applications for directed surveillance authorisations in 2019. The policy & guidance on Lawful Surveillance was due to be brought back to the Committee once the on-going inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office was completed. An update report has been included on the June 2021 agenda; the findings will be reflected in the Committee's Annual Report 2021/22.
- 1.11 At the end of the year the Committee received a report which set out an overview of the Council's response to the entire COVID-19 pandemic as well as some high level learning points. The Committee was informed that a report would be taken to the relevant policy committee on IT issues and continuity arrangements, both of which were discussed by members.

## **Improving Services and Adding Value**

- 1.12 At the Special Meeting of the Committee held in September 2020 the Committee received the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and the Annual Internal Audit Report & Opinion 2019/20. The AGS is an important document which provides assurance regarding our governance arrangements, both financial and non-financial. It is prepared on an annual basis for inclusion in the Statement of Accounts. The AGS is normally presented in June to meet the 31 July statutory timetable for the publication of the AGS and final audited accounts, but due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic this date was pushed back to 30 November 2020 by the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.
- 1.13 The AGS is underpinned by the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion. The Annual Opinion provides a conclusion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control. The Head of Internal Audit highlighted the significant impact and subsequent challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic on the way that they worked and on the delivery of Council services. This resulted in some delays to the completion of the 2019/20 reviews, particularly those audits completed in the latter part of the year. However this did not inhibit his ability to provide an opinion for 2019/20. The Council's framework of governance, risk management and control was provided an adequate rating. Of the internal audit reviews undertaken during 2019/20, six reviews had been assigned limited assurance, six assigned adequate assurance and one assigned substantial assurance. No reviews were assigned no assurance.
- 1.14 The Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee received two internal audit progress reports from the internal auditors, Southern Internal Audit

Partnership (SIAP). These reports updated the Committee on work against the Internal Audit Plan 2020/21, which had been adjusted in light of the coronavirus pandemic. The Committee has endorsed the Internal Audit Plan 2021/22, the third year of the current internal audit contract, although movement of audits can take place across the year in order to enable auditors respond to any new risk areas identified. Internal audit representatives attended all three virtual Committee meetings to present their findings and answer members' questions.

- 1.15 Finally, the Committee received a report which enabled it to meet its responsibilities for monitoring the development of the Council's risk arrangements. The Committee considered the arrangements in place for risk management and following review of the Leadership Risk Register, the Committee did not identify any risks which it wished to raise with the Leadership Team.

### **Conclusion**

- 1.16 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.