

Annual Report of the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee 2015/16

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Annual Report provides Council with an overview of the work of the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee during 2015/16.
- 1.2 In 2015/16 the work of the Committee has been taken forward by its ten members, Councillors Clive Smitheram (Chairman), David Reeve (Vice Chairman), Steve Bridger, Kate Chinn, Alex Clarke, George Crawford, Robert Foote, Peter O'Donovan, Humphrey Reynolds and David Wood. Attendance at the four formal meetings of the committee and a Special meeting of the Committee held on 6 October 2015 is shown in the table below.

Member	Actual Attendance at Meetings	Nominated Substitute
Councillor Clive Smitheram	5	
Councillor David Reeve	5	
Councillor Steve Bridger	4	
Councillor Kate Chinn	4	
Councillor Alex Clarke	3	1
Councillor George Crawford	1	2
Councillor Robert Foote	4	
Councillor Peter O'Donovan	4	1
Councillor Humphrey Reynolds	4	
Councillor David Wood	3	1

- 1.3 An account of the main items considered by the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee across the year is set out below.

2. Effectively holding Decision makers to Account

- 2.1 The Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee has the ability, subject to certain conditions, to examine Council decisions made by a policy committee and those taken by an officer under delegated decision making.
- 2.2 Members of the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee have a statutory power to call-in a decision of a policy committee where there is evidence to suggest a decision made but not yet implemented does not meet the principles of decision making set out in the Constitution. Although subject to specific time limits, following review the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee can refer a decision back to the policy committee for reconsideration, refer the matter to Full Council or take no further action. No decisions of the policy committees were called in for scrutiny during 2015/16.

2.3 The Scheme of Delegation to Officers requires a report to be presented to the Committee annually which sets out significant decisions taken by Officers under delegated powers in the year prior. At its meeting of 23 June 2015 the Committee received the annual report on the decisions taken under delegated powers (excluding Planning Committee decisions). No issues of particular note were raised.

3. Contributing to More Effective Policies and Improving Services

3.1 During the year the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee has continued to monitor progress on the Council's Corporate Plan receiving regular reports which highlighted progress made against the targets of four of the Council's policy committees (Environment, Leisure, Social, and Strategy & Resources Committees). The Committee was interested, in particular, in those actions which were recorded as not met, i.e. those actions not likely to be achievable at year end.

3.2 The Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee did not raise any issues of concern with the policy committees. However, the Committee learned that the Council's Performance Management system would be reviewed once the new Corporate Plan had been agreed. The Committee requested that in future end of year reports, the broad reason for 'signing-off' an action should be given. In addition, it considered that Plan E was of interest to councillors and so requested that officers provide a Members' Briefing Evening on the topic in the future.

3.3 In June 2015 the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee appointed a scrutiny task group to review the Council's administrative arrangements for publicising and determining planning applications. The aim of this review was to identify potential ways in which customer satisfaction could be enhanced. The report and recommendations of the task group were considered and approved by the Committee at its meeting in April 2016.

3.4 Lastly, the Committee monitored different aspects of the Council's work including action taken against the Council's Corporate Equality Scheme and the Data Quality Strategy 2012/16. No areas of concern were raised.

4. Improving the Quality of Life for Local People

4.1 In June and November 2015 the Committee received an update on the work of the Epsom and Ewell Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The Committee learned that the loss of CSP funding had affected its ability to resource on-going intervention work, but that it had been successful in receiving some project specific funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey. The potential to amalgamate with neighbouring CSPs to help address capacity and capability had been considered; this is being continually reviewed.

5. Adding Value

- 5.1 Under its Terms of Reference the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee has overall responsibility for audit and governance frameworks (including functions of an audit committee). To meet this responsibility the Committee has considered various audit reports throughout 2015/16. Internal auditors have attended each of the meetings of the Committee to present the findings of their audit reports and answer questions of the Committee. External audit attended the November 2015 and April 2016 Committee meetings.
- 5.2 In accordance with its annual work programme, in June 2015 the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee received the Internal Audit Assurance Report for 2014/15. The Council received assurance levels for governance, risk management and internal control according to a traffic light rating system. Governance and risk management received a green rating; internal control received an amber rating. Also at the June 2015 meeting, the Committee confirmed the adequacy of the arrangements for preparation of the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2014/15.
- 5.3 Throughout the year, the Committee received quarterly audit monitoring reports from the internal auditors; these have informed the Committee of progress made against the Audit Plan 2015/16, as well as the outcome of individual audits. In November 2015 and April 2016 the Committee received and considered a progress report from External Audit.
- 5.4 Lastly, in June 2015 the Committee agreed to carry out two service reviews on (i) the Social Centres and (ii) Routecall. Both reviews were to form part of the work programme for preparing the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Two task groups were appointed. These task groups reported their findings to the Special Meeting of the Committee held on 6 October 2016 and have since been considered by the Social Committee and Full Council. A third service review of Venues, the details of which were agreed by the Committee in February 2016, is on-going with an initial report anticipated in the autumn.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee wishes to thank all those who have contributed to the work of the Committee during 2015/16. In particular the Committee should like to thank all those who have attended meetings of the Committee to provide information and advice.