
Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020-21



Elmbridge
Borough Council
... bridging the communities ...

Overview and scrutiny

What is ‘Overview and Scrutiny’?

The Local Government Act 2000 first introduced the requirement for every local authority to include provision for at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Subsequent amendments to the Act have further developed the role of Overview and Scrutiny within local authorities.

Although not a decision-making body, effective Overview and Scrutiny has enormous potential to influence and inform decisions made by both the Council and partner bodies affecting the Borough.

The Committee can review and scrutinise any matters which affect the Council, its area or the residents of that area, in order to provide greater transparency and accountability in the delivery of local services.

The following key roles were identified as areas which Overview and Scrutiny should be concerned with in Elmbridge:

- **Holding the Cabinet to account**, which may include reviewing decisions taken by Cabinet, but not yet implemented, via the ‘call-in’ procedure;
- **Monitoring Council performance**;
- **Reviewing policy**;
- **Developing policy**;
- **Scrutinising externally** issues of public concern beyond the remit of the Council.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has 16 members. All Elmbridge Borough Councillors are eligible to sit on the Committee, except for members of the Cabinet. No Councillor can be involved in the scrutiny of a decision with which he/she has been directly involved. The Committee is chaired by a member of the opposition party.

Detailed arrangements regarding the operation of Overview and Scrutiny can be found in the Council’s Constitution.



Chairman
Councillor
Rachael I. Lake



Vice Chairman
Councillor Neil
Houston

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

During 2020-21 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continued to raise important local issues with external organisations, examine Council performance, scrutinise Portfolio Holders and examine future plans for the Council. Meetings were held virtually with the functions of the Committee continuing to be fulfilled during COVID-19.

The Committee fulfilled its role in reviewing and shaping the Council Plan for 2021-22, which sets out the Council priorities and how the Council will work towards its five-year vision.

The environment was a key issue for the committee, with the Environment Agency attending twice on the municipal year to provide updates on a range of issues, from invasive plant species in the River Thames to unauthorised moorings.

The Committee received a written report from the Chief Executive of Painshill Park, regarding Painshill Park activities as at October 2020. The Chief Executive of Painshill Park was also in attendance at the meeting and answered a number of questions from the Committee.

The Elmbridge Borough Commander updated the Committee on the ongoing work of Surrey Police, discussing the challenges of enforcing the Government Guidance regarding COVID-19 while continuing to deal with the priorities of business as usual daily policing. Issues discussed by the committee on this item included anti-social behavior, speed limits and vehicle thefts.

Representatives from the River Thames Scheme (Environment Agency) and Thames Water were invited to provide a general update on the impact of COVID-19 on services in Elmbridge.

A number of Cabinet Members were invited to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings to provide a comprehensive overview of their Portfolios and to discuss the key challenges and achievements.

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Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups

Established to perform specific issue-based/time-limited reviews of specific issues

The Financial Plan Task and Finish Group concluded their work and a report was taken to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September. The main Committee decided to not take forward the recommendations of the Group

Overview and Scrutiny Standing Panel

Established to perform scrutiny related functions throughout the year

The Performance and Finance Standing Panel undertakes detailed scrutiny of often complex financial and performance information. In 2020-21 the Panel continued to review and monitor Council services to ensure they are delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Issues examined this year by the Panel included the 2020/21 budget gap; the impact of COVID-19 on Council reserves and income; the performance of JWS and AMEY; Government funding for additional costs as a result of COVID-19; and the ongoing position of the new Leisure Contract.

In addition, the Panel reviewed quarterly income, expenditure and performance indicators against the 2019-20 Council Plan.

Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups

Collaborative consultative forums providing views on matters within its remit

There are six permanent Working Groups reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- Countryside Consultative Group – acts as a forum for Elmbridge’s Countryside Estate where information is exchanged and issues relevant to good practice in countryside management can be discussed.
- Constitutional Review Member Working Group – no meetings this year.

- Community Safety Working Group – this year the group’s focus included continuing to work with Surrey Police on crime prevention, issues with increased anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse as a result of COVID-19; the CCTV funding formula for 2021/22, and the general work of the Elmbridge Community and Safety Partnership.
- Elmbridge Older Person’s Advisory Body – continues to review, develop and promote key community services with key local partners. The group is working on concluding the Elmbridge Connects Strategy. There was a focus on the impact of COVID-19 on services including the Surrey County Council bus services, the voluntary sector, meals on wheels, and mental health.
- Elmbridge Energy and Sustainability Group – the group’s focus included single use plastic, the promotion of reusable face masks, Boomerang Bags, tree planting, two trial drink and food carton bring banks, electric car charging, and the promotion of cycling and walking. Increased. The reduction of increased litter during COVID-19 was also considered. The group was presented a draft of refreshed Terms of References to distinguish their work compared to the Council’s Climate Change Member Advisory Panel.
- Elmbridge Annual Grants Panel – considers applications from individual residents and organisations.

Looking forward to 2021-22

Following the work of the Committee in 2020-21, it is now time to look to the development of the Committee’s programme for 2021-22.

The Committee will continue to review key local issues and engage with a range of partner organisations to ensure that its work reflects the priorities of residents and businesses. With the challenging financial environment for local government set to continue, the scrutiny of performance and financial information will continue to be a core aspect of the Committee’s work.

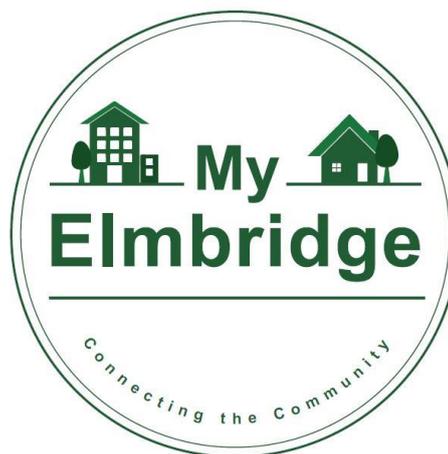
Contact us

Further information on Overview and Scrutiny is available on the Elmbridge Borough Council website. Members of the public are welcome to attend any meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting dates for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2021-2022 are now available and are published on the Elmbridge Borough Council website.

Please note that due to COVID-19, meeting times and locations are subject to change. Currently meetings

will continue to be virtual and held at 5pm. Keep up to date by checking our [Meetings Calendar](#).



- [Watch online](#)
- [Website](#)
- [Suggest a topic](#)
- Email: corporatepolicy@elmbridge.gov.uk
- Tel: 01372 474385
- Write: Overview and Scrutiny, Elmbridge Borough Council, High Street, Esher, Surrey, KT10 9SD