
Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report 2022-23



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 14 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. During 2022/23, the Committee met on 8 occasions.

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



Chairman

Councillor David Lewis



Vice Chairman

Councillor Graham Woolgar

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

During 2022-23 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 continued to be held in person, in the Council Chamber and followed the relevant COVID-19 guidance.

Following recommendations from the 2021/22 Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group to review best practice and research on scrutiny, a progress tracker and rolling two-year work programme were introduced to the Overview and Scrutiny agenda.

Key resident issues such as unauthorised moorings were raised with the Environment Agency (EA), who were invited but were unable to attend. The EA provided the Committee with written responses on the key issues across Elmbridge.

Representatives from Amey and Joint Waste Solutions (JWS) attended providing an update on the bin strike and the impact on the Council and its residents.

Representatives from Surrey County Council on Surrey Highways, School admissions in Surrey and the Fire Service were invited but were unable to attend. The Committee was provided with written responses on the key issues across Elmbridge.

Representatives from Transport for London attended to provide an update the committee on proposals to extend the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ).

The Committee reviewed the proposed Countryside Strategy and asked the Countryside Consultative Group (CCG) to reconsider the details on the report.

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.

Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups

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

There were no Task and Finish Groups in 2022/23



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 2022/23 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 2022/23 Revenue and Capital Budget update, an update on the Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24, Budget and Council Tax report and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Action Plan.

The Panel also reviewed the quarterly income, expenditure and performance indicators against the 2022/23 Council Plan. In addition, it reviewed the quarterly Crime and Disorder Benchmark report.

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 – the group reviewed issues related to Elmbridge's Countryside Estate including woodland management on Weybridge Heath, the Village Green Application on Stokes Field and the Council's review of the Countryside Strategy.
- The Constitutional Review Member Working Group have reviewed and discussed the majority of the constitution including, the terms of reference for committees and Council standing order, with a view to a new constitution becoming effective from the next Annual Council Meeting.
- Community Safety Working Group – this year the group focused on the general work of the Elmbridge Community and Safety Partnership. There were discussions on CCTV performance, the monitoring of the Walton-on-Thames Public Spaces Protection Order and its extension into North Walton, along with a PSPO proposal for our greenspaces. The group also reviewed the findings of the annual community safety survey and engaged with Surrey Police.
- Elmbridge older person advisory body continues to review, develop and promote key Community Support Services and partner services. The last meeting focused on updates around the cost of living crisis.
- Elmbridge Annual Grants Panel met in March 2022 to allocate funding to 12 voluntary sector organisations for the 22/23 financial year. The Partnership Fund Panel (which includes representation from the Annual Grants Panel) met in November 2022 with partners Walsingham Care and Walton Charity and allocated funding to 11 voluntary sector organisations.

Looking forward to 2023-24

Following the work of the Committee in 2022-23, it is now time to develop in more detail the Committee's programme for 2023-24 and 2024-25.

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. While External Bodies are under no obligation to attend Overview and Scrutiny meetings, we are hopeful invitations sent in 2023-24 to representatives from external bodies such as the Environment Agency will be accepted and meetings attended in the spirit of community co-operation and good will. 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 2023-2024 are now available and are published on the Elmbridge Borough Council website.

<http://mygov.elmbridge.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>

Watch online: elmbridge.public-i.tv/core/portal/home

Web: elmbridge.gov.uk/councillors-and-committees/overview-and-scrutiny/

Suggest a topic: bit.ly/2BY011Q

Email: policy@elmbridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01372 474385

Write: Overview and Scrutiny, Elmbridge Borough Council, High Street, Esher, Surrey, KT10 9SD