

# Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022–23

Folkestone & Hythe District Council



# Foreword by Overview & Scrutiny Chair Cllr Michelle Keutenius

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) performs an essential function for Folkestone & Hythe District Council (F&HDC). It helps to improve public policies and services by encouraging open, transparent, and accountable decision making, scrutinising proposals and decisions on matters of importance to the district.

Over the course of the year, OSC has focused on numerous policies, strategies, updates and plans. It has also scrutinised topics at the request of full council.

Recently OSC conducted a review of self-contained holiday lets and waste collection for holiday lets. After hearing from officers, OSC made comments and recommendations about how the council should deal with the matter.

On 7 February 2023, following a request from full council, OSC conducted a review into the circumstances surrounding traffic disruption experienced within the district. There was a focus on the first weekend of the school summer holidays, between 22 and 24 July 2022, when significant disruption was felt. The meeting was well attended by a number of relevant organisations, including representatives from local business, the Department for Transport, National Highways and senior officers from neighbouring councils and the emergency services.

Following a motion unanimously supported by full council, OSC held a dedicated Cost of Living Summit on 20 September 2022. More than 100 people from 60 different organisations were invited. During the event there were presentations from Andrew Hatcher, F&HDC's Revenues and Benefits Lead Specialist, Jon Wilson, Chief Executive

at Romney Marsh Community Hub and Sue Day, District Manager at Citizens Advice. The summit provided a dedicated opportunity for many local organisations to come together and discuss the challenges ahead as winter approached. This summit generated a number of action points that were taken forward by the council and partner organisations to help support local residents. As a result, support was more co-ordinated and given a higher profile, and in turn this helped to improve the reach and penetration of support offered across the district.

During the 2022/23 year OSC also received a detailed presentation regarding the Carbon Reduction Approach for the council's housing stock. OSC heard how the council had a programme of improvements that aimed to improve the housing stock to a minimum energy performance certificate rating of C by 2030, with the ambition to be net zero by 2050.

OSC has also scrutinised vital topics such as community safety, safeguarding, and conducted the Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership Annual Review.

This committee is a way for councillors to come together and ensure we are working in the best way possible for everyone in the district. OSC is not able to cover everything that is important to our residents, but I would encourage residents to take the opportunity to submit suggested topics for the committee to consider.

## **Councillor Michelle Keutenius**

*Chairman of the Folkestone and Hythe  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee*



# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

F&HDC decisions are largely made by the council leader and cabinet under a scheme of delegation set out in the council's constitution. The OSC is made up of non-cabinet members and its membership is politically balanced, drawing on the input from all parties that make up the council. Members scrutinise and review the council's decisions, considers how it makes policy to shape the resulting policy framework, examines how the council performs against key targets and indicators in deploying its budget, and investigates specific issues affecting the district.

The committee can:

- Question cabinet's decisions
- Make its own recommendations to Cabinet
- Ask the cabinet and other decision-makers to reconsider decisions
- Refer a decision to the Full Council (known as a call-in)

Call-in usually refers to key decisions, i.e. those with a significant impact on finance or local communities, it is a powerful tool in supporting local democracy.

O&S has met nine times during the 2022/23 year and considered 26 items. A summary is given below:

## 26 April 2022

- OSC agreed its annual report for 2021-22
- A work programme was agreed for 2022-23
- Income and Debt Management Policy – the committee provided feedback on the policy proposal, shaping it, before it went to cabinet for adoption
- Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Order – the committee considered the proposals and provided comments that were included in the consultation process, shaping the ultimate outcome of the Order
- Anti-Social Behaviour Public Spaces Protection Order – the committee received an update on the proposals and provided comments that were included in the consultation process, shaping the ultimate outcome of the Order
- Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy and Rechargeable Repairs Policy – OSC reviewed the policies and made recommendations to cabinet which influenced the final policy framework

## 31 May 2022

- Otterpool Park Stewardship – the committee received an update on the emerging strategy to provide long term stewardship at Otterpool Park. The committee gave considerable input and requested that the item be bought back for consideration when further information became available
- Levelling Up Fund – the presentation included an overview of the Levelling Up Fund proposal, a summary of the priority projects in the Folkestone Place Plan, a report on engagement with stakeholders, and the selection of projects to be included in the F&HDC submission. OSC’s support was critical in council decision-making on the matter and the ultimate outcome was a successful award of around £20m funds made from DLUH
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund – following a presentation, OSC highlighted a number of areas for consideration to ensure that the fund was allocated appropriately to maximise the impact of the available funds

## 13 July 2022

### EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

- Call-in of decision number 22/015; High Street Fund – following OSC’s scrutiny of how grants were awarded, it agreed that the proposed improvements to the process should be immediately implemented and that these should apply to all council grant programmes.

## 6 September 2022

- Cost of Living Summit – OSC agreed the arrangements for a Cost of Living Summit. The successful summit took place on 20 September 2022 drawing on a wide range of local partners
- Ship Street, development of the design brief – OSC received an update on the strategy to provide housing- led regeneration of the former gas works site. The committee strongly supported the proposals and emphasised that the buildings needed to be future-proofed in terms of energy performance and quality
- Otterpool Park Stewardship - the presentation built upon the themes and issues considered at the meeting in May 2022, and detailed the development of a bespoke stewardship vehicle
- Draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) update – OSC considered the work carried out to update the SCI and offered suggestions on how to engage most effectively with groups and residents across the district



## 26 October 2023

### EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

- Safeguarding Update – OSC received an update on the council’s important safeguarding activity since the committee approved the safeguarding policy in November 2021
- Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership Annual Review – each year the OSC acts as the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, its aim is to ensure that the partnership is working effectively and extensive discussion took place with a wide range of partners to review activities of the past 12 months. Recommendations were made that shaped the work and actions of the Partnership

## 8 November 2023

- Otterpool Park LLP Business Plan 2023-24 – during consideration of the strategic business plan, OSC looked back at the progress achieved to date, and its future priorities. It provided opportunity for Members to scrutinise those activities and proposed plans
- Medium Term Financial Strategy – OSC considered the strategy and offered suggestions on how to encourage public engagement during the budget consultation on this important financial document
- Cost of Living Summit – OSC reviewed the event and offered suggestions about how to implement some of the actions arising from it
- Petition concerning closure of the footpath south of Seaview Bridge, Hythe – OSC thoroughly reviewed the circumstances that brought about the petition. They agreed that the path should be closed when works commenced

## 17 January 2023

- Assistance for parish and town Councils with moving on illegal encampments – OSC had a detailed presentation on the matter and how illegal encampments are dealt with. Members suggested that an information sheet be produced outlining the processes and support available to parish and town councils from F&HDC to aid communication
- Housing - OSC received a detailed presentation that proposed the strategic priorities and themes for the Housing Revenue Account 30-year Business Plan and Housing Carbon Reduction Approach. Members agreed with the priorities and supported efforts to reduce the carbon emissions arising from the council’s housing stock while improving energy efficiency

- Operation Brock, Holiday Traffic Disruption – more than 15 organisations attended a detailed review of the significant disruption and scrutinised the various actions taken by a wide number of organisations. OSC’s comments from the review were submitted to the county-wide Operation Fennel review to convey, in strongest possible terms, the extent of and local impacts arising from the disruption

## 14 February 2023

- Princes Parade (motion from full council) – OSC noted the lessons learnt arising from the delivery of large complex capital schemes and made a number of recommendations in relation to the type of reports considered by cabinet and the Audit and Governance Committee, communication with councillors, expertise of resources, and risk training
- Homes for Ukraine Scheme update – OSC received a detailed presentation about the work that had taken place over the year and the priorities for 2023 to support those from Ukraine residing in the district
- Review of self-contained holiday lets and waste collection for holiday let businesses – (referred from full council) – OSC scrutinised the matter and asked for an update once the relevant small businesses in the district had been contacted to remind them about the requirement to have a commercial waste collection arrangement in place

## Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee

This sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was created in October 2020 to scrutinise the council's performance against key performance indicators (KPIs) and financial monitoring data against the budget. It makes recommendations to the main committee, where appropriate, which is also reported to Cabinet in support of their decision-making.

The sub-committee comprises five councillors who are drawn from the OSC membership, currently there is one vacant position.

### Review of the year from Chairman, Cllr Connor McConville

The sub-committee has met six times during the year and considered 17 items. The sub-committee gives councillors the time to consider and analyse often sizable financial and performance-based reports and provides the opportunity to ask probing questions.

Just like OSC, the sub-committee does not exist to make decisions, instead it holds the council to account with regards to its budget process and overall performance. I believe that the work of the sub-committee has proven beneficial to council operations this year.

I would like to thank those councillors who have sat on the sub-committee this year and all the officers who have provided insight and information through well-written reports and attendance at meetings.

#### 14 June 2022

- Annual Performance Report 2021/22 and Draft KPIs 2022/23
- General Fund Capital Programme Outturn 2021/22
- Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Financial Outturn 2021/22
- General Fund Revenue 2021/22 Provisional Outturn

#### 11 October 2022

- Quarter 1 Performance Report 2022/23
- General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring - 2nd Quarter 2022/23
- General Fund Capital Programme Budget Monitoring 2022/23
- Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring Quarter 2

## **6 December 2022**

- 2022-23 Quarter 2 Performance Report
- Budget Strategy 2023/24

## **10 January 2023**

- General Fund Capital Budget Monitoring 2022/23
- Quarter 3 22/23 General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring
- Quarter 3 22/23 Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring
- General Fund Revenue Detailed Draft Budget 2023/24
- Housing Revenue Account Draft Budget 2023/24
- Update to the General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme to 2027/28

## **7 March 2023**

- 2022-23 Quarter 3 Performance Report



