



Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report

2018-2019

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What is Overview & Scrutiny?

In general terms, Overview and Scrutiny is the process whereby Councillors investigate, scrutinise and oversee the work of the Council. More specifically Overview and Scrutiny pays particular attention to:

- ❖ The decisions made by Cabinet, Council and officers in relation to Council policy or key decisions.
- ❖ The activities carried out by the Council and other bodies (such as the NHS).
- ❖ The performance of the Council in relation to its targets and objectives.

Work Programme

The work programme for Thurrock's Overview and Scrutiny is created by a combination of:

- ❖ What Councillors feel are important topics (this is gathered from their work in their wards and activities across the whole of the Council).
- ❖ Members of the public highlighting issues for debate, either through Call-Ins or through consultation.
- ❖ Requests by Thurrock's Cabinet for Overview and Scrutiny to undertake "pre-decision scrutiny" prior to policies being taken to Cabinet for consideration.

The agendas and associated reports of each Committee can be accessed by the following link: <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/>

Committees

At Thurrock, the work of the Overview and Scrutiny function is carried out by six committees, which each have a specific remit:

- ❖ Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Membership

The membership of Thurrock's Overview and Scrutiny Committees is made up of Councillors drawn from all the political parties of the Council. The Overview and Scrutiny function enables Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet (also known as the Executive) to have an active role in the decision-making process of the Council.

Thurrock has a number of non-Councillors sitting on Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Children's Services Committee has two parent-governors as well as a diocesan representative from the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches respectively. There are also two co-opted members on the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and one co-opted member on the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee representing health and housing interests across the borough.

In addition, sub-committees or panels may also be formed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to undertake specific tasks, such as a review, the membership of which is decided alongside the remit of the review.

The decision making process

In Thurrock, Overview and Scrutiny plays a key role in adding value to the Council's decision-making process. It also reviews the existing practices of the Council and makes recommendations to Cabinet to enhance and improve service provision.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees meet in an informal atmosphere and engage with people who can help with their work and provide evidence for their reviews. Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Committees and at the discretion of the Chair may even be able to take part.

Overview and Scrutiny Online

Overview and Scrutiny has a dedicated section on Thurrock Council's website and can be found at (<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/overview-and-scrutiny/overview-and-scrutiny-committees>).

Thurrock Council's website provides the most up-to-date information on Overview and Scrutiny in Thurrock. Participation from the public is actively encouraged and promoted online.

A number of documents are available and easily accessible, including our Overview and Scrutiny annual reports. Reports, agendas and minutes from each Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting are also available electronically from Thurrock's website.

Getting in Touch

The Overview and Scrutiny process at Thurrock is managed by our Democratic Services Team. The Team is located within Legal Services. Democratic Services manage the Council's decision making process and services a wide range of Council decision making bodies including the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet, Planning Committee, Licensing Committee as well as Full Council.

If you have any queries about this report or the Overview and Scrutiny process, or if you are interested in participating, please feel free to contact us.

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Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

In this municipal year, the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed two new Parent Governor Representatives whose expertise and guidance was widely appreciated.

The year started off well with a presentation from the Youth Work Team which emphasised its continued support in young people's personal and social development skills to help boost their confidence, improve their peer relationships and improve their social skills. Projects such as Tilbury Youth Club and #USound Music Studio continued to be set up with funding from various sources.

There was much discussion and update regarding the Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) which will soon be known as Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) due to the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements that will be taking place in May 2019. Updates will continue to come to the Committee in the new municipal year as a standing item on the work programme and the Committee looked forward to this.

Good scrutiny was undertaken by Members of the Committee on several reports that went to Cabinet. These reports included Short Breaks and Support Services for Disabled Children; Children's Transport: Re-procurement of Service; Schools Funding Formula 2019/20; and Children and Young People's Emotional, Wellbeing and Mental Health – Schools Wellbeing Service.

Following concerns raised by Members of the Committee in regards to whistleblowing allegations, a report was provided by the Corporate Director of Children's Services which detailed an independent review of the allegations and recommendations to follow. This had given Members reassurance and alleviated their concerns. Members were satisfied with the actions taken and that the whistleblowing allegations had been unsubstantiated.

Members were pleased to hear that Thurrock's schools were performing well based on Ofsted inspections indicating that around 89% of schools were judged to be good or better, when the national average is 88%. The disadvantaged gap at the end of key stage 1 had also closed.

In preparation for the Update on Brighter Futures Children's Centres Service report in February 2019, a site visit was arranged for the Committee to visit the Tilbury Children's Centre. A tour of the centre was provided to Members with discussion and details over the positive changes that had taken place. This enabled Members to see how Children's Centres had become more embedded into the local community and its benefits to parents with the journey starting from pregnancy until children reached the age of 11 years old.

I assumed the position of Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee from November 2018, but being a member of the Committee from the beginning of the municipal year, I can report on the work of the committee for the year 2018-19.

We considered a wide-range of agenda items, including Children's Social Care Development Plan, Schools' Performance Report, plus regular updates from the Youth Cabinet. The Committee regularly scrutinised standing agenda items such as the Social Care Performance Report, as well as updates from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The School Wellbeing Service delivered a presentation on Emotional, Wellbeing and Mental Health for Children and Young People, and the Committee also received a presentation by the Youth Work Team on the activities they run across Thurrock for young people aged 11–19 years of age.

The self-evaluation document of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) were considered, as well as the highlights of the work undertaken by the Youth Offending Services which included gang crime, knife prevention and child exploitation. We also had the opportunity to monitor the performance report of schools and commended their efforts on improvements.

The LSCB in its update informed the Committee of the "Walk Online" roadshow in March 2019 aimed to raise awareness and teach children on social media and internet safety and gang-related issues. Also noted is the composition of new multi-agency safeguarding arrangement known as Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) which is effective from mid-2019. It is assuring that the scrutiny committee will continue to have input into safeguarding and service development / improvement.

Outside our scheduled meetings, and before considering the progress report of changes brought about by the 2017 Children Centres' review, Members of the Committee had the opportunity to pay site visits to the Tilbury's Brighter Futures Children's Centre.

Further on, the Members of the Committee had the chance of scrutinising the progress report, presented by the Corporate Director of Children's Services, of the implementation plans in response to recommendations of the independent investigation into the 2018 whistleblowing allegations.

To conclude, I feel that it has been a successful year. I would like to thank all Members of the Committee and Officers of Children's Services and Democratic Services for their hard work and commitment.

Councillor Bukky Okunade
Chair of the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny

The year began with a detailed update on the progress made at Linford Household Waste and Recycling Centre. The Committee heard how the site had been improved in areas such as new signage; new CCTV; new waste disposal containers; more extensive staff training; and a new commercial vehicle access permit scheme. The Committee also heard plans to expand and upgrade the site such as split level step free access; improving Highway Access with dedicated turn lanes; connecting the site to utilities and services; and increasing the recycling and re-use facilities on site. The Committee also undertook a site visit to the Linford Household Waste and Recycling Centre in August 2018 and saw the developments first hand, as well as sharing ideas of their own.

A representative from Essex Police and the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour attended a meeting of the Committee to discuss gang related violence and how this was being tackled across the borough. The Committee heard how injunctions were being handed out, and arrests were being made based on these injunctions. A report on the Violence against Women and Girls Strategy also came before the Committee and the Committee were glad to hear that Project MAYA, which was aimed at tackling female genital mutilation, worked with Barnardo's, who were embedded in the multi-agency service hub (MASH).

The Air Quality and Health Strategy update report outlined the authority's response to measures taken to improve the air quality and reduce air pollution exposure across the borough. As part of the strategy reducing poor air quality would be covered by promoting public transport, working closely with schools to promote walking and cycling, landscaping and tree planting programmes and promoting a heavy goods vehicle management scheme.

A strategy on tree planting across the borough was also presented to the Committee, based on a motion made at Full Council. The Committee decided that Option 1 would be followed which would replace trees on a like-for-like basis, as well as Option 3 which would backdate the replacement of trees.

The Committee also discussed a new back office system for the Environment and Highways Service called Bartec Collective, which provided a digital scheduling and reporting tool, as well as a means of allocating work packages to frontline staff via a mobile app or in-cab unit.

Members agreed the Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy for 2019/20 that related to the charges within the remit of the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This year the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee have scrutinised a number of items that included Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleansing, Fly Tipping, Refuse Collections, Recycling Services and a report on Air Quality and Health.

Members of the committee also looked at the future development of the Linford Household Waste and Recycling Centre and how this would incorporate significant increases in recycling and re-use facilities on-site, make improvements to the highways so that access was improved, Automatic Number Plate Readers, on-site connections to mains power and sewerage and a dedicated commercial waste disposal facility would be introduced on-site. Members were invited to attend a site visit to see plans on how these redevelopments would benefit the residents of Thurrock.

The Tree Planting Strategy was presented at this committee for the first time where members agreed that with the planned development of potentially 30,000 houses over the next 20 years in Thurrock, this was an ideal opportunity to encourage developers to include in their design the planting of trees and shrubs and for their ongoing maintenance to be the responsibility of the management company.

The committee also received a report on Gang Related Violence and noted the continually changing landscape and challenges in Thurrock and how the Council was working with partnerships to combat the increase in violent crime.

Finally, members commented and agreed to the Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy proposals that were currently being considered within the remit of this committee.

I would like to thank Officers, Democratic Services and all those guest speakers for all their hard work and contribution to this committee.

Councillor Lynn Worrall

Chair of the Cleaner, Greener, and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny

The Committee started the year by continuing to look at the Corporate Performance Report which monitored Council progress against a variety of Key Performance Indicators, and the Committee took this opportunity to engage with Officers to ensure the Council pushed for higher targets. This report came before the Committee every quarter so the Committee could monitor targets and suggest improvements.

The Committee also considered the disposal of land to deliver the Free School Programme, and an extraordinary meeting on this was held so the Committee could study the decisions in greater detail. The Committee was attended by representatives from Thurrock Rugby Club, as well as Officers and Members and lively debate was held.

The Communications Team Strategy Update was discussed at September's meeting, and this was attended by the editors of four local newspapers. This was a chance for the Communications Team to update Members on the progress made on implementing the strategy in the last six months, including the increased use of social media, and the success of specific campaigns such as recruiting new foster carers. It also opened discussion between the Communications Team and local newspapers on the use of social media vs. print media, and each editor spoke to the report and enjoyed the debate.

A report on the Customer Services Strategy, and its progress came before the Committee, which discussed improvements made to customer services such as a new contact centre telephony platform; a Customer Contact Association industry accreditation; transformation of the face-to-face customer services area on the ground floor of the Civic Offices; and the implementation and development of online only services.

Members were also presented with a report which outlined detailed plans for the regeneration of Grays South and the Civic Offices Project. They heard how the project will help deliver the Grays masterplan, as well as studying the architect's initial designs.

In addition, the Committee also considered the proposed Long Term Investment Strategy and heard how the Council found investments, duly considered them, and maintained them through their life-span. Officers outlined the Council's long term plans for a balanced budget. The proposed Council Tax Scheme was scrutinised at January's Committee before it went on to be agreed at Cabinet and Full Council.

It has been an eventful year for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which I have been proud to chair. We have examined a wide range of issues relating to the council's corporate functions and made a number of recommendations.

The year started with a review of the disposal of land for the purpose of building schools within Thurrock. The committee warmly welcomed the commitment to provide more school places, but raised concerns on the process followed to identify sites, and in the level of communication between the council and those groups impacted by the decision.

In September, the committee heard an update on our communications strategy where we hosted a forum for members of the local media to directly feedback on the experience of working with Thurrock Council. This led to a good debate and a strong feeling from members that we must work with local media organisations in a closer partnership and ensure that they are well used as fantastic channels of communication with our residents. The committee recommended an approach of 'proactive openness' with the local media to ensure that our relationship was on the best footing.

Later in the year, the committee considered our long term investment strategy and reaffirmed our belief in a robust investment approach and in speeding the development of Thurrock Regeneration Limited. We also took the opportunity to consider how best to deploy the council's capital investments, and questioned the proposed new Civic Offices building.

Along the way, we have also begun consideration of how we can improve the scrutiny process and ensure that the views of scrutiny are considered by Cabinet, continued to review our corporate performance and KPIs, and ensured that budget proposals were fully debated and scrutinised. At every step, the committee has worked openly, constructively and not along party political lines, and we look forward to this approach continuing next year.

Councillor Oliver Gerrish
Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny

The main focus of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee this year has been the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) for Mid and South Essex. At the January 2018 meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), it was agreed to join with Essex and Southend and participate in the Joint HOSC covering the STP area. The purpose of the Joint HOSC was to respond to the consultation document on acute reconfiguration in Mid and South Essex, and to monitor and scrutinise the work of the STP. In January 2019 a referral was made by Thurrock HOSC to the Secretary of State on the closure of Orsett Hospital and the consultation process of the STP.

The Committee also established the Orsett Hospital Task and Finish Group in September 2018 to discuss and study the proposed closure of Orsett Hospital. This was following the announcement in July 2018 that Orsett Hospital would close, once the four Integrated Medical Centres were up and running.

A report on a new residential care facility and a new model of primary care in South Ockendon was presented to the Committee which proposed the development of a new residential facility in South Ockendon to meet demand and set new standards in terms of facilities and services. The Committee were pleased to hear the report and after much scrutiny sent it to Cabinet for their approval.

The Integrated Medical Centre Delivery Plan was presented to Members for them to be able to comment on the progress made to the Plan before it went to Cabinet. The Committee discussed many questions relating to the report including parking; public transport links; and timescales.

The Committee also considered waiting times for cancer patients, as focus had continued on the pathway transformation, operational control and the investment in additional capacity and capability. A representative from Basildon and Thurrock Hospital Trust participated in the meeting and Members discussed the reasons for longer waiting times, but recognised that the figure was coming down.

'The Mental Health Urgent and Emergency Care Report' was presented to Members and this highlighted that demand for adult acute mental health had increased, and as a result the system was under pressure. It also discussed that over the last 18 months commissioners had focused on developing and delivering an urgent and emergency care transformation programme. There was also focus on a winter plan to improve the operational efficiency of the current service, and plans to merge two dementia wards to form an adult inpatient wards with 16 beds.

This year the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee continued to look at a large range of topics ranging from the development of a new residential care facility and a new model of primary care in South Ockendon, cancer waiting times, learning disability health checks, to the future of libraries in the borough.

The committee also looked at reports planning fundamental changes to how residents will receive care in the future. We heard regularly about the development of the Integrated Medical Centres (IMCs) and innovative plans on primary care to ensure more residents can see the right medical professional sooner, thus creating a vision that has been adopted by others across the country.

Mental health was an important feature in this year's work. Sadly mental health support is not as good as it should be in Thurrock. This is not isolated to Thurrock – accessing consistently good quality mental health support is an issue across the country – however in Thurrock we have acknowledged we need to do better. The council undertook a peer review and excellent work began on developing our plans for adult mental health service transformation. This work will be closely monitored by the committee in the coming year too.

Last but not least the committee spoke at every meeting about Orsett Hospital and the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) plans. The committee held one extraordinary meeting on this important issue, ultimately referring the plans to the Secretary of State for Health for his consideration. The committee decided the consultation process and the ultimate decision to close Orsett Hospital was not in the best interests of Thurrock residents. I know that this important issue alongside many others will continue to be discussed by this committee.

Thank you to Officers, Democratic Services and the outside organisations who sit on the committee for all their hard work and to fellow Councillors on the Committee for their dedication and constructive contributions.

Councillor Victoria Holloway
Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Following the tragic fire in Grenfell Flats in 2017, the Committee continued to hear regular updates regarding fire safety in tower blocks and high-rises throughout the borough. The Committee heard how the council had brought forward the programmed inspection of every high-rise dwelling in the borough; and every block had been inspected by the in-house team, an external fire safety consultant, and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. The Committee also heard that planned works had taken place such as installing smoke and heat detectors in every flat; compartmentation; and compliance work on front doors.

An on-going review of garages also took place throughout 2018/19. The Committee heard how officers had undertaken a comprehensive review of all council-owned garages across the borough, and would start to undertake works to either improve or remove garages that were deemed to be at end of life. The Committee were pleased to hear updates of this review, and officers described how detailed records were now kept, as well as liaising with the legal team to organise agreements and storage of items other than cars.

A report on licensing in Houses of Multiple Occupation also came before the Committee this municipal year, and was approved and referred to Cabinet. The Committee discussed how the new licensing would affect houses of multiple occupation and their occupants, as well as the wider community.

Reports on the housing allocations policy review were also presented to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on two separate occasions, after being presented to Cabinet and referred back for additional scrutiny. This report focussed on how the council housing waiting list was formed, and how priority was given. A lively debate ensued on both occasions this report came before Committee regarding the criteria for giving council housing, and the formation of a sheltered housing register.

It has been a pleasure to Chair the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in what has been a busy and stimulating year. A key issue this year was a focus on the safety measures installed in high rises across the borough, following the tragic fire in Grenfell Tower in June 2017. The Committee considered a number of additional fire suppressant systems and reviewed policies for compartmentalisation and evacuation in case of emergency. We welcomed initiatives from Essex County Fire and Rescue, as well as working with the Council's in-house teams to provide a high level of safety for our high rise residents.

Members have also encouraged social housing on a number of occasions and have considered a government Green Paper on social housing and a consultation on the use of "Right to Buy". In addition, Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the internal and external redecoration of council properties across the borough, to help benefit those residents in social housing.

The Committee have also scrutinised proposals to undertake a homelessness service review; implement mandatory licensing of houses of multiple occupancy; and considered the out of hours procedures for sheltered housing.

My thanks go to all the officers who worked to bring reports and support the Committee, as well as Democratic Services for the efficient organisation of all meetings. My thanks also go to my fellow Councillors on the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee who were committed to the scrutiny process.

Councillor Gerard Rice
Chair of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny

The Planning, Transport, Regeneration (PTR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered many development reports that came to the Committee this year. Most of these directly related to the Local Plan and as a result, the Members agreed on the formation of the Local Development Plan Task Force to discuss and analyse the Local Plan. This would enable the Task Force to focus purely on the Local Plan and the PTR O&S Committee to look at agenda items.

The proposed sites for the Integrated Medical Centres were brought to the Committee for discussion. There had been questions raised by Members on why certain sites had been chosen such as Purfleet which was less accessible for Aveley and Ockendon residents. Officers had explained that the site had been identified as a part of the Purfleet Centre Regeneration Scheme.

On the Purfleet Centre Regeneration Scheme, this update was brought to the Committee in the form a presentation by the Purfleet Centre Regeneration LTD. Members had found the presentation interesting and supported the project as Purfleet needed the infrastructure proposed. The Chair also invited the Chairman of Purfleet-on-Thames Community Forum to speak.

Members were informed of the next stage of the Grays South Regeneration Project: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass which was in a position to begin the next phase of development. Given the danger of the barrier crossing at Grays train station, the underpass was proposed to resolve this issue. Concerns had been raised by Members regarding anti-social behaviour which was common in underpasses and Officers had reassured the Members that safety concerns had been taken into consideration and there would be CCTV and lighting installed.

Presentations were brought to the Committee by Network Rail and c2c twice this year which detailed actions that were undertaken on trespassing, safety and train delay issues. c2c stated that they were in the process of changing their systems that was over 20 years old which would help to reduce the number of delays . At the March 2019 meeting, Members had challenged the ticket machines that were to be placed in Stanford le Hope and c2c had reassured Members that station staff would be on site to help with route and ticket purchase enquiries.

The Planning, Transport and Regeneration (PTR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee have had a good year with many positive reports. Following the Development Plan update provided to the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the start of this municipal year, PTR agreed on the formation of the Local Development Plan Task Force which enabled a more focused look and scrutiny of Thurrock's Local Plan and gave Members a chance to become more involved with the Local Plan.

The Committee received interesting reports that highlighted the regeneration and growth that Thurrock is going through. One in particular was the Purfleet Centre Regeneration plan in which I had invited the Chairman of Purfleet-on-Thames Community forum to speak on the positives of this regeneration scheme. I have to thank the Chairman of Purfleet Community Forum and other community forums for doing more for their local communities.

I was pleased to see an update on the Grays South Regeneration Project: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass which was informative and good to know that Officers would be engaging with affected residents. It was also good to see updated on other ongoing projects such as the A13 Widening Scheme.

Councillor Martin Kerin

Chair of the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Budget Overview and Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny Members were keen to scrutinise the budget to ensure that the Council was on target to achieve significant budget savings and to identify if further value for money and efficiencies could be realised. Members were keen to ensure that Thurrock was getting good value for money for its residents, as well as finding new income streams and protecting services that were important for people in the borough.

Cleaner, Greener & Safer Overview and Scrutiny

Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed proposed fees and charges, particularly those relating to the use of Wi-Fi in public libraries, the charge for school's visiting Coalhouse Fort, and charges for cultural services in the Thameside Theatre.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and agreed to the proposed fees and charges, and engaged in detailed discussions on issues such as nursery charges and fees for the use of the Grangewater facility.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a freeze in Council Tax for the next municipal year, and enquired into alternative plans, should the Council opt to increase in Council Tax. The Committee also welcomed the aspirational approach suggested for the Capital Programme, and scrutinised capital plans such as the widening of the A13, Grays underpass, East-facing slip roads; and an improved cycle network.

Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny

The Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy for 2018/19 that related to the charges within the remit of the health and wellbeing overview and scrutiny committee.

Housing Overview and Scrutiny

To ensure the delivery of income targets for 2018/19, the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed and agreed the proposed fees and charges including mobile home site licensing fees.

Planning, Transport & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny

The Planning, Transport & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy for 2018/19, including licensing for highways, skip licenses and scooter training in schools.

Overview and Scrutiny Reviews

Overview and Scrutiny Committees can establish Scrutiny Review Panels to investigate in-depth issues which have come to their attention.

Therefore a Task and Finish Group may be established by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider a specific piece of work and make recommendations to its parent committee or directly to the Cabinet. The number of Members of the Task and Finish Group and its terms of reference must be specified when it is established.

An Overview and Scrutiny Committee may establish Working Groups to consider a specific piece of work or look into a particular issue in more detail outside of the formal meeting of the Committee. Any such Working Group will comprise of members of the Committee, working informally with Officers or other Members and reporting their findings back to the Committee.

Although there were two Task and Finish Groups convened this year, which were the Orsett Hospital Task and Finish Group set-up by the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and the Local Development Plan Task and Finish Group set-up by the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In addition, the Lower Thames Crossing Task and Finish Group continued their work investigating Highways England's plans to build a new Thames crossing.

Orsett Hospital Task and Finish Group

The Orsett Hospital Task and Finish Group held its first meeting in November 2018 to scrutinise the proposed closure of process of Orsett Hospital and looked at the following:

- Proposed transfer of services.
- Timings and operational position of the integrated medical centres.
- The future of Orsett Hospital and alternative proposals.

Members also received a briefing note from the NTS regarding the Sustainability and Transformation Plan and this was discussed in great detail. In addition, Members undertook a site visit to Orsett Hospital which proved interesting for Members as they could see first-hand the problems and benefits of Orsett Hospital, as well as questioning NHS staff and patients.

Local Development Plan Task and Finish Group

The Local Plan Task and Finish Group held its first meeting in January 2019 to discuss and make recommendations in relation to the development and implementation of the Local Development Plan and looked at the following:

- Review the preparation, development of strategies, and policy approaches of the Local Plan and provide comment on its scope and development
- Receive reports, presentations, and updates on government policy and the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan.
- Keep under review the Council's approach to community engagement in the plan-making process.

Members received an overview of the Local Plan and of the Issues and Options 2 Consultation, in which residents had the opportunity to express their opinions on the Local Plan. The Task and Finish Group also received a presentation by David Lock Associates, and the Town and County Planning Association, which informed Members about the most effective way of building new 'Garden Cities', and how to deliver effective communities. Members also discussed transport in relation to the Local Development Plan as traffic and pollution was an issue for Thurrock residents.

Call-ins

Thurrock's Call-In process is a vital aspect of the Overview and Scrutiny function. It allows Councillors or members of the public to ask that a decision of the Cabinet not be implemented until it has been subject to scrutiny by the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

A Call-In of a Cabinet decision can be requested by two elected Members who are not members of the Cabinet, a Chair of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a voluntary group with an interest in the Borough, a local business situated in the Borough or ten residents in the Borough. The Call-In must be in writing and include reasons for the Call-In together with an alternative course of action.

The Call-In once it has been verified as legitimate and in accordance with the provisions of the Council's constitution is then referred to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Committee receives all the evidence relating to the issue in question and following consideration makes recommendations about whether the original decision should stand or whether Cabinet should be requested to reconsider its original decision.

During 2018-2019 no Call-ins were submitted to an overview and scrutiny committee.