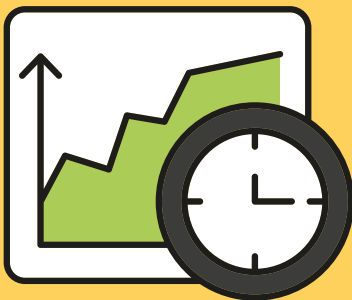
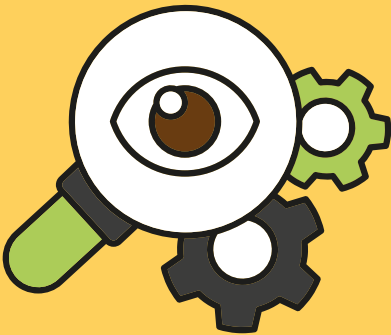
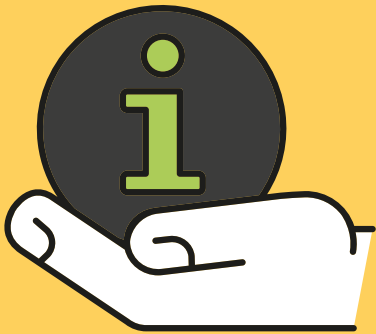


OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24



Tendring
District Council



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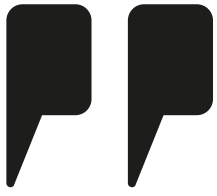
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Opening

This report sets out the review of 2023/24 for the Overview and Scrutiny function of the Council. As such it represents a comprehensive "Joint Report" from the Council's two Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs). This approach has been in place for several years and has garnered widespread acclaim and appreciation from the Chairmen and Members of both OSCs.

During 2023/24 the Committees operated with their programmed formal meetings taking place at a quarterly frequency. This enabled capacity for other substantive and essential Overview & Scrutiny enquiries to be carried out through dedicated Task and Finish Groups of Councillors, ensuring comprehensive scrutiny throughout the entire year. A number of enquiries continued to be undertaken by the Committees through their formal meetings, as those enquiries were best suited to that forum.

In evidence gathering, both Committees made use of visits/meetings away from the Town Hall in Clacton-on-Sea. These visits and meetings have proven helpful, and the committees are likely to use this approach in 2024/25.



Councillor Graham Steady

Chairman of the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The last year has been one of positive change for The Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee this has enabled robust recommendations to be presented to cabinet.

The use of Task and Finish Groups, along with off site visits which have proved to be successful, will be continued. I'm particularly interested into looking forward, seeing the recommended summit take place for local transport providers, that came forward out of the Mainstream and Community Transport enquiry in 2023/24. I would like to thank the Committee Members and Council officers for their support and look forward to another year of robust scrutiny



Chair Quotes

2023/24 was a year of adjustment as it followed the May elections to the Council and a change of administration. That change meant I then took on the Chairmanship of the Resources and Service OSC, with Members on the Committee we quickly had to develop a new working programme tackling the important issues facing the Council, its services, functions and stewardship of funds. We made some really positive proposals to improve enforcement in Planning, flytipping and use of Mobile CCTV. On-street parking was looked at and I hope we can improve enforcement there in the coming years. Finally from me, we considered the issue of unauthorised expenditure in the important project to create temporary housing accommodation at Spendells House in Walton. The Committee will look forward to receiving the lessons learned.



Councillor Paul Honeywood

Chairman of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Line Up

We had some changes to the membership of both Overview and Scrutiny Committees for the year 2023/24. 2. As this Annual Report spans most of 2023/24 and the start of 2024/25 municipal years, the Membership of the Committees in both years have been shown.

Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023/24

Councillor Paul Honeywood – Chairman
Councillor Mark Cossens – Vice Chairman
Councillor Matthew Bensilum
Councillor Carolyn Doyle
Councillor Chris Griffiths
Councillor Susan Honeywood
Councillor Sarah Newton
Councillor Adrian Smith
Councillor Graham Steady

Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2024/25

Councillor Paul Honeywood – Chairman
Councillor Mark Cossens – Vice Chairman
Councillor Matthew Bensilum
Councillor Carolyn Doyle
Councillor Peter Harris
Councillor Susan Honeywood
Councillor Sarah Newton
Councillor Adrian Smith
Councillor Graham Steady

Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023/24

Councillor Graham Steady – Chairman
Councillor Terence Barrett – Vice Chairman
Councillor Bill Davidson
Councillor Carolyn Doyle
Councillor Tanya Ferguson
Councillor Chris Griffiths
Councillor Susan Honeywood
Councillor Lynda McWilliams
Councillor Ann Oxley

Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2024/25

Councillor Graham Steady – Chairman
Councillor Terence Barrett – Vice Chairman
Councillor Bill Davidson
Councillor Carolyn Doyle
Councillor Tanya Ferguson
Councillor Chris Griffiths
Councillor Lynda McWilliams
Councillor Ann Oxley
[Vacant at the time of preparing this report]

2023/24 Enquiry Task and Finish Groups Memberships:

Enforcement Arrangements of the Council -
Councillor Paul Honeywood (Chairman)
Councillor Mark Cossens
Councillor Sue Honeywood
Councillor Pam Morrison
Councillor Adrian Smith
Councillor Getta Sudra

School Age Provision -
Councillor Terry Barrett (Chairman)
Councillor Bill Davidson
Councillor Carolyn Doyle
Councillor Chris Griffiths
Councillor McWilliams

Mainstream and Community Transport -
Councillor Graham Steady (Chairman)
Councillor James Codling
Councillor Carolyn Doyle
Councillor Tanya Ferguson
Councillor Ann Oxley

Volunteer Sector/Community Groups Funding -
Councillor Graham Steady (Chairman)
Councillor Maurice Alexander
Councillor Bill Davidson
Councillor Chris Griffiths
Councillor Adrian Smith
Councillor John White.
(Discontinued to enable Cabinet to undertake its own review).

Work Programme

Below is a very brief summary of the Work Programme approved by Council, or subsequently by the Committees, for 2023/24. The full Work Programme scope approved by Council on 11 July 2023 is available [here](#).

Community Leadership OSC

As a Committee:

- School Age Education provision and specifically mental health (COMPLETED) (see further details elsewhere in this report)
- Improving access to NHS Dentistry for residents in Tendring and specifically those who should have such access free of charge (COMPLETED)
- Mainstream and community transport provision in the District (COMPLETED)
- Active Essex/Sport England Local Delivery Pilot in the District of Tendring (OFF AGENDA BRIEFING RECEIVED)
- Policy on Events on Council and (OFF AGENDA BRIEFING RECEIVED)
- Grants to Voluntary/Community Groups (DISCONTINUED - To enable Cabinet to undertake its own review).

Resources & Services OSC

As a Committee:

- Council Enforcement Arrangements (COMPLETED)
- On street parking arrangements in the District (COMPLETED)
- Scrutiny of the Budget proposals for 2024/25 (COMPLETED)
- Post delivery scrutiny of the Sunspot commercial workspace in Brooklands, Jaywick Sands (COMPLETED) (see further details elsewhere in this report)
- Carbon Neutral by 2030 (OFF AGENDA BRIEFING RECEIVED)
- Spendells, Walton - unauthorised expenditure (COMPLETED)
- Treasury Management (COMPLETED)

Note: In the above, "COMPLETED" means the enquiry envisaged in the 2023/24 work programme was completed. It does not mean that there may be re-consideration of the matter in the 2024/25 work programme. Such re-consideration may seek to address the progress with measures reported in 2023/24 or an opportunity to look at progress with implementation of recommendations from 2023/24.

Spotlight on the Enquiry into Education

The comprehensive report compiled by the Community Leadership OSC's Task & Finish Group shed light on the critical issues of pupil attendance and mental health support within secondary schools, reflecting a concerted effort to examine these challenges. The inquiry's findings underscored the persistent struggle schools faced in achieving satisfactory attendance levels, a situation exacerbated by the aftermath of the Covid pandemic. Particularly concerning was the revelation that attendance figures for SEND and EHCP students lagged behind their peers, signaling a need for targeted interventions.

Key Findings and Insights: The report highlighted the proactive measures schools employed to combat absenteeism, relying predominantly on in-house strategies and early intervention by school staff. This approach, while commendable, suggested a potential gap in external support systems and resources that could bolster these efforts.

Moreover, the inquiry aligned with the broader objectives of the Corporate Plan, emphasizing community leadership, sustainable development, and integrated public services. The collaborative framework involving Essex County Council's education directorate, representatives from Tendring secondary schools, and the Assistant Director of Partnerships exemplified a multi-faceted approach to tackling these educational challenges.

The scheduled school visits between January and March 2024 provided further insights into the practical application of these strategies and the real-world challenges schools encountered. It was imperative that the findings and recommendations from this report not only informed policy but also translated into tangible actions that could support educators, engage students, and ultimately foster an environment conducive to both academic success and mental well-being.

In conclusion, while the Council did not have a statutory role in education, its position as a community leader and influencer was pivotal. By bringing together various stakeholders and focusing on partnership engagement, there existed a significant opportunity to make a positive impact on the educational landscape, particularly in the areas of student attendance and mental health support. The Task & Finish Group's work served as a testament to the power of collaborative scrutiny and the potential for community-led initiatives to effect meaningful change.

Spotlight on the Post Delivery Scrutiny of the Sunspot Commercial Workspace

The Resources & Services OSC reviewed the Sunspot commercial workspace in Brooklands, Jaywick Sands in September 2023, following a decision made by the Council on 11 July 2023. Members toured the new premises and met with the intended café operator. The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Regeneration and Tourism highlighted the project's progress, including the availability of 24 affordable commercial units, surpassing initial expectations. Despite challenges such as cost overruns and delays, attributed to capital cost inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic, the project has made significant strides.

The Corporate Director for Place and Economy provided a detailed timeline of the project, addressing cost-related concerns. The initial estimate was for 13 units at £1.97 million, but this increased to 24 units and an additional £300,000 after a scope review. Tenders were sought for a £2.1 million project, but the lowest tender came in at £3.9 million. Despite cost overruns and delays, the decision was made to continue, securing investment from partners, including Essex County Council. The construction contract was awarded in April 2022.

The project faced unique challenges, including unexpected ground conditions and the need for additional funding, leading to a total cost increase of £760,000. Refinancing was necessary, involving discussions with partners around the refinance process. The importance of closely monitoring costs, refining project scopes, and considering potential challenges for future projects was emphasized. The cost increases in the project were reported to be due to global capital cost increases due to COVID and the Ukraine war.

Developing the 2024/25 Work Programme

There was an open invitation to suggest items for the Work Programme for 2024/25. Members of the Public and others participated in this process and made suggestions. These were considered and prioritised through informal meetings and then formal meeting of the two Committees. This resulted in the detailed specifications for enquiries presented to Full Council on 6 August 2024.

Statement from the Leader of the Council

Councillor Mark Stephenson

Leader of the Council



Prior to being elected as the council's leader in May 2023, I had been a chairman of the Resources & Services OSC for a number of years. As such I know the value of scrutiny to the Council as the "critical" friend of the Cabinet. The dedication of Members of OSC to the enquiries they undertake is very much appreciated.

The development of well evidenced recommendations from the OSCs is something that is critical to good governance. I've valued receiving them in 2023/24. The summaries set out in this Annual Report can only give a brief flavour of the sterling effects of the Council's OSCs and I would encourage everyone to use this report as a spur to engage further with the OSCs & their enquiries in 2024/25.

INTERESTING IN CONTRIBUTION TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRIES IN 2024/25?

Contact: Democraticservices@tendringdc.gov.uk