

**COUNCIL MEETING – 19TH MARCH 2026**

**AGENDA ITEM NO.**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 In accordance with the Council's procedures for monitoring the overview and scrutiny process, this report reviews the work that has been undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2025/26. The Committee's focus has primarily been to keep a watching brief on the Council's activities, along with service performance and providing comments and ideas. The aim has been to shape the Council's future policy and services. The Report covers the issues discussed, the processes followed, and the outcomes achieved during the year.

**2. RESPONSIBILITIES AND WORK PLAN**

2.1 The Committee was established as part of the review of the decision making structure which took effect from May 2018. The Committee's breadth of activity includes all Council services and services provided by other organisations which impact on the Borough and its inhabitants.

2.2 Progress Meetings, (consisting of Cllrs. Leola Card, Thomas Day, G.B. Lyon, Nadia Martin, Bill O'Donovan, M.J. Tennant and, myself), had initially been held prior to meetings of the Committee to discuss and consider processes and priorities, monitor the work plan and undertake agenda planning. From December 2025, a Programme Management Group was developed, replacing the Progress Groups, which brings together the Chairs of the four committees, (OSC, PPAB, AGC, LCB) accompanied by other cross-party Councillors and Lead Officers. This Group undertakes an overarching role in monitoring the agenda for each committee meeting, ensuring no duplication of work, and sharing ideas for items for future meetings.

**3. COMMITTEE ISSUES**

3.1 Over the year, the Committee has endeavoured to ensure that it has kept the Council's activities under review. However, some external scrutiny has been undertaken, in particular, around the SERCO contract and Policing.

3.2 The main areas of focus in 2025/26, detailed by priority of the Council's Delivery Plan, were:

## **SKILLS ECONOMY AND REGENERATION**

- **Union Yard Disposals** – In February 2026, the Committee considered a decision taken by the Cabinet to dispose of units at Union Yard, Aldershot to Vivid Housing. The Committee discussed, in detail, the financial implications for selling to Vivid Housing compared to other options detailed within the exempt papers. No recommendations were made to the Cabinet as a result of this scrutiny.

## **HOMES FOR ALL: QUALITY LIVING, AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

- **Registered Providers / Housing Oversight Group** – In June 2025, the Group received the Annual Report 2024/25 of the Registered Providers Task and Finish Group. At the same meeting appointments were made to the Group (consisting of Cllrs Gaynor Austin, Bill O'Donovan, S.J. Masterson, M.D. Smith and myself). The Group met in September 2025, to discuss and plan the review of Registered Providers for 2025/26, and at the meeting a number of proposed changes to the terms of reference and the approach to the reviews were made. Further discussion with the Portfolio Holder and Chair took place in October and at the December 2025 meeting the Committee reviewed and agreed the proposed changes including a name change, with the group becoming the Housing Oversight Group. Membership of the Group was also adjusted (consisting of Cllrs Leola Card, Steve Harden, Rhian Jones, Steve Masterson, Bill O'Donovan, Ivan Whitmee and myself). The Groups primary purpose is to provide oversight on how the Council is meeting the objectives of the housing priority - Homes for All.
- **Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy** – In July 2025, the Committee Reviewed the Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy, following a request in June 2024 to carry out a review of the priorities within the strategy, and to track progress since 2024/25. Progress to date was noted, and the Committee would continue to keep a watching briefing on its progress via the Housing Oversight Group.

## **COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING: ACTIVE LIVES, HEALTHIER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES**

- **Farnborough Leisure Centre Operator and Build Contract** – In February 2026, the Committee convened two separate meetings to consider the operator and build contracts for the proposed new Farnborough Leisure Centre. Each item was pre-decision scrutiny prior to the Cabinet making their final decision. In considering the operator contract the Committee raised a number of matters but no recommendations were recorded for the Cabinet to consider. However, as a result of the scrutiny on the build contract, a paper was circulated to the Cabinet prior to its meeting in March 2025, raising a number of points for consideration prior to a final decision being taken.

## **PRIDE IN PLACE: CLEAN, SAFE AND VIBRANT NEIGHBOURHOODS**

- **Police and Community Safety** – In September 2025, the Committee met with the Police Chief Inspector, Gillian Cox, and representatives of the Council's Community Safety team, to hear about current issues, challenges and positive news stories within the sector. The Committee discussed the matter at length and raised a number of questions at the meeting. The Committee was again represented on the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Community Safety (JOSC) along with elected Members from both Hart and Basingstoke. The JOSC worked well and had set priorities for the year which had been noted by the Committee. As in previous years, a date would be sought to invite the new Police Chief Inspector, Alex Reading, and the Council's Community Safety Team to a future meeting of the Committee in the new Municipal Year.
- **SERCO** – In December 2025, the Committee reviewed the Annual Report from SERCO on their activities during the year. The report covered SERCO's purpose, vision, mission and values, alongside details of performance in the key areas of refuse and recycling and management of street cleansing and grounds maintenance. The Committee also received a presentation from internal Operations Officers which highlighted the background to the procurement process, how the contract was managed, service changes, new legislation timetables and the introduction of 'Simpler Recycling'. Full scrutiny was undertaken and a watching brief would be kept on the progress of any extension of the contract with SERCO, as appropriate.
- **Walk this Waste Pilot** – also in December 2025, the Committee reviewed the outcomes of the Walk this Waste Pilot. In discussing the presentation, Members made a number of suggestions which were shared with the Cabinet to consider. However, the proposed Portfolio Holder's Report to Cabinet – recommending a boroughwide roll out of Walk This Waste – did not progress, and instead it is understood that Cabinet are reviewing alternative initiatives that could contribute to reducing fly-tipping.

## **THE FUTURE AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

- **Local Government Reorganisation** – In September 2025, the Committee reviewed the proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Following detailed consideration of the Report, the Committee raised a number of representations to the Cabinet for consideration prior to the full Council agreeing the proposals at its meeting later in September 2025.
- **Community Engagement** – At its October 2025 meeting, the Committee considered how the Council consulted with and understood the views of our residents. Several comments were made, in particular around consultations and surveys and how we can use best practice to inform future engagement with our residents. A watching brief will be kept on the matter.

3.3 A further meeting of the Committee is due to take place on 26th March 2026 for which items are being finalised.

- 3.4 When appropriate, Cabinet Members have been in attendance at meetings to support items and answer the Committee's questions. Cabinet Members who have attended include, Cllr Gareth Williams (Leader) Cllr Sophie Porter (Deputy Leader and Healthy Communities and Active Lives Portfolio Holder), Cllr Christine Guinness (Pride in Place and Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder) and Cllr Keith Dibble (Housing and Planning Portfolio Holder).

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The Committee has worked well during the year and carried out a range of activities, which have a significant impact on the Borough and the Council. The work of the Committee will be reviewed at the start of the 2026/27 Municipal Year to ensure that the Work Plan is realistic, and the focus is on issues where it can make a difference.
- 4.2 Finally, I would like to highlight the effective and thorough scrutiny the Committee has achieved over the course of the year. Every Member has played an active role in our meetings, and their constructive contributions have been integral to our success. I am sincerely grateful for their commitment and engagement. I would also like to extend my thanks to the officers for the professional support they have provided to both the Committee and to me as Chairman.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 The Council is asked to note and endorse the Committee's work.

CLLR. HALLEH KOOHESTANI  
CHAIRMAN - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE