



**North
Herts**
Council

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT
2022/2023**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair's Foreword

To be provided by Councillor David Levett ahead of consideration at Full Council

1. Overview and Scrutiny at North Hertfordshire Council

1.1 The depth and breadth of the Council's work means that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must use its resources efficiently and effectively in order to scrutinise topics in the time available. It does so by:

- Considering a number of issues during its Committee meetings and making recommendations to Cabinet;
- Appointing dedicated task and finish groups which can examine issues in depth and make recommendations to improve services;

2. Methods of Scrutiny

2.1 The Committee can scrutinise issues in a number of ways:

- By considering reports from, and questioning officers and Executive Members about different aspects of the Council's business;
- By submitting written questions which require a written answer, and which members can follow up by asking supplementary questions in Committee;
- By interviewing and questioning Executive Members about their respective portfolios;
- By calling in decisions which are of great concern to members or to the public;
- By inviting representatives from outside bodies to talk about topics of interest to the public in North Hertfordshire.

3. Meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3.1 There were six scheduled meetings this year and all proceeded as planned, in person in the Council Chamber, making effective use of the facility for officer presentations to be delivered remotely.

3.2 There was one extraordinary meeting of the Committee this year.

3.3 The Committee has considered a range of topics including scrutinising key decisions going to Cabinet, checking whether the Council has met its performance indicators and reviewing other issues which the Committee has decided would benefit from closer scrutiny.

4. Call-In

4.1 The call-in process allows the Chair of the Committee, or five members of the Council, to call in a decision which is the responsibility of the Executive, which has been made but not implemented. The Committee can ask the Executive to reconsider the decision or can refer it to Council.

4.2 There have been no called in items this year.

5. Presentations by Executive Members

5.1 The Committee has in general continued with its decision not to invite Executive Members to speak on their portfolios on a rolling basis and to instead invite them only to address specific issues or to present reports that were of interest to the Committee. The exception to this has been the Executive Member for Enterprise and Arts, who has attended on a rolling basis to provide an Enterprise Update since June 2022.

5.2 Executive Members are also welcomed when attending meetings and encouraged to take part in the meeting when appropriate.

5.3 The Committee are grateful to the Executive Members for making presentations and attending meetings this year.

6. Crime & Disorder Scrutiny

6.1 The Committee is also the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee for North Hertfordshire which is required to meet at least once a year.

6.2 The Committee chose this year to invite Hertfordshire Constabulary and North Herts Citizens Advice to discuss:

- Anti-social behaviour in town centres.
- The reporting and monitoring process behind anti-social behaviour issues.
- Safe walking for women and girls.
- Scams, with a focus on telephone scamming.

7. Safeguarding

7.1 The Committee continued to take a close interest in safeguarding matters and received its annual update on the Council's safeguarding performance in July 2022.

8. Statistics

8.1 In total, the Committee has considered **42 items** at its scheduled meetings this year.

8.2 It has made **10 recommendations on 4 topics to Cabinet and 1 recommendation to Full Council**. At every meeting the Committee also considered the resolutions previously made and the work programme.

8.3 No written questions were submitted this year.

9. Task and Finish Groups

- 9.1 Ongoing resource implications because of staffing changes to the Committee Services Team had meant it was not possible to allocate the officer time required to undertake successful Task and Finish Group on Communication.
- 9.2 An email was sent to Group Leaders in December 2022 to request nominations for Members of the Task and Finish Group. As of March 2023, no nominations to the group have been received. Therefore, this will be retained on the Work Programme of the Committee and will be approached again in the 2023/24 Civic Year.

10. Public Participation

- 10.1 The scrutiny process is open to involvement by local people and the Committee encourages public participation.
- 10.2 Six members of the public attended the Committee's meetings to make presentations this year.
- 10.3 Although physical attendance at the actual meetings was extremely low, recordings of the meetings on YouTube have received a total of **347 views**, with a mean average of **58 viewers** watching live or on the day of the meeting. The average view duration of a recording was **12 minutes 45 seconds**.
- 10.4 Some of the ways for the public to get involved include suggesting a topic for investigation as a task and finish group; providing evidence to or at a meeting; and being co-opted on to a topic group. The Committee is keen to see more public participation both in its task and finish groups and in its committee meetings.

11. Peer Review 2020

- 11.1 A peer review took place in January 2020.
- 11.2 Their initial findings included:
 - Executive Members should lead and be accountable for decisions;
 - Meetings should be focused with fewer agenda items;
 - Membership of the O&S committee is perceived to be too large;
 - All scrutiny members to complete formal scrutiny training;
 - Use the task and finish programme to support early involvement with policy making;
 - Review finish time and location of the meeting;
 - Clarify the governance arrangements between O&S and Cabinet Panels;
 - Ensure forward work plan includes scrutiny of external partners and contractors.
- 11.3 Until the new year the Committee had reviewed these recommendations at each meeting, to consider which had been completed and what actions could be taken in order to work towards those recommendations not yet complete. As there had

since been a review by the Peer Committee this had been removed from the agenda.

12. Further Information and Membership

12.1 Further information about the work of scrutiny and contact details can be found here: [Overview and Scrutiny | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/scrutiny)

12.2 Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2022/2023:

Members of the Committee:

Councillor David Levett (Chair)
Councillor Val Bryant (Vice
Chair)
Councillor Adam Compton
Councillor Alistair Willoughby
Councillor Carol Stanier
Councillor Claire Strong

Councillor Ian Moody
Councillor Nigel Mason
Councillor Phil Weeder
Councillor Raj Bhakar
Councillor Tamsin Thomas
Councillor Tony Hunter

Substitutes:

Councillor Lisa Nash
Councillor Morgan Derbyshire
Councillor Terry Hone
Councillor Simon Bloxham

Councillor Sean Nolan
Councillor Terry Tyler
Councillor Kay Tart