

# **Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2023-24.**

This report will be considered formally by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 20 February 2024.

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## Foreword from the Chairman and Vice-Chairman



Committee Chairman,  
Councillor Clive English



Committee Vice-Chairman,  
Councillor Maureen Cleator

As Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, we are pleased to present this annual report, detailing the work carried out across the 2023-24 municipal year.

This year the Committee has reviewed **three call-in requests**, carried out **pre-decision scrutiny on five decisions** and completed **one review**. The work programme has been reviewed regularly as Members continued to evaluate the use of the Committee's time and resources.

We would like to thank the Officers and Cabinet Members that attended meetings this year to assist in the Committee's work. However, our deepest thanks go to the Committee Members, for their efforts in supporting the work conducted overall.

As the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prepares to enter into its third year, we look forward to continually developing the skills required to build a strong Overview and Scrutiny function; continuing the Committee's legislative role in being a check and balance to the Cabinet and delving into issues of local importance through our review powers.

## **Committee Remit & Membership**

Councillors English (Chairman), Cleator (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Blackmore, Cannon, Clark, Conyard, Eagle, Mrs Gooch, Hastie, Hinder, Round, S Thompson and Webb.

Members attending as substitutes included Councillors Forecast, Jeffery, Jones, Kimmance, Springett and Trzebinski.

Further information can be found here: [Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council](#)

## **Member Workshop**

In May 2023, an informal workshop was held with the Committee to discuss its work programme for 2023/24. This included re-capping on the rights and roles of Overview and Scrutiny Members, a review of the previous year's work and lessons learnt, reviewing remaining work programme items from 2022-23, and a suggestion session (for new reviews).

The workshop was beneficial, and contributed to the Committee's work programme which was agreed in June 2023: [Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council](#)

## **Meetings and Reviews**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the 2023/24 Municipal Year included the following, with the Committee having met on 12 occasions by the end of this municipal year:

- Environmental and Waste Crime Enforcement (**completed**)
- Health Inequality (not yet started)
- The Integrated Transport Strategy (not yet started)
- Water Management Cycle (second phase, via a working group) (**paused**)

The Water Management Cycle review was paused due to a lack of engagement from external stakeholders as the review could not be sufficiently progressed without those organisations. This was disappointing given the high level of external stakeholder engagement seen in the first phase of the review.

The reviews not yet started can be rolled over to the next municipal year for the Committee to consider when it sets its work programme.

Additionally, the Committee received two Overview and Scrutiny Recommendation and Action Implementation Plans (SCRAIP) from the Cabinet concerning reviews conducted in the previous municipal year. The response were positive overall. On both occasions the relevant Cabinet Member attended the meeting to present the responses and answer questions from the Committee.

**Review Title & Objectives:** Environmental and Waste Crime Review, to:

*'Identify [any] required actions and/or policies to improve the Council's Environmental and Waste Crime enforcement services'.*

Information relating to the review can be accessed here: [your-councillors \(maidstone.gov.uk\)](https://your-councillors.maidstone.gov.uk)

**Outcomes:** The Group's report was reviewed by the at the 23 January 2024 Meeting and received by the Cabinet on 7 February 2024; a formal response by way of a SCRAIP is awaited to the 11 recommendations made, all of which relate to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services' portfolio.

It should be noted that the Committee was supportive of the service and the actions proposed by the Officers during the review.

<b>Meetings</b>	<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Evidence Provided</b>
17 Oct 23	Cabinet Member for Environmental Services Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm Public Realm Operations Manager Waste Crime Manager	Information Pack: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Waste Crime Team Structure</li><li>- Fixed Penalty Notices</li><li>- Enforcement Performance</li><li>- Fly Tipping Data</li><li>- Surveillance and CCTV</li><li>- Household Waste Recycling Centres, including policy changes to HWRCs</li><li>- Interna policies</li><li>- Resident Survey Results</li></ul>
21 Nov 23	As Above.	Briefing note based on Q&A from Oct Meeting.
Dec 23	Reviewed draft recommendations put forward across review.	

## **Call-In**

It is a legislative power of the Committee and takes place when **either the Committee Chairman OR any three Council Members** request to call-in a decision for review, after it has been made by the Cabinet (before the end of the call-in period).

The Committee has reviewed three call-in requests this year:

- Archbishops Palace (August 2023)
- Strategic CIL Assessment & Spend (August 2023)
- Kent Minerals and Waste Plan Review – MBC Response (September 2023)

For each, the relevant officers and cabinet members attended the meetings to answer questions on the decisions made.

After reviewing the Archbishops Palace item, the Committee requested that it conduct pre-decision scrutiny on future decisions relating to the building; this was recently put into action in January 2024, where the Committee reviewed the award of a lease and made additional recommendations to the Cabinet before a decision was made.

## **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

The Committee has focused on its pre-decision scrutiny role this year, reviewing the below items prior to the decisions being made:

- Public Spaces Protection Order (July 2023)
- Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals (Sept 2023)
- Public Consultation in relation to the Kent Community Warden Scheme (Sept 2023)
- Medium Term Financial Strategy - Capital Programme (Jan 2024)
- Archbishops Palace – Agreement for Lease (Jan 2024)

## **20243-25 Municipal Year**

A detailed training package will be offered to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in the next year, particularly following the Whole Council Elections in May 2024, to ensure Members are aware of their rights, powers and duties as part of the function.

Consideration has not yet been given to the work programme, but a preferred option would be to hold a work programming day, where the Committee and Wider Leadership Team can meet to discuss issues of importance to add to the work programme.