1. Scrutiny in Hertfordshire

Welcome to the Annual Report of Hertfordshire County Council’s Health and Overview and Scrutiny committees. The report provides details of the scrutinies undertaken April 2013 – March 2014. Key members of the scrutiny process include:

**Alan Searing** Chairman Overview and Scrutiny
**Seamus Quilty** Chairman Health Scrutiny
**Malcolm Cowan** Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny
**Leon Reefe** Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny
**Nick Hollinghurst** Vice Chairman Health Scrutiny
**Sherma Batson** Labour Spokes Health Scrutiny

1.1 What is Scrutiny?

Local government scrutiny is about reviewing decisions made by the **Executive (Cabinet)** and acting in the capacity of a critical friend. In other words, scrutiny holds the authority to account. To achieve this selected members conduct investigations, take evidence and talk to witnesses before making recommendations.

Hertfordshire has two scrutiny committees, **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)** and **Health Scrutiny Committee (HSC)**. Both set annual work programmes for the areas they wish to scrutinise, whilst retaining flexibility to deal with emerging issues quickly. The majority of scrutinies run for the whole day (one or two days being the maximum for all but the most complex scrutinies).

The overlap between Health and Social Care means that some scrutinies involve joint committee membership and work. The scrutinies that fall into this
category are still identified in the report. They are listed under the committee that took the lead on that particular scrutiny.

Scrutinies are focussed with a clear objective; a number of questions to be addressed; desired outcomes; and identified constraints, such as areas that are not being covered. A detailed timetable is produced and thorough Member briefings take place in advance of any formal meetings. ‘Topic Groups’ are then formed to look in depth at the subject and to produce a report with recommendations.

When the report is published the relevant Executive Member/Trust Director has two months in which to respond to the recommendations in particular and to the report in general.

In 2013/14 across HSC and OSC, 92% of recommendations were implemented by Trust Boards or the County Council Executive, 3% partially implemented and 5% rejected. In addition, Hertfordshire scrutiny was the winner of the Centre for Public Scrutiny overall impact award in 2011.

2. Health Scrutiny Committee (HSC)

The Health and Social Care Act (2001) requires one of the County Council’s scrutiny committees to have the power to scrutinise public health services. In doing so, it can establish joint arrangements with and/or delegate some responsibility to the County’s district and borough councils.

A Health Scrutiny Committee considers strategic countywide health issues. It consists of ten county councillors and a representative from each of the County’s ten district and borough councils.
2.1 – For ease of reference, Topic Groups are listed in alphabetical order:

Ambulance Response Times – 30 September 2013

The topic group reviewed the actions being taken by the ambulance services to improve its services to patients.
From the evidence, it became clear that only a whole systems approach will address the challenges facing the Ambulance Service.
The number of interim board appointments leaves the service vulnerable.
Members were concerned that not addressing this issue could compromise the ability to achieve the objectives of the Turnaround and Action Plan.
Members were impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm of staff, and are confident that current plans would improve performance.

Francis Scrutiny Café – 6 and 12 February 2014

The scrutiny was held over two days in response to the Francis report.
Members heard from NHS England, the three CCGs that cover Hertfordshire, the two acute trusts, the mental health trust, community trust and the Ambulance Service.
Four topic groups discussed issues with the trusts, a format that was received positively. It was agreed that future HSC café’s would combine budget and further consideration of the patient outcome and experience.

HSC Budget Scrutiny – 17 and 25 October 2013

The scrutiny was held over two days in a café format, examining the robustness of the trusts strategic budget proposals.
A number of recommendations were made, including some to be addressed at future meetings or via information requests, as well as some being added to the work programme or receiving an update at a future committee.
To increase member understanding of the services provided and engage with frontline staff, the Health Scrutiny Committee also visited:

- Kingsley Green (mental health facility) – 24 January 2014
- Princess Alexandra, Harlow – 7 March 2014

3. Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to hold The Executive to account by scrutinising:

- Decisions made by, or on behalf of, the Council or Cabinet
- Any operational or policy aspect of the Council’s business

OSC membership consists of fifteen County Councillors, four parent governors and two church representatives, the latter six being only able to vote on education related issues and take part in education related scrutinies.

3.1 – For ease of reference, Topic Groups are listed in alphabetical order:

20 MPH – 23 and 24 October 2013

The scrutiny used the existing speed management strategy to consider whether the new strategy should encourage greater use of 20mph speed limits and zones. Members recommended the expansion of 20mph limits and zones where there was public support and without the need for physical measures such as bollards, speed tables and chicanes. To increase the number of zones and roads eligible they also endorsed a proposal to use mean speeds for determining all speed limits, rather than 85th percentile speeds.
Anti-Bullying Scrutiny – 4 July 2013

The topic group was advised on the key issues in bullying behaviour and how the local authority supports schools to address these issues. Hertfordshire is recognised by other local authorities and lead agencies such as Ofsted as being at the forefront of both bullying and cyberbullying prevention and support. The e-safety guidance is followed by schools, local authorities and organisations across the country and abroad.

There was concern that once follow up services from the local authority are provided on a traded basis, schools ability to tackle bullying, especially cyberbullying, would be less effective.

CO2 Scrutiny – 28 March 2014

The topic group sought to assess how HCC has progressed in its CO2 reduction work since the previous scrutiny in 2010. Members heard that HCC achieved the Corporate Plan 2008-2012 target of a 25% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2012-13, achieving a reduction of 26.4%. Members noted that from 2014/15 schools emissions were excluded. This raised some concerns that the new arrangements held no plans by central government to set targets for schools to reduce emissions.

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board (HSCB) - 10 October 2013

This is an annual scrutiny that enables Members to monitor the progress and performance of HSCB. It focussed on helping Members understand the work of HSCB, Child Death Overview, Serious Case Review and Partnership Case Reviews, as well as an update on missing children, sexual exploitation and joint working.

This scrutiny is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how the relevant organisations in Hertfordshire will cooperate to safeguard children in the county, promote their welfare and ensure that the work undertaken is
effective. Members were happy with the progress made by the board during 2012/13 and asked that at the 2013/14 scrutiny they hear about:

- Serious Case Reviews
- Partnership Case Reviews
- Child Death Overview Panel
- Child Sexual Exploitation

and the work being undertaken in these areas.

**Integrated Plan Proposals (Budget Scrutiny) - 11 December 2012, 30 January and 6 February 2013**

The annual budget scrutiny covers three days. The first day advised Members of emerging issues arising from the budget settlement, the second was a ‘scrutiny café’ approach involving the majority of Members of the County Council (both Executive and Non-Executive), all Chief Officers and a further 30 senior County Council officers, whilst the third day was a debate by the committee on the outcomes of the ‘scrutiny café’.

Recommendations were produced for consideration by the Executive and Full Council in reaching decisions on the County Council’s Integrated Plan for 2013/14 – 2015/16.

**Part Night Lighting – 1 October 2013**

The scrutiny examined the HCC part night lighting strategy, in which most street lamps in the county are switched off between midnight and 6am. Residents were invited to write in with their comments. They were almost evenly split between those in favour, those against and those who suggested some modification to the existing arrangements.

Members concluded that there should be greater flexibility in some areas for lights being turned off and also asked that an ‘invest to save’ opportunity be developed through the Integrated Plan (IP) process. This would encourage a move toward Light Emitting Diode (LED) lighting when it is financially viable and reliability and efficiency has reached a level to make a scheme viable.
Police and Crime Panel (PCP) – 19 March 2014

The scrutiny was the annual Crime and Disorder scrutiny. It looked at how the PCP holds the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to account. Members heard that the powers of the PCP to hold the PCC to account were limited primarily to influencing through question, recommending and commenting. Members felt that the PCP could develop a programme of one day scrutinies with follow up monitoring of the implementation or otherwise of recommendations. This would raise the profile of the PCP as well as providing a helpful challenge to support the PCC in the effective carrying out of his functions.

Relationship with Borough and District Councils – 18 and 19 December 2013

The topic group looked at the current working relationships with the Boroughs and Districts, their strengths and weaknesses and how they might be improved. All 10 Boroughs and Districts were invited to give evidence and 6 did so. Members identified a number of areas where the relationship could be improved including shared learning, service delivery and the development of shared services similar to that of the Shared Internal Audit Service.

Road Reinstatements - 16 January 2014
This scrutiny examined what control HCC had over road reinstatements. Members heard about the powers HCC has to co-ordinate works on the highway which have been strengthened since the introduction of the permit scheme. It enables HCC to apply conditions to who can work where, when and how and is enabling better planning of works to be undertaken.
3.2 - Written updates

For a range of reasons it may not always be appropriate to scrutinise a topic on which Members have expressed an interest. In these instances all Members are provided with a short written update on the particular topic. This method has been used to provide updates on:

- Welfare Reform –Social Fund Changes
- Transition from primary to secondary school

3.3 - Lunchtime seminars

Scrutiny organises two-hour long seminars, with a speaker on topics of general interest to members and officers. Recent examples have included:

- CQC
- Impact of academies

4 - Having your say on the issues being scrutinised

Members of the public are able to attend any scrutiny and/or topic group. Although the public have no right to speak at the meeting, they may be invited to do so by the Chairman. Members of the public can also make their views known to their local County Councillor or any Member of a scrutiny committee
5 - Suggest items for future scrutiny work programmes
Members of the public may write to the Head of Scrutiny to request that a relevant subject or issue be investigated.

He can be contacted at:
tom.hawkyard@hertfordshire.gov.uk

or at
CH0317
Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8DE.

All suggestions will be considered by the chair and vice chairs of the appropriate committees at the next agenda setting meeting. The member of the public will then be informed by the Head of Scrutiny of the outcome.
Glossary of terms

**CCG** – Clinical Commissioning Group, responsible for commissioning, or purchasing, most health services for a particular area.

**CQC** – Care Quality Commission, a statutory body responsible for analysing the quality and performance of health trusts.

**Elected member** – Locally elected, sometimes known as councillor

**Executive cabinet** – A group of elected councillors who each look after a particular department

**Executive member** – An elected member who holds responsibility for a particular department

**Francis Report** – A report written in response to the Mid-Staffordshire NHS review, creating a series of recommended changes for the NHS across the country

**Full Council** – Meets throughout the year and is a meeting of all elected members, to agree and debate suggested policies and strategies of the council.

**Police and Crime Commissioner** – An elected individual who offers direction for the police service, in Hertfordshire this is David Lloyd.

**The executive** – These are the chief officers of the Authority led by the chief executive of Hertfordshire County Council, John Wood.

**Trust Director** – A senior official in charge of a health trust

**Turnaround and Action Plan** – A strategy written in response to low scoring performance outcomes, setting out a way to solve the issues raised.