



Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

# Overview and scrutiny annual report



## Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

Overview and Scrutiny at RBWM consists of three main panels; Corporate, Place, and Adults, Children & Health. Adults, Children & Health and Place have four scheduled meetings a year, with Corporate having six meetings a year due to its wider responsibility and overarching scrutiny role. Each Panel is closely aligned to a key council theme and directorate area, which allows each Panel to focus on specific objectives. Items of consideration can vary from one-off reports, regular performance monitoring and deep dive reviews into a specific topic area.

The graphic below provides an illustrative summary of each Panel's remit:



There is a requirement for Overview and Scrutiny to submit an annual report each year to a meeting of Full Council, highlighting the work of each Panel and what topics have been scrutinised. This report gives a brief summary of the work and findings of each Panel while looking to pick out some key areas of positive scrutiny, along with some commentary on what was achieved by the Panel.

The report concludes with some figures of Overview and Scrutiny across the municipal year and further information on how residents can become more involved in the scrutiny process.

Consideration also needs to be given to the [Centre for Governance and Scrutiny 'good scrutiny guide'](#) which provides a framework for ensuring that scrutiny plays a key and effective role in the governance of a council. The guide shows that weak scrutiny leads to weak governance processes, with three core principles underpinning this:

- **Accountability** – an environment where responsibility for services and decisions is clear and where those holding responsibility can and are answerable for success and failure.
- **Transparency** – the publication, proactively, of information relating to services and decisions to allow local people, and others, to hold policymakers and decision-makers to account.
- **Involvement** – rules, principles and processes whereby a wide range of stakeholders, including elected representatives, can play active roles in holding to account, and influencing and directing the development of policy.

Councillors sitting on scrutiny are encouraged to consider good practise resources from organisations like the [Centre for Governance and Scrutiny](#) and the [Local Government Association](#) as part of their ongoing work to ensure that there is continued progress on good governance and positive working relationships across the council.

## Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

Changes and improvements made to further improve scrutiny:

- Following approval Full Council in April 2025, each scrutiny panel will be reduced from 9 Councillors down to 7 Councillors for the new municipal year, to help allow those on the Panel more time for discussion and debate. This should also help to sustain the focus of meetings and agenda items.
- The remits of Place and Adults, Children and Health have been amended slightly, to reflect that Environmental Health and Housing fall under the Place directorate and therefore should be under the Place remit.
- In November 2024, the People Overview and Scrutiny Panel was renamed back to the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel. This name change was designed to make it clear to residents, officers and Councillors the purpose and scope of the Panel's work.
- Discussions have been held with the Leader of the Council to see how the links between scrutiny and the executive can be improved, including the attendance of relevant Cabinet Members at scrutiny meetings for new strategies and policies being brought forward.
- Providing a stronger link between the Cabinet Forward Plan and scrutiny – discussions have been held with officers from all directorates about involving scrutiny as a key part in the decision making process, including attending the internal officer Performance and Resources Board.
- Encouraging Panel Members to think about areas of concern or interest and ensuring that this is scoped effectively to hold effective scrutiny reviews, using the Thames Water review as a positive example.
- Continuing to encourage further collaboration between the Chairs of each Panel, to encourage scrutiny symmetry whilst avoiding duplication or repetition.





**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**Membership May 2024 – April 2025**



Councillor Chris Moriarty  
Chair



Councillor Helen Price  
Vice Chair



Councillor  
George Shaw



Councillor  
Maureen Hunt



Councillor  
Mark Howard



Councillor  
Gurch Singh



Councillor  
Julian Sharpe



Councillor  
Julian Tisi



Councillor  
Wisdom Da Costa\*

\*Councillor David Buckley until January 2025

### **Introduction by the Chair of the Panel – Councillor Chris Moriarty**

It is vital that scrutiny at RBWM continues to evolve. As a cornerstone of transparent and democratic governance, effective scrutiny ensures that the policies impacting every resident, every day, are well-considered and robust.

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel has faced a number of complex and challenging topics this year, as outlined in the following pages. Alongside this, we've also been considering how to strengthen our future impact.

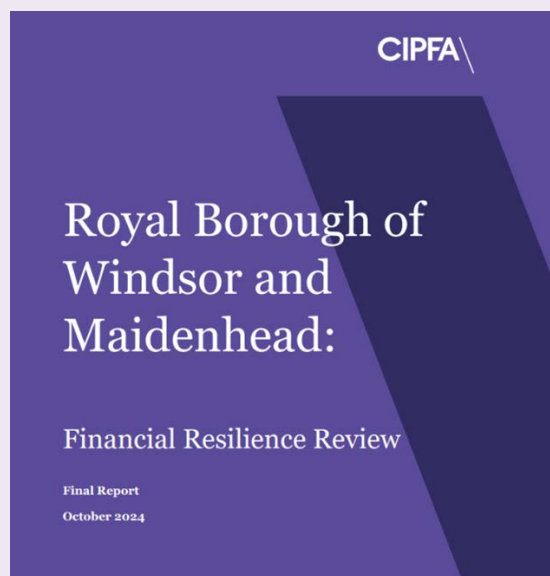
As Chair, I've long believed that scrutiny requires a clearly defined scope — something that, over the past decade, has become somewhat blurred. What exactly is scrutiny's role in shaping policy? How can we make it more proactive, rather than reactive?

Encouragingly, I believe we are beginning to sharpen that focus. This year, for example, we have contributed to corporate policy at an earlier stage — such as our recent review of the consultation policy ahead of Cabinet consideration. This not only streamlines the process, but also leads to better outcomes.

Looking ahead, I believe the next step is a cultural shift: moving away from viewing scrutiny as a tool to assess officer performance, and towards ensuring that the policies being implemented are genuinely fit-for-purpose and aligned with RBWM's strategic objectives.

With that in mind, I welcome more Cabinet Members engaging with the Panel to present and discuss their policies. A cross-party, collaborative approach is essential to ensure we're delivering the best possible outcomes for our residents.

### **CIPFA Report and Financial Sustainability and Improvement Plan**



The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) were commissioned by the council to conduct a review of the council's financial resilience, financial management and sustainability; commercial investments and governance. As part of the final report, the council produced a Financial Sustainability and Improvement Plan (FISP) which looked to address the CIPFA report's recommendations. While the final version of the FISP would be approved by Full Council, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel were given an opportunity to initially scrutinise and provide feedback on the draft FISP.

The Panel debated the following areas of discussion with senior officers:

- An understanding of why there was a need to avoid declaring a S114 notice.
- The next steps for the council, following the FISP being approved by Full Council.
- Scrutiny of the new independent board, including the proposed cost of £80,000 and consideration of the additional knowledge and scrutiny this could bring.

- The prioritisation of proposals set out in the FISP.
- The asset strategy to be followed, including reviewing existing council owned assets, utilising them in a different way or selling assets if this was deemed necessary.
- The level of resource needed across the council to ensure that the priorities of the FISP could be addressed.
- Providing clear and consistent communication with residents on the financial situation, including any potential council tax rises.
- A reflection of how the council had found itself in the current financial situation, including factors which had not been addressed following the 2020 CIPFA review.

The FISP was put forward for approval by Full Council in November 2024. The minutes and discussion from the Panel were added as a supplement to the agenda, to ensure that all Councillors were aware of the points raised and to help inform the debate at the Full Council meeting.

### Quarterly Assurance Report

The Quarterly Assurance Report (QAR) has continued to be presented to the Panel each quarter over the course of the municipal year, after consideration at the respective Cabinet meeting. The report continued to encompass key performance indicators, corporate risk register, audit and workforce insights. While discussion on the QAR has been wide ranging and often in-depth, there had been a danger for the Panel to focus on specific operational matters which were the responsibility of officers across the council, rather than considering the performance of service areas against the aims and priorities set out in the Council Plan.

Looking towards the 2025/26 municipal year, it is expected that the Panel will not consider each iteration of the QAR, but instead reporting will be by exception. This will include the annual refresh of the Council Plan, Q4/year end reporting and any further reports as requested by the Panel.

### Budget Challenge Session



In January 2025, the Panel had an opportunity to scrutinise the draft budget proposals in a dedicated challenge session. The Adults, Children & Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel held offline meetings in advance of the challenge session, with comments and concerns highlighted to Panel Members. The Panel were also able to consider the initial emerging themes coming through as part of the public consultation. Councillors scrutinised various areas of the budget, with the meeting

being split into various sections, looking at the general approach to the creation of the budget, before deep diving into each area of council operation (Place, Adults, Children's, Resources) and finally looking at the revenue approach.

The draft budget made it clear that the council was facing serious financial challenges, with negative reserves, a debt figure of over £200 million and recently discovered accounting errors which had increased to over £30 million. An application had been made to the government for Exceptional Financial Support which looked to increase the council tax rise above the cap while also receiving a short term funding loan to help address the pressure seen on the budget through increased demand across place, adult services and children's services.

The main points raised by Councillors on the Panel included:

- Challenging the assumptions made on inflation.
- Considering the savings being proposed by service areas and whether these went far enough.
- Concern around the proposed 25% council tax increase and the impact this would have on vulnerable residents.
- How the value of assets could be maximised, particularly if they were part of the plan to tackle the increasing level of debt.
- The impact of car parking usage decreasing and the suggested lack of enforcement across a number of council car parks.
- That the council should look to take advantage of the block booking system for beds in care homes.
- Whether additional support could be provided to attract foster carers and also how unpaid carers could continue to be supported.
- The high cost of residential placements for children in care and the plans the council had to tackle this increasing cost.

These comments and concerns were acknowledged by a number of Cabinet Members at the meeting of Cabinet where the final budget was agreed and put forward to Full Council for approval.

### Review of Property and Future Delivery Model



The council had engaged CIPFA to review the effectiveness of the RBWM Property Company. CIPFA identified strengths and challenges and recommended that the council brought the property function in-house, developed a property asset framework and considered a corporate landlord model of delivery.

The Panel made it clear to Cabinet that there had been a lack of openness and transparency around the original Property Company and that these were positive

steps forward in making improvements. Asset valuations were questioned by the Panel, especially with the valuing organisation having a seat on the newly formed board. Councillors asked for reassurance that there would be more openness when it came to decision making and performance of the new internal Property Company. Officers confirmed that the new model would not be looking at new property acquisitions and would primarily be focused on managing the council's current asset portfolio, but this would be kept under review. The Panel suggested that a long term strategy was needed, particularly to address the affordable housing shortage.

It was expected that the business plan and asset strategy would be drafted over the summer and there was agreement that the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel would review these documents.



### Council Plan Refresh



The Council Plan had been adopted in April 2024, with a yearly refresh designed to ensure that the plan was still up to date and relevant, with any KPIs or deliverables being amended where appropriate. The Panel were provided with an opportunity to scrutinise the refresh ahead of approval by Full Council.

There were five key strategy aims forming the core of the plan and it was suggested that the links between these aims could be made clear so that residents could understand how aims were prioritised, with a particular emphasis on financial sustainability. The Panel recommended that narrative on financial resilience could be included as part of the forewords to the plan being drafted by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. Suggestions raised by Councillors as part of the formation of the refreshed plan led to the inclusion of a new social value policy, exploring how the council could utilise positive community impacts inspired by local businesses and organisations in the borough and also linking this to the portfolio of council contractors.

Cabinet responded to the recommendations and comments by scrutiny and agreed that financial resilience would be referenced as part of the newly drafted foreword to the Council Plan by both the Leader and Chief Executive. Cabinet made it clear that there was no specific aim which was more important or to be prioritised above any of the others, in response to the Panel's discussion.

The Panel were keen to scrutinise new strategies and policies being developed by the council over the coming year, using the Council Plan as a basis for the work programme. This should help to ensure the Panel is forward looking and is able to proactively scrutinise Cabinet proposals in advance of them being approved and adopted.





**Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel  
Membership May 2024 – April 2025**



**Councillor Gary Reeves**  
Chair



**Councillor Jodie Grove**  
Vice Chair



**Councillor**  
**Clive Baskerville**



**Councillor**  
**Alison Carpenter**



**Councillor**  
**George Blundell**



**Councillor**  
**Asghar Majeed**



**Councillor**  
**Gurch Singh**



**Councillor**  
**Sian Martin**



**Councillor**  
**Leo Walters**

Co-opted Members: Louvaine Kneen (Bray Parish Council) and Roly Latif (Wraysbury Parish Council)

### Introduction by Chair of the Panel – Councillor Gary Reeves

It has been a privilege to act as Chair for the Place Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the last year and being able to support the valuable contributions and probing questions from all the panel members, the contributions and commitment from the RBWM officers, outside attendees and the public speakers of whom I would like to take this opportunity to thank for all their time and effort. I have always seen the O&S Panels as a valuable platform for accountability to not just the Councillors but also for the public. It brings extended transparency around the workings and delivery of commitments to serving the public, within our borough, in the best way possible.

I have felt that this has not always been delivered in the most transparent way but that we have turned a very big corner, in the last couple of years, where the culture of scrutiny has matured, to not only focus on the transactional but importantly focusing on policy. We have seen this progression on Place O&S by not only reviewing and scrutinising the Place department officers on the day to day running of the council, but also started to pull in the policy makers and outside bodies.

A couple of highlights of this approach to scrutiny expansion was bringing in Thames Water and consideration of the Climate Strategy Impact report. I would like to take this chance to thank Councillor Carpenter for her proposal to Full Council in July last year, from where we explored the prospect to bring in Thames Water and expanded the scope of the call-in to include outstanding issues and potential major concerns around the infrastructure impact from all the ongoing and upcoming housing development in and around the borough. Another positive was being the drive to encourage and represent non-panel members questions, such as the Youth Council on the Environment and Climate Strategy Impact report and all our public speakers during the past year. I would really encourage and be supportive of having further questions from non-panel members in 2025/26, where I will be happy to continue to represent these as Chair. Your questions asked is my drive.

It is good to see a flex of panel members, bringing new perspectives to the Panel and wish Councillor Jodie Grove the best in her well-earned new role as Chair of the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel. In exchange, our Panel is gaining a very experienced new Vice Chair Councillor Helen Taylor and the previous Chair of the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel. I am sure that our future drive towards bringing in relevant Cabinet Members so that we can scrutinise policy alongside deliverables gives us and the public even more access to the overriding aims and levers to perform for the residents. I look forward to another year of robust discussion, scrutiny and openness around key topics, including the upcoming new Climate Strategy along with continuing to ask more probing questions and our Panel pushing hard for adoption of our suggestions on policy & strategy.

### Community Infrastructure Levy Review



Community Infrastructure Levy had been a topic that scrutiny were keen to consider for a number of years, with the final version of the scoping document for the review being approved in September. Following an initial discussion and introduction to CIL, the Panel agreed for a full review of the CIL process to be commissioned.

The review comprised of a comprehensive report produced by officers which contained information on how the charging schedule had been adopted, comparisons with other council's charging schedules, the viability assessment that underpinned the current rates and how CIL funds were allocated to projects across the borough. The report was supplemented by a significant amount of evidence from the last viability review, which allowed the Panel to consider the issue in depth.

The Panel reviewed how CIL funds had been collected and allocated to date, including the total funds raised, distribution mechanisms, and transparency and accountability in fund usage. Panel Members raised concerns about whether current CIL rates were optimally set to balance development viability and infrastructure funding and raised the potential disparities in how funds were distributed across different areas of the borough. Through the review, the Panel noted that RBWM's CIL rates were generally lower than some neighboring authorities and expressed concern about the potential loss of significant amounts of CIL income through the zero rate of CIL across Maidenhead town centre.

The Panel made a direct recommendation to Cabinet that a viability study on CIL rates should be completed as soon as possible, ideally before the end of the municipal year. The Panel also suggested that the two Town Forums should be used as sources of local engagement for how CIL was spent in the unpraised areas of the borough.

In response to the recommendations, Cabinet explained that best practice guidance was to review the CIL viability process and the local development strategy in conjunction with each other. While the viability study would not be completed before the end of the municipal year, the council would be looking to complete this as part of the local development strategy. Cabinet agreed that during the creation of the local development scheme, there would be plans to consult with the two Town Forums on this proposal.

### EV Chargepoint Contract Approval



The council received an indicative £927,000 from the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Capital Fund in March 2023 which would support the rollout of on-street EV charging infrastructure in line with RBWM's EV Chargepoint Implementation Plan. The Panel considered the report being brought to Cabinet which was seeking to procure two concession contracts for the supply, installation, operation, and maintenance of EV chargepoints across the borough.

When considering the report, it was clear that there was support for the goal of having chargepoints in every ward and village, but concerns were raised about how this would be prioritised and monitored, with assurance sought that rural and lower-income areas would not be left behind in the rollout.



Panel Members questioned how performance and compliance would be monitored over the life of the contract while it was also stressed that there was a need for clear communication with residents around where chargepoints would be installed, how this would be decided and how residents could provide input or raise concerns.

The Panel recommended an addition to the wording of the recommendation in the report which was submitted to Cabinet, that the award of the contract was approved 'in accordance with the delivery of the Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Implementation Plan'. This recommendation was agreed and accepted by Cabinet.

### Thames Valley Police and Community Safety Partnership Plan 2024-2027



A key part of the Panel's remit is around ensuring there is oversight and scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership, including the partner organisations like the police. The Community Safety Partnership Plan 2024–27 outlined the strategic priorities and actions for reducing crime, anti-social behaviour, and promoting community safety across the borough and is a statutory requirement under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Panel members commended the use of the Strategic Needs Assessment to inform the

plan's priorities and appreciated the evidence-based targeting of issues such as youth violence and night-time economy safety. There was a call to ensure that data continued to be updated regularly and used to adapt priorities dynamically over the plan's lifespan. Several councillors stressed the importance of clear performance indicators to track the plan's effectiveness.

Councillors urged the partnership to:

- Engage more directly with residents, especially in areas where trust in public services may be lower.
- Use accessible communication channels to share updates and gather feedback.
- Work closely with schools, youth services, voluntary and community organisations to build early intervention strategies.

Later in the year, the Panel invited representatives from Thames Valley Police to a meeting, including the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable, to provide an annual summary of their work.

Key areas of focus explored by the Panel included:

- The implantation of a new DISC app to help tackle shoplifting, which allowed sharing of CCTV footage and intelligence.
- Continued challenges by the force to attract and retain police officers, particularly due to the competition faced with close proximity to Metropolitan Police.
- Steps taken to improve public confidence in policing, particularly with the recent temporary suspension of the Chief Constable.
- How a centralised anti-social behaviour reporting system could be developed including coordination with the Community Safety Partnership to address persistent hotspots.
- Plans for a new forensic centre which would be built in Oxfordshire to enhance investigative capacities and resource.

### Parking Supplementary Planning Document – Outline and Scope



The Parking Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) outline and scope was brought to the Panel for consideration which contained the proposed plan for the SPD and four main questions which had been posed for discussion. Bringing the outline of the SPD at this stage provided the Panel with a unique opportunity to shape the future direction of the SPD, with the full draft due to be created by officers.

Discussion from the Panel was focused on ensuring that the SPD was written in a clear and concise manner and that the SPD was flexible to consider parking in different areas of the borough, particularly urban areas against the more rural areas. There was an emphasis that the SPD should reflect the council's climate goals which would see a shift to public transport use over increased parking spaces.

The Panel agreed that the full draft of the SPD would be considered at a meeting once ready, before it went to Cabinet.

### Thames Water



At a Full Council meeting in July 2024, a motion was agreed to scrutinise Thames Water due to recurrent water leaks across RBWM. The motion cited frequent leaks, repeated repairs, road closures, and impacts on residents and businesses, especially in areas like Clewer and Dedworth East. The Panel prepared a scoping document for the review and invited senior representatives from Thames Water to a meeting. Attendance included the Head of Operations for Clean Water, the Stakeholder Manager for Waste and the South Thames Valley Stakeholder Engagement Manager.

Key areas discussed:

- Panel members questioned Thames Water's track record and response times to leaks in certain specific areas, including ensuring that a response was provided and followed up after the meeting.
- There were calls for clearer communication with residents and better public engagement.
- Questions were raised about how Thames Water would prevent future disruptions, especially in high-risk areas. There were plans for a new warning system to be trialled and a request was made for this to be rolled out in RBWM.
- Assurances were sought over the increased level of development across Maidenhead and in particular how the water infrastructure would need to be upgraded to keep up with demand.
- Concerns were voiced about the impact of water outages on vulnerable individuals and how Thames Water planned to support them.
- Thames Water agreed to hold a site visit to explore the removal of a potentially redundant waste pipe over the waterway in Maidenhead.

**People Overview and Scrutiny Panel  
Membership May 2024 – April 2025**



Councillor Helen Taylor  
Chair



Councillor Devon Davies  
Vice Chair



Councillor  
Mandy Brar



Councillor  
Suzanne Cross



Councillor  
Carole Da Costa



Councillor  
Clive Baskerville



Councillor  
Genevieve Gosling



Councillor  
George Shaw



Councillor  
Sally Coneron

Co-opted Members: Tony Wilson (Church of England), Catherine Hobbs (Roman Catholic), Poornima Karunacadacharan and David Hicks (Primary Parent Governors), Noel Wood (Secondary Parent Governor) and Mark Jervis (additional co-optee)



### Introduction by Chair of the Panel – Councillor Helen Taylor

I am encouraged by the changes in the Overview and Scrutiny Panels along with the content of the reports coming to Panel over the last year. We have come on in leaps and bounds over the last two years and whilst there is always room for improvement, the positive and forward movement should be noted and commended.

The change in name of the Adults, Children and Health Panel was vital to reflect the departments it covered and we have covered a number of hefty topics over the last year including Domestic Violence, CQC Inspection, AfC Inspection, new IT systems and child exploitation to name a few.

I have chaired this panel for two years and I would like to thank all panel members for their contributions. This Panel has been a truly collaborative and has shown that working together is possible and constructive no matter what your political beliefs. The officer reports are always well presented and informative, with officers bringing knowledge and helpful discussion to the meetings.

The cooperation of Cabinet Members has been appreciated and this has improved the Panels focus and ability to scrutinise adding input into policies prior to them going to Cabinet. Moving forward, I believe that this approach will prove more beneficial ensuring transparency and greater input from a wider range of Councillors into the policies being implemented by this council.

I am delighted with the election of Councillor Jodie Grove as Chair of the Panel for 2025/2026 and look forward to working with her and the panel members on issues which straddle both Adults and Place.

### Domestic Abuse Strategy & Task and Finish Group Report



**Support is available if you experience domestic abuse:**

999 in an emergency

Visit [thedashcharity.org.uk](https://thedashcharity.org.uk)  
or call **01753 549865**  
(Mon-Thurs 9.30-3pm, Friday 9.30-12pm)

24/7 National Domestic Abuse Helpline:  
**0808 2000247**

Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

The Task and Finish Group was established by the Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel to conduct a focused, time-limited review of how RBWM was addressing domestic abuse, particularly in light of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the borough's own Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022–2024.

The Group met a number of times and invited representatives from the Dash Charity, the BRAVE Project, Health, Housing and the Police to meetings.

The core purpose of the report was to assess whether the existing strategy was effectively addressing the needs of domestic abuse victims and survivors and determine if the strategy was being implemented in a way that reflected real-world experiences and challenges. The Group wanted to

ensure that the refreshed strategy incorporated the lived experience of survivors, with the voices of victims and survivors being central to the review. The work of the Group would be able to identify any gaps, opportunities and highlight areas where the council and its partners could improve service delivery.

The Group reported back to the Panel with evidence-based recommendations to inform the refreshed Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024–2027, which were put forward to Cabinet for consideration:

- 1) Mandatory domestic abuse awareness training for Councillors.
- 2) Ensure that all agencies and organisations work in a collaborative way to provide safe accommodation whilst maintaining support networks, where possible.
- 3) Explore ways to improve the signposting on the RBWM domestic abuse webpages to make it as simple as possible to access information and support, while maintaining a balance with the safety of victims.
- 4) Ensure that the domestic abuse and safe accommodation strategy is delivered and appropriately aligned with the new refresh of the domestic abuse strategy.
- 5) All residents are important and should be provided support, but victims with protected characteristics are given consideration in the domestic abuse strategy. For example, those from ethnic minority groups, military and travelling communities as well as those from the LGBTQ+ community, who can often find it more difficult to access services.

The Panel also considered the refreshed Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024–2027, which incorporated a number of these recommendations. This consisted of both the overarching strategy and the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy, which was required under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Cabinet agreed to adopt all five these recommendations, with the Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing Services writing directly to the Panel and Group to thank them for their hard work and contributions on the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

### Care Quality Commission Inspection Report of Adult Services

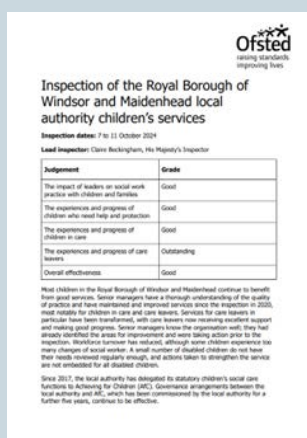


The Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted an assurance review of Adult Services between February and June 2024. The report outcome confirmed that the council were currently rated as “Requires Improvement” with a score of 62/100, just below the threshold for “Good”. This was the highest possible score within the “Requires Improvement” band, acknowledging strong frontline work and partnerships.

In their work scrutinising the result of the inspection, Panel Members acknowledged the “Requires Improvement” rating being at the top of the band. They recognised the positive feedback of frontline staff and partnerships, suggesting the rating did not fully reflect the quality of service delivery. Councillors questioned the strategic oversight and governance issues raised by the CQC and considered the need for better use of data to drive decisions and monitor outcomes. Suggestions included investing in data infrastructure and training staff to interpret and act on performance metrics.

Several Councillors praised the dedication of social care staff, noting that many of the issues were systemic rather than individual. There was a strong sentiment to ensure staff morale remained high during the improvement process.

The Panel noted the positive improvements put in place since the report was received by the council and requested that the next update report, due to be ready in the summer of 2025, was considered by the Panel in addition to Cabinet.



### Children's Services Ofsted Inspection Report

In October, Achieving for Children (AfC) was subject to an Ofsted review of children's services. The inspection confirmed that AfC continued to deliver "Good" services, while the experience and progress of Care Leavers was rated as "Outstanding".

The inspection report was considered by the Panel, with Councillors discussing the importance of the action plan being developed in response to Ofsted's recommendations.

Some Councillors raised the need to ensure ongoing support and resources for staff to maintain high standards. The Panel stressed the importance of robust data collection and analysis to track progress.

The Panel added the inspection action plan to the work programme, to scrutinise progress against the implementation of recommendations at an appropriate time in the next municipal year.

### Jubilee Ward Relocation



The Panel invited representatives from NHS Frimley to a meeting to outline the plans being proposed to relocate the Jubilee Ward, currently based at Upton Hospital in Slough. Plans were in place to relocate the ward to St Mark's Hospital in Maidenhead as the current ward was no longer fit for purpose and St Mark's was found to be the best option in terms of quality and longevity.

The new ward would be located in the refurbished Charles Ward and would see an increased capacity from 16 to 21 beds along with improved patient facilities. The ward was expected to open in the autumn of 2026.

Stakeholder engagement was being led by NHS Frimley and had so far included 78 completed surveys, social media outreach, local media, and partnership meetings. Feedback was mixed, depending on whether patients were from Slough or Maidenhead.

Concerns raised by the Panel:

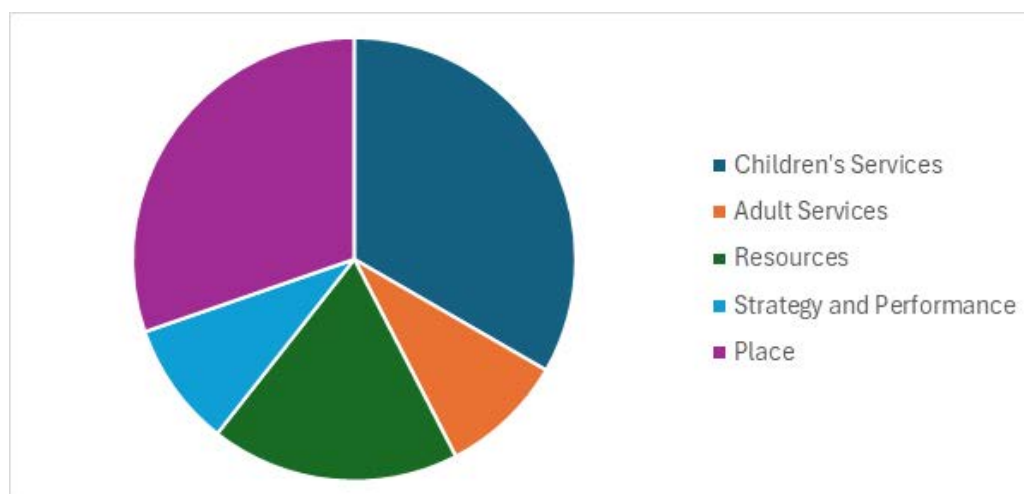
- Travel difficulties for patients without cars.
- Public transport options were being reviewed, but NHS Frimley had limited influence over services.
- Information sharing between NHS Berkshire and NHS Frimley was questioned and clarification was asked for.
- The future of Upton Park Hospital and the bed configuration at the new site would be confirmed post meeting.



### Overview and Scrutiny in Figures

	Corporate	Place	Adults, Children & Health
<b>Number of meetings held</b>	7	5	5
<b>Total meeting time</b>	19 hours	12 hours	8 hours
<b>Number of substantive agenda items</b>	14	9	11
<b>Number of recommendations made to Cabinet</b>	9	8	10
<b>Number of call ins considered</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total number of YouTube views</b>	1,360	667	366

A total of 35 different officers have been involved in Overview and Scrutiny meetings this year, split by the following directorates:



### Get involved in overview and scrutiny

You can get involved in the work of overview and scrutiny at the council in a number of ways:

- Attend a public meeting, either in person or via [YouTube](#), for any of our Panels.
- Register to speak at a scrutiny meeting.
- Contact your local [Councillor](#) to share your views and questions.
- Suggest a topic for consideration by scrutiny on our [website](#).