Overview and Scrutiny offers a unique opportunity to not only consider matters under the direct control of the Council but to scrutinise issues of public concern beyond the remit of the authority. The number of external organisations involved in the annual Overview and Scrutiny work programme continues to grow with a wide variety of issues being scrutinised. Councillors, Council officers and representatives of partner organisations have all continued to support and contribute to Overview and Scrutiny in the past year to ensure the best possible service provision for those living and working in the Borough.

Overview and Scrutiny consists of the main Committee and a number of ancillary groups. These groups have undertaken an enormous amount of work in the last year (reviewed in more detail on pages 2-3). As always, the range of topics and issues covered was vast and included ongoing scrutiny of the Council’s performance and budget, community safety and CCTV, development of a new Housing and Homelessness Strategy and an overview of service areas including volunteering and Community Transport.

In 2014-2015, the level of involvement from Members in the work of Overview and Scrutiny continues to bring with it an enormous amount of expertise and experience that has helped inform discussions on issues of real importance to the local community.

What is ‘Overview and Scrutiny’?

The Local Government Act 2000 first introduced the requirement for every local authority to include provision for at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Subsequent amendments to the Act have further developed the role of Overview and Scrutiny within local authorities.

Although not a decision-making body, effective Overview and Scrutiny has enormous potential to influence and inform decisions made by both the Council and partner bodies affecting the Borough.

The following key roles were identified as areas which Overview and Scrutiny should be concerned with in Elmbridge:

- Holding the Cabinet to account, which may include reviewing decisions taken by Cabinet, but not yet implemented, via the ‘call-in’ procedure;
- Monitoring Council performance;
- Reviewing policy;
- Developing policy; and
- Scrutinising externally issues of public concern beyond the remit of the Council.

Chairman
Councillor Hopkins

Vice Chairman
Councillor Elmer
The number of partners that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been working with over the last year has continued to grow with the Environment Agency, Thames Water, Surrey and Borders Partnership, South West Trains, Surrey Police, North West Surrey Clinical Commissioning Group and Surrey Downs Clinical Commissioning Group all attending the Committee.

Health has been an important subject matter for the Committee this year with the two local Clinical Commissioning Groups both attending to discuss their work. Clinical Commissioning Groups are responsible for commissioning most clinical services for people living in Elmbridge.

Discussion was focused on issues of local concern including the impact on services as a result of winter illness, the review of community hospitals and General Practitioner surgery opening hours, the latter being outside the direct responsibility of Clinical Commissioning Groups. Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust attended to discuss the provision and availability of mental health services within Elmbridge.

Environmental matters were also high on the agenda this year. Mindful of the recent flooding within the Borough, the Committee prioritised a further discussion on the progress of the River Thames Scheme and plans to reduce flood risk in affected communities with the Environment Agency. In addition to the discussion on the reduction of flood risk, the Environment Agency also provided the Committee with a comprehensive overview on the causes of the recent 2013/14 winter flooding to help improve understanding locally.

In November 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee took to social media and live tweeted its meeting which included a discussion with South West Trains. This proved incredibly powerful with the tweets having a potential reach of an additional 58,759 Twitter accounts.

The Committee had one Task and Finish Group established this year reviewing community safety matters in the Borough. The Task and Finish Group not only focused on the annual review of the Elmbridge Community Safety Partnership but also on ensuring CCTV performance remains at an acceptable level and consideration of the future options for the delivery of CCTV.

The role of this Task and Finish Group in monitoring CCTV performance has continued to be critical. Particularly noteworthy is the increase in total number of recorded incidents between April and December 2014, and the increase in the number of incidents reported to the CCTV Control Room by the Police. CCTV will continue to be an area of review next year with six monthly updates on performance and a continued discussion on the future options for CCTV in the Borough.
Overview and Scrutiny Standing Panel
Established to perform an on-going role, usually scrutiny related, throughout the year

By establishing the Performance and Finance Standing Panel, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee intended to facilitate detailed scrutiny of often complex financial and performance information. This year, the work has continued to review every aspect of Council services ensuring they are being delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Performance topics under review have ranged from looking in greater detail at recycling and composting targets, factors affecting processing times of planning applications, call answering times and affordable housing. Detailed consideration of the 2014-2015 budget monitoring reports and the 2015-2016 budget has also been a priority. The Panel has scrutinised underspend relating to staff vacancies, the validity of setting top-down targets, the decline of income from town centre parking, underspend from major projects from the Capital Programme 2014-2015 and the Surrey Business Rate Pool 2015-2016.

Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups
Act as collaborative consultative forums providing views on matters within its remit

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee established six working groups in 2013-2014.

The groups were:
- Affordable Housing Member Panel
- Countryside Consultative Group
- Constitutional Review Member Working Group
- Elmbridge Older Persons’ Advisory Body
- Elmbridge Energy and Sustainability Group
- Elmbridge Annual Grants Panel

As in previous years, the Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups continued to undertake an enormous amount of work. Not only did the Affordable Housing Member Panel continue to monitor progress in the delivery of affordable housing in the Borough, it continued to monitor the Affordable Housing Enabling Fund and the development of a new Housing and Homelessness Strategy for 2015-2019. The Elmbridge Older Persons’ Advisory Body continued to review services such as the Wellbeing Centre, Community Transport, Community Alarms and Telecare Service.

The Constitutional Review Member Working Group concluded its review of the Council’s Decision Making Structures concluding the Council should continue to operate a Cabinet Model. This year, the Elmbridge Annual Grants Panel conducted site visits to the voluntary sector organisations that receive core funding from Elmbridge Borough Council or allocations under the Grants process. This included 8 visits to organisations including Rentstart, Relate, Walton, Weybridge and Hersham Citizen’s Advice Bureau and Home Support Elmbridge. These visits helped the Working Group to get a better understanding of how these organisations use the Council’s funding. The Elmbridge Energy and Sustainability Group has continued with the delivery of its 2014-2015 action plan and the Countryside Consultative Group has looked at a range of issues including a request for a new footpath over common land in Esher.
Looking forward to 2015 - 2016

As we conclude the work undertaken in 2014-2015, it is now time to turn our attention to the development of our programme of work for 2015-2016.

As always, key to developing the Overview and Scrutiny work programme is ensuring that it reflects the issues that really matter to Elmbridge residents and businesses. The Committee will continue to prioritise the scrutiny of performance and financial information.

No doubt the Scrutiny of Cabinet Members will also continue to play an important part of our work. In 2014-2015, once again all Cabinet Members attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings providing a comprehensive overview of their Portfolios setting out key challenges and achievements.

Our work with partners is also likely to remain key as we look to find solutions to important local issues of concern. What is guaranteed is that the Committee and its various ancillary groups will continue to deliver a varied and challenging work programme.

Overview and Scrutiny should reflect the issues that matter to those who live or work in Elmbridge. Help us by telling us what you think we should focus on in 2015-2016. We have the scope to review any issue that affects Elmbridge, not just Council-related services.

- What are the priorities for improving life in Elmbridge?
- Are there emerging local issues we should be looking at?

You can contact us using the methods listed below; or submit a suggestion for our work programme using the online form on our website.

How to find out more about Overview and Scrutiny

Further information on Overview and Scrutiny is available on the Elmbridge Borough Council website. Members of the public are welcome to attend any meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Meetings generally start at 7.45pm and are held at the Civic Centre in Esher. The meeting dates for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2015-2016 are now available and are published on the Elmbridge Borough Council website.

Contact Us…

Web:  www.elmbridge.gov.uk/Council/information/overviewscrutiny.htm
Email: overviewandscrutiny@elmbridge.gov.uk
Tel:  01372 474397
Write: Overview and Scrutiny, Elmbridge Borough Council, High Street, Esher, Surrey, KT10 9SD