

London Borough of Lambeth



Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2019-20



Chair's Foreword

In the face of years of public sector cuts and ongoing uncertainty about the future of local government funding, the focus of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) has been to ensure that Lambeth prioritises the needs of its most vulnerable residents. This has been particularly important since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March which has resulted in much of the committee's attention being focussed on the Council's emergency response.

This year our formal OSC meetings looked at Homes for Lambeth, the Borough Plan Review, Health and Adult Social Care, the design of housing services after 2020, waste and street cleansing, the budget and the sustainable growth strategy as well as crime and disorder.

Our scrutiny of Homes for Lambeth (HfL) has focused on its management of risk and the need for independent oversight of its activities. Our planned follow up meeting on the HfL business plan in March 2020 was cancelled because of the Covid-19 lockdown but we submitted over 50 questions in writing (before it became possible for the committee to conduct its business in virtual meetings). Our main concern has been the independence of the governance arrangements, ensuring that residents and councillors are properly involved in overseeing HfL's ambitious plans to deliver new genuinely affordable homes. This has led to the setting up of an external governance review to examine HfL's governance framework and the various bodies and processes through which the Council and HfL work together. It will review the means by which the Council exercises its oversight and scrutiny of HfL to ensure that the Council is following best practice and at all times meets the interests of the residents and the communities it serves.

In scrutinising other areas such as the Borough Plan, OSC secured the commitment to produce more meaningful and measurable key performance indicators for every outcome and called for greater focus on supporting the growth of small businesses. Given the pressures on adult social care, OSC highlighted the need to offer more support to informal carers whose vital work is not sufficiently recognised. We also called for more timely adaptations to council and private properties to allow older and disabled people to remain at home.

In examining the budget and the sustainable growth strategy our priority was to protect front line services to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged. We agreed that it made sense to focus on achieving growth and raising income to meet the savings that we still need to make because of savage central government cuts. But we questioned how achievable new income targets for Resident Services were to meet the bulk of the necessary savings, if growth was hit by Brexit, and we did not get the income from business rates, council tax and parking incomes that we expected. Of course the Covid-19 pandemic has now massively impacted on Council income and expenditure, making these targets unachievable.

The Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee (CSSC), chaired by Cllr Lucy Caldicott, focused on securing the best possible outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people through its examination of social care, special educational needs, school inspections and sex and relationships education. It has scrutinised the improving story of children's social care and the youth offending service.

Tackling crime, especially youth violence and terrorism, was a key focus for both OSC and CSSC. We were particularly impressed by the work of St Giles Trust which helps young people move away from violent crime into work, training and education. We had a useful meeting with the Borough Commander at Brixton Police Station to discuss progress in reducing crime. This was followed by CSSC members visiting the Police Station to discuss the Divert programme, designed to reduce the number of young people entering the criminal justice system.

We have engaged in regular meetings and communication with senior officers and cabinet members to ensure we were properly briefed on emerging issues and to identify matters that could benefit from early scrutiny. This has included extensive discussions on the design of housing services after 2020. The focus of OSC has been to ensure that robust mechanisms are in place to drive value for money and quality performance through new housing contracts and to improve communication with and the involvement of a diverse range of residents.

Call-ins reflected councillor and public concern on three issues: Children's Centres, the Climate Crisis and housing contracts. They resulted in OSC calling for minimum 12-week consultation periods for service changes and better oversight of the Council's carbon reduction programme. OSC is in the process of setting up a commission on climate change.

The Events Commission, initiated and chaired by Cllr Mary Atkins, focused on how best to ensure major commercial events in our parks and open spaces maximised the benefits to the community and were made more inclusive. To ensure the right balance between open access to parks and revenue raising activities, the report called for greater clarity, transparency and consistency in the way major events are run. In particular it called for a more strategic approach and recommended that the Council's Events Strategy should be clear about intended outcomes for both the public and commercial event operators. It also called for a clear link between the Events Strategy and other council policies such as economic development, environmental impact, equalities, health and wellbeing, culture, parks and tourism.

Councillors Danny Adilypour and Philip Normal have diligently represented Lambeth on the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) which, with five other boroughs, seeks to improve health and care across South East London. It has challenged poor public engagement with the Long Term Plan and the lack of engagement with local authorities on the Clinical Commissioning Group reconfiguration proposals. The plans to redevelop Lambeth hospital to improve mental health services is being scrutinised by a separate JHOSC with Southwark.

Last September gave us the opportunity to meet the then very new senior management team at King's College Hospital with Southwark colleagues. Concern was expressed at the ability of King's to deliver high quality care given its appalling financial position and severe waiting list backlogs. Though the response was reassuring it is an area we will need to revisit to see if the new team has got to grips with the tremendous challenges facing the Trust.

Throughout the year members of OSC have benefitted from impressive verbal and written input from witnesses. Their detailed contributions have helped us better understand issues of community concern, providing us with a reality check against which we could judge reports from council officers and key partners. Their submissions have proved invaluable to the committee's deliberations and have helped us draft recommendations and change the Council's policy and guidance. Impressive input has come from Council leaseholders, parent champions, climate change activists and residents. We hope to increase the input from witnesses next year.

My sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to the work of overview and scrutiny this year: residents, co-optees, partner organisations, councillors and council officers. I am particularly grateful to the council officers who have supported us so ably this year: Gary O'Key, Maria Burton and Christian Scade; and for the hard work of Councillors Mary Atkins, Danny Adilypour and Lucy Caldicott who have respectively been assiduous Vice Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny and Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

Cllr Liz Atkins

Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Context

This report provides an account of the activities of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) and its commissions, as well as the Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee (CSSC) and Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committees, during the 2019-20 municipal year. For reporting purposes, this covers the period from May 2019 to April 2020.

1. Introduction: the scrutiny process and structure in Lambeth

Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the democratic process of the council. The purpose of scrutiny and the activities undertaken by scrutiny councillors is to enable members who are not part of the Executive (Cabinet) to engage with and influence the policy development and decision-making of the council. They do this by reviewing or scrutinising decisions made by the council (and by some key partners), by contributing to the development of strategies and policies, and by making reports and recommendations on matters which are the responsibility of the authority or which affect the local area.

The Lambeth model of scrutiny comprises an overarching Overview and Scrutiny Committee which is responsible for scrutinising the whole range of the council's functions as well as exercising statutory responsibilities for health scrutiny (including the establishment of any joint health scrutiny arrangements that may be set up with other boroughs) and for crime and disorder scrutiny. In addition, at its AGM on 19 April 2017, Council approved the establishment of a Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee covering the provision, planning and management of all children and young people's services. This built on the work of the Improving Children's Services Scrutiny Commission, which was set up in July 2015 to provide governance oversight and challenge with respect to the Council's improvement journey following the Ofsted inspection report of May 2015 which judged Lambeth's Children's Services to be 'inadequate'. When matters are identified which require more in-depth scrutiny, OSC may establish short term task and finish groups ('scrutiny commissions'). Terms of reference and operational arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny and the Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee are set out in the council's constitution (Part 3, Section 6).

Accordingly scrutiny provides backbench members with the opportunity to question cabinet members, senior officers and other statutory partners on their proposals and hold them to account for their decisions and for the delivery of anticipated outcomes. Through commissions, scrutiny councillors in Lambeth undertake in-depth investigations on specific issues, including the work of other public service providers and its impact on the local community, and can make recommendations to support the ambitions of the authority. Scrutiny also seeks to involve the public and provide a voice for local people on the local issues that affect them or may be of concern.

Through these arrangements scrutiny is used to hold public-service providers in Lambeth to account and help improve public services in the area. Effective scrutiny improves accountability, ensures transparency of decision-making, contributes to service improvement and acts as a 'check and balance' on decision-makers.

2. Work Planning

OSC has a chair and two vice-chairs. Each vice-chair leads on a particular set of priorities as set out below, with the chair covering overall strategy plus any other areas not included within the vice-chair remit. The holders of these posts for the 2019/20 municipal year were:



Cllr Liz Atkins

Chair



Cllr Mary Atkins

Vice Chair



Cllr Danny
Adilypour

Vice Chair

- *Cllr Liz Atkins responsible for: Finance & Investment; Adult Social Care; overall strategy and direction*
- *Cllr Mary Atkins responsible for: Resident Services*
- *Cllr Adilypour responsible for: Health; Sustainable Growth & Opportunity*

The chair and vice chairs (alongside the CSSC chair) continued with their schedule of regular informal meetings in order to provide a steer on operational issues and work planning, as well as discussing more strategic matters concerning the scrutiny function. In 2019/20 the quarterly briefing sessions established previously between each vice chair and their corresponding strategic director(s) were continued, having been successful in providing opportunities to better engage around budgets, performance, horizon scanning and issues for future scrutiny, as well as following up on relevant issues. This was done in light of the following principles underpinning the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the commissions it sponsors and the Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee:

- Be independent from the administration and stakeholders;
- Be accessible and inclusive of everyone in the borough;
- Enable decisions to be challenged constructively;
- Strive for better services that produce the best outcomes;
- Base its decisions and recommendations on the best evidence available;
- Follow up its recommendations.

Being the second year of the four-year municipal term, 2019/20 saw only modest changes in committee membership from the previous year, meaning continuing members were able to build on the knowledge and expertise gained during 2018/19. This also enabled the committee to take a broader contextual view, reflecting on previous findings when devising recommendations. Meanwhile new members were able to bring a fresh perspective while learning from the experience of the more established membership. A member induction session was held in the spring covering such issues as the legislative framework for scrutiny (including the new statutory guidance issued in May 2019), mechanisms and structures operated in Lambeth, questioning skills, assessment of evidence and work programming. Pre-meetings continued to be held prior to each scheduled OSC at a stage that could seek the input of all committee members, and these also enabled informal discussion of work programme priorities.

3. Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Membership

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprises nine councillors – seven from the majority Labour Group, one from the minority Green Group and the sole Conservative councillor – plus four education co-opted members (who may vote only on education issues and therefore in practice attend the Children’s Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee), thereby enabling a genuine cross party approach:

- Cllr Liz Atkins – Chair
- Cllr Mary Atkins – Vice Chair
- Cllr Danny Adilypour – Vice Chair
- Cllr Lucy Caldicott – Chair of Children’s Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee
- Cllr Stephen Donnelly
- Cllr Maria Kay
- Cllr Josh Lindsey
- Cllr Jonathan Bartley – Leader of the Opposition (Green)
- Cllr Tim Briggs – Opposition Member (Conservative)
- Education co-opted members: Lynette Murphy O’Dwyer, Frank Roberts, Simon Funnell and Baboucarr Jallow (*in practice the co-opted members attended Children’s Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee as this is the scrutiny body whose remit covers education and related matters*).

The committee held five scheduled meetings in the 2019/20 reporting period – one fewer than normal due to a late cancellation of the March 2020 meeting because of the Covid-19 pandemic – as well as two call in meetings. Outline meeting themes were established in the weeks and months prior to each meeting, which enabled the committee to focus the bulk of each meeting on a particular area or set of cohesive priorities. The outline meeting themes comprised: *Homes for Lambeth; Health & Social Care; Contracts and Procurement; Budget; and Crime and Disorder*.

Key issues that the committee considered during the year are set out below. Full details of reports and minutes of the meetings can be found at:

<http://modern.gov.lambeth.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=113>

Public Participation

As alluded to in the introduction, OSC is keen to hear from external stakeholders wherever possible and as such invites individuals and organisations to attend its meetings (which are held in public) in order to hear their views. This helps councillors understand issues of community concern and contextualise the information received from the executive and senior officers, and is a key way for individuals and groups to influence Council policy and practice.

This year the committee heard from a wide range of external witnesses including Lambeth HealthWatch, Black Thrive, Faiths Together in Lambeth, the Police Independent Advisory Group and St Giles Trust, as well as various representatives of residents’ organisations. Witnesses both gave their views in person and sent in written submissions which proved invaluable to the committee’s deliberations and helped contribute to its recommendations. If you are interested in participating in the scrutiny process in this way please contact democracy@lambeth.gov.uk

- *Meeting theme: **Homes for Lambeth (June 2019)***

The first Overview & Scrutiny Committee of the reporting period provided the committee with an opportunity to scrutinise key aspects of the Council's wholly owned house building company, Homes For Lambeth, while also questioning the organisational leadership on the review of the Borough Plan – the overarching strategic document setting out the administration's priorities and key outcomes.

On Homes for Lambeth (HFL), the Cabinet Member for Planning, Investment & New Homes attended to explain the drivers behind the establishment of HFL – principally to enable the Council to maximise the amount of new housing being built to respond to the housing crisis in the borough, with an emphasis on social housing. Members challenged the Cabinet Member on such issues as HFL's governance, management of risk and finances, environmental impacts of the housebuilding programme, and resident engagement. The committee made a series of wide ranging recommendations including on the need for ongoing scrutiny of HFL given the levels of expenditure and risk; the potential to use HFL as a driver for social value; and the importance of thorough environmental impact assessments in light of the Council's commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030; as well as suggesting potential improvements in the Ownership & Stewardship Panel's governance arrangements.

Members heard from Cllr Jack Hopkins in his first appearance before the committee as Leader of the Council since taking on the role in January 2019. The Leader, alongside the Chief Executive, explained the Borough Plan review process and highlighted the importance of encouraging growth and investment for the benefit of all residents. Members questioned the senior leadership on how key metrics and performance indicators would be established and measured to determine the progress against the plan, with a particular focus on environmental aspects, and urged more to be done to support small businesses who were not currently able to benefit from being part of existing umbrella groups.

These discussions took place against a backdrop of uncertainty in terms of the national political situation, with the prospect of a No Deal Brexit seeming increasingly likely, and many concerns were raised at what effect this may have on the borough and its residents.

- *Meeting theme: **Health & Social Care (July 2019)***

The July meeting was dedicated to health and social care issues, with members examining the progress of Lambeth Together – the overall programme that aimed to integrate health and social care in the borough – alongside the annual Public Health report and an assurance report on adult social care. In addition, a late item was added regarding the procurement of pathology services, reflecting public concern on the issue, with the committee formally referring the points raised by Lambeth Keep Our NHS Public on to the Our Healthier South East London Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee as the appropriate scrutiny body in this area.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care addressed the committee alongside senior officers including the newly appointed Strategic Director for Integrated Health and Care –

a shared role between the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). It was explained that Lambeth Together operated under a framework of shared principles and pooled budgets to enable a holistic view to be taken when funding health interventions. The committee also heard from the Black Thrive Programme Director and local HealthWatch Chief Executive regarding partnership working with communities and patients in the borough. Members endorsed the overall approach while also making recommendations concerning the need for robust performance indicators, careful oversight of finances, and the removal of barriers faced by certain communities in accessing appropriate healthcare and support.

On adult social care, the committee stressed the importance of informal carers to the social care system and wished to see more thorough information gathering regarding the needs and risks faced by such carers in order to ensure they were appropriately supported. Suggestions were also made regarding potential improvements in partnership working with Housing colleagues to incentivise private sector landlords to adapt properties to make them more suitable as social care settings, as well as expediting occupational therapy assessments and Disabled Facilities Grant applications. The primary focus of this year's Lambeth Public Health Annual Report was on neighbourhood-based care – an approach supported by members.

- *Meeting theme: **Contracts and Procurement (September 2019)***

At its September meeting the committee turned its focus to contracts and procurement in two areas where the forthcoming expiry of existing contractual arrangements offered opportunities to transform services for the better – namely the delivery of housing services, and waste and street cleansing.

On housing, initial design phase proposals aimed at achieving greater efficiency and flexibility were set out by the Cabinet Member. This included structuring contracts to include break clauses if performance was not up to standard, aligning with the Council's climate change and digital transformation programmes, and increasing social value, such as maximising employment and apprenticeship opportunities for local people. The committee heard from four members of the public regarding their views on housing services contracts including concerns that the new proposals would reduce competition and result in poor value, and that the procurement process did not give adequate weight to resident involvement. Members picked up on these issues in their recommendations, which supported the need for greater efforts to be made to engage a diverse range of residents in the process, while also stressing the crucial importance of a strong contract management function to realise the potential benefits.

In relation to waste and street cleansing, the strategic outcomes of the procurement exercise were set out to members – namely putting the customer at the centre of delivery; achieving value for money; ensuring that the contracts supported the Council's environmental ambitions, including increasing recycling and facilitating the zero emissions aspiration; harnessing the use of new technologies; and partnership working (both between the provider and council and with residents and businesses). It was also explained that estate cleansing was being brought into scope in order to ensure a more joined-up service. Members probed the Deputy Leader on various elements of the proposals – in particular around estate cleansing, giving these a cautious welcome provided appropriate flexibility and responsiveness were maintained – and made recommendations on improving recycling communications and performance.

- Meeting theme: **Budget (November 2019)**

At its November meeting, OSC considered the budget overview and financial implications for the Council set out in the Financial Planning Report 2019/20 to 2023/24. The committee focused its scrutiny principally around the big picture issues in relation to local government funding, concerned as it was at the short-term nature of funding settlements constraining the ability of the Council to plan ahead and invest in longer term preventative measures. The committee made a number of observations and recommendations to Cabinet as set out below, which OSC plans to monitor in future budget focused meetings.

RESOLVED:

1. *That budget and expenditure comparisons with other councils in Lambeth's CIPFA comparator group should be routinely included in future budget reports*
2. *To request further information on the London business rates pooling arrangements for 2020/21 with a particular focus on expected benefits or drawbacks for Lambeth*
3. *To request details of the forthcoming business rates revaluation and its effects for Lambeth, including expected mitigation, as soon as this information becomes available*
4. *That all future budget reports should include a detailed analysis of the financial implications of the Council's climate emergency response*
5. *That further detail be provided to the committee regarding the modelling work that has been done to assess options for the introduction of a voluntary contribution from residents. This should include information on forecast value, costs and governance arrangements as well as maintenance and distribution of the funds*
6. *That the committee continues to be concerned at the pressures on adult social care and the potential effects of increased fees and charges on service users, and requests a future update on the extent to which the service is delivering positive outcomes and value for money in the face of these pressures*
7. *That further details regarding the impact of the 1% increase in the Public Works Loan Board interest rate on the Council's capital programme be provided to the committee*
8. *That the committee notes the reliance on income generation to meet the bulk of the savings set out and wishes to receive future updates on how these proposals are progressing against the stated targets*

This meeting also received a report on the Draft Sustainable Growth and Inclusive Opportunity Strategy, examining in more detail how the Council sought to ensure that growth in the borough would benefit the wider Lambeth population. Acknowledging that the strategy was still in draft form and appreciating the opportunity to input at a formative stage, the committee urged a clearer focus on addressing disparities experienced by BAME, Portuguese, disabled and economically inactive communities. Recommendations were also made regarding the transparency and criteria for allocation of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Finally Members endorsed the draft report of the Events Scrutiny Commission which would go on to be approved by Cabinet in January 2020 (see also Section 6).

- ***Meeting theme: Crime and Disorder (January 2020)***

The January OSC meeting was the annual scrutiny of the Safer Lambeth Partnership – the statutory community safety partnership for the borough consisting of the Council, Police, Fire Service, Probation and other key partners. This was timed to enable the feeding in of observations and recommendations from the Children’s Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee’s meeting the previous week, which considered, among other items, the progress being made in tackling violence against young people, and was preceded by an informal – and informative – meeting between the Borough Commander and members of both OSC and CSSC at Brixton Police Station.

Members focused the first part of the meeting on the most serious criminal matters including youth violence and terrorism. The committee heard compelling testimony from representatives of St Giles Trust regarding how they assisted young people to move away from violence at key ‘teachable moments’ in their lives – such as in hospital or police custody – and supported them to find employment, education, training or some other positive activity to engage with which helped them to develop a different mindset with regards to criminality. The Chair of Faiths Together in Lambeth also addressed the committee as part of a discussion on counter-terrorism and raising awareness and engagement regarding the Prevent programme, which Members recommended be improved and enhanced.

The committee went on to consider the work being done to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB), such as noise nuisance and fly-tipping – which, despite being comparatively low-level crime, nonetheless had a big impact on residents’ lives. Members gave a cautious welcome to the Council’s revamped noise service but asked for performance data, including on resident satisfaction, to be reported back in due course to assess the success or otherwise of the new measures. Further recommendations were made regarding the efficacy of the Public Space Protection Order in place ostensibly to tackle street gambling on Westminster Bridge, and the ongoing need for greater engagement around stop and search.

- ***March 2020 and beyond – Scrutiny in the time of Covid-19***

As preparations were in their final stages for the scheduled March OSC meeting – which had been due to examine the Homes for Lambeth Business Plan – world events intervened in dramatic fashion. When the novel coronavirus Covid-19 reached the UK at the end of January 2020, few could have foreseen the impact it would come to have on all aspects of life. Declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation in early March, the virus has devastated countless lives and led to societal changes which would previously have been unthinkable, including weeks of strict lockdown measures and a policy of ‘social distancing’ which looks to be here to stay for some time to come.

The effect of Covid-19 on the Local Authority is hard to overstate. For several weeks the Council operated under emergency arrangements in order to be able to respond urgently to the emerging situation and provide critical support to residents and businesses in the borough, and this meant the cancellation of all Council meetings, including Overview & Scrutiny, for a period. Though

previous checks and balances were relaxed, OSC adapted by ensuring oversight of decision making was appropriate to the situation without being burdensome. Scrutiny is now having to find its place in the post-Covid world.

The most obvious aspect of the scrutiny function which became unviable practically overnight in March, and remains so at the time of writing, is the ability to physically meet to hold decision makers to account. As with most other organisations, the vast majority of Council members and officers began working from home by default and therefore work began to devise a solution to enable committees to meet virtually to transact their essential business. OSC held its first such meetings in May – one of the first scrutiny committees in the country to do so – and additionally has managed to facilitate some level of public involvement in both of the virtual committees which have taken place so far.

The other major effect of the pandemic has been to alter the scrutiny work programme almost beyond recognition. A number of items provisionally scheduled for scrutiny have been shelved or deprioritised and recommendations have had the ground shifted beneath them as strategies and plans are rewritten to take account of Covid-19, and the committee's attention has instead turned to the Council's response to the emergency. In the medium term, the implications of the pandemic on the Council's finances and the recovery plan are likely to be key areas of focus as the borough comes to terms with the 'new normal'.

More detail on these themes is expected to be included in next year's annual report.

4. Call Ins

As stated above, in 2019/20 OSC heard three call ins requiring two additional meetings of the committee.

- ***Decision: Proposed Changes to the Commissioning and Delivery of Lambeth's Children's Centres (May 2019)***

In April 2019, Cabinet approved a series of measures regarding the commissioning and delivery of Children's Centres provision in Lambeth as part of a wider programme of redesign of early years' services. This decision was called in by the five Green Group councillors and OSC considered the issues at a special meeting the following month.

Members heard concerns, voiced by Cllr Pete Elliott and Union representatives as well as other stakeholders, that the consultation process in relation to the proposed changes was not comprehensive enough. Among the issues raised was the length of the consultation – which was seen as inadequate given that it encompassed the Christmas holiday period – and a worry that the consultation mechanisms did not adequately enable the most vulnerable residents, such as those who spoke English as a second language (ESOL), to fully participate. Further concerns were raised that the proposals would leave some people having to walk for almost half an hour to access their nearest centre.

After a thorough questioning of the Deputy Leader (Children & Young People) and senior officers, the committee allowed the decision to stand but made recommendations for improvements to consultation processes. These included consideration of a 12-week minimum

consultation period for future such decisions, and providing consultation documents in languages other than English where service users primarily fell into the ESOL bracket.

- ***Decision: Lambeth's Response to the Climate Crisis (July 2019)***

In July 2019 the Deputy Leader of the Council (Environment and Clean Air) approved the recommendations in the report 'Lambeth's Response to the Climate Crisis'. This set out the corporate carbon reduction plan and proposed approach to an independently coordinated Citizens' Assembly on the borough's response to the climate crisis, including the funding required. This was called in by the Green Group and later the same month OSC held a special meeting to scrutinise the decision.

Though the call in was accepted, the Monitoring Officer advised that only one of the cited grounds was deemed valid – scrutiny of the corporate carbon reduction action plan. The meeting therefore focused solely on this issue. Members heard from Cllr Pete Elliott, leading the call in, that the proposed approach would lead to a democratic deficit, with an annual report to Cabinet providing insufficient scrutiny and oversight of the authority's carbon reduction programme. After probing the issues the committee decided not to refer the decision back for reconsideration but nonetheless made recommendations regarding future oversight of the action plan, including a commitment to take a formal agenda item on this subject at a future OSC meeting, and highlighting the need for clear baselines and key performance indicators.

- ***Decision: Design of Housing Services After 2020 (July 2019)***

The same July meeting considered a second call in of a Cabinet Member delegated decision, this time from the Green Group and Cllr Tim Briggs, on the plans for the future of housing repair, maintenance and capital works contracts. Again the call in was accepted on limited grounds – this time the decision to increase the term for future contracts, and the use of framework agreements for delivering complex capital works.

Cllr Elliott once more led the call in and, along with representatives of two area housing boards and the Lambeth Homeowners' Association, expressed concern that the proposed approach would benefit larger, more established providers and in turn reduce competition and value for money.

Though the decision was again allowed to stand by the committee, members did resolve to examine the issues in more detail at the scheduled OSC meeting held in September 2019 (see Section 3 above).

5. Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Membership



Cllr Lucy
Caldicott
Chair



Cllr Mohamed
Jaser



Cllr Nanda
Manley-Browne



Cllr Philip
Normal



Cllr Emma
Nye



Cllr Nicole
Griffiths

- Plus Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer (statutory co-optee), Frank Roberts (statutory co-optee), Simon Funnell (parent governor co-optee) and Baboucarr Jallow (parent governor co-optee).

The remit of the Children's Services Sub-committee (CSSC) covers the range of services and provision for children and young people in Lambeth: children's social care; safeguarding children; children in care; education, learning and schools, early years, special education needs and disability (SEND); youth and play services; and Youth Offending Services (YOS). The terms of reference were well reflected in the work of the committee during 2019/20 and up to four substantive reports were considered at each of the committee's four meetings. The headline issues scrutinised are set out below, reports and minutes can be found at:

<http://moderngov.lambeth.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=778>

- Children's Social Care Improvement
- Budget
- Raising Achievement in Lambeth Schools
- Introduction of Compulsory Sex and Relationships Education
- Young Lambeth Co-operative
- Lambeth Early Action Partnership
- Pupil Referral Units
- Youth Offending Service Inspection
- Early Help and Serious Youth Violence

There were three reports that were due to be considered at the March 2020 meeting: Raising the Game, Youth Offending Service Annual Report and Exclusions. This meeting was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic after the agenda was published, but the reports are available on the website and will be considered in the 2020/21 municipal year.

Children's Social Care

A key focus for the committee was the safeguarding of the borough's most vulnerable children and young people, with Members providing challenge and seeking assurance that the help, care and protection afforded by the council and partners continues to improve. Accordingly the committee took an ongoing interest in the progress being made in delivering the children's social care improvement plan, receiving an update report at the January meeting.

The Committee welcomed the progress made by the service since the 2015 inspection, while noting concerns on performance. Efforts to change the culture of the department, such as the use of peer reviews to ensure continuing improvement, a restructure of Social Worker roles to

provide career progression and the creation of a new Fostering Strategy with the aim of increasing the number of in-house Foster Carers, were noted.

The Children's Services Budget was considered at the November meeting, with Members raising concerns regarding the budget pressures on areas such as Children's Social Care and the Children with Disabilities service. They also raised their concerns around the difficulty of planning for future budgets due to the political uncertainty in the period prior to the General Election of December 2019.

Young People at Risk

The Sub-Committee focused on young people at risk throughout the municipal year following high rates of serious youth violence and the inspection of the Youth Offending Service which took place in early 2019 and had found that the service 'required improvement'. A progress report on the YOS was presented to the Sub-Committee at the June meeting, and members heard from the Independent Chair of the Youth Justice Board. The impact of partnership working, closures of youth courts and London-wide interventions were all considered. The Sub-Committee requested that future reports include the voice of young people.

The Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP), a pilot programme being run in four wards to improve the life chances of children in their early years, was halfway through its ten-year pilot in 2019/20 and a report was presented to the Sub-Committee at the November meeting. The Sub-Committee heard from four Parent Champions on their experiences of the programme and recommended that greater focus be given to the outcomes for Parent Champions. Members requested more engagement with Ward Councillors and that during the final five years of the programme, best practice and areas for improvement be identified.

At the January meeting, the Sub-Committee received a report on Lambeth Made Safer, which was a multi-agency initiative to reduce serious youth violence. Members heard from a LEAP Manager in Tulse Hill, the Chair of the Lambeth Police Independent Advisory Group, and a parent affected by serious youth violence on the work of communities affected by violence and the impact that violence had on young people's lives. The parent spoke of her experiences of the difficulty in involving Children's Social Care and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services with her child who had been the victim of serious youth violence. The Sub-Committee heard of the success of the Divert programme, which aimed to reduce the number of young people entering the criminal justice system, and which had now been expanded for younger children. Members recommended that the potential role of councillors in their communities be considered.

In March 2020, members of the Sub-Committee visited Brixton Police Station to meet with police officers and others involved in the Divert programme. They toured the custody suite and heard of the ways in which the Police and voluntary sector worked together to reduce the number of young people entering the criminal justice system. However, as the programme only operated in Lambeth, concerns remained for young people resident in Lambeth who were arrested elsewhere and may not get the opportunity to be referred to Divert.

Education

The Sub-Committee considered reports on school inspections and achievement in schools with a particular focus on data and monitoring.

The Sub-Committee congratulated pupils, parents, teachers and staff on their achievements. School inspection outcomes again indicated that the quality of schools in Lambeth continued to

be high, with 89% of schools evaluated by Ofsted in 2018/19 judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding'. The importance of monitoring the outcomes of children after leaving education was highlighted by the Sub-Committee. Members requested that children missing from education, including those 'off-rolled', be considered at a future Sub-Committee meeting.

The Sub-Committee heard from a Headteacher of a secondary school who had been involved in the Raising the Game programme, which aimed to increase the ambition and attainment of Black children, and recommended that an update report on Raising the Game be presented in early 2020. While the performance of Black children had improved, there appeared to be issues with the performance of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking children in particular, and members questioned whether Raising the Game could be expanded to include other demographic groups, or whether a similar programme could be created for these children.

At the January meeting, the Sub-Committee considered Pupil Place Planning and the challenges caused by the fall in birth rate seen across inner London since 2014, and resultant decrease in primary-aged children. A reduction of 255 primary school places had been proposed and was at that time with the Schools Adjudicator. The Sub-Committee recommended that any classrooms no longer in use for teaching be encouraged to be used by the community and requested that an update return to the Sub-Committee in 2021.

Health

At its November meeting, the Sub-Committee received a report on the introduction of compulsory Sex and Relationships Education (SRE), and the work of Lambeth schools to implement this. The Sub-Committee heard from two headteachers at Lambeth primary schools on the work they had done to prepare teachers, pupils and families for the new requirements, such as by appointing PSHE Leads, providing training to teachers and efforts to reassure parents of any concerns they may have.

6. Scrutiny Commissions

In addition to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee, scrutiny commissions provide an opportunity for more detailed investigations of specific issues by a group of councillors. Commission reports and recommendations are approved by OSC on completion and then submitted to Cabinet (or relevant body) for consideration and action planning.

Formal commission activity in 2019/20 was limited to the Events Scrutiny Commission, details of which are set out below; however, provisional approval was also given to establishing a commission aimed at supporting the authority's climate change ambitions. Details are still under discussion as the context and assumptions underpinning this work have shifted dramatically due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The final action plan updates in relation to two commissions which reported back in 2018 – namely, Accessibility of Council Digital Services and Jobs For All – have had to be pushed back, again owing to Covid-19. These are expected to be taken during the 2020/21 municipal term.

Events Commission

Membership: Cllr Mary Atkins (chair), Cllr Nigel Haselden, Cllr Philip Normal and Cllr Becca Thackray

The context for this commission was major commercial events in parks and open spaces becoming a common feature in many London boroughs and beyond, largely due to local authorities expanding and diversifying their cultural offerings in response to ongoing budget pressures. These events have the potential to deliver significant community benefits – for example, enabling work experience, paid employment or apprenticeship opportunities; providing free or concessionary tickets for local people who otherwise may struggle to afford them; awarding grants to community organisations; or boosting trade for local businesses. However, members were of the view that such benefits packages were not approached in a consistent, systematic way and relied heavily on active local ward councillor engagement and relationships which can vary from area to area, meaning opportunities may be being lost. The Events Commission, established in the autumn of 2018 following an initial proposal from Cllr Mary Atkins, OSC Vice Chair leading on culture, was therefore set up to evaluate current practice and explore how processes could be improved to maximise the benefits delivered via major commercial events and ensure they work for everyone. This work was timed to coincide with and complement the review of the Council's 2016 Events Strategy.

The commission considered a variety of information provided from officers on the benefits delivered via events held since the 2016 strategy came into force, together with good practice examples from such bodies as independent charity Parks for London, the Greater London Assembly Environment Committee, and the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee. Following its research phase the commission then arranged an engagement session to which a variety of key stakeholders with a broad range of views were invited. This began with keynote speeches from the Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture, the Chief Executive of Parks for London, and an event organiser who had worked with the council, to set the scene. There followed a series of round table discussions, facilitated and mediated by the four commission members, to gather participants' views on what was and wasn't working and how they believed improvements might be made. These proved extremely insightful and provided a great deal of food for thought which commission members were able to take on board when considering their findings.

The commission presented its final report to Cabinet in January 2020, having been endorsed by OSC at its November meeting. This made recommendations in six broad areas: clarity, transparency and consistency; health, wellbeing and culture; economic and business benefits; accessibility, equality and diversity; reducing environmental impacts; and communication and stakeholder engagement. The report was well-received and the recommendations were accepted in their entirety.

Events is another area in which the landscape has changed beyond recognition because of Covid-19 and, as such, it is not expected that major events will be permitted in Lambeth's parks and open spaces for some time to come. This in turn has meant a delay in the production and approval of the refreshed Events Strategy. However, OSC expects the strategy to take on board the commission's findings when it does materialise, and plans to schedule the first formal action plan update in respect of this commission in tandem with this at the appropriate time.

The commission report can be found at:

<http://moderngov.lambeth.gov.uk/documents/s113993/1.1%20Events%20Commission%20report%20v2%20MA.pdf>

7. Joint Health Scrutiny

As noted in the introduction, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee holds a statutory responsibility to scrutinise health arrangements in the borough. Where health service changes are proposed which impact across borough boundaries, these are considered via joint health overview and scrutiny committee (JHOSC) arrangements involving consideration of proposals by councillors appointed from the boroughs affected. In 2019/20 Cllr Danny Adilypour and Cllr Philip Normal represented Lambeth on the Our Healthier South East London JOSC, with Cllr Normal continuing as Vice Chair. In addition, a separate JHOSC was established in early 2020 with the London Borough of Southwark to consider proposals for reconfiguration of mental health inpatient services at Lambeth Hospital.

Our Healthier South East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OHSEL JHOSC)

Our Healthier South East London is the NHS Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) for South East London (SEL). The programme is led by the six NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in the region – Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark – and accordingly the JHOSC comprises two members from each of these six boroughs. The project aims to improve health and care across South East London with a focus on closing the gap around three headline issues – the health and wellbeing gap; the care and quality gap; and the funding and efficiency gap. The JHOSC is looking at the associated plans, questioning on delivery of proposals and the issues for local communities, and presenting challenge.

The JHOSC has met eleven times since it was set up in 2015/16. There were two meetings in 2019-20.

At the July 2019 meeting members questioned the Programme Director on the Long Term Plan, focusing particularly on staffing vacancy rates, public engagement and the digitisation of services. The committee also heard about the plans for CCG system reform, which aimed to enable better integration and realise efficiency savings by establishing an SEL CCG with local place-based boards sitting beneath, as well as considering the commissioning of pathology and diagnostic services item referred on by Lambeth's OSC.

At its meeting in September 2019 the committee continued their scrutiny of the items considered in July, expressing disappointment in the limited extent of the engagement exercise undertaken, and resultant lack of diversity of opinion, around the Long Term Plan, while also criticising commissioners for the lack of engagement with local authorities and their scrutiny functions on the CCG reconfiguration proposals.

Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Lambeth Hospital Redevelopment

In late 2019 a service change proposal was received from NHS Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group and their provider, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) regarding the potential reconfiguration of mental health inpatient services at Lambeth Hospital; specifically the transfer of one psychiatric intensive care unit (PICU) and four acute wards to a new facility on the Maudsley Hospital site, located in the London Borough of Southwark. Following conversations with commissioners and colleagues in Southwark it was decided that this proposal amounted to a substantial reconfiguration proposal covering more than one local authority area

(in accordance with the Local Authority (Public Health, Health & Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013) and, as such, a Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee was established between the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark to scrutinise the plans.

This JHOSC held its first meeting on 6 February 2020, during which the Terms of Reference and consultation plans were approved. The original Lambeth representatives were Cllr Danny Adilypour (who was elected Chair at the inaugural meeting), Cllr Philip Normal and Cllr Nanda Manley-Browne (both members of CSSC); however following the appointments made at the Council AGM in April 2020 both Cllr Adilypour and Cllr Normal became ineligible to continue to sit on this JHOSC. They were replaced by Cllr Marianna Masters and Cllr Josh Lindsey, while Cllr Manley-Browne is continuing her membership of the committee.

On 27 March the committee conducted a virtual tour of the Lambeth Hospital site and a fly-through of Douglas Bennett House, which would be built on the Maudsley Hospital site if the service change proposals are agreed. In addition to the tour, information was provided on the need for change and key issues were highlighted in relation to the current wards, while updates were provided on the consultation process and the timeframe for decision making. The JHOSC has continued to review the consultation process and in late May met to consider, and respond to, the proposals for improving inpatient mental health services for Lambeth. This included consideration of the wider programme for service improvement. A final meeting is scheduled for late June to allow further scrutiny before a final decision is made on the proposals.

King's College Hospital Visit

In September 2019, members of OSC and CSSC, along with Health Scrutiny colleagues in Southwark, visited King's College Hospital at the Denmark Hill site which sits right on the border between the two boroughs, in order to meet with newly appointed senior management representatives to discuss the challenges facing the Trust and how it was proposed these would be overcome. Discussions focused on the perilous financial position, waiting list backlogs, administration and engagement, among other issues. Members were reassured with the actions being taken but appreciated that the scale of the challenge was vast and it would take some time before the positive work which was being done would feed through into higher level performance indicators.

As part of the arrangements, members also toured the Children's department and concluded with an eye-opening visit to the major trauma network team, including the helipad (on what can be seen from the photograph below was a particularly windy day!).



Scrutiny members from Lambeth and Southwark visiting the helipad at King's College Hospital