

# Annual Report – Special Responsibilities

(Under the South Gloucestershire Scheme of Members' Allowances, certain councillors who perform significant responsibilities over and above those of other councillors, are entitled to receive additional allowances to recognise those extra responsibilities. The Scheme requires councillors in receipt of such allowances to report on their actions. This report is published on the Council's website).

**Report for period: 2019-2020 .....**

**Name: Ian Boulton .....**

**Position held: Co Chair Scrutiny Commission .....**

## A general outline of the special responsibilities you perform

I am Co-Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Commission has a number of functions, namely:

- agree issues to be considered by the Scrutiny Commission as part of a strategic work plan
- make recommendations to the Executive
- call in decisions
- monitor in year performance and budgets, and
- conduct in-depth reviews of particular issues of relevance through the establishment of informal and focused Task and Finish Groups.

As a Co-Chair I am an ex-officio member on all the Task and Finish Groups.

We carry out in-depth, focused, and potentially cross cutting pieces of work, which may take 3/6 months. It is anticipated that there are around 5/6 such reviews spread across the year.

I have taken an active role in each Task and Finish Group and have actively represented The Scrutiny Commission at Cabinet meetings.

## Key Milestones/Achievements during the reporting Period

### Budget Scrutiny

The Budget Task Group, seeking ever closer and earlier scrutiny of budget proposals and issues, held 9 meetings with the Director of Resources and Business Change and Head of Financial Services (S151 Officer), predominantly monitoring the departmental savings programmes, but also considering the digitalisation programme and the budget 20/21 report, pre-publication. The task group convened a Financial Scrutiny Skills workshop, led by Ian Parry of the Centre for

Public Scrutiny, to which all members were invited.

The Scrutiny Commission questioned the Leader of Council over 2020/21 budget papers, prior to decision, and a summary of this discussion is given in the minutes

### Children's Services

A standing item on children's services was added to the agenda of the Scrutiny Commission, in order to monitor the improvement journey, and to date, has looked into the following aspects:

- ☐ Services to Care Leavers;
- ☐ Vinney Green Secure Unit Ofsted Report and Improvement Plan;
- ☐ Children's Services Improvement Plan;
- ☐ Threshold Guidance and Neglect Toolkits;
- ☐ Signs of Safety;
- ☐ Early Help Strategy;
- ☐ Timeliness of Looked After Children reviews;
- ☐ Adoption West.

A standing group on Children's Services, comprising the Commission's lead members has been set up, and now meets on monthly (approx.) basis with the Cabinet member, Director, and Head of Service, to plan areas for scrutiny by the Commission, and to scrutinise matters of a confidential nature. A peer mentor from the LGA, has been sourced and is working with Lead Members to develop the incisiveness of their scrutiny of this area, and more broadly.

### Educational Attainment

Following both the task and finish group work on this in 2018, an update presentation on 2018 results in Jan 2019, and on 2019 results in March 2020, the Scrutiny Commission will keep this matter, as a key priority area for this Council, under constant review, by means of a standing item on the agenda.

Progress updates were received in early 2020, regarding five previous task and finish group reviews (which reported into Cabinet in the Autumn/Winter of 2018), in order to monitor implementation of the accepted recommendations.

These reviews were in relation to:

- (1) Homelessness And Alternative Options To Bed And Breakfast For The Provision Of Emergency Accommodation - the Scrutiny Commission was particularly pleased to know that, as a result of this work, Cabinet resolved in Feb 2020 to endorse the principle of providing emergency accommodation as an alternative to B&B for homeless households, and to approve the use of land at Cranleigh Court Road, Yate for a pilot scheme.
- (2) educational attainment

- (3) the responsiveness of social services
- (4) areas of multiple deprivation

#### Task and Finish Groups 2019/20

Climate Emergency - the Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019, and tasked the Scrutiny Commission with assessing how South Gloucestershire Council could reach Net Zero by 2050. The task and finish group reported into Cabinet on 13 January 2020: that report and Cabinet's response are attached.

A standing group on the Climate Emergency has been convened to take forward this work.

Yate Area Future Transport Needs – the task and finish group reported into Cabinet on 13 January 2020.

Air Quality - the focus of this work was on AQMs (air quality management areas) and on the broader changes which have impacted on these. The task and finish group considered the Clean Air Strategy pre-decision, in order to consider how it might impact on AQM areas, on resources and also to identify barriers to progress etc. These comments are set to be reported to Cabinet in Summer 2020.

Adult Social Care first contact and 3 conversations – a spotlight session will be held in November 2020 (deferred from March, due to the Covid-19 response effort), involving staff and service users in order to: look at the implementation of the First Contact and Three Conversations model in Adult Care, and evaluate the model from the operational and customer sides; to assess if the commissioning side is covering all that is required by the social workers; to assess what quality monitoring is in place and what impact there has been on quality; to assess the impact of changes on the CAH budget. A report on this will go to Cabinet in late 2020/early 2021.

Community Infrastructure Levy – scrutiny members are seeking to input into/comment on the policy on this, in light of recent changes in the regulations by Government. Work is being reconfigured, following new guidance. An update report will be considered by the Scrutiny Commission in May 2020.

SATs - to assess the opinion of Head Teachers towards Statutory Testing, their desire to either retain or replace the existing SATs structure; to explore potential alternatives to existing testing structures, and inform the Cabinet, in addressing the priority of driving up education attainment standards. This work is in progress, and will resume in September 2020, following a deferral due to the Covid-19 response efforts in schools.

Resource Base Review – a task and finish group was set to look at the proposals arising from this review, pre-decision, but was stood down, following revisions to the proposed changes arising from this review. This matter will be revisited, as and when necessary, however.

Education Health & Care Plans – a review of the process for preparing and reviewing EHCPs is set to commence work at the end of June 2020 and will be informed by the outcome of the SEND re-visit by Ofsted.

#### Other areas of scrutiny during meetings

Winter Plan for Adult Social Care – further monitoring, following a mid-season presentation on Winter Pressures to Health Scrutiny Committee in January 2020, attended by Commission members, will take place by both Committees in June 2020, to establish if enough is being done in relation to the pressures anticipated for Winter 2020.

Services for victims of serious sexual assault – this area of concern was prompted by what appeared to be a lack of a co-ordinated plan for providing services to victims, along with long waiting times for counselling. The Chairs of the Scrutiny Commission sent a letter to the Clinical Commissioning Group, in February 2020, to highlight concerns and ascertain how these will be addressed, and a response is awaited.

Cabinet Member Portfolio Scrutiny – this has been added as a standing item at meetings of the Scrutiny Commission, and Cabinet members will attend on a rotational basis, so that the Commission can scrutinise:

- ☐ key portfolio local issues/decisions in the preceding period and forthcoming period;
- ☐ national developments;
- ☐ news from relevant government department;
- ☐ news from any quality assurance bodies (ofsted, cqc etc).

**What “added value” to the local community have you been able to achieve through your special responsibilities?**

By scrutinising the actions of the South Gloucestershire Council it is our hope that better, and more informed, decisions are made and the Executive and Officers are held to account for their decisions.

**How have your special responsibilities enabled the Council to be more effective?**

Scrutiny is considered to be an essential part of the Council to ensure good governance.

We provide a public forum which can hold the executive to account.

**In what ways has the exercise of your special responsibilities supported the core objectives of the Council?**

The Scrutiny Commission plays a key role as part of the Constitution of the Council.

I have been an ex-officio and active member of each Task and Finish Group. Each group has to demonstrate support for the core objectives of the Council.