

COUNCIL
23rd April 2014



Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2013-14	Agenda No: 9
Report presented by: Councillor Dr. Evans, Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report prepared by: Alastair Peace, Member Services Manager	
Background Papers:	Public Report
Options:	Key Decision: No
Executive Summary: <u>Key Scrutiny Topics 2013-14</u> The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's key areas of scrutiny in 2013-14 have been: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enabling Young People Who Are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) to Participate in Education, Employment or Training;• Council's Budget. Brief details on each are set out below. Enabling Young People Who Are NEET to Participate in Education, Employment or Training The Committee has reviewed the issues surrounding young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The review focused on those who are in the 16 to 24 group, and enabling them to participate fully to ensure the project was manageable; although recognising that there are specific issues for Graduates and disabled young people. The Committee agreed the topic due to its importance within the District and recognising the national implications. Increasing the participation of young people in education, training and employment not only makes a lasting difference to their individual lives, but can improve social mobility, develop well-being in communities, and stimulate economic growth.	

The key objectives of the review included:

- Identifying the number of young persons who are NEET and the problems this causes;
- Understanding the skills gaps being faced by local employers and whether the training available meets the gaps;
- Identifying and evaluating the organisation and support services available to help young people who are NEET participate in education, employment or training.

The Committee carried out several formal and informal meetings with a wide range of invitees including Braintree District Council, Essex County Council, Jobcentre Plus, National Apprenticeship Service, Colchester Institute (the College at Braintree), schools, businesses, young people and youth support workers.

In working with the young people it was clear that the traditional committee approach would not generate the best result. A series of informal sessions were held in local hostels where Members were able to better understand the issues and challenges facing the young people.

Committee Members also held informal meetings with businesses including visits to employers such as Stansted Airport to understand the issues from their perspective.

The Committee will be considering its final report at its meeting on 4th June. It is expected that the report will then be considered by Council on 16th June and by Cabinet on 21st July. The Committee has collated a substantial body of evidence and is likely to make recommendations on a range of potential service improvements for both the Council and partner agencies.

Council's Budget

The Committee scrutinised the Council's budget at 2 meetings in December 2013 and January 2014 with Cabinet Members. Both meetings included presentations from the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member, Performance and Efficiency, on the Council's proposed priorities for 2014-15, Council Budget and Council Tax 2014/15 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/15 to 2017/18.

The Committee's meetings on scrutiny of the budget were opened to all Council Members to attend. It is pleasing that many Members who are not Members of the Committee were able to attend these meetings and participated in the questioning sessions.

As Members have commented favourably on opening the Committee's meetings on scrutiny of the budget to all council members, the Committee's budget meetings in 2014-15 will again be open to all Members to attend.

Task and Finish Groups

The Committee established the following Task and Finish Groups in 2013-14:

- Provision of Public Services in Rural Areas
- Operation of the Council's Tax Support Scheme

The Committee has received progress reports on the work of the Task and Finish Groups, both of which are progressing and looks forward to seeing the recommendations of both groups.

Meeting of Scrutiny Chairman –Essex and Suffolk

On 3rd April 2014, I attended a meeting, along with the Members Services Manager, of Scrutiny Chairmen from Essex and Suffolk Councils hosted by Colchester Borough Council. The meeting provided a useful exchange of best practice in scrutiny. All those attending found the meeting useful and agreed that a further meeting should be held later in the year.

Acknowledgement

Committee Members are grateful to all those who have attended its meetings over the year and assisted with its enquiries and studies. This includes Cabinet Members and all members attending the Committee's budget scrutiny meeting and all those attending scrutiny meetings on the enabling young people who are NEET to participate in education, employment or training.

I would particularly like to thank the young people who met with Members of the Committee and their frank and open comments were much appreciated.

Decision:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report for 2013-14 be noted.

Purpose of Decision: To note the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report.