



## Committee and Date

Council  
30<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Item

Public



# People Overview Committee Annual Report 2021/22

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<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):</b>	All

## 1. Synopsis

People Overview Committee looked at a range of key topics in 2021/22 which are summarised in this paper.

## 2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Shropshire Plan includes 'Healthy Organisation' as a priority outcome and the Strategic Objective that "We will ensure councillors are supported to advocate for their constituents but to also be ambassadors for the council". This report shares the annual statement for 2021/22 for the People Overview Committee.

2.3 The annual statements for each overview and scrutiny committee for 2022/23 will be reported to Council during 2023/24

## 3. Recommendations

3.1. Members are asked to consider and comment on the 2021/22 annual statement for People Overview Committee.

## REPORT

### 4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. Effective Overview and Scrutiny is a feature of the Council's governance arrangements, particularly where the Council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range of factors that could result in risks to Council of not doing O&S effectively.
- Failure to challenge and hold decision makers to account.
  - Failure to link O&S work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management – failure to demonstrate added value
  - Failure to carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations.
  - Failure to engage partners and providers.
  - Failure to ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources.
  - Failure to ensure that O&S can operate as the voice of communities.
  - Failure to draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.
- 4.2. To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:
- Operating in an apolitical manner.
  - Clarity of vision and purpose
  - Overview and Scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
  - Effective engagement and commitment by Members and officers at all levels, including Cabinet, Opposition Leaders, Scrutiny Chairs and Senior Officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
  - Robust Work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
  - Access to and availability of robust data and intelligence
  - Good relationship with partners and providers
- 4.3. Overview and Scrutiny Committees have remits that cover the breadth of the work of the Council, as well as looking externally including Health Services and provision through Health Overview and Scrutiny requirements.
- 4.4. Topics for Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes are identified based on a number of different considerations including an understanding of risks to the Council, employees, people who use services, to service themselves, and to communities. These may be identified through reviewing performance information and comparing with others, changes to national and local policies, budget information, feedback from communities and customers/service users, feedback from partners/providers, and reports from regulators.

- 4.5. During overview and scrutiny work evidence will be gathered that builds on this understanding to inform the development of conclusions and evidence-based recommendations.
- 4.6. The use of external peer challenge such as that offered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny provides objective review and feedback about opportunities to develop the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny.

## 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications associated with the annual statements of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees set out in this report.
- 5.2. Effective overview and scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of "what works" at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of what the situation locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.

## 6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. All reports to Overview and Scrutiny committees, as with all council committees, include appraisals of the impact of the report content on climate change.
- 6.2. Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes directly link to the Shropshire Plan priorities, including Healthy Environment which is built around climate change and carbon reduction, and the natural and historic environment.
- 6.3. Climate change and carbon reduction related issues are directly identified in the remit and therefore focus of the Place Overview Committee i.e.
  - delivery of the agreed lower carbon footprint and emissions targets, including air quality, by the Council and its partners;
  - actions to protect, enhance and value Shropshire's our natural resources and respect the historic environment;
  - arrangements to safeguard and promote a clean and green environment;
  - the delivery of work to reduce landfill and waste;
  - management and development of the physical and digital infrastructure

## 7. Background

- 7.1. Overview and Scrutiny Committees report to Council annually as part of the organisation's governance arrangements. This includes the work that they

have completed in the previous 12 months and the impact they have had through their evidence-based recommendations.

- 7.2. This report sets out the annual statement for 2021/22 for People Overview Committee

## 8. Annual Scrutiny Statements

### 8.1 People Overview Committee

- **Young People's Substance Misuse Services**

Following the committee's scrutiny of criminal exploitation, it scrutinised more closely services supporting vulnerable children and young adults. The committee were assured that the service worked closely with other agencies, highlighting the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

- **School Places**

Members of the committee raised concerns that future housing growth in areas of the county could result in a lack of school places for those communities. Following their work over several meetings they were reassured and concluded that school place planning processes were robust and embedded into strategic planning for housing growth.

- **Covid19**

During the year the committee explored the short and longer-term impact of the Covid19 pandemic on the lives of children and young people. The members supported the council's work to commission out of term support to vulnerable families. The committee tracked the increase in children becoming looked after, as well as the drop in attainment in some children who had attended school remotely during the pandemic. These concerns informed the committee's work programme.

- **School exclusions**

This topic was a priority identified from the committee's earlier work into criminal exploitation. The committee members were concerned by the rising number of children being expelled from school and that their increased vulnerability to exploitation. Members focussed on the high prevalence of children with a special education need and recognised the benefits of keeping these children in mainstream education where possible. The committee recognised the central role that Early Help service played in supporting children who were at risk of being expelled from school, and in doing so welcomed the increased budget allocated to the service.

- **Stepping Stones**

Shropshire Council's Financial Strategy task and finish group asked the committee to scrutinise the implementation and performance of Stepping Stones, the council's holistic, psychologically informed service, providing wrap around, customised support for looked after children, young people and adults. The committee welcomed a project that had demonstrated creativity

and focus to deliver better care for children by moving them from residential care, often some distance from Shropshire, into home environments.

- **Recruitment**

A recurring theme throughout the year, and a focus of the Financial Strategy task and finish group, was how Shropshire Council responded to the national shortages in critical staff such as social workers and youth workers. The committee endorsed both services commitment to their workforce by developing apprenticeships and graduate training development programmes. As a result of this the youth service had been able to be fully staffed.

- **Youth Work**

The committee praised the service on its commitment to developing its work force, filling all the posts despite a shortage of qualified workers. It pressed the service to seek clarity on funding through town and parish council services, who were central to services throughout Shropshire.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

People Overview Committee agendas, papers and minutes for May 2021 to March 2022.

**Local Member:**

All

**Appendices**

None