

**CALDERDALE MBC**

**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

**COUNCIL – 2 October, 2014**

**ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2013/14**

**Report of the Head of Democratic and Partnership Services**

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## **1. Purpose of Report**

To present to Council the sixth Annual Scrutiny Report.

## **2. Background**

This is the sixth Annual Report of the Council's scrutiny activity. The Council's five scrutiny panels considered a wide range of issues in 2013/14 and completed a number of detailed reviews.

A draft of the Annual Report has been sent to the Chairs of Scrutiny Panels in 2013/14. Comments have been received from two of the former Scrutiny Panel Chairs and the report has been amended accordingly.. Any further comments from 2013/14 Scrutiny Chairs will be reported to Council.

As last year, the Annual Report will be written as a report to the public, rather than in a more traditional committee report format. The report will be "published" on the internet, rather than as a booklet.

After Council has received the Annual Scrutiny Report, the scrutiny internet pages will be updated and will include photographs of the Panels at work and links to the reports of detailed reviews and other material. This will include a facility for the public to contact easily the Council's scrutiny function to suggest items that they wish a Scrutiny Panel to consider. In order to ensure that the Annual Report is as accessible as possible, there may be some minor changes to the wording, although the subject included will remain as presented to Council.

The Annual Report will also be available through the Centre for Public Scrutiny website.

## **3. Recommendations**

- a) That the Council endorses the Annual Scrutiny Report
- b) That the Annual Scrutiny Report is published on the Council's website

For further information on this report, contact:- Mike Lodge, Senior Scrutiny Support Officer, [mike.lodge@calderdale.gov.uk](mailto:mike.lodge@calderdale.gov.uk) 01422 393249

Dear Calderdale Resident,

We are pleased to present the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Panels for 2013/14. The report highlights those areas where Councillors have looked in detail at some of the most important issues facing Calderdale residents.

It shows how we have tried to involve the public in our work and to act as a proper “guardian” of the public interest.

Scrutiny Panels have combined work in formal meetings with more in-depth scrutiny reviews.

The role of scrutiny in local Councils is of increasing importance. In times of austerity Scrutiny Panels should challenge the Council’s Cabinet and senior officers to make sure that every penny we spend is spent well on providing essential and effective services to Calderdale people. And the recent report from Rotherham describing the terrible exploitation of girls and young women, as well as the Francis report into the mid-Staffordshire NHS Trust underlines the overwhelming duty of Scrutiny Panels to be robust in challenging the Council and its partners to demonstrate that they are doing everything possible to safeguard vulnerable people.

And particularly in view of the on-going concerns around the future of hospital provision in Calderdale, following a number of options outlined by the Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust, the importance of making sure that elected Councillors listen carefully to local residents patients, service users and other stakeholders is imperative.

We would like to thank all the officers, colleagues from other organisations and members of the public who have helped us in our work throughout they year by providing us with high quality evidence about a wide range of issues. We hope to hear from even more of you next year.

Councillor Ann McAllister, Adults Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel  
Councillor Scott Benton, Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel  
Councillor Marcus Thompson, Communities Scrutiny Panel  
David Hardy, Use of Resources Scrutiny Panel  
Pauline Nash, Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

## **So what is scrutiny.....?**

Calderdale Council has five scrutiny panels. Each panel has seven or eight Councillors and two of them have additional “co-opted” members.

The Panels:

- Act as a “critical friend” to the Council’s leadership and senior officers
- Drive improvement in public services
- Enable the concerns of the public to be heard
- Consist of independently minded people who decide their own agenda and how they will do their work

The Scrutiny Panels all met at least ten times during the year. The panels are:-

Adults, Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel  
Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel  
Communities Scrutiny Panel  
Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel  
Use of Resources Scrutiny Panel

The panels try to take a thoughtful, evidence-based approach. That means listening to different people who have an interest in what we are discussing, including, of course, the public.

We try to limit our meetings to discussing two or three issues in depth. This helps us really “get under the skin” of an issue and put together proposals for improvement and change.

## ***Enabling the concerns of the public to be heard***

Over the year scrutiny panels looked at several issues which were of major concern to a particular group of people, who turned up in numbers when that issue was discussed. Their views are important and helped the panel make informed recommendations. Here are a few examples:

### **Calderdale Royal Hospital – Accident and Emergency provision**

The Calderdale and Huddersfield Health and Social Care Strategic Review, *Right Care, Right Time, Right Place* is taking a root and branch look at NHS services and Council services for vulnerable people. This may well lead to a complete reconfiguration to hospitals in Halifax and Huddersfield. The Adults, Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel has discussed this issue with health service managers several times during 2013/14 and – when Calderdale Clinical Commissioning Group makes formal proposals for change – will scrutinise them rigorously with Kirklees Scrutiny.

### **Calderdale flood recovery programme**

High on the list of priorities for the Economy and Environment Panel was how those areas of Calderdale most affected by flooding in recent years, are being supported by the Calderdale Flood Recovery programme.

In June, we held our Panel meeting in Todmorden, which has suffered particularly badly from flooding. Before our meeting, we made site visits to Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge and Todmorden to see the work being done as part of the Flood recovery programme.

At Todmorden Town Hall, we heard from a number of individuals, businesses and organisations that had been affected by flooding and from partner agencies including Yorkshire Water and the Environment Agency on remedial works they had done or were planning to undertake.

We then took time to review our findings from our evidence gathering session in Todmorden at our August meeting. Amongst other things, the Panel decided to ask the Flood Resilience Strategic Partnership Manager to look at the introduction of a prominent web page on the Calderdale Council website, which could provide regular updates to the public on the on-going flood recovery work.

## **Domestic Violence and the White Ribbon Campaign**

Over recent years Communities Scrutiny Panel has examined a number of issues, such as alcohol misuse, where one of the consistent consequences was domestic violence or abuse. We'd held a domestic violence review to look at this problem in greater depth. This was in the context of a general increase in the number of domestic violence incidents and crimes in Calderdale.

The review took place over an afternoon and early evening in May 2013. We took evidence from a wide number of people, including the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire and many partner organisations. One of these was the White Ribbon Campaign, which is an international organisation that asks men to pledge never to *commit, condone or remain silent about men's violence against women in all its forms*. Its UK base is in Calderdale.

We heard that Calderdale Council had been a White Ribbon accredited employer for two years and that this accreditation was due for renewal. However, the Panel wanted to know what this meant in reality. If the Council were going to join a campaign to end domestic abuse, the Panel wanted to know that our own house was in order and we were doing all that we could to lead by example. As a large employer, it is inevitable that there are people who work for us who are victims of domestic abuse. It is equally inevitable that we employ perpetrators.

So we decided to have a further meeting, but this time purely to look at the Council as an organisation and what we were doing. We worked closely with the White Ribbon Campaign and also researched examples of best practice from around the country.

The outcome of this further meeting was that the Panel felt there was much more that we could be doing as an employer, and that a step-change was needed. There was also a determination that Calderdale Council should aim to be more than just adequate, but should lead by example because we feel so strongly about this issue. We made 8 detailed recommendations to Cabinet which were accepted in full.

We now have a domestic violence staff policy, senior members of staff as White Ribbon ambassadors, training packages being developed and hold a number of events throughout the year highlighting the campaign. This culminates in White Ribbon Day on November 25<sup>th</sup> each year, when the White Ribbon flag will be flown from the Town Hall.

### ***Critical Friend***

#### **Asset and Facilities Management**

The Council is making major changes to the way it manages its land and buildings and Use of Resources Scrutiny Panel Members had a series of discussions throughout the year looking at different aspects of this programme.

Matters considered during the year have included the Council's programme of asset reviews, the sale of assets surplus to requirements and the potential for communities to take over the management of buildings from the Council. We also examined facilities management – the way in which the Council provides reception services, cleaning and maintenance of our buildings in-depth at the September meeting. We finished in January by looking at the proposed strategy for planned building maintenance and the review of schools catering and cleaning.

#### **The Voice of the Child**

There are children in Calderdale who need the help of our social services. They may live in care homes, or are fostered or adopted. They may be in families with a whole range of problems, or they may be young carers. Whatever the issues are that they are dealing with, it's important that their voice is heard when it comes to decisions that affect their lives.

Scrutiny was asked to look at how effective the council is at listening to the voices of young people, how that's recorded, and how we take those opinions into account.

A team of four Councillors went out and interviewed over twenty different groups of council staff, voluntary sector workers and others who should be listening. We then produced a report with some recommendations and took that to a meeting with young people at the Orange Box to see what they thought, and whether they'd like to add anything else.

Most of the recommendations have now been taken on board, including the very important one which is that two members of the Youth Council are now members of our scrutiny panel!

## **Absence Management**

The Use of Resources Scrutiny Panel recognises that the health and well-being of the Council's staff is very important. It also recognises that senior management has a responsibility to ensure that sickness absence levels in the organisation are effectively managed, with policies and procedures in place to manage sickness absence in a fair and consistent manner throughout the organisation.

The Panel considered absence management several times last year and held detailed discussions with the Cabinet member and the Director of Communities and Business Change on the levels and types of sickness absence in the organisation and, in particular, what measures they were taking to address sickness absence in the organisation, particularly to reduce long term absences and stress related illnesses.

Average sickness absence per employee at the Council had varied between 8.9% in 2010/11 and a current figure of 8.5% in 2013/14. The figure for sickness absence per employee is now below the national average of 8.8% for local government employees.

## ***Driving improvement in Public Services***

### **Economic Regeneration**

This year the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel decided to look in-depth at how the Council was supporting economic regeneration in Calderdale. Members gave this such priority that all seven of them joined the review team!

As well as meeting together, Councillors did research on their own, including attending a breakfast meeting to learn the views of local business people. We also heard from both the Cabinet Member and the Director of Economy and Environment, as well as a town councillor.

The Panel recommended that a *Member Champion* should be appointed to champion apprenticeships; and that Cabinet should put specific signposting opportunities and funding sources guidance in place for inclusion in the Youth Strategy for apprenticeships and work placements, in support of people over 25 who want to become an apprentice.

And we want to see all those businesses that the Council buys services from encouraged to take on apprentices as well.

### **Green Economy**

Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel also set up a review group to look at the *green economy*.

They met several times including arranging two “drop-in” sessions at Halifax Town Hall, where a number of private businesses gave us their views.

Members also did a lot of work outside the meetings and three of them joined the *Our Energy Future* event at Calderdale College.

During the review we heard from the Council’s Sustainability, Business and Economy, and Corporate Assets and Facilities Management (CAFM) teams, who told us about their work and its

relationship with the green economy and about current and planned developments.

We made ten recommendations to Cabinet including; asking that a greater emphasis is placed on championing the Green Economy as a key sector by Leeds City Region; a re-launch of “Green Champions” to encourage our staff to adopt more energy-conscious practices while they are at work; and the possibility of applying exemptions and not charging parking fees for electric cars in the Council’s car parks.

## **Diabetes**

Diabetes is a growing health problem across the world and Calderdale is no different. Councillors spent time outside their normal meetings examining; the role that community pharmacy can play in identifying people at risk of developing diabetes and in helping them manage the condition; and how effective Calderdale has been in implementing NHS health checks.

## ***Being independently minded***

### **Keeping People Safe**

No-one wants the terrible events in Staffordshire and Winterbourne View to be repeated and scrutiny panels have an important role to make sure that social care services and the NHS are doing everything they can to keep people safe. In December Adults Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel took a close look at; analysis of complaints in social care services, NHS trusts and Calderdale Clinical Commissioning Group. They also discussed the Annual Report of the Calderdale Safeguarding Adults Board. This was a far more comprehensive examination of how the Council and the NHS are safeguarding vulnerable people and the Panel plans to repeat the exercise in December 2014.

## **The Challenges Ahead**

Scrutiny Panels have identified identified a number key areas of work for 2014/15. These include:

- Reviewing Customer First services
- Continuing to press for improvements in social care services for children;
- Examining in detail plans for major changes in the ways that NHS services are delivered in Calderdale
- Monitoring the Corporate Asset and Facilities Management programme.
- Scrutinising the extent to which environmental issues harm Calderdale residents and what steps are being taken to address this.
- Staff Absence management