

Annual Scrutiny Report



2008-2009



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Foreword

Welcome to the first annual report from the Council's five scrutiny panels. This report reviews highlights of the work of the panels in the 2008/09 council year.

The Council and its key partners increasingly recognise the important contribution made by scrutiny panels as a result of the work that they undertake. The permanent establishment of three Scrutiny Support Officer posts gives us that important base to enable scrutiny to develop and be more effective.

One area that does need more promotion is to inform the wider Calderdale public more about the work that scrutiny does, and this first annual report is one way of communicating that to a wider audience.

Over the next year, we will see new developments such as the Councillor Call for Action, which will help us to resolve issues raised by our communities. The Local Involvement Network (Calderdale LINK) will be a new voice for patients and service users, working in partnership with health scrutiny. These and other developments will further enhance the importance of our scrutiny role.

We urge everyone to find a few minutes to read through the contents of this report. You will find many examples of members looking in depth and making recommendations on a whole range of current and future issues that are relevant to all those who live, work or visit this district.

As well as being a very busy and productive year for scrutiny in Calderdale, it has also been a sad year. Councillor Geoffrey Wainwright passed away in February 2009. Councillor Wainwright made a valued contribution to a number of scrutiny panels over the years and was held in high regard by councillors of all parties. He will be missed.

Finally, we send our thanks to all who have assisted the five scrutiny panels with their work programmes over this last year.

Councillor Megan Swift	Chair, Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel
Councillor Colin Stout	Chair, Community Services Scrutiny Panel
Councillor Bryan Smith	Chair, Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel
Councillor Bob Metcalfe	Chair, Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel
Councillor Barry Collins	Chair, Regeneration and Development Scrutiny Panel

Scrutiny in Calderdale – how does it work?

Overview

All councils are required by law to have an ‘overview and scrutiny’ function. This function is carried out by councillors and co-opted members who are not part of Calderdale’s Cabinet (‘the executive’), and can therefore critically examine executive decisions, and look into performance or policy issues of concern. The overview and scrutiny function is an essential element of local democracy, as it holds decision-makers to account and enables in-depth review of Council and partner policies and performance.

Scrutiny Panels

In Calderdale, there are five scrutiny panels. Each of these is designated to mirror one of the five Council directorates. The panels each have seven back-bench councillors at the core of their membership, and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel also has an additional nine co-opted members from related organisations and partners.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning services • Care services • Family support • Commissioning and partnerships
Community Services Scrutiny Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries, museums and arts • Recreation, sport and streetscene • Housing and community support
Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law and administration service • Human resources • Finance and procurement • IT
Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health services across Calderdale • Older people and disability • Mental health and learning disability • Environmental services
Regeneration and Development Scrutiny Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering and design services • Regeneration • Planning strategy

How the panels work

The scrutiny panels in Calderdale meet every three weeks, and follow annual work plans which are developed by the panels themselves. The work plans focus on:-

- Scrutinising decisions made and action taken by Cabinet, senior Council officers and in some circumstances, external partner organisations
- In-depth scrutiny review of a small number of topics of particular concern to panel members
- Ongoing overview of the performance of the Council’s directorates and key partners
- Developing ideas for service or policy improvements.

Making improvements through scrutiny

Calderdale’s scrutiny panels undertake their scrutiny work in a number of different ways. The panels decide which issues they wish to scrutinise, and then adopt scrutiny methods to suit those topics. Once the panels have discussed an issue and gathered evidence from a wide range of sources, they then agree whether they wish to make recommendations for change. Once recommendations have been made, the scrutiny panels then monitor whether they have been accepted and implemented.

Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request reports • Question Cabinet members, officers and witnesses • Conduct research • Consult with stakeholders / public • Site visits
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of key issues • Formulate recommendations • Produce evidence-based reports
Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer recommendations / reports to relevant bodies • Monitor progress of all recommendations

Scrutiny panels do not have the power to make direct changes to Council policies or the way that services are delivered. However, when panels make recommendations which are well-evidenced and well-argued, a good case can be made for driving the changes through. Scrutiny can therefore have a powerful influence on decision and policy making. Scrutiny may also make representation to Cabinet for funding for projects such as reviews of policies and practices on specific issues.

Links to corporate priorities

An effective and challenging scrutiny function is a key contributor to Calderdale achieving its long term vision of [‘everyone different everyone matters’](#). The key priorities set out by the Council are reflected in the breadth of issues which scrutiny panels look at. By reviewing performance against local targets, and suggesting improvements in services, scrutiny can ensure that better outcomes are delivered for the people of Calderdale.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Members of the Panel

- **Cllr Megan Swift (Chair)**
- **Cllr Olwen Jennings (Vice-chair)**
- **Cllr Howard Blagbrough**
- **Cllr Geraldine Carter**
- **Cllr Mohammed Ilyas**
- **Cllr Zafar Iqbal-Din**
- **Cllr Richard Marshall MBE**
- **Patricia Astwood** **Free Churches**
- **Sheraz Aziz** **Muslim Faith**
- **Robert Finnigan** **Roman Catholic Church**
- **Ashley Knowles** **Parent Governor**
- **Sue McMahon** **Teachers' Federation**
- **Ashton Thripland** **Teachers' Federation**
- **David Warbrick** **Church of England**
- **Vacant** **Parent Governor**
- **Vacant** **University of Huddersfield**

Introduction

Our panel is committed to working together to improve outcomes for children and young people in Calderdale. In addition to the councillors on the panel, we have co-opted members representing teaching unions, parent governors, education providers and faith groups. This gives us a wide range of knowledge and expertise with which to hold decision makers to account and improve services for children and young people. The work of the panel has changed over the year, more accurately reflecting the broad agenda of Children and Young People's Services, rather than focusing heavily on education issues.

Engaging with Children and Young People

We feel strongly that in order to scrutinise services for children and young people effectively, we need to hear from children and young people directly. That's why we invited young people to come and talk to us at a special meeting held at Eureka in February. We spoke with Calderdale Youth Parliament Members, the Bright Sparks children's grants panel and the Voice 4 U Council representing children in care.

Usman Ali, Deputy Youth Member of Parliament said "Assigning a full scrutiny meeting for children and young people was a tremendous idea and one which hopefully the panel will remember. It's great the members do feel involving children and young people is crucial in improving children's services throughout Calderdale."

Services for Children and Young People with a Disability

We invited the Disabled Youth Forum and children from Ravenscliffe High School to come and talk to us about their experiences of accessing services for children and young people with a disability. We also spoke to the Calderdale Parent and Carers Council, who highlighted housing for families with disabled children and young people as a key priority. We raised this with officers from Pennine Housing 2000, and the Planning and Housing departments of the Council.

One of our key concerns was the waiting period for children and young people to receive aids and adaptations –which could be as much as two years. Since we highlighted this problem, funding has been made available to create an occupational therapy assistant post. This will help to speed up the assessment process. We welcomed this development, and will continue to monitor progress.

Corporate Parenting

The Council has a legal responsibility to act as ‘corporate parent’ for looked after children in Calderdale. This means we must seek for children in our care everything that a good parent would want for their own children. We scrutinised our corporate parenting arrangements and were pleased to hear about the variety of good and innovative work going on in Calderdale. However, we wanted to ensure that our corporate parenting arrangements are developed more strategically, in line with the national *Care Matters* policy and legislation. We raised this issue with Cabinet, recommending that further work is done to strengthen to role of the Council as corporate parent.

As a result, Cabinet decided to establish a cross party Lead Member Support Team to support the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services in promoting and strengthening the Council’s corporate parenting arrangements. This team will report back to us twice a year, and we look forward to hearing about the progress it is making.

Care Services and Safeguarding

We invited the Independent Chair of the Calderdale Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) to update us on the work of the board over the past year. We are working with the board to look at how we can most effectively scrutinise Calderdale’s approach to safeguarding children.

Improvement in Care Services in the management of referrals and assessments for vulnerable children and young people is a key priority. We received evidence of very recent improvements in performance, but considered that further very close scrutiny of performance should continue for at least the next twelve months. In addition to capacity to improve, we will be seeking evidence that the service improvements have been embedded and that a rigorous system of performance monitoring and reporting to members is fully established and maintained. We noted the creation of the Leader Member Support Team (highlighted above) that will also be playing a role in strengthening capacity and leadership in this area.

Standards in Education

We are committed to ensuring that educational standards in Calderdale schools remain high. We were once again pleased to congratulate all the pupils, staff and parents in Calderdale on their hard work in achieving good results at all Key Stages of education, particularly the outstanding results at Key Stage 2. We welcomed the improvements made at Key Stage 5, but still have some concerns at this level, and will be investigating them further next year through our post-16 education working party.

We have been concerned that the transition between primary and secondary school is a difficult time for pupils, and may account for the drop in standards between Key Stages 2 and 3. We have welcomed the actions being taken to address this issue and look forward to seeing the improvements. We will continue to monitor this work, and intend to speak with year seven pupils to gain an understanding of their experience of the primary to secondary school transition.

Young People Not In Employment, Education or Training

Reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training is a priority for Calderdale. We are pleased that the statistical trend has been downwards, however there is still some way to go before we reach our target of 6.4%. We are concerned that the economic downturn may reduce employment opportunities for our young people, and we will be monitoring this carefully.

Working Parties

We worked with the Community Services Scrutiny Panel to scrutinise play strategy and play facilities across the borough. We have visited the Jubilee Children's Centre to talk to children about playing in Calderdale, scrutinised the progress of the Playbuilder projects and looked at the work of the Playrangers in Calderdale. We feel that the working party is making good progress, and hope to continue next year.

Issues referred by other councillors

- We looked at the capacity of the **Pupil Referral Unit** and how exclusions from schools are managed. A review of school exclusions in Calderdale is underway and we will scrutinise the results.
- **Home to School Transport** – some families are no longer able to access free home to school transport due to changes in national policy. The Council is lobbying local MPs and the Department for Children, Schools and Families on this issue, and we will continue to monitor progress.

Ongoing Issues

Over the course of the year we have monitored the directorate's **revenue budget** and **budget implementation plan** for looked after children's placements. We have also kept an eye on the directorate's **risk register**, and the number of **compliments and complaints** received about the directorate.

Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Members of the Panel

- **Cllr Colin Stout (Chair)**
- **Cllr Peter Wardhaugh**
- **Cllr Stephen Gow**
- **Cllr Jennifer Pearson**
- **Cllr Helen Rivron**
- **Cllr Richard Marshall MBE**
- **Cllr Andrew Feather**

Introduction

The work of the Community Services Scrutiny Panel focuses on finding ways to improve housing, cultural, and leisure services for Calderdale people, as well as exploring ways to make our communities safer, stronger, and more cohesive. We have considered a very broad range of issues, and present the highlights below. We would like to thank all external witnesses, officers and members of the public who have attended the meetings over the year to give their views and contributions to what has been a successful year's work.

Swimming Pools

We examined the proposals for new swimming pools in Brighouse and Sowerby Bridge, and discussed a variety of issues with the project architects, surveyors and construction partners. We raised concerns around the consultation and public awareness of the projects, and sought to find out if the funding for the schemes was sufficient. We identified some potential public concerns such as car parking, and took the opportunity to examine the proposed designs in some detail. We intend to keep a close eye on progress and look forward to further updates on these high profile projects, which should give Calderdale swimming facilities fit for the 21st Century.

Post Offices

At one of our best attended meetings, we questioned officials from Post Office Ltd on proposals to close a number of local branch post offices. A large number of local residents attended the meeting to express their concern and anger at the proposals. We resolved to support the campaign against closures and challenge some of the information the Post Office had used to base their decisions. Unfortunately, the campaign was unsuccessful and we were extremely disappointed when the closures went ahead.

Area Forums

Area forums have been a new development for the Council this year, brought in to enhance the ways in which the Council directly engages with the public. We had regular progress reports on area forums, and raised some important issues including the level of

attendance, the participation of partners and the size of the areas covered by each forum. We did, however, recognise the importance of keeping the impetus going and continuing to engage with the public. Our comments on area forums will be taken into account during the end of year review process.

Safer and Stronger Communities

We have reviewed a number of issues under the broad umbrella of Safer and Stronger Communities. This involved speaking to a wide variety of partners. We heard from West Yorkshire Police and the Community Safety Team about initiatives to tackle alcohol-related crime and to reduce the sale of alcohol to under age people. We also examined initiatives which are ongoing to prevent violent extremism. We were reassured to hear that figures for all crimes were improving and that Calderdale has a lower number of crimes than the average for West Yorkshire. However, given the importance of tackling antisocial behaviour and domestic violence, we plan to scrutinise these further next year. We will also look at alcohol abuse in more depth.

Major Projects

We had concerns that not all major projects within Community Services were running to time or to budget, so we scrutinised in detail the projects register implemented by officers. This allowed us to keep closer track of developments and ask more detailed questions on current major projects. Some of the major projects that we reviewed this year included the successfully completed library developments at Shelf, Brighouse and Hebden Bridge, the refurbishment of Victoria Theatre, and the Rochdale Canal. We also reviewed and raised concerns over the refurbishment project at Brighouse Civic Hall.

Issues referred by other councillors

We looked at problems with the poor condition of a **replacement rugby pitch** at Ovenden Rugby Club, which had been provided by the Council. We recommended that £40,000 should be ringfenced as a contribution to sports facilities proposed by the Ovenden Sports and Community Arena.

Councillors 'called in' Cabinet's resolution on **Neighbourhood Management** in order to consider it in more detail. An in-depth discussion resulted in us strongly supporting the Cabinet resolution.

Ongoing Issues

- We considered the redevelopment proposals in connection with **Halifax Central Library and Archive**. We will keep a close eye on this, in view of the strength of public feeling about these popular and successful Council facilities.
- We gave our support to the new **housing strategy for an ageing population**, which is anticipated to give older people more independence and choice as well as providing better homes.
- We undertook regular **revenue budget** monitoring. We had concerns about the shortfall in the directorate's budget arising from unforeseen fuel and energy costs.

- We agreed to recommend to Cabinet that additional funds should be made available for a feasibility study to look at the suitability of locating the **Museum Store** at Shaw Lodge Mill.
- We are concerned that the maintenance of closed **cemeteries** is becoming increasingly onerous for the Council and recommended that our concerns were addressed to the Diocese of Wakefield.

Working Parties

In the **Equality and Community Cohesion working party** we spent time examining issues including the establishment of the Equality Forum, Calderdale's performance against the Equality Standard and social housing. We also discussed key cohesion issues with representatives from a variety of community groups.

In the **Voluntary and Community Sector working party** we examined a range of issues including the role of the Citizen's Advice Bureau, the Calderdale Credit Union, the work of the Women Centre and Voluntary Action Calderdale, and the functioning of the Small Grant Scheme.

We worked with the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel to scrutinise Calderdale's **Play Strategy** – see page 8.

Site Visits

- We visited the **CCTV monitoring centre** and were given a tour of the facility.
- We held our August panel meeting at the newly completed **visitor centre at Shibden Park** and viewed progress on the park redevelopment project.



Recently completed – the visitor centre at Shibden Park

Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Members of the Panel

- **Cllr Bryan Smith (Chair)**
- **Cllr Colin Raistrick (Vice-chair)**
- **Cllr Jennifer Pearson**
- **Cllr Robert Pearson**
- **Cllr Roger Taylor**
- **Cllr Ian Cooper (part)**
- **Cllr Geoffrey Wainwright (part)**
- **Cllr Keith Watson**

Introduction

This year, we have looked at a wide range of service areas and corporate issues, from benefits and local land charges to procurement and elections. Our approach has been to keep a close eye on service areas which have been previously subject to in-depth scrutiny review (procurement, registration services and in-house transport), and to add other new topics to the work plan as and when they arise.

Procurement

We have been involved in scrutinising the development of the procurement strategy for a number of years now. We have been pleased to note a number of steps forward in delivering this strategy this year. Major successes have included the switch to pay all Council suppliers by BACS rather than by cheque. This has resulted in significant savings. A new contract to supply agency staff across different Council services has been developed and commenced in April 2009. We have welcomed this, and look forward to the Council achieving the estimated savings of £300,000 per year in transaction costs, and up to £145,000 per year in other contract costs.

In-house Transport

Following our previous in-depth scrutiny review of the Council's transport service, major changes were made to bring the procurement, maintenance and management of the transport fleet in-house. We have continued to regularly monitor this service at our meetings, and have been happy to note continued improvements in the efficiency of the service. The service is now able to achieve a significant surplus, to directly contribute to council savings and enable some reduction in the charges levied by the service.

Local Land Charges

Over the last year we have spent a lot of time considering the local land charges service, which provides property search information to the public. We are increasingly concerned about the loss of market share for this service, which has been made worse by the downturn in the economy and housing market. This means the service is unable to meet its income targets, leaving a significant shortfall in the directorate's budget.

We made recommendations to establish a one-stop-shop for all property search information provided across the whole Council, to be based within the Local Land

Charges service. The Cabinet agreed to this, and we now look forward to the one-stop-shop getting up and running. This will not address our wider concerns about the loss of income and impact on the directorate's budget, however, so we will continue to keep a close eye on this in the coming year.

Performance Appraisal

The Council's performance appraisal system (PAS) for staff has come under close scrutiny this year. We have actively reviewed the number of appraisal and review meetings conducted by each directorate, as we felt that more could be done to ensure every eligible member of staff gets an annual appraisal and a six-monthly review. After questioning the differences in completion rates and hearing responses from each directorate, we recommended that challenging council-wide targets are set for PAS completion. Completion rates are gradually increasing, so we look forward to seeing further progress over the next few years.

Site Visits

- This year we visited the new offices of the Human Resources and Change department at **Dean Clough**, as part of our overview of the major 'change project' implemented in that department.



New offices at Dean Clough

Ongoing Issues

- As a result of regularly monitoring the directorate's **revenue budget**, we have identified some financial issues which we will keep under review next year. We are particularly concerned about budget shortfalls in elections administration due to the rising costs of postal voting.
- The Council's **communications** work has come under close scrutiny this year. We took an active role in suggesting changes to the revised media protocol for council staff, which were taken on board. We are also planning to take a closer look at corporate publications next year, to help to identify whether any savings can be

made in the number and type of publications currently issued across all departments.

Working Parties

- We have been involved in scrutinising the **registration service** over the last couple of years. Major changes have been implemented this year, with the closure of the register office premises at Carlton Street after 131 years, and the opening of Somerset House as the magnificent new venue for weddings and civil partnerships. We will continue to scrutinise the impact of these changes, and promote ideas for making the service run as efficiently as possible.
- We have continued to scrutinise the **Customer First** programme through our working party. We have reviewed progress this year in delivering customer first face-to-face provision at Brighouse, Sowerby Bridge, Elland and Todmorden. We also reviewed the 'Access to Services' inspection of the Council, which took place this year. We have also continued to take an overview of emerging proposals for Halifax Customer First facilities.

Issues referred by other councillors

- We looked at building consultancy's **approved supplier list** and made recommendations for significant changes to the way the list is managed. These changes were then implemented. We hope the changes will make it easier for local businesses to apply for building maintenance work generated by the Council.
- We discussed the need for all written communication from the Council to be drafted in accordance with a '**plain English**' approach. We will follow this up over the next year, to tie in with our broad review of council publications.
- We had one 'call-in' of a Cabinet decision to consider this year. A thorough discussion took place on the **allocation of balances** towards capital projects, after which we decided to note the Cabinet's decision on the issue.

Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel

Members of the Panel

- **Cllr Bob Metcalfe (Chair)**
- **Cllr Peter Coles (Vice Chair)**
- **Cllr Howard Blagbrough**
- **Cllr Diane Park**
- **Cllr Tom Bates**
- **Cllr Kay Barret**
- **Cllr Andrew Feather**

Introduction

The work of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel focuses on finding ways to improve the health outcomes and enhance social care delivery for the people of Calderdale. Our annual work plan has been very diverse and we have explored an exceptionally wide range of services and issues.

Many of the topics under scrutiny were as a result of discussions held at our annual planning day in September 2008. This involved hearing about the priorities of the Council's Health and Social Care Directorate, NHS Calderdale, Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust, South West Yorkshire Mental Health Trust, and the Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust, and was very important in developing our priority scrutiny topics for the year.

Putting People First

We recognise the critical importance of the national 'Putting People First' agenda. This aims to transform the way care is provided, by moving to personalise services and give people using care services much more say over the support they receive. We spent time examining how the Council is responding to 'Putting People First'. We explored the progress already made in developing a more personalised and responsive adult social care service. We also reviewed reports on the range of work streams which are being put in place which will transform the whole of the social care system within Calderdale over the next two years, and looked particularly closely at the plans to modernise home care and roll out individual budgets.

Establishment of the Local Involvement Network (LiNK)

We spent a lot of time this year looking at the establishment of the Calderdale Local Involvement Network (LiNK). LiNKs are being set up across the country to help members of the public influence the way health and social care services are run, and will have a close relationship with scrutiny committees. We hosted a workshop to start to develop better understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of our scrutiny panel and the LiNK. Panel members and representatives from the LiNK host, Cloverleaf Advocacy, discussed how the LiNK will operate and how it will benefit the community.

We will continue to work to develop a productive two-way relationship between ourselves and the LINK. By working together effectively, we can each maximise our contribution to the shared objective of improving health and social care services.



Working together – the workshop with Calderdale LINK

Safeguarding Adults

During the year we considered Calderdale's Safeguarding Adults annual report. In light of the Government's launch of a review of the 'No Secrets' guidance, we gave our views on the proposed draft response from the Council. As part of this, we discussed how the NHS were developing the 'No Secrets' guidance and how it could be ensured that staff in the NHS were able to recognise, investigate and act on abuse. Our comments were included in the Council's formal response, which was submitted to the Department of Health in January.

Dignity in Hospitals

There were two branches to our scrutiny of dignity in hospitals. The first was the topic of mixed-sex wards, where we were thoroughly briefed by the Hospital Trust on policy and practice in this area. We were reassured that steps were being taken to ensure that all accommodation was single sex where possible, and that hospitals within the trust had improved performance and were meeting targets.

The second was on the issue of bed sores, where NHS Calderdale and the Hospital Trust gave an account of this extremely distressing condition covering its incidence and treatment. We were glad to hear that a robust framework was in place for dealing with bed sores and that further work was being done to improve care in this area. We will continue to track progress on both these issues next year.

Waste Management

We considered the implementation of the waste management strategy at length as the contract for Calderdale's waste collection was being transferred from FOCSA to SITA in 2008. We also reviewed the plans for the new waste collection and recycling service in advance of its launch in April 2009. We will continue to monitor the performance of the service during this critical period of change.

Gender Dysphoria

Following our major review of 2007/8, we published our final report on services for people with Gender Dysphoria in April 2008. During 2008/9, we closely monitored progress against the recommendations made in this report and continued to press for improvements. We heard statements from the client group (Trans Yorkshire) and reviewed progress with NHS Calderdale. We also reviewed the development of new care pathways and the interaction between NHS Calderdale and Yorkshire and The Humber Specialist Commissioning Group. We are pleased that our involvement has made an impact by raising awareness of the need to improve services in this specialist area. However, there is still some way to go to secure lasting improvements.

Ongoing Issues

- Following a request from another Councillor, we spent some time considering the Council's **public toilet provision** and raised a number of concerns with officers. It was agreed that we would be provided with a report which will provide a costing for a Community Toilets pilot scheme based in the Hebden Bridge area. This will outline funding sources and viability and a possible template to roll out the scheme to other areas of Calderdale if successful.
- We also considered the plans for Calderdale's **Affordable Warmth** strategy, bringing attention to the progress which the Council has made in addressing this vital issue and suggesting additional ways of tackling the problem.
- We reviewed developments in primary care **psychological therapies**, noting the recent progress in service delivery. We will continue to monitor this next year, focusing in particular on the implications the current economic climate has on the mental health of people in Calderdale.
- We received two reports on **Oral Health** from NHS Calderdale and welcomed the fact that significant improvements have been made since our major scrutiny review. Many service improvement targets have been achieved and we were particularly pleased to note that the number of Calderdale residents treated in the year increased by 5.5% between 31 March 2007 and 31 March 2008.

Regeneration and Development Scrutiny Panel

Members of the Panel

- **Cllr Barry Collins (Chair)**
- **Cllr Colin Raistrick (Vice-chair)**
- **Cllr Joyce Cawthra**
- **Cllr Nader Fekri**
- **Cllr Bob Thompson**
- **Cllr Geoffrey Wainwright**
- **Cllr Keith Watson (part)**
- **Cllr Ian Cooper (part)**

Introduction

The Regeneration and Development agenda is an exciting and fast moving one. Our approach this year has been to take a broad look at the many major regeneration and development issues and projects going on in Calderdale. In addition, our working parties have been undertaking in-depth scrutiny of key issues throughout the year.

Flooding and Land Drainage

The floods of 2007 and 2008 caused many problems for residents, businesses and visitors in Calderdale. We wanted to minimise the risk of this happening in the future and so commissioned a review of flooding and land drainage in Calderdale.

We took the results of this review to Cabinet who endorsed it and accepted our proposals. They made £800,000 of capital funding available over four years to carry out a programme of highway infrastructure improvements, and increased revenue funding in the annual budget to improve land drainage.

Winter Gritting Service

We recommended to Cabinet that the winter gritting service is reviewed for the first time in 20 years. The review is underway, and we have ensured that it will cover issues highlighted after the extreme wintry conditions we experienced this year, particularly the gritting of pavements and the provision of grit bins. We also highlighted the need to build storage facilities for salt to preserve stocks and save money. We hope that the review will result in an improved service for schools, as many are currently not on precautionary gritting routes.

Economy and Enterprise

We considered the Economy and Enterprise Strategy, which sets out Calderdale's approach to economic development. We felt that it was important to highlight the opportunities that we have in Calderdale for developing 'green' business and promoting environmental issues. Our recommendations were taken on board and 'the green

agenda' and principles of sustainability are now embedded in Calderdale's approach to economic development.

Major Regeneration & Development Projects

We have looked at several of the major projects currently underway in Calderdale. We have considered and commented on:

- Sowerby Bridge/Copley Valley Redevelopment
- The University Centre
- Halifax Masterplan
- Broad Street Development and the Central Library and Archive
- The Local Development Framework

Ongoing Issues

- Over the course of the year we have monitored the directorate's **revenue budget**, and made recommendations to cover the shortfall in the 2008/2009 parking, markets and street lighting budgets from Council Balances pending full budget reviews.
- We have also kept an eye on the Regeneration and Development directorate's **risk register**, and the number of **compliments and complaints** received about the directorate.

Site Visits

We are looking for ways in which the Council and its partners can work together to develop new woodland and fruit tree planting strategies. As part of this work, we joined local charity Treesresponsibility in a tree planting session in Walsden.

Working Parties

Markets Working Party

The Markets Working Party has worked hard at championing and developing the markets agenda this year. Now for the first time, Calderdale's markets have an achievable action plan with clear priorities and timescales. In 2007/8 we secured £150,000 over three years for investment into the service. Thanks to this funding, this year the service was able to carry out external refurbishment to Todmorden Market Hall, relocate Elland Market and introduce computer based systems for the administration and management of the Council's open markets.

Transport Issues Working Party

We have started to develop a strategic approach to road, rail and bus issues in Calderdale through:

- Developing an investment case and lobbying strategy for improvements to the Caldervale railway line
- Seeking improvements to bus services through the Bus Improvement Partnership

- Developing bids for funding to improve transport through Regional Funding Allocation
- Looking at ways to develop strategic transport priorities for Calderdale



Lobbying for improvements - the Caldervale line

Issues referred by other councillors

- We considered the **rent collection methods for markets**, which were viewed by some Councillors as heavy handed. We agreed a new approach with the Council's Markets and Finance Officers.
- After considering some areas in need of **minor works and traffic improvement schemes**, we recommended to Cabinet that funding was made available. Consequently, £100,000 was approved by Cabinet to carry out two specific schemes.
- After hearing about **Network Rail's approach to felling trees** in Calderdale, we wrote to them requesting that they undertake more public consultation in future, and consider a replanting scheme to replace felled trees.
- Concern was raised over the **provision of arboricultural advice to planning services**. We recommended that a member of staff in Planning Services is trained so that they can provide advice at the level required.
- Councillors came to us concerned about **pavements in a state of disrepair**. We asked the Highways Manager to bear in mind the funding required for the repair of Calderdale's pavements when drafting priorities for the next Local Transport Plan.

Major Reviews

Obesity

Members from the Health and Social Care, Children and Young People and Regeneration and Development Scrutiny Panels came together to carry out a review of obesity in Calderdale.

Panel Membership

- **Cllr Bob Metcalfe (Chair)**
- **Cllr Joyce Cawthra**
- **Cllr Olwen Jennings**
- **Cllr Colin Raistrick**
- **Ashley Knowles**
- **Cllr Howard Blagbrough**
- **Cllr Peter Coles**
- **Cllr Richard Marshall MBE**
- **Cllr Megan Swift**

Obesity is a serious problem in Calderdale. An estimated 21.8% of adults in Calderdale are obese, with 13.8% of year 6 children overweight and a further 15% obese. The cost to Calderdale of treating obesity and its related conditions is in the region of £53 million per year. The aim of the review was to find more ways of preventing obesity across the borough, and to maximise responses to existing obesity, helping people to lose weight and live healthier lives.

We spoke to a wide range of professionals involved in tackling obesity across the borough and regionally – officers from NHS Calderdale, officers from all directorates of the Council and professors from Leeds Metropolitan and Sheffield Universities. We were encouraged by the amount of work that is going on in Calderdale, but recognise that obesity is still on the increase and we must keep working to find new approaches to reduce it. As a result, we hope to continue this review next year.

Our interim report was published in May, with recommendations including encouraging schools to develop walking buses and focus on healthy eating, improving the Council's approach to workplace health and creating a built environment that promotes physical activity.

Fly tipping

Members from the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel set up a working party to undertake an in-depth study of the problem of illegally dumped fly-tipped waste.

Working Party Membership

- **Cllr Bob Metcalfe (Chair)**
- **Cllr Peter Coles**
- **Cllr Howard Blagbrough**

We decided to carry out a two stage review. The first stage consisted of a desk-top review of current information and policy both locally and nationally. The second stage considered evidence from a range of services, organisations, individuals and site visits. We met from September 2008 to March 2009 and took evidence from a number of expert witnesses, including representatives from the Environment Agency, Pennine Housing, and senior managers from within the Council. We were extremely concerned at the findings and published our report on the issue in May – entitled ‘Overcoming the Blight of Fly Tipping’.

The report makes a number of recommendations. These include: the provision of additional funds to create two full time Enforcement Officer posts in order to make a bigger impact on fly tipping; the creation of a mobile task force to deal quickly with fly tipping incidents; and an extension of opening hours at waste recycling centres in spring and summer. We feel that these recommendations, if adopted, could make a significant impact on how fly tipping is dealt with across Calderdale.



The blight of fly tipping

Parking

The Regeneration and Development Scrutiny Panel have been undertaking a major review of parking in order to develop a coherent parking strategy for the borough.

Panel Membership

- **Cllr Barry Collins – Chair**
- **Cllr Nader Fekri**
- **Cllr Roger Taylor**
- **Cllr Keith Watson (part)**
- **Cllr Joyce Cawthra**
- **Cllr Colin Raistrick**
- **Cllr Bob Thompson**
- **Cllr Ian Cooper (part)**

We started the review by developing the principles that will underpin the parking strategy. We wanted to ensure that the parking strategy: -

- promotes thriving and welcoming town and village centres;
- meets the needs of Calderdale’s residents;
- keeps bus routes clear and encourages non-car use where possible;
- is fair, equitable and transparent; and
- takes local factors into account.

Early on in the review we discovered that certain car parks in Halifax town centre were significantly under-occupied on Saturdays. We recommended that the Saturday tariff on these car parks was reduced to encourage use, and relieve pressure on busier town centre car parks. This worked well in Halifax and has since been rolled out in other areas of Calderdale.

A lot of hard work has since gone into looking at the detail of the proposed strategy, and consulting the public on their priorities for parking. Cabinet made £40,000 available to conduct the review, enabling us to engage a consultant who is currently developing the strategy. We will present the finished document to Cabinet in the summer.

Affordable Housing

Members from the Community Services and Regeneration and Development scrutiny panels joined forces to look at the critical issue of affordable housing this year. Two scrutiny sessions were held, when we considered the empty homes strategy and also the challenges facing the housing market during the current economic downturn. We heard evidence from Pennine Housing, HBoS and the Citizens Advice Bureau about the local impacts on affordable housing.

As a result of these scrutiny sessions, we welcomed the establishment of the Council's cross-party economic task force, set up to take action to address issues arising from the economic downturn.

We also made a key recommendation to reduce the current rate of Council Tax discount on empty homes from 50% to 25%, to encourage bringing these homes back into use. This recommendation was later formally approved by full Council.

Developing scrutiny

Scrutiny Action Plan 2009/10

We are looking forward to a challenging year ahead for scrutiny. A number of legislative changes have been brought in recently, which will bring opportunities for scrutiny to strengthen the way it works, particularly with partner organisations and the wider community. Some of the key actions for scrutiny development are summarised here.

- 1. Develop the role of scrutiny in monitoring the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and contributing to the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).**
- 2. Develop innovative ways of working in scrutiny, particularly in terms of engaging the community in scrutiny and developing the relationship between scrutiny and the Calderdale LINK.**
- 3. Respond to new legislation and any other structural changes, including Councillor Call for Action.**
- 4. Improve evidence base for major reviews.**
- 5. Offer scrutiny training and development opportunities for scrutiny members, other members, officers and partners.**

Scrutiny Performance Monitoring

There are a number of ways in which the scrutiny function itself can be monitored. Ultimately, what matters most is that scrutiny contributes to or brings about real benefits and positive outcomes for the people of Calderdale. There are also advantages to tracking scrutiny outputs, which help to measure the type of work that scrutiny gets involved in and the impact it has. This can help to us to reflect on progress and development from year to year. Over the coming year, we will use a range of performance monitoring techniques, including:-

- Each scrutiny panel will monitor progress against the recommendations that they agree during the course of their work.**
- The annual scrutiny action plan will be monitored and reviewed within future year's annual reports.**
- A range of scrutiny outputs will be recorded by the Scrutiny Support Team, including number of major reviews completed; number of recommendations made / accepted; types of items considered by the panels; and savings or efficiencies achieved from scrutiny recommendations.**
- Work will be done to survey scrutiny member and witness satisfaction with the scrutiny process.**
- Ongoing review of the structure of scrutiny in Calderdale will be undertaken by the Scrutiny Structure Working Party.**

Notes Page

Get in Touch

If you have any queries about scrutiny in Calderdale, or about the work of the five scrutiny panels, please get in touch. We would also welcome your feedback on this Annual Scrutiny Report.

You can contact us:

- By post The Scrutiny Support Team
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- By phone Call one of our Scrutiny Support Officers
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- By email scrutiny@calderdale.gov.uk

