



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018

### WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL



September 2018

## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Foreword.....  | 3  |
| What is Overview and Scrutiny? .....                             | 4  |
| The Structure of Overview and Scrutiny at Waverley.....          | 5  |
| Developing Overview and Scrutiny .....                           | 5  |
| O&S Committee Work Programme 2017/18 .....                       | 6  |
| Value for Money and Customer Service Overview and Scrutiny ..... | 6  |
| Community Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny .....                  | 8  |
| Environment Overview and Scrutiny.....                           | 9  |
| Housing Overview and Scrutiny.....                               | 10 |
| Overview and Scrutiny Member Survey.....                         | 11 |
| Officer Reflections .....  | 23 |
| Conclusion .....   | 25 |
| Officer Contact .....  | 25 |

## **Foreword**

Cllr John Ward

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Board

Welcome to Waverley's first Annual Scrutiny Report.

The new Scrutiny arrangements, which came into effect in 2017, have been implemented effectively with constructive recommendations stemming from various Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee meetings and Scrutiny reviews. This work has been welcomed by the Executive and all formal recommendations have been accepted, demonstrating the value Scrutiny has added to the work of the Council.

The smaller committees, brought in under the new arrangements, have provided more of an inclusive feel, allowing Members to be more involved in the process of O&S. This change in atmosphere has enabled Members to contribute more effectively to discussion and has resulted in higher Member engagement.

The Coordinating Board is a group comprising the Chairs and Vice Chairs of each of the four O&S Committees. It has enabled us to keep abreast of the other Committees' work programmes, ensuring cooperation is maintained and duplication of effort avoided. It has also allowed the Chairs and Vice Chairs to stay up to date with the progress of the in-depth Scrutiny reviews of each Committee.

These in-depth reviews have been a notable success for the new Scrutiny arrangements, with each Committee having initiated at least one in this first year. Enthusiasm from Members and Officers for these working groups has been encouraging, with the Value for Money and Customer Service O&S Committee having completed two reviews by the end of the first annual Scrutiny cycle. The Community Wellbeing and Environment O&S Committees have also completed reviews. A working group of the Environment O&S Committee investigated and evaluated options for the future of the waste and recycling contract and the Community Wellbeing O&S Committee undertook a major study into health inequalities in the borough. The Housing Design Standards Review was an in-depth piece of work in which Members from the Housing O&S Committee took part. This review was hugely successful with the outcomes being instrumental in both the design of the latter phases of the Ockford Ridge housing development and subsequent Waverley housing.

I extend my thanks and appreciation to Members who undertook the O&S role over the past year. Likewise my thanks go to our Scrutiny officers, Alex Sargeson, who was intimately involved with setting up the new system and sadly moved on to pastures new just as his efforts were bearing fruit, Yasmine Makin, who has picked up much of this work, and also to Fiona Cameron, Democratic Services Manager, who has been the mainstay and backbone of the Committees.

## What is Overview and Scrutiny?

O&S is an independent, Member-led function that facilitates and achieves democratic accountability for public services. Scrutiny acts as 'critical friend' challenge to the Executive and partners to help support, prompt reflection and influence how public services are delivered. This function is achieved by:

- reviewing and challenging decisions taken by the council and its partners,
- investigating services or policy areas which are of interest or concern to people in Waverley, and
- making evidence based recommendations to improve services provided by Waverley and other partner organisations.

The Local Government Act (2000) requires local authorities with an Executive arrangement to include provision of one or more Scrutiny committees to hold to account Executive decision makers and other providers of public services, for example local partners, in a public forum where residents are able to attend and ask questions<sup>1</sup>.

O&S has four broad functions:

- Review and scrutinise the decisions and performance of the Council and other public bodies in the local area and invite reports from them.
- Make reports and evidence based recommendations to the Executive or other constitutional/external bodies arising from the outcome of the Scrutiny process.
- Act as a forum where Executive decision makers are publically held to account for their decisions.
- Develop and review policy by making reports or recommendations to the Council and the Executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.

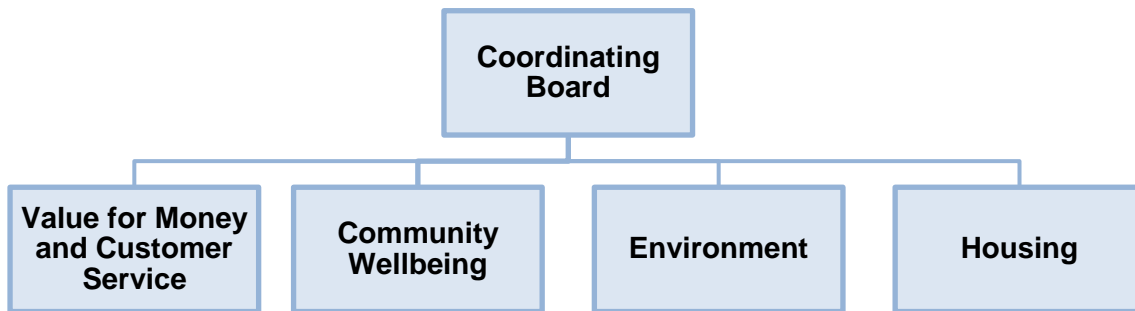
Additional Functions include:

- Examining future decisions to be taken, to influence and improve them;
- 'Calling-in' decisions made by the Executive within 5 working days of being taken to re-consider the decision;
- Conducting research and carrying out consultation with members of the public on policy issues that affect the local community;
- Liaising with other external organisations operating in the area, whether local or national, in the interest of improving service delivery for the Borough's residents;
- Monitoring agreed recommendations coming from the Scrutiny process and decisions made by the Executive and Council.

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<sup>1</sup> Local Government Act 2000: Overview and scrutiny committees.  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/22/section/21>

## The Structure of Overview and Scrutiny at Waverley



The structure of O&S at Waverley Borough Council consists of four O&S Committees: Value for Money and Customer Service; Community Wellbeing; Environment; and Housing and an overarching Coordinating Board. These four committees originally aligned to the Council's priorities in the Corporate Plan 2016.

The Coordinating Board's role is to coordinate Scrutiny activities and assign cross-cutting tasks to the most appropriate Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Scrutiny Committees are made up of nine non-Executive Members who plan and develop the committee work programme, including in-depth Scrutiny reviews.

### Developing Overview and Scrutiny

Waverley's current O&S arrangements were put in place as a result of a review carried out in 2016<sup>2</sup>. The review found that the role of Scrutiny was not clearly defined; was not as effective as it could be and did not add as much value to the work of the Council as it could do. As a result of this review a new O&S structure and process was designed and implemented and a dedicated Policy Officer for Scrutiny was recruited to support the work of the committees.

The review identified 'good' Scrutiny as being:

- an independent, Member-led function working towards the delivery of the Council's priorities and playing an integral part in shaping and improving the delivery of services in the Borough
- providing a 'critical friend' challenge to the Executive to help support, prompt reflection and influence how public services are delivered
- being led by 'independent minded governors' who take ownership of the Scrutiny process
- amplifying the voices and concerns of the public and acting as a key mechanism connecting the public to the democratic process.

<sup>2</sup> The full report can be found here: <https://modgov.waverley.gov.uk/documents/s9958/Joint%20OS%20-%20Final%20Interim%20report%20V3%2018042016.pdf>

Members of the Coordinating Board, whilst working with the Policy Officer for Scrutiny, agreed that Scrutiny give attention to:

- developing a flexible committee work programme that is member-led, but Officer supported;
- creating a process that measures itself against its outputs by contributing to the Council's corporate priorities and continuous improvement in services
- creating a Scrutiny system that lends itself to 'pre-Scrutiny' by being able to look at decisions prior to being made
- giving a greater focus on looking at the 'issues' that affect residents within the borough, and as a result work with external partners within the remit of O&S; and, as a result
- creating an O&S system that is able to assist the Executive to develop policy by making effective policy recommendations to the Executive and local partners.

## **O&S Committee Work Programme 2017/18**

### **Value for Money and Customer Service Overview and Scrutiny**

**Chair: Cllr John Williamson (June 2017 – May 2018) Cllr Stephen Mulliner (June 2018)**

**Vice Chair: Cllr Mike Band**

The Committee had a strong focus through the year on financial matters and undertook in-depth reviews into capital programme slippage, property strategy and continues to work on a long term approach to budget strategy.

The in-depth review into the root causes of slippage in the capital programme took evidence from a broad range of Service Managers responsible for undertaking capital projects. The findings of the Group brought together a number of strands covering project management, finance governance, phasing of budgets over multiple budget years and effective resourcing. The recommendations were agreed by the Executive and now form the basis of an Action Plan which will be monitored by the Committee in the coming year.

Another major area of work followed a request for the Committee's expertise to examine the merits of setting up a property company. The purpose and objectives of such a company were initially explored by the Committee in their September meeting and it was agreed that a Property Strategy Working Group would be set up to work with officers on the detailed approach to be taken. However, the exercise also led to the conclusion that the draft Property Investment Strategy was in need of improvement. Accordingly, the Working Group reviewed the Strategy through a series of very productive meetings and delivered a revised Strategy which the Executive agreed in April 2018.

A major theme throughout the year for the Committee was their Scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Plan and as a result a major in-depth review was commenced to make recommendations to the Executive on a longer term budget strategy. Accordingly, a Budget Strategy Working Group was established to examine the Council's general fund financial outlook over the next five year given the indications that some significant income reductions were likely to occur. The scope detailed five work streams to be undertaken over the next two years covering the following: identification of discretionary and statutory services; an assessment of demand management including a public budget participatory consultation; procurement; project management; assessing the Council's assets including people resources and identifying efficiencies in the way the Council does business.

The general work of the Committee covered a variety of areas but always with a view to add value and develop policy. For example, following the government's roll out of Universal Credit the Committee was concerned about the impact on Waverley residents and requested a report on the measures that would be put in place to support residents in the transition to Universal Credit as well as a financial model showing how the budget would be managed during this change. As a result of this Scrutiny the Council's Financial Inclusion Approach is being reviewed and will be brought back to the Committee.

The Committee requested updates on a number of Council and service initiatives including the Customer Services Review, the 2016 Strategic Review and the Building Control Business Plan. An update on the Strategic Review was given to the Committee's October meeting and Members voiced their concern at the lack of apparent progress on the strategic vision for the Council.

Progress on the Customer Services Review was also scrutinised. The review covered four key areas; channel shift, the customer service pilot in Housing, the customer service system technology and corporate infrastructure covering all relevant strategies, policies and service standards. Members were keen to emphasise the importance of maintaining access to key services for less IT literate residents.

During the year the Complaints Handling policy was revised from a three stage process to two stages. Scrutiny members were keen to ensure that the Chief Executive and Strategic Directors would still be involved in monitoring the complaints process to draw out learning and this was subsequently clarified in the agreed procedure.

Proposals for governance arrangements for the Community Infrastructure Levy were scrutinised by the Committee and further work on the criteria for assessing bids will be considered later in 2018.

The Committee scrutinised the Economic Development Strategy and following the referral of their observations to the Executive further work will be undertaken by a group of Members from both O&S and the Executive.

The Committee received performance indicator information on an exception only basis. They focused in particular on the time taken to pay invoices, staff turnover and sickness levels. A detailed report was requested on the latter items and a workforce profile report with a presentation was made to the Committee in June. A separate meeting was held to focus specifically on Service Plans and the Committee requested that in future a closer alignment is made to the budget report with cross references included where appropriate.

## **Community Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny**

**Chair: Cllr Andy MacLeod**

**Vice Chair: Cllr Liz Wheatley**

The Committee undertook a major in-depth review of the 'Factors Affecting Health Inequalities in Waverley' during 2017/18. The review was triggered by the very significant disparities in life expectancy across the Borough demonstrated in the annual health profile. The Working Group that was tasked with the review gathered evidence from a variety of internal and external experts and organisations and were supported enormously by the Public Health Team. The resulting recommendations were adopted by the Executive and form the basis for further work with the Clinical Commissioning Groups, Surrey County Council, Surrey Heartlands as well as a detailed action plan for Waverley service managers.

The review illustrated the opportunity to consider the wider effects of district council services on the wellbeing of its residents. It also demonstrated the willingness of external partners to work jointly and collaboratively with Waverley. The review was a significant and unique piece of policy development work to be carried out by a Surrey district and Members involved in the review gave extremely positive feedback. The Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Culture has been thoroughly engaged with the outcome of the review and is pursuing the recommendations with partner organisations.

Reports and presentations on a variety of subjects were received by the Committee during the year including the Waverley Safer Neighbourhood Partnership, the Community Engagement Plan by Surrey Police and a very thought provoking presentation on Loneliness by the Communities and Prevention Officer from Surrey County Council. Updates were requested and given on the Community Meals Service, the Stroke Service relocation, the transfer of public conveniences to Haslemere and Godalming Town Councils and the new Business Plan for Waverley Training Services. The Committee considered the new Prevent Policy and the Safeguarding Policy for Children and Adults at Risk before adoption by Council. They also assisted the Executive on areas such as Service Level Agreements grant



funding proposals, the Leisure Centre Contract Management Review, Service Plans and annual budget proposals.

The Committee agreed to receive key performance information on an exception only basis and recommended new performance indicators in the service areas of Waverley Training Services, Careline and Leisure. The Committee considered and shaped the proposed investment options for Godalming, Farnham and Cranleigh Leisure Centres.

## **Environment Overview and Scrutiny**

**Chair: Cllr Jerry Hyman**

**Vice Chair: Cllr Wyatt Ramsdale**

The Committee undertook an in-depth review into the future approach to waste management and street cleaning in Waverley. The scope was later expanded to include options for the Grounds Maintenance Contract. The review was supported by officers from the Environment service and the Council's consultant. The Working Group explored the options around the type of service to be procured, the way in which the service might be provided and the affordability. The Group looked in detail at the design of the current service and also reviewed the evidence on how well the contract was performing, taking into account benchmarking data and customer satisfaction feedback. Member feedback was extremely positive and those taking part in the review felt it had been a rewarding experience, greatly extending their knowledge of the subject. The recommendations were presented to the Executive and a decision on which options to take forward was taken at their July 2018 meeting.

The work of the Committee during 2017/18 focused on a number of major Council projects and work streams including the consideration of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule, Local Plan Part 2: issues and options, air quality issues, street cleaning performance and the review of the Development Management function.

The Committee maintained a strong focus on air quality during the year. As a result of new government policy guidance and best practice an Air Quality Steering Group was set up to bring strategic stakeholders from both the Borough Council and County Council together to work collaboratively to address poor air quality within the Borough. In addition, a Farnham Air Quality Working Group was also established to support the Steering Group.

The review of the Development Management Function was considered by the Committee and it was agreed to establish a Planning Reference Group. This Group is considering current arrangements for planning decision making and to consider options for the future.

A standard item on the agenda on 'corporate priorities' was established early on in the year. It has provided a useful update for the committee on major Council projects and issues. Items included progress on Brightwells, the Frensham 'Heathland Hub' and the Local Plan Parts 1 and 2. A special meeting to consider the Local Plan Inspector's report was held in February 2018 with comments going forward to the Executive.

Questions were received from the public on public conveniences, Brightwells, traffic and air quality. The Committee also considered the impact of the Surrey County Council proposals to change services at the Community Recycling Centres and this will continue to be monitored as early indications are that it has resulted in an increase in fly tipping. Performance monitoring across a range of key performance indicators has been carried out at each meeting and a particular focus has been given to street cleaning and refuse and recycling rates.

### **Housing Overview and Scrutiny**

**Chair: Cllr John Ward**

**Vice Chair: Cllr Pat Frost**

The Committee undertook a major in-depth review of Housing Design Standards in 2017/18 in order to inform both 'Site C' of the major regeneration project at Ockford Ridge, Godalming and other future council housing developments. The review arose from discussions following a site visit to Ockford Ridge about the optimum use of space in the homes. As a result the Working Group reviewed the Design Standards and Specifications adopted in 2014 and researched other available good design standards. The review focused on standards for new homes to be developed and funded by the Council, internal and external space standards, potential use of roof space, parking, materials and opportunities for future proofing and adaptation to changing circumstances. The new Standards were approved by the Executive at their July 2018 meeting and the review outcome is a good example of the additional value the work of the Committee has contributed to the Housing Service.

The Committee requested regular updates on a number of major projects and work streams throughout the year so that progress could be scrutinised. Update reports on the regeneration scheme at Ockford Ridge were received at each meeting as well as updates on the Tenancy Agreement review and progress on the procurement of the new repairs and maintenance contracts due to commence in April 2019.

The tenant's Waverley Scrutiny Group carried out reviews on both voids and recharges during the year. The voids report focused on the re-let standard, reducing the cost of a void and improving value for money in the voids process. The Group also completed a review on how the Council manages the process of recharging certain costs to tenants and leaseholders.

Proposals by Surrey County Council (SCC) to decommission all Housing Related Support funding, including funding for services for older people, were reported in September 2017 and the implications for the Sheltered Housing Schemes were considered. Following recommendations to the Executive, the Leader sent letters to SCC, local MPs and Ministers expressing the Council's grave concern over the impact the reduction in funding would have on elderly services.

In November 2017 the Committee received a presentation on the Private Sector Improvement Policy which highlighted the joint work being undertaken by the districts and the county in relation to home adaptations and efforts to speed up grant approvals.

Performance on a range of key performance indicators were monitored regularly and particular focus was given to gas safety checks, voids and responsive repairs.

The development of a new Housing Strategy for 2018-2023 was considered by the Committee during the year and it culminated in the adoption of the Strategy by the Council in April 2018. Following Scrutiny by the Committee the Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 was also adopted.

## **Overview and Scrutiny Member Survey**

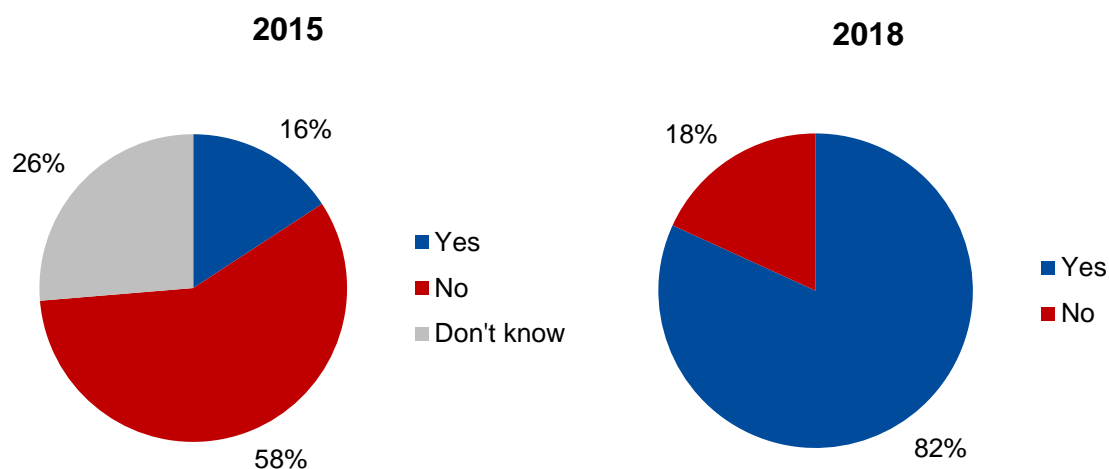
As part of the review of the O&S arrangements in 2015/16, Members were encouraged to complete a survey to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of O&S at Waverley in order to inform the revised process.

Following the first complete cycle of the new O&S arrangements an opportunity has been taken to conduct a similar survey and an online confidential questionnaire was sent to all members of the new O&S Committees during the period 10 July and 3 August 2018.

There were 11 respondents to the 2018 survey as compared to 19 in 2015. Most questions were binary but all gave Members the opportunity to provide comments if they so wished. Comparisons between percentages are given in terms of percentage points (pp). It is important to note that in the 2015 survey respondents had an option to choose 'don't know', respondents were not given this option in 2018 but could skip the question if they so desired.

## Survey Results

### Q1. Do you think O&S provides an effective challenge to the Executive?



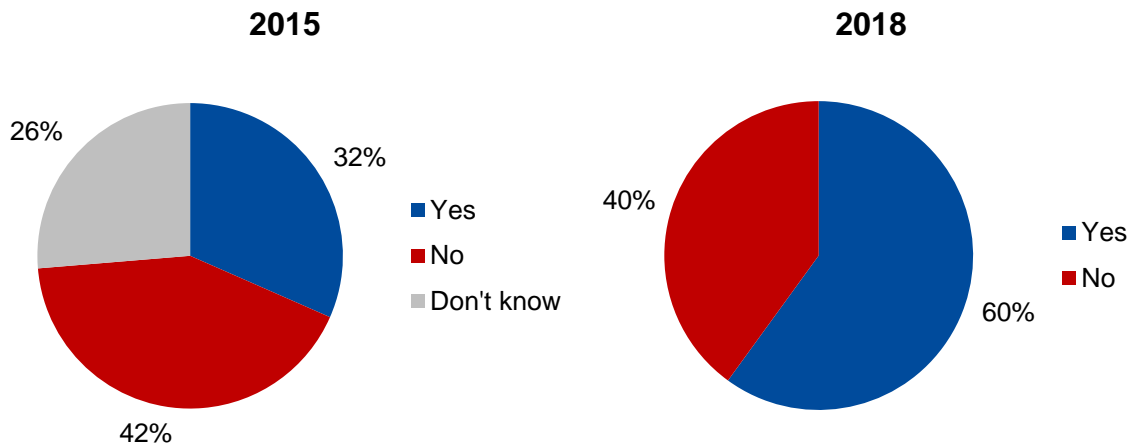
This question related to the first principle of good Scrutiny, defined by the Centre for Public Scrutiny<sup>3</sup>, in that it 'should provide a constructive critical friend challenge' to the Executive.

The 66pp increase in respondents answering yes when asked if O&S provides an effective challenge to the Executive suggests that the new Scrutiny arrangements are enabling O&S to fulfil its 'critical friend' function much more effectively. In the comments provided by respondents, one Member acknowledged that the process had improved but did not believe 'that the situation has changed sufficiently to be able to say that O&S is an effective challenge'.

Another Member recognised the improvement but conditioned this by saying the process is only effective when the gap between the O&S meeting and Executive is sufficient to make changes. Whilst the process has improved, there is still scope to develop the efficacy of O&S by ensuring the timescales allow for O&S outcomes to genuinely inform Executive decisions.

<sup>3</sup> The [Centre for Public Scrutiny](#) is CfPS is a national centre of expertise on governance and scrutiny.

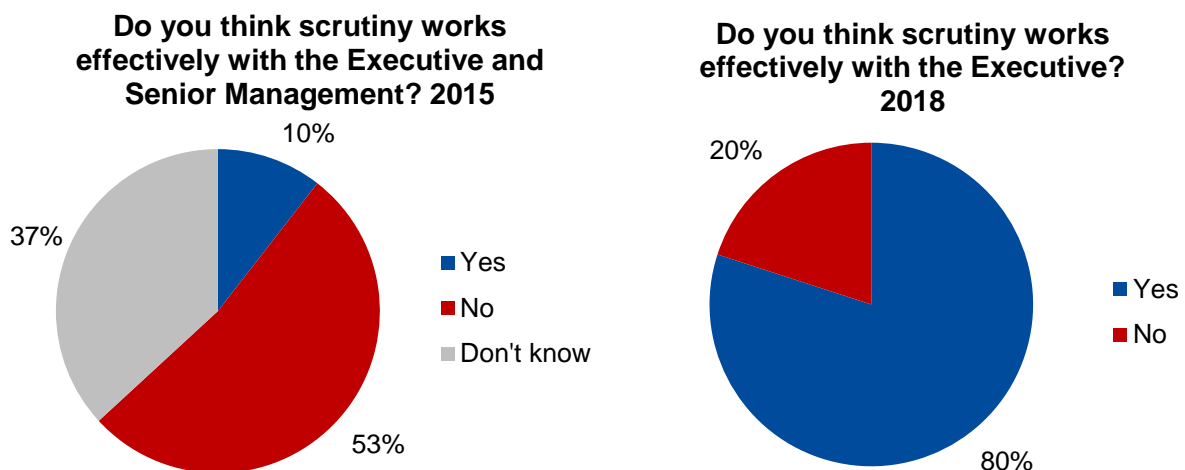
**Q2. Do you think external partners are involved in Scrutiny enough?**



Over 40% of Members responding to the above question in 2015 said no. In 2018 this had decreased slightly to 40%. This is clearly an improvement but with only 60% saying yes in 2018, there is a clear desire from Members to involve more external partners in Scrutiny. In the comments provided by respondents, one Member recognised their role in involving external partners through discussion and engagement outside of the direct O&S process and another recognised the value of external partner expertise but expressed concern at the time required to resource this.

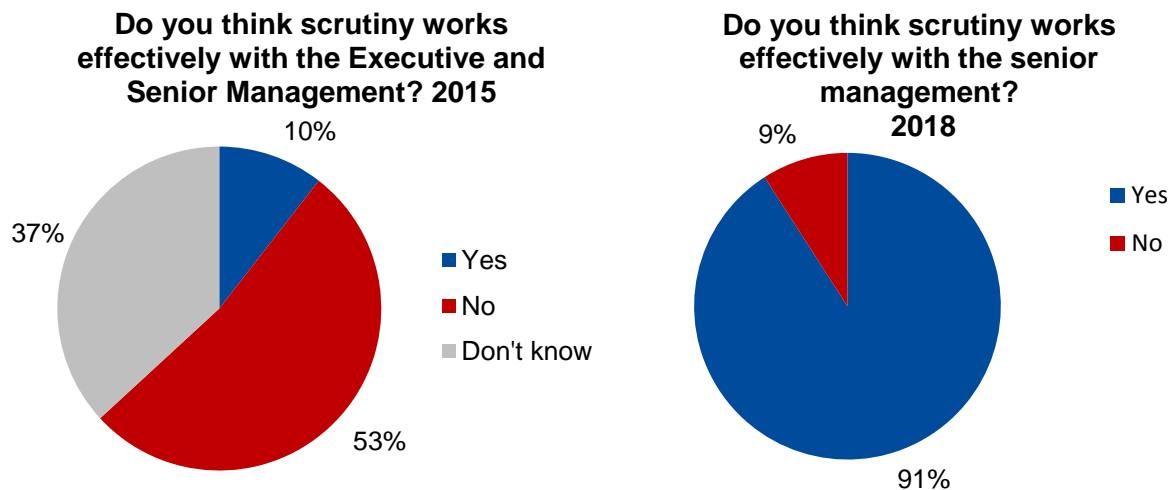
Attendance at meetings of representatives from partners such as Surrey County Council, Safer Waverley Partnership and health organisations has provided Scrutiny with another perspective through which to challenge and develop the issues at hand. As the new process is established, there will be opportunities to involve more external partners in the work O&S does at Waverley.

**Q3. Do you think Scrutiny works effectively with the Executive?**



The 2015 survey contained a combined question asking whether Members felt O&S works effectively with the Executive *and* senior management. This question was split into two for the 2018 survey and so the results are not directly comparable.

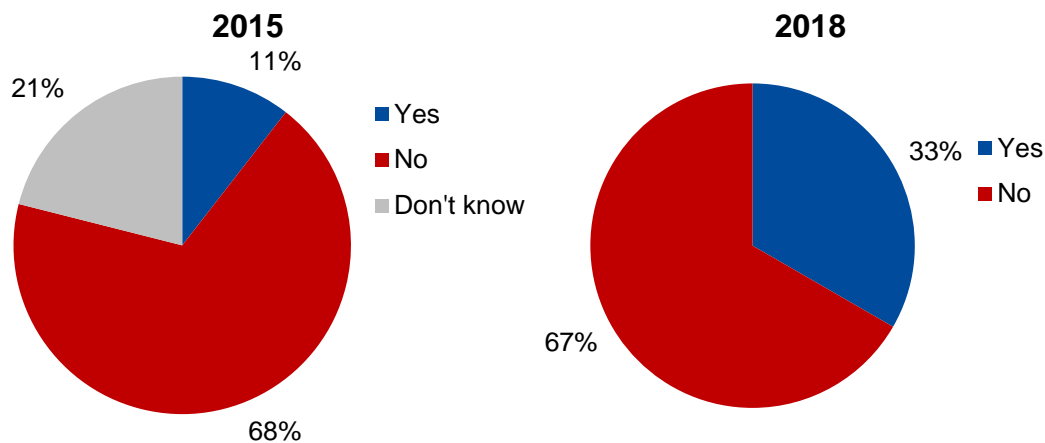
**Q4. Do you think scrutiny works effectively with the senior management?**



In relation to question 4, 91% of respondents said O&S works effectively with senior management. Although the results of question 3 are not directly comparable, the increase shows Members have seen a considerable improvement in how effectively O&S works with the Executive and senior management. In the comments on the 2018 survey one respondent showed concern regarding how seriously the Executive takes the O&S process. However, this respondent expressed their belief that the Scrutiny in-depth review working groups could be increasingly effective. Another comment stated that the follow up on recommendations varied (seemingly due to workload of officers). Whilst there has been a significant increase in the confidence that O&S works more effectively with the Executive and senior management, the survey results have provided useful feedback on how to continue to improve this efficacy, namely following up on recommendations more effectively and showing evidence of the seriousness with which Executive treats O&S outcomes.

Questions 5, 6 and 7 relate to the second principle of good Scrutiny in that it should 'amplify the voices and concerns of the public'. The questions seek to understand Members' perceptions of how well Waverley's O&S process does this.

**Q5. Do you think O&S publicises itself enough to the public?**

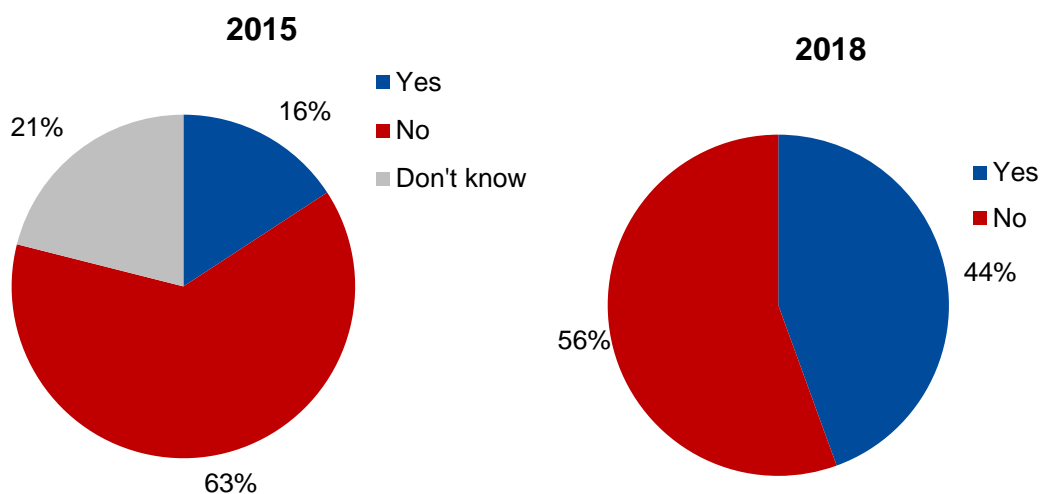


In 2015 68% of respondents said they did not believe O&S publicises itself enough and in 2018 this figure was 67%. Whilst the results show an increase in the percentage of respondents saying yes, public involvement and representation are clearly areas in which the process could see improvement.

**Q6. What ways are there to improve interaction with the public?**

When asked what ways there are to improve O&S interaction with the public, social media, press releases and website information were all included in multiple comments. One respondent suggested creating short videos containing information on the role of each O&S Committee, something that could be tried in combination with increase use of social media. Webcasting of the Committee meetings was also mentioned as a way for O&S to publicise itself to the public and improve interaction.

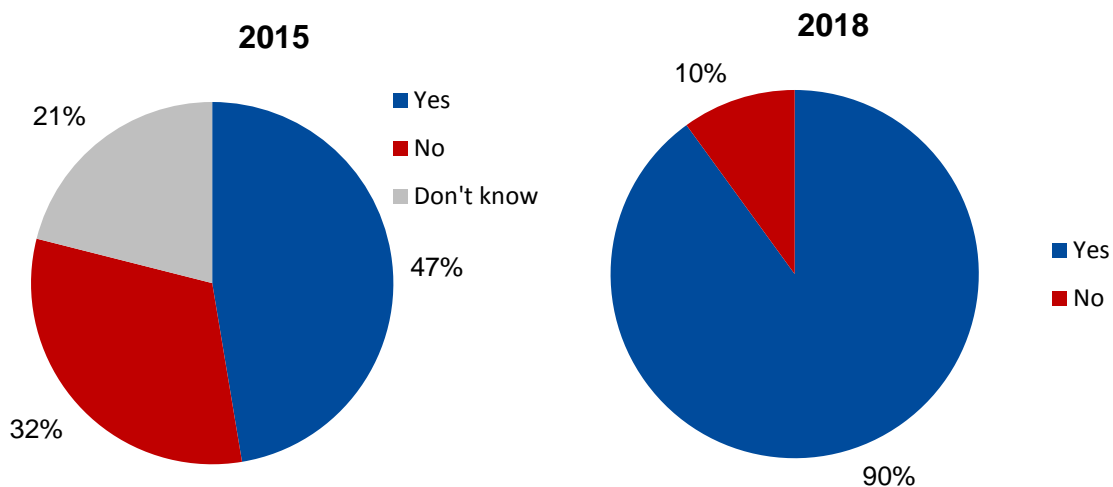
**Q7. Do you think the public have been involved in the scrutiny process?**



In answer to the third question on whether Members thought the public have been involved in the Scrutiny process, the percentage of respondents responding positively increased and negatively decreased. This is a slight improvement but with over half respondents saying the public has not been involved in the Scrutiny process there is clearly opportunity to develop this area of engagement.

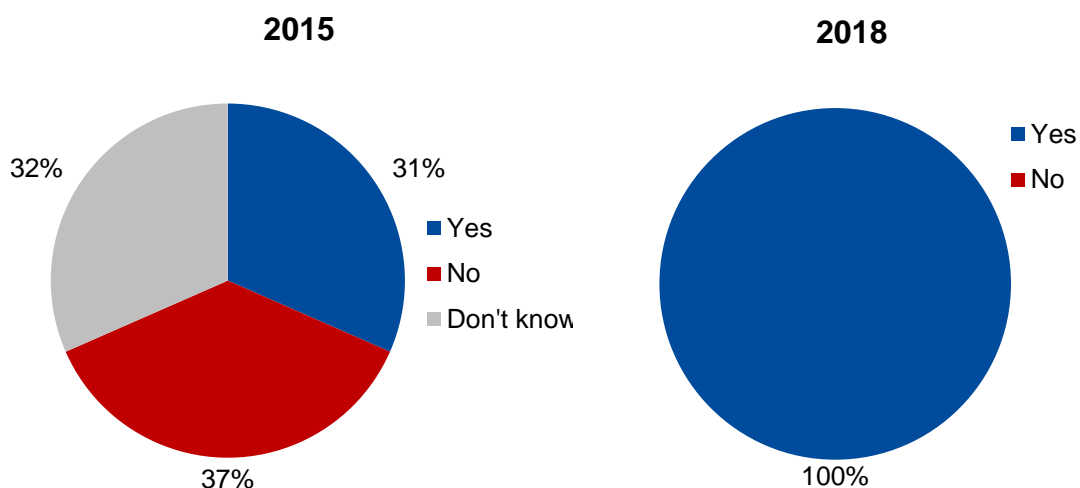
Questions 8, 9 and 10 relate to the third principle of good Scrutiny being 'led by independent minded people who take ownership of the Scrutiny process'.

**Q8. Do you think O&S operates with political impartiality?**



The percentage of respondents answering yes to this question increased by 43pp from 2015 to 2018. The percentage of respondents answering no to the question decreased, illustrating that an increase in political impartiality is one of the successes of the new arrangements. A comment provided for this question recognised the importance of operating with political impartiality and stated that O&S should be about Waverley wide issues.

**Q9. Do the committees have ownership of their own work programme?**

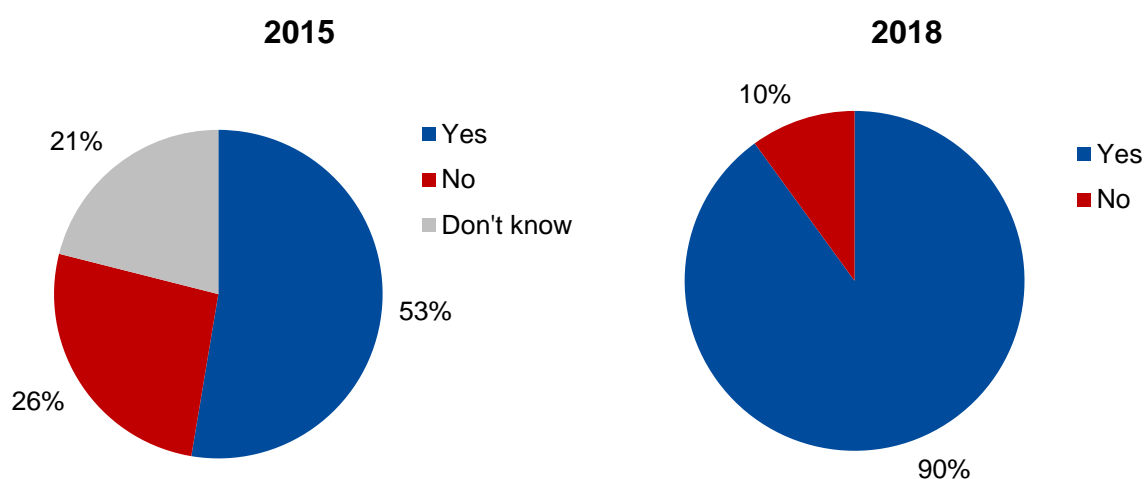




In 2018 all respondents felt that the Committees do have ownership of their work programmes. One of the comments from respondents in 2018 stated that they believed the Committees have ownership of their work programmes 'to a limited degree'.

The 'Committee Work Programme' item on each agenda is intended to give Committee Members ownership of their respective agendas with an opportunity to comment on items coming up, request particular items or suggest the removal of items. The result of the 2018 survey clearly demonstrates that the feeling of ownership has improved.

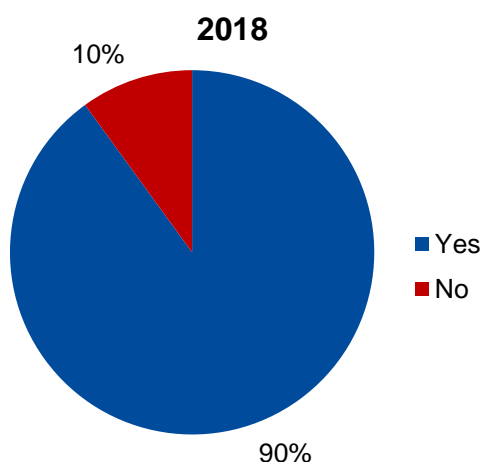
**Q10. Do you consider Scrutiny to be a worthwhile and fulfilling role?**



The increase of 37pp in respondents answering yes to this question suggests that the new arrangements have improved Members' perception of the value of O&S

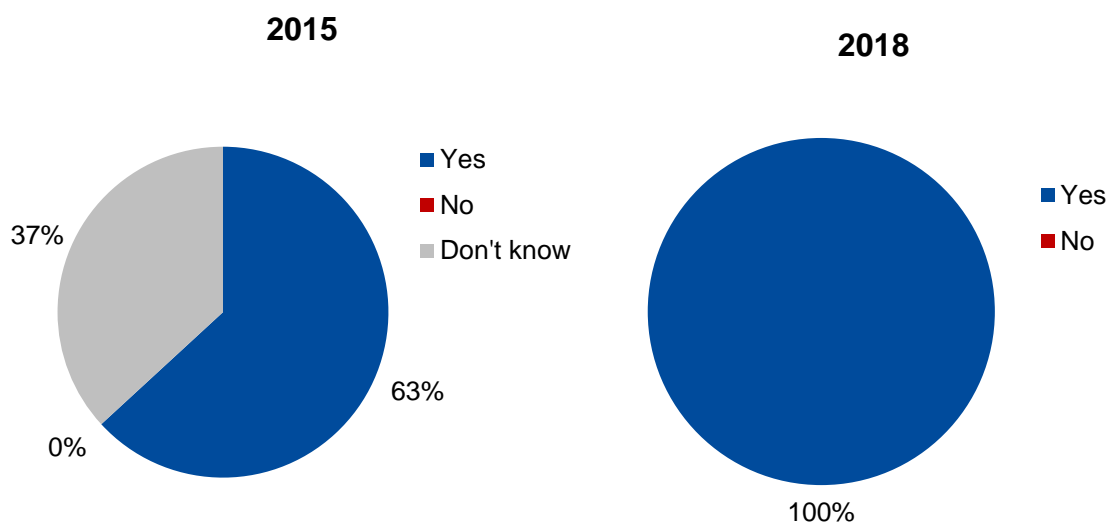
Two comments provided for this question articulated the respondents' beliefs that the changes to the O&S process have positively impacted how worthwhile and fulfilling they feel their role is

**Q11. Do you think Scrutiny results in valuable recommendations and outcomes?**



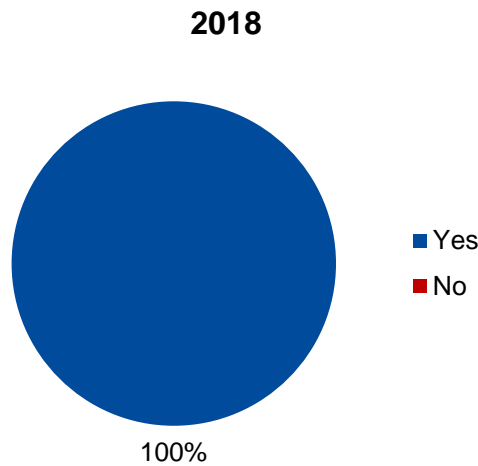
This question was not asked in the 2015 version of the survey. One of the criticisms of the previous O&S process was that items were being brought to Committee after decisions had been made and the opportunity to influence had been missed. Therefore such a high percentage of respondents answering yes to this question suggests the new process has, to some extent, addressed this issue. One of the comments provided, however, states that the respondent has ‘some concerns that decisions have been pre-determined’ and so whilst the new process has improved perceptions there is still progress to be made. Another respondent commented ‘yes, but not often enough’, demonstrating the point that whilst there have been developments there are still opportunities to improve.

**Q12. Do you think O&S has a constructive working partnership with officers?**



In the 2018 survey, all those who responded to question 12 replied that they did feel that O&S has constructive working partnerships with officers. Two respondents’ comments attributed this success to the new O&S process. One respondent expressed their view that ‘councillors on O&S feel more involved and valued and officers are greatly encouraged by this and are more supportive’, demonstrating the fact that effective Scrutiny is in the interests of both officers and Members. Another comment partly credited the constructive working relationships to familiarisation of Members and officers since the 2015 elections. From this comment one might infer that, depending on the results, the 2019 election could see a fall in the number of respondents answering yes to this question. This, therefore, is an aspect of O&S for officers to bear in mind for the 2019/20 Scrutiny cycle.

**Q13. Do you feel communication between officers and committee members is effective?**

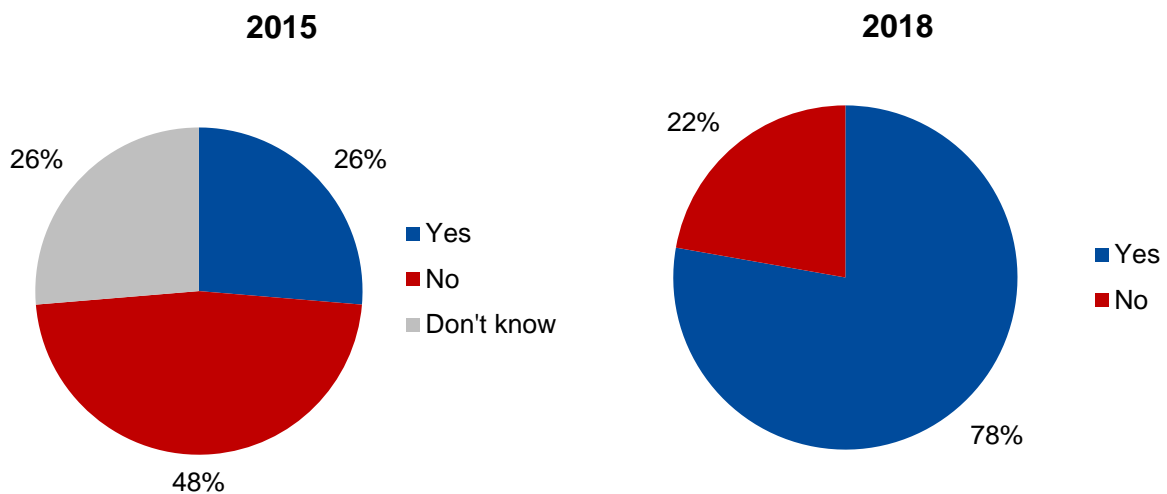


This question was not asked in the 2015 version of the survey. In their comment for this question, one respondent recognised that much of the communication will be between officers and the Chair and Vice Chair, stressing that the role of the Chair in communicating with their Committee Members is vital. The relationship between Chair and committee members is very important to increase Member engagement and involvement in the work programme.

**Scrutiny Driving Improvement**

Three questions were asked to assess Members' views on whether the fourth principle of good Scrutiny is being observed in that it 'drives improvement in public services'.

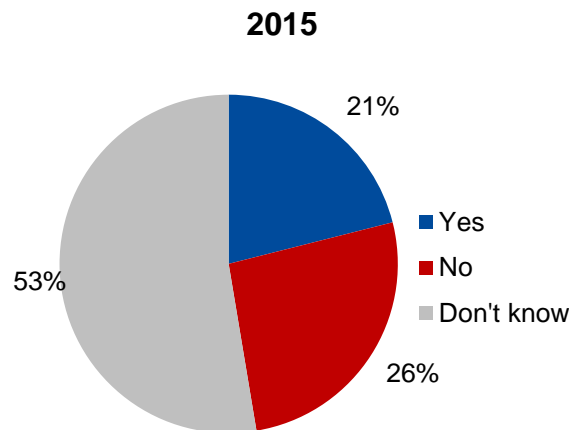
**Q14. Do you think the O&S function is integrated with corporate processes?**



Almost half of respondents in 2015 said they did not think O&S was integrated with corporate processes with the others split evenly between no and don't know. 78% of respondents answered yes in 2018, with 22% answering no. Whilst the increase in yes answers is positive, 18% of respondents in 2018 and 26% in 2015 did not answer the question or answered don't know, suggesting the meaning of the question was not very clear. The respondents' comments to this question recognised the integration to some degree but expressed that there were improvements still to be realised, particularly in terms of the stage at which issues are brought to O&S and their potential to influence these issues.

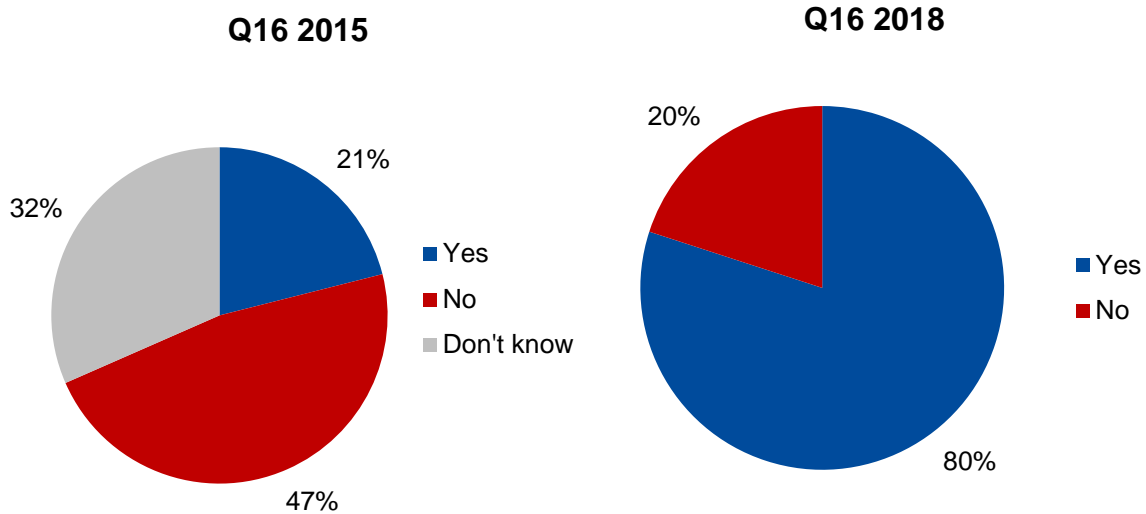
**Q15. What evidence is there that Scrutiny has (or is able to) contribute to service improvements?**

In 2015 respondents were asked 'is there evidence that Scrutiny has (or is able) to contribute to service improvements?' and in 2018 this question was altered slightly, as set out above.



Seven of the nine (78%) respondents who commented on this question listed positive outcomes O&S has had in the past year. Two respondents answered 'very little' and 'none' and the rest skipped this question. In the list of positive outcomes provided, Members referred to housing repairs, waste and recycling, the apprenticeship scheme, leisure centres, housing design standards and staff turnover. Two Members explicitly expressed the view that O&S now has the opportunity to influence the work of the Executive, and make recommendations, before it meets. Each of the four Committees has its own work programme and in-depth Scrutiny reviews and each Member, therefore, will have a different experience of Scrutiny. Further analysis of the views of respondents by Committee would provide more indication of the effectiveness of each Committee in delivering service improvements. Future developments and areas for improvement could then be broken down by Committee. However, all responses to the survey are anonymous.

## Q16. Do you think O&S fulfils its policy review and development roles?



When asked if they feel O&S fulfils its policy review and development roles, there was an increase of 59pp from 2015 to 2018. The percentage of those who answer no decreased significantly.

It is worth noting the useful role O&S committees have in policy development, and each of the O&S Committees has received policy based items in the past year. Whilst 80% is a good figure, one area for improvement is to ensure all O&S Members feel engaged in policy development particularly in the work of the various working groups established to undertake in-depth reviews.

## Q17. What do you feel O&S has achieved over the last 12 months?

Respondents were asked what they felt O&S had achieved over the last 12 months and their replies fell into three categories: deliverables (tangible outcomes such as reports or recommendations); improvements in ways of working; and impact on Executive decisions.

Respondents cited in-depth Scrutiny reviews including the Leisure Centre review, the Housing Design Standards review, Waste and Recycling Contracts review and Health Inequalities review as achievements of the last 12 months.

Some respondents expressed their view that O&S Members now have more meaningful participation with their expertise being used more effectively and working effectively as a team with officers.

One respondent felt that the outcomes of Executive had been improved through the work of O&S and another that the Executive better realised the importance of O&S.

In addition to completing the survey, Members were also encouraged to share their reflections more generally on the last 12 months of O&S.

One Member, who had taken part in two in-depth Scrutiny working groups in the first 12 months of the new O&S process, expressed their view that the support from officers had been brilliant and it had been a pleasure to work with their fellow colleagues in small groups. This Member said they found the working groups very interesting and worthwhile and believed they would make a valuable contribution to the way the Council operates and provides its services, hugely benefitting the residents of Waverley.

**Q18. Are there any further improvements in the O&S process you would like to see?**

One respondent expressed their concern at the resourcing levels of Scrutiny and emphasised the need for permanent officer Scrutiny support. Another respondent suggested putting the work programmes of the Committees in a more prominent place on the website for residents to access, a potential way to improve public engagement mentioned earlier in this report.

Finally, this comment was made in relation to the impact O&S has had on Executive considerations and enthusiasm of O&S Members:

'I would like to see some evidence that the work being carried out by the O&S committees is better appreciated by the Executive and that the hard work carried out by the enthusiastic councillors and very supportive officers is seriously taken into account when decisions are made. I fully acknowledge that there are many other factors to be taken into account by the Executive and senior management but Waverley should take advantage of the enthusiasm of back benchers who really want to make a difference. The support from officers associated with O&S has been excellent.'

## **Officer Reflections**

### **Alex Sargeson, Scrutiny Policy Officer (2017/18)**

This was the first Council year (2017-2018) that the new O&S arrangements were implemented; new Committees were designed, and a greater focus was given on creating an O&S that adds value to the policy decisions of the Executive and informs the direction of the Council. This was also the first year that Members on O&S had a dedicated Officer support, as recommended by a member-led review on the O&S arrangements (2016).

O&S at Waverley faced challenges, but Members have had an appetite to change how Scrutiny functions and equally, Officers understood the value of a Scrutiny system that lends itself as a resource to assist the Council in producing quality reports that inform policy. The current O&S system is now a process that is Member-led, but Officer supported; has strengthened its policy development capacity by producing more effective policy recommendations to the Executive and others, and is more strategically focused in how Scrutiny can add value to Executive's objectives and the Council's Corporate Priorities.

During this past year there has been a greater emphasis on 'pre-decision' Scrutiny; looking at decisions before they have been made in order for members to input, influence decisions, and where necessary improve them. Additionally, Members have been encouraged to put a greater emphasis on balancing their work programmes to ensure it reflects the issues and concerns of local residents. For instance, the Community Wellbeing Committee looked in-depth at the health inequalities within the Borough which covered and identified a range of issues concerning the health and wellbeing of residents; the Value for Money and Customer Service Committee examined the anticipated impact of Universal Credit and advised on the merit of the creation of a property company and subsequently the property investment strategy; the Environment Scrutiny Committee looked at the impact of Surrey County Council's proposals to change the services at Community recycling centres, including looking in-depth at the Council's Waste, Recycling and Street Cleaning Contract; and Housing reviewed in-depth the Council's Housing Design Standards for New Council Homes, and also looked at how the Homelessness Reduction Act would affect Waverley's most vulnerable residents.

### **Yasmine Makin, Policy Officer Scrutiny (2018)**

As Graduate Management Trainee I joined the Scrutiny team in September 2017. The new process had only been in place for a few months and each Committee had met only once. All the work that had been undertaken to contribute to the development of the new process was evident in the enthusiasm shown by both officers and Members; there was a real sense of change. Almost one year later I have been formally in post as Policy Officer for Scrutiny for nearly two months and

have seen that sense of change affect not only the work the Committees have embarked upon but also the approach both officers and Members take to Scrutiny.

Good practice tells us that O&S should be Member-led. Whilst officers and Members are still adapting to this new driving force of O&S, a good proportion of agenda items have been at the request of Members informed by strategic curiosity and constructive desire to enhance the output of the Council. The move from officer-led to Member-led has had an encouraging start but there is more opportunity to develop this and include items on Committee meeting agendas at the request of Members, resulting in more engaged debate and valuable outcomes.

One of the major successes of the new process is how items are brought to O&S before decisions have been made by the Executive; the O&S Committees exercise 'pre-decision' Scrutiny much more effectively. The in-depth working groups have also been a success of the new Scrutiny arrangements. O&S has been able to develop and inform policy through Committee meetings but particularly through these working groups. This is a change to the previous way of working that has enabled O&S to act as a resource for the Council and ultimately improve service delivery to residents.

A broader range of issues has been considered by the O&S process. In my opinion this is a result of both the influence of the first Policy Officer for Scrutiny, Alex Sargeson, and the interest of Members to look less internally and more at issues which affect our residents. This welcome change does require a shift in not just the approach of Members but also that of officers; it necessitates the acceptance and use of alternative sources of information to support the work of Scrutiny. As O&S progresses, more contacts and working relationships with external agencies will be formed to allow for these alternative sources to be utilised. This is one of the clear areas for improvement after one year of the new arrangements.



## **Conclusion**

### **Cllr John Ward**

The first year of the new O&S arrangements has been very productive and the results of the survey show that Members have seen an improvement in the effectiveness and value of Scrutiny.

A major area of success has been the policy development side of the O&S work. The in-depth reviews have contributed enormously to the work of the Council and have helped forge a firmer relationship with the Executive. These reviews have all been conducted with good cooperation between councillors of all parties and officers involved. The working groups have invariably led to recognisable improvements to outcomes in the areas of study.

The work of the O&S committees and reduction in committee size has also strengthened Members' level of service knowledge and in turn officers have been able to benefit from drawing on the expertise of Members.

Although, disappointingly, fewer Members took part in the repeat of the 2015 Survey, the results were generally very encouraging. It was particularly pleasing to see that a very high percentage of respondents felt that the new Committees were working more effectively with the Council's Executive and senior management.

Areas for improvement were highlighted through the survey, these being: publicising the work of O&S; increasing engagement/involvement with/from the public; and increasing liaison with external bodies such as other councils, emergency services and infrastructure suppliers. Consistent and well publicised webcasting and more effective use of social media, the press and the website could contribute to improvement in this element of Scrutiny.

Overall the re-organization of Waverley's O&S arrangements has led to a successful and productive year with the Committees not only **scrutinising** already-made decisions but actively **overviewing** the Executive process pre-decision, often by in-depth reviews of important matters.

### **Officer Contact**

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