

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committees – Annual Reports</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Council on 21 March 2024
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Graham Ebers, Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Resources and Assets

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to provide independent “critical friend” challenge and to work with the Council’s Executive and other public service providers for the benefit of the residents of the Borough.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council notes the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Reports for 2023/24.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to hold decision makers to account, both inside and outside the Council. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees provide independent “critical friend” challenge to the Council and other public service providers across the Borough.

The Committees also play a role in developing and reviewing policy and ensuring that the Council and its partners are working effectively to improve services for residents, businesses and visitors. Effective scrutiny is an important element of the successful functioning of local democracy.

The Council’s Constitution requires each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to submit an Annual Report. The Annual Reports are appended to this report. The Annual Reports give details of the issues considered during the year and the impact of the Scrutiny process on the Council and the wider community.

## Background

The Council's Constitution requires the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to submit Annual Reports setting out a summary of activity during the previous year and analysis of the impact of Scrutiny on the Borough.

The Annual Reports for 2023/24 are attached. The reports highlight some of the key challenges facing the Council, the issues considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees during the year and Scrutiny's impact on the Council and the wider community.

During 2022/23, the Council commissioned an external review of the Overview and Scrutiny function. The review concluded that the Council had in place the foundations for an effective Overview and Scrutiny system. Following the review, an action plan was developed. Progress against the action plan is monitored by the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee. Members and officers will continue to make positive changes, in line with best practice, to ensure that Overview and Scrutiny adds value to the democratic process at Wokingham Borough Council.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£Nil	NA	NA
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£Nil	NA	NA
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£Nil	NA	NA

#### **Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

None.

#### **Cross-Council Implications**

The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees impacts on all areas of the Council's operations along with other public service providers.

#### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

The Council's Equality Plan is scrutinised each year by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees also examine Equality Impact Assessments relating to service and policy changes.

**Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030***

During 2022/23, a Climate Emergency Overview and Scrutiny Committee was established. The Committee scrutinises progress against the targets in the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan. The Committee's annual report is set out in the appendix to this report.

**List of Background Papers**

None

<b>Contact</b> Neil Carr – Scrutiny Officer	<b>Service</b> Governance
<b>Telephone No</b> Tel: 0118 9746000	<b>Email</b> neil.carr@wokingham.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank