



Annual Scrutiny Report

2023 – 2024

London Borough of Hounslow

Hounslow House | 7 Bath Road, Hounslow, TW3 3EB

CONTENTS

Foreword	2
1 Scrutiny at the London Borough of Hounslow.....	3
Where does scrutiny fit in?	3
How scrutiny fits into the Borough	3
How scrutiny fits in to the Council	4
Who is involved in Scrutiny?	4
Meet our members	5
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)	5
Children and Young People (CYP) Scrutiny Panel	6
Health and Adults Care (HAC) Scrutiny Panel.....	6
Housing and Environment (H&E) Scrutiny Panel.....	7
2 Scrutiny year – at a glance.....	8
Over the last year... ..	8
The Committee’s work programme this year	9
Scrutiny in a Day	10
The Overview and Scrutiny Call-In Sub-Committee	12
Developing scrutiny.....	13
What impact has Scrutiny had this year?.....	14
3 What have we achieved since the last deep dive recommendations?	15
Housing and Environment.....	15
Health and Adults Care	16
Children and Young People	16
4 Deep dives 2023/24 – What have our panels found?	18
Housing and Environment.....	18
Children and Young People	22
Health and Adults Care	26
North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	28
5 Playing a role in scrutiny	29
How to get involved.....	29
Join a meeting	29
Participate in a call for evidence/views	29
Submit a scrutiny topic	29

FOREWORD



I'm pleased to introduce the 2023/24 Annual Scrutiny Report, setting out the work undertaken by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Scrutiny Panels.

Looking back on my second year as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, I am struck by the breadth of issues we have considered and their immediate relevance to the people we serve. Anti-social behaviour to quality housing, good work to biodiversity and flood resilience, social care to school readiness, healthcare to litter - we've considered issues that matter. We've also ensured we look beyond organisational boundaries, rather than limiting ourselves to the work of the Council alone.

I observe that scrutiny should operate on two levels. It is a key element of effective governance. In a formal sense, scrutiny happens in committee, but the impact of scrutiny also needs to be judged by changes in the real world. To that end, we have continued to try new things – look at our Scrutiny in a Day with housing associations – and strengthen our approach – learning not only from other local authorities, but also the independent Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. I look forward to seeing how the Centre's recommendations can support the organisation's commitment to effective scrutiny.

We've also had the opportunity to consider the impact of last year's scrutiny activity. It's not always possible to point to immediate change but, taking a longer perspective, my fellow scrutineers and I saw clear evidence of past recommendations and proposals now bearing fruit. I hope this focus on assessing impact in the medium- to long-term is something that the Committee continues to consider.

I would like to express my gratitude to all our guests, both from the Council and elsewhere, who contributed to scrutiny this year. Meaningful engagement with the Metropolitan Police, with housing associations, with the NHS, and with several Council departments has helped ensure the Committee has been able to consider Hounslow the borough, as much as Hounslow the Council. Our Panels have also been able to draw on the insight and expertise of more than a dozen external guests.

Similarly, the continued willingness of the Executive to engage so openly in the scrutiny process, and my standing invitation to attend Cabinet as an observer, has ensured we have been able to recognise that scrutiny and the executive work best when our different, but complementary, roles are acknowledged and where the Council recognises the value open, constructive debate brings.

Finally, I would like to put on record my thanks to my fellow scrutineers for their commitment to good scrutiny and their desire to see the Committee and its Panels have impact. I hope they found the work of scrutiny this year purposeful and can recognise their contributions throughout this annual report.

Cllr Sayyar Raza
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, London Borough of Hounslow

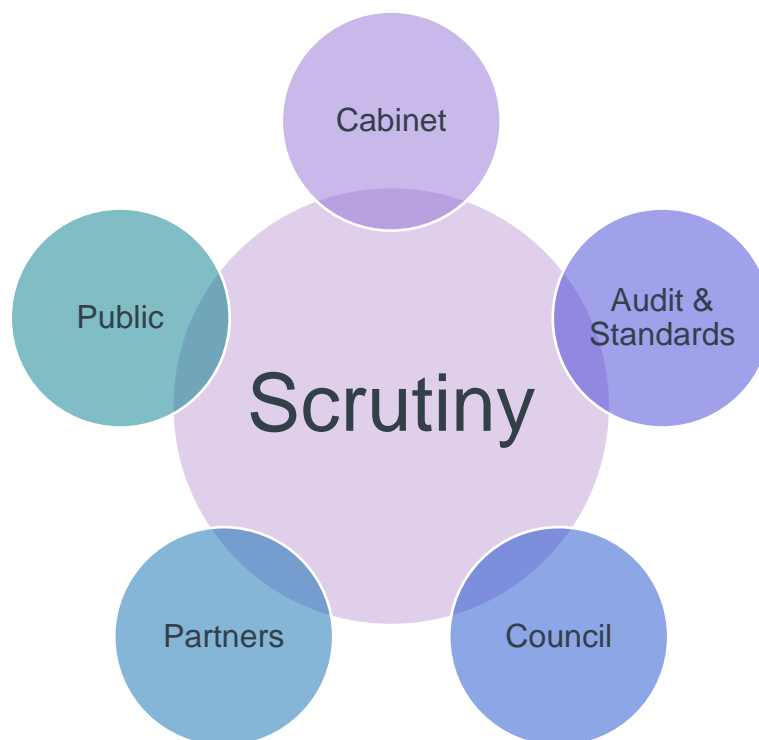
1 SCRUTINY AT THE LONDON BOROUGH OF HOUNSLOW

Where does scrutiny fit in?

Since the Local Government Act 2000, scrutiny has existed as a check and balance to councils' executives. There is no single approach to scrutiny across local government, but for most councils, scrutiny acts to hold the executive to account, review performance, develop and review policy, and investigate the effectiveness of partnership-working locally. The rationale for scrutiny is to allow Councillors to learn from residents and community representatives and provide recommendations around how services can be improved locally according to need and/or demand.

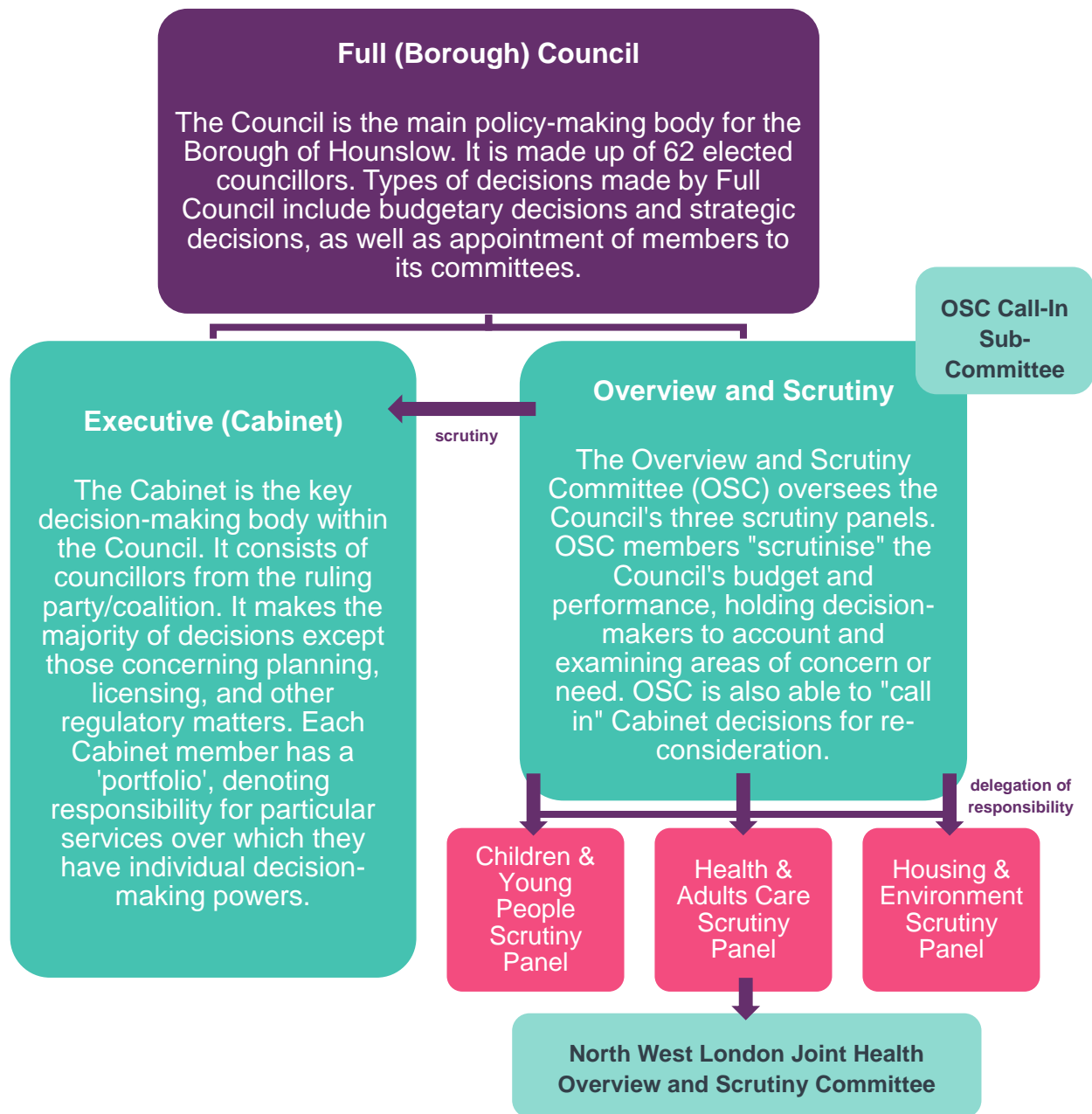
While the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) has no formal decision-making powers, at Hounslow, Scrutiny is used as a critical friend, with its remit concerning anything that can impact our residents and our Borough. To the Council, good scrutiny provides a constructive challenge to decisions made by the Executive, amplifies the voices and concerns of residents and communities in Hounslow, demonstrates independence from decision-makers, and ultimately drives improvement in public services.

How scrutiny fits into the Borough



Scrutiny plays an important role in maintaining and fostering engagement with the Council's partners – centring their expertise and using their perspectives and knowledge to shape our lines of inquiry. Partners that work closely with residents have been important contributors over the last municipal year, with organisations ranging from local schools, local employers and local Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) representatives all participating in scrutiny in 2023-24.

How scrutiny fits in to the Council



Who is involved in Scrutiny?

Hounslow’s [Overview and Scrutiny Committee \(OSC\)](#) typically meets up to six times over the municipal year, inviting guests and experts, and examining a range of issues in each meeting. There are also three distinct Scrutiny Panels, focussing on [Children and Young People](#), [Health and Adults Care](#), and [Housing and Environment](#). Each panel is chaired by a member of OSC and has between six to seven other councillors sitting on it, alongside a number of co-opted non-voting members.

The Call-In Sub-Committee exists solely to consider decisions that are called in by members. It consists of five members of OSC, based on political proportionality – it is in place to ensure that the Scrutiny function addresses call-ins in a timely fashion.

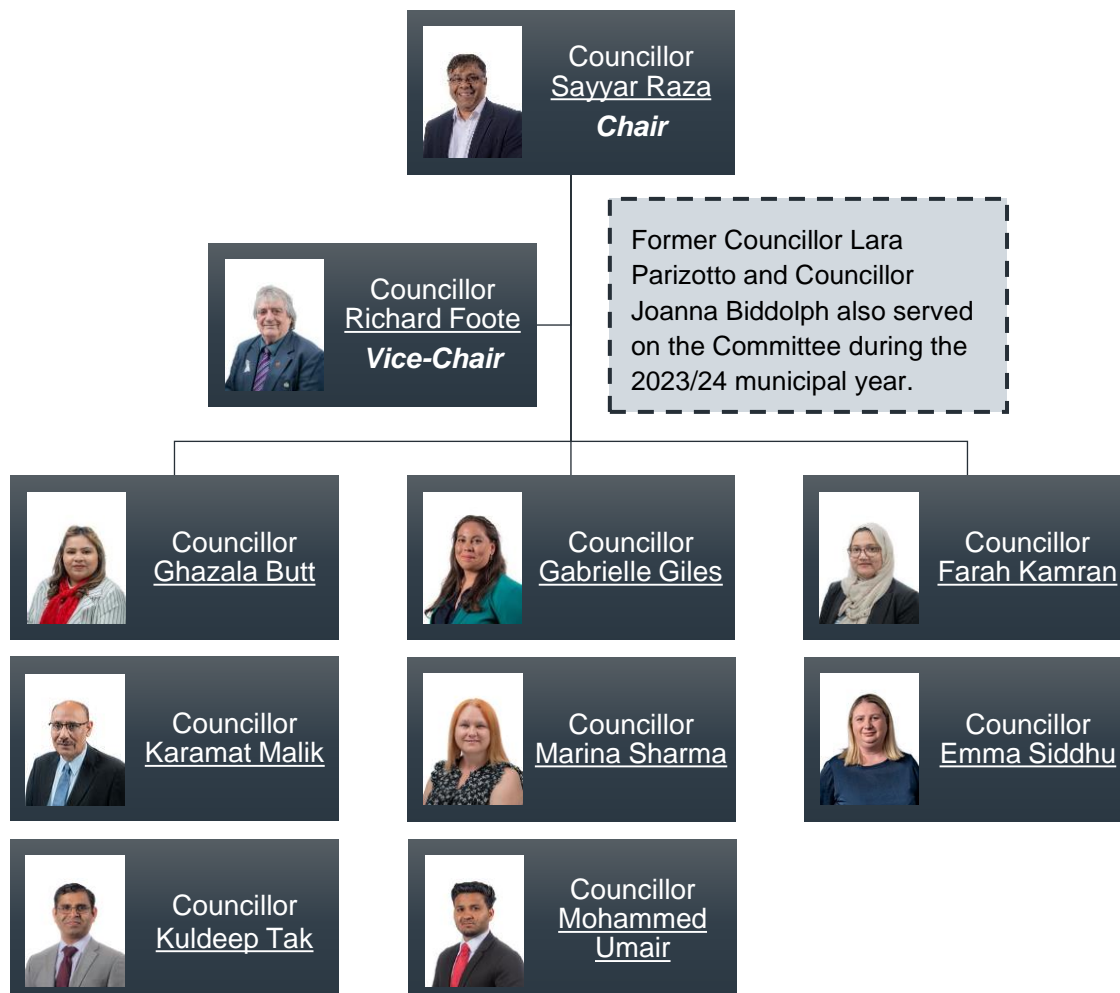
Finally, Hounslow also has a role to play in the North West London [Joint Health and Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) (JHOSC). This committee’s membership encompasses Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hillingdon, Harrow, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, Richmond, and Westminster. The Boroughs’ representatives convene around matters concerning the NHS.

While Scrutiny is a member-to-member process, the Committee values and encourages resident input. If there is an issue that you wish to see considered by OSC or one of our panels – we invite you to write to us at scrutiny@hounslow.gov.uk. More information is outlined later in this report.

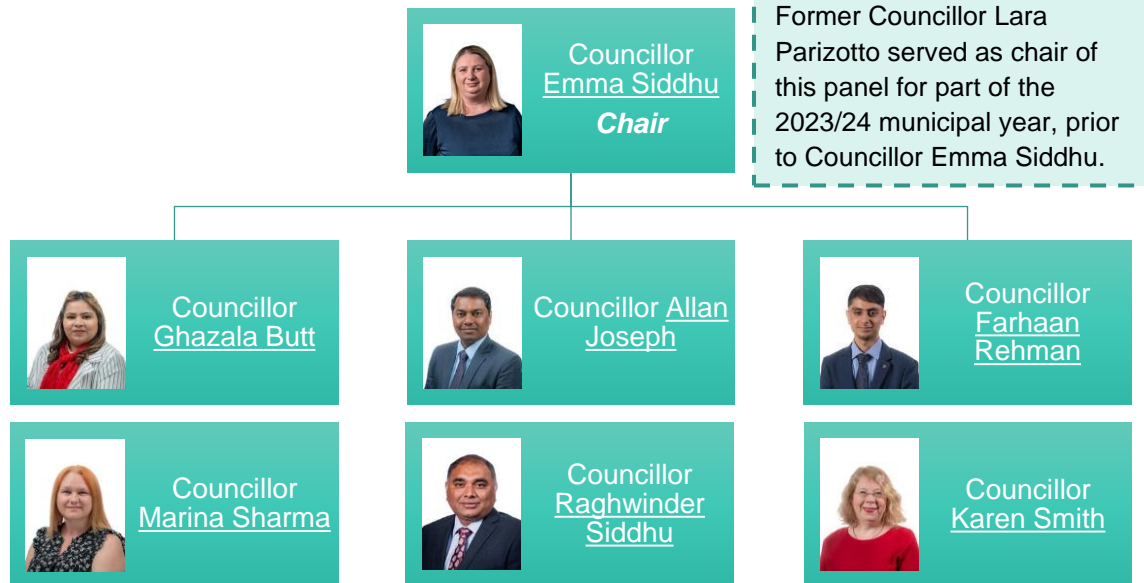
Meet our members

Scrutiny appointments for 2023/24 were recommended in June 2023. Full committee and panel membership is outlined below.

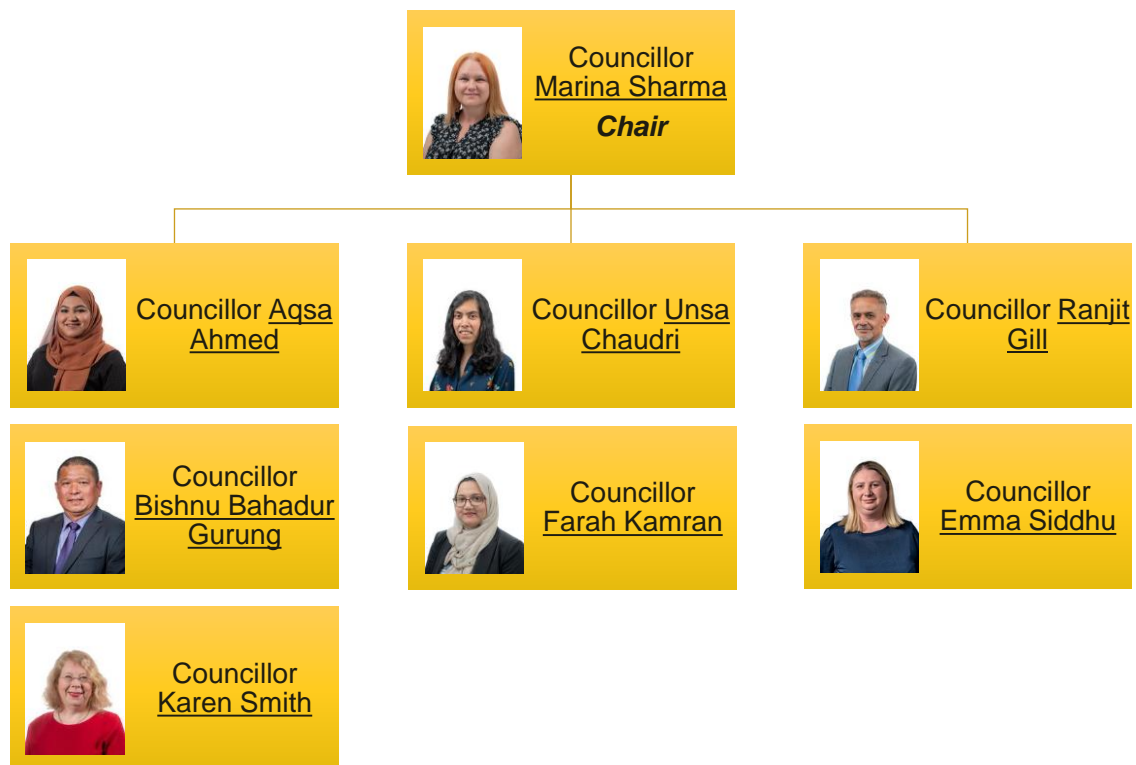
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)



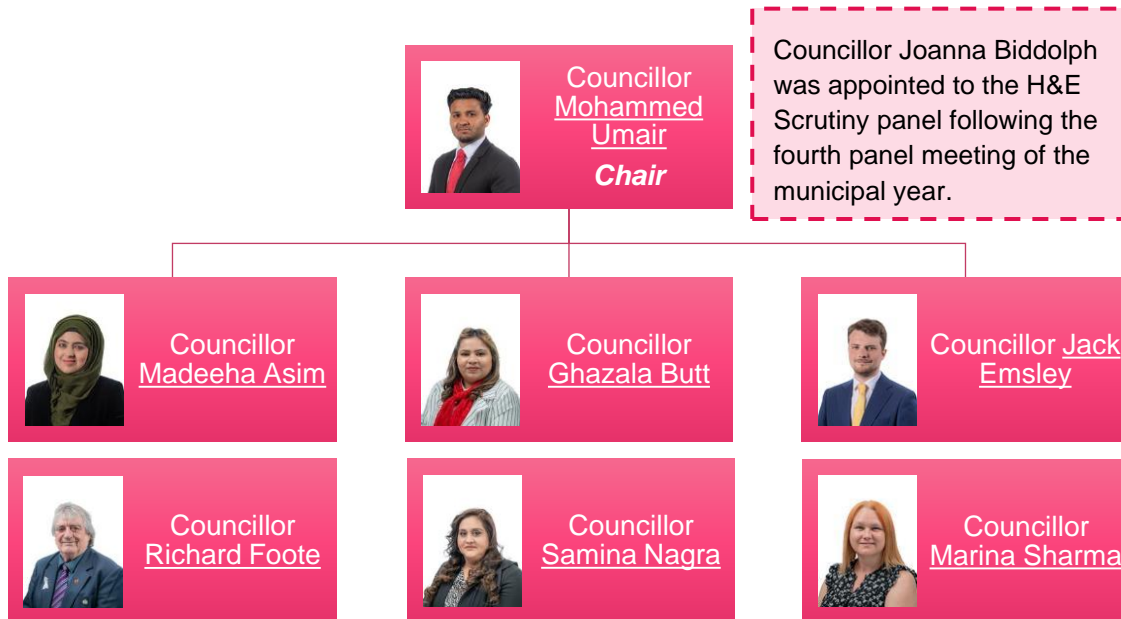
Children and Young People (CYP) Scrutiny Panel



Health and Adults Care (HAC) Scrutiny Panel



Housing and Environment (H&E) Scrutiny Panel



2 SCRUTINY YEAR – AT A GLANCE

In this scrutiny year, our panels have conducted deep dives into employment support available to SEND individuals, biodiversity and flood resilience, and school readiness of young children in Hounslow. The OSC has a broader remit and in addition to the topics covered in the Panels' deep dives, OSC has considered the work of various partners, including the Metropolitan Police, the West London NHS Trust, and Keep Hounslow Tidy, as well as housing associations. Last but not least, Hounslow has played a role in the North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC).

Over the last year...



The Committee's work programme this year

At the start of the municipal year, the Committee considers what issues could be potential focus areas for the upcoming year and proposes a work programme which is put forward in the first meeting of the year. Once the work programme has been agreed, it is used to structure discussions over subsequent meetings.

Despite being put in place early, the work programme is amenable to change over the course of the year, particularly in response to changing social, political, and economic circumstances. The rationale for setting the work programme in advance is to create an anchor point for the Committee, rather than a fixed point of reference.

Each meeting includes an opportunity to discuss and report on progress against the 2023/24 work programme. In addition to the below, the three Scrutiny Panels were asked to share relevant updates at each meeting, in addition to hearing from Hounslow's representative on the North West London JHOSC.

Meeting	Substantive items	Additional items
June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny appointments 2023/24 	
September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Keeping Hounslow Tidy' Neighbourhood Policing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery Plan Q1 Update West London NHS Trust –acute mental health provision update H&E Scrutiny Panel 22/23 – update on recommendations
November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One Hounslow Financial Strategy Housing Improvement plan Homelessness Prevention Service Update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery Plan Q2 Update Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy
February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024/25 Budget Delivery Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery Plan Q3 Update Ofsted outcomes: Westbrook Short Breaks Unit & The Ride Children's Home
May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Associations – Scrutiny in a Day Impact of the Social Housing Act Community Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery Plan Q4 Update CYP Scrutiny Panel 22/23 – update on recommendations HAC Scrutiny Panel 22/23 – update on recommendations Scrutiny Annual Report Suggestions for 2024/25 work programme

Scrutiny in a Day

In a departure from previous years, in addition to its formal meetings, the Committee also ran a ‘Scrutiny in a Day’ session in May 2024. The day brought together committee members and housing associations in a workshop-style setting, to consider social housing and improve tenant experience in the borough. Committee members spent time in Feltham and Hanworth scoping, scrutinising, and developing recommendations across the day. This approach is not only new for Hounslow, but also relatively innovative in the national context and shows the Committee’s commitment to creative and impactful scrutiny.



Scrutiny-in-a-day is a misnomer...because the amount of effort and planning before the big day is enormous! But when you manage to align the stars to make it happen, it feels much more rewarding for councillors and officers than the usual committee room fare.

‘Scrutiny in a Day’ was designed to centre residents’ experiences and consider relationships between residents and housing associations. As part of discussions, members heard and relayed challenges that local residents face when it comes to housing associations – particularly repairs, communication, anti-social behaviour. The invaluable contributions of housing association representatives led to fruitful conversations around collaboratively addressing these challenges. The Committee was pleased to hear that housing associations welcomed the space to consider these issues.

We recognise that good scrutiny must encompass an understanding and experience of localities being considered. With this in mind, the Committee heard from residents in Chiswick and Feltham, and visited Pieris House in Feltham, and Butts Farm in Hanworth. This provided first-hand exposure to the challenges raised during earlier discussions.



The day was successful, thanks to the contributions of members of the Committee; guests from A2Dominion, LB Hounslow’s housing function, Metropolitan Thames Valley, Peabody, Places for People, and Richmond Housing Partnership; and, crucially, residents in Chiswick, Feltham and Hanworth.

For face-to-face service delivery, understanding the area and how it impacts on residents’ experiences is absolutely essential. For that reason, I am also a big fan of the humble ward walk.

The feedback from attendees highlighted their appreciation for the day’s format, which it was felt created the right environment for open and honest conversations encompassing a range of perspectives and voices. When asked to describe the day in one word, attendees commonly stated “collaborative”, “informative” and “engaging” – this is a testament to the benefits of conducting scrutiny through novel approaches.

The Committee developed three overarching recommendations, agreed at the final OSC meeting of the 2023/24 municipal year:

1. **Better communications amongst housing professionals** – such as setting up a housing forum; sharing best practice; and improving how we use data to know who owns what properties.
2. **Better communications with local people** – including case management; highlighting local councillor profiles alongside handymen in housing association properties; and, again, being clear about who the landlord is for each place.
3. **Greater focus on place** – place is crucial and strengthened through initiatives such as housing estate inspections and including housing associations in ward walkabouts; creating connections between housing associations and LBH initiatives such as Thriving Communities Strategy and Safer Communities officers; and emphasising that we collectively can serve residents better if we work across organisations.

These recommendations have been shared with the Council's housing association partners.

The Overview and Scrutiny Call-In Sub-Committee

In addition to the Committee's full meetings, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Call-In Sub Committee met [in September](#) in response to a request from Cllr Peter Thompson that a Cabinet decision relating to an Experimental Traffic Order on Cycleway 9 was called-in.

The Sub-Committee, having taken evidence from Cllr Thompson; Cllr Katherine Dunne as Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment, and Transport; and John Futcher from Transport for London decided by majority vote that the challenge to the Cabinet decision should be taken no further, and that the Cabinet decision could be implemented.

Developing scrutiny

We want to be able to scrutinise effectively. As with any element of the Council's business, this means we need to commit to developing our skills. For scrutineers, development takes place:

- **formally** as part of the Council's wider Member development programme and through attendance at external conferences and training sessions, both regionally and nationally; and
- **informally**, through targeted issue-specific briefings and regular engagement with Council reports, external research papers, and current thinking on the issues we consider.

This year we have also taken a wider look at scrutiny as a function and a cornerstone of good corporate governance. This is a piece of work that benefits from an external, independent perspective and we commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny to look at Hounslow's approach. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny has supported local authorities since 2003 and their review, which is concluding as this report was finalised, focuses on culture, information, and impact.

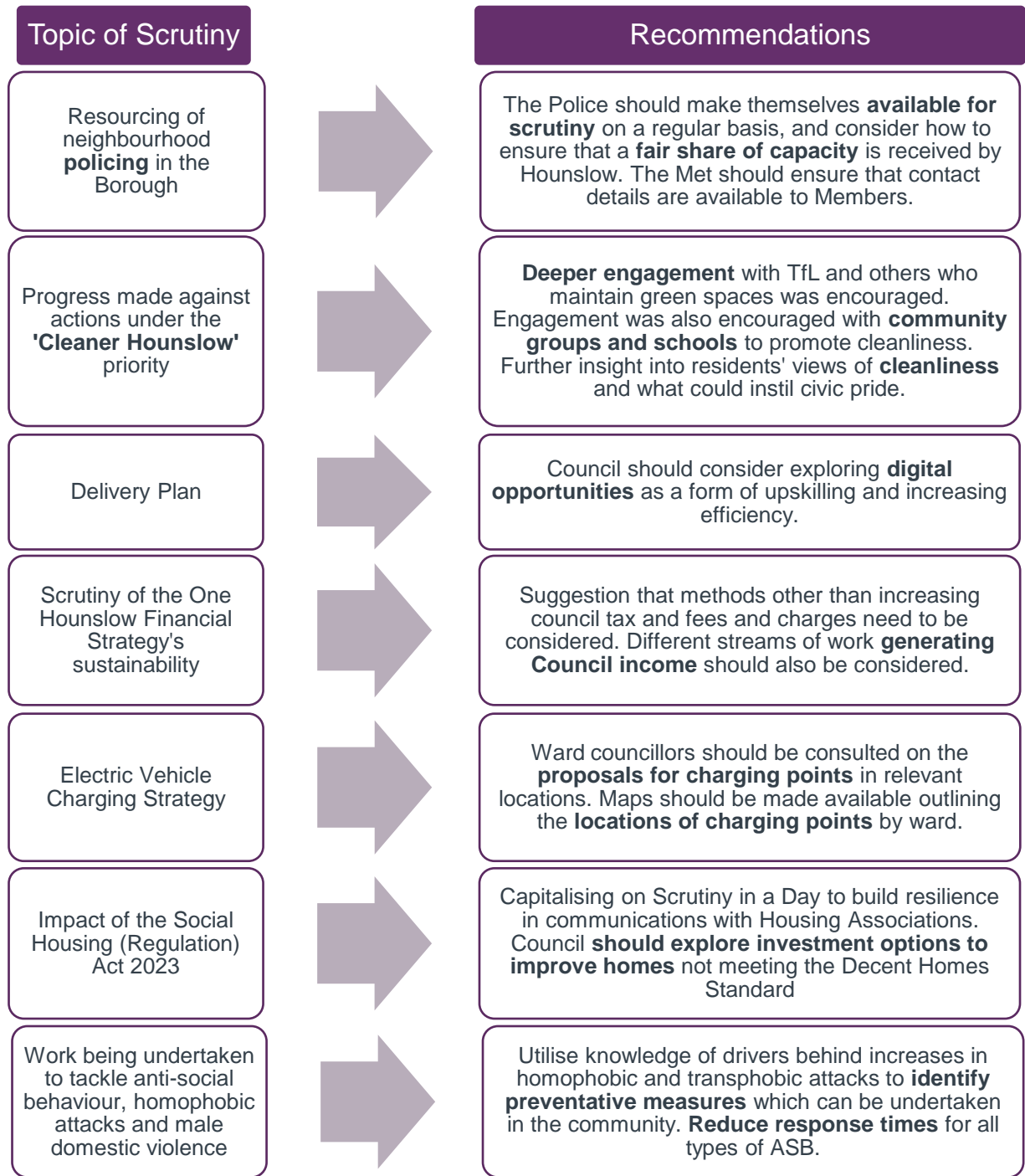
Through interviews and workshops with members and officers, as well as desk research, the Centre is helping us understand how scrutiny can develop through 2024/25 and beyond. This is in addition to making recommendations based on best practice elsewhere and suggesting ways in which work programming can be made as impactful as possible.

This will be valuable both corporately – as we consider how we can collectively maximise the value we get from scrutiny – and as an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, not least in work planning for the 2024/25 municipal year which will begin in June.

What impact has Scrutiny had this year?

Good scrutiny can demonstrate impact; we do this in several ways. Our Panels investigate issues in depth over the course of a year, making recommendations to decisionmakers. We then revisit those recommendations in the years that follow to understand what difference our suggestions have made. The Committee takes a broader view, scrutinising a range of issues that matter to local people and, following investigation and discussion in committee, make recommendations to our guests.

What follows highlights the recommendations the Committee has made this year. We then turn to the work of last year’s Panels and assess how those recommendations have been adopted and the difference they have made.



3 WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED SINCE THE LAST DEEP DIVE RECOMMENDATIONS?

Housing and Environment

In September 2023, OSC received [a progress update](#) from the Council's Housing Service in implementing previous recommendations. These had been made following the H&E Scrutiny Panel's previous deep dives into the Homelessness service and the Repairs service.

From the 2021/22 (Homelessness Review) recommendations, progress had been made against 9 of the 10 recommended actions. Four recommendations had been completed:

1. Providing information on expected waiting times.
2. Redesigning the homelessness service telephone system – removing redundant steps in the call handling process and providing support more quickly.
3. Delivering diversity and inclusion training to staff – which is now a mandatory part of the corporate induction programme.
4. Reviewing staffing levels as appropriate – leading to a decision to create additional roles relating to voids and temporary accommodation).

Further to the above, five recommendations that were in progress, but not yet completed:

5. Reviewing the housing application process to ensure that it is as streamlined as possible (with no duplication of stages) and not overly demanding on applicants.
6. Reviewing the Council's void standard for new lets (which had been subsumed by wider work on ending the void process).
7. Updating the e-form for applicants to include protected characteristics (though it was noted that these would need to then be incorporated into the new NEC system).
8. Benchmarking the homelessness journey in Hounslow against peers, which was in progress due to a change in management incorporating experience from across London-based housing services.
9. Ensuring wider housing staff have access to key systems – staff access to ICT was audited and access to core systems ensured across the board, as well as an agreement that other systems (e.g., land registry that come with additional costs/requirements would be arranged on a bespoke basis).

The only 2021/22 recommendation that had not been progressed was around establishing a newsletter for register applicants – due to being incompatible with the Council's Allocations Policy at the time. It was noted that the recommendation would be retained and implemented at a later stage if appropriate (i.e. if involvement of applicants in the allocations process became more significant).

From the 2022/23 deep dive (Repairs Review), progress had been made against all recommendations, though none had been completed to date.

1. Review of the role, use and oversight of contractors (Lampton Services), and implementation of a plan to reduce overdue jobs, including ringfencing operative and planner resources.

2. Implementation of feedback, through periodic deep dives, and monthly reviews focussing on resident satisfaction and trend analysis with regard to complaints.
3. Reviewing KPIs for repairs and revising these KPIs to focus on responsive repairs and minor works (now under the responsibility of Lampton Services).
4. Addressing the repairs booking process collaboratively – between the Council's Contact Centre, Asset Investment/Programme Management service and Lampton Services. Focus on streamlining the journey from reporting to completion.
5. Reviewing the Council's end-to-end void process and procedures, with a pilot in June 2023 exploring how to make more effective use of operative and supervisor time and resources.

Health and Adults Care

In May 2024, OSC received a [progress update](#) from the Council's Children's and Adults' Services on the implementation of previous HAC panel recommendations. These recommendations came from the 2022/23 deep dive review into services for people with dementia and their carers.

The following six recommendations were in progress and under regular review:

1. The Borough Based Partnership (BBP) work with services to ensure adequate post-diagnosis referrals are made into clinical and community pathways.
2. The BBP consider ways to communicate and coordinate work between dementia care services.
3. The Dementia Care Alliance and BBP review and ensure that services are sufficient and effective to keep up with community needs.
4. Take forward outputs from the Carer's Listening Sessions into changes in career support options.
5. The BBP review and consider people living with dementia and their carers' access to timely and useful information.
6. The Dementia Action Alliance and LBH work to encourage all organisations to implement dementia-friendly training; supported by a public information campaign.

The following two recommendations were completed at time of reporting:

7. CIDS (Cognitive Impairment and Dementia Services) and the BBP's work with GPs and care providers to encourage timely end-of-life or advance care planning, enabling earlier conversations about final wishes and power of attorney/care at end of life.
8. Consider how the Floating Support Service, VCSE befriending, or Side by Side initiatives could help those living alone with dementia to deal with correspondence.

Children and Young People

In May 2024, OSC received a [progress update](#) from the Council's Children's and Adults' Services on implementation of previous CYP panel recommendations. These recommendations came from the 2022/23 deep dive into the experiences of children seeking asylum, those with status as an

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC) or those already in the United Kingdom seeking asylum / immigration status known to services.

The following six recommendations were in progress and under regular review:

1. Review and implement robust procedures to identify immigration status and citizenship of a child when care proceedings are going to be initiated.
2. Ensure that the Council maintains appropriate records of immigration applications made for children in our care, to ensure that the application can be progressed or passed on to the care leaver.
3. Ensure social workers have access to information on how to identify the immigration status of a child they are working with, and be aware of signposting procedures for a child in need of a Home Office application for their status.
4. Restart the UASC support group to provide information and a community of support for UASC children.
5. Support councillors to use their influence to encourage foster carers to support LAC and UASC children.
6. Encourage councillors to challenge derogatory narratives about asylum seekers and defend the rights of UASC in our care.

In addition to the above, the following recommendation had been successfully completed at time of reporting:

7. Providing materials on British citizenship and other immigration applications to social workers, for sharing with families who may need this advice.

4 DEEP DIVES 2023/24 – WHAT HAVE OUR PANELS FOUND?

Housing and Environment



“As I reflect on the past year’s deep dive into biodiversity and flood resilience, I’m immensely grateful for all the contributions we’ve received. Special thanks to my colleagues on the panel—Cllrs Asim, Butt, Emsley, Foote, Nagra, and Sharma—and to our dedicated co-optee, Jo Gilbert of WildChiswick, who have generously given their time and enthusiasm. We’ve also been fortunate to welcome many guests, from Ealing to Sutton to Heston, who have brought their knowledge, passion, and a wealth of inspiration.

Together, we’ve explored how housing and environmental needs can be thoughtfully met through policy and action, ensuring that Hounslow’s natural wildlife continues to thrive for future generations. Looking ahead, I hope our panel remains focused on housing and environmental issues at the community level; it’s here that change—and scrutiny—begins.

By maintaining this collaborative spirit and embracing our role as a critical friend, scrutiny can help build a greener, more liveable, and thriving Hounslow for everyone.”

Cllr Mohammed Umair, Chair

Over the last year, the Panel has conducted a deep dive into biodiversity and flood resilience in the Borough. In particular, the deep dive has explored how the Council could fulfil its statutory duties to ensure a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) for all approved planning applications (maintained for at least 30 years), as well as how to improve biodiversity and flood resilience more widely across Hounslow.

Across the municipal year, four panel meetings have taken place, along with two engagement sessions. The first engagement session was an evidence session from the Greenspace Information for Greater London centring around biodiversity, flood resilience and species hotspots in the borough. The second engagement session was a nature walk in Boston Manor Park, Robin Grove, and Waterman’s Park (joined by Friends of Waterman’s Park), covering biodiversity at different scales of regeneration.

Date	Event	Activity
4 Jul 2023	Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of deep dive process and agreed topic Drafted terms of reference
21 Nov 2023	Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received an overview from Deputy Leader and portfolio holder for Environment, Climate and Transport <p>Received evidence from LBH officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Director Environment, Culture and Customer Services; Head of Parks, Development and Green Infrastructure; In-house Ecologist Head of Resilience and Contingency Planning Head of Development Management
13 Dec 2023	Engagement	Received evidence from Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL)
14 Jan 2024	Engagement	Nature walk in Boston Manor Park and met with Friends of Waterman's Park
31 Jan 2024	Meeting	Received evidence from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Biodiversity Officer at Sutton Council Ealing Wildlife Group, Ealing Council Metis Consultants, and Project Engineer at Havant Council Heston Action Group
11 Mar 2024	Meeting	Considered evidence and developed findings and recommendations.

Since its introduction in February 2024, England's BNG policy has mandated a focus on protecting and creating habitats for new development. The Panel identified key challenges with the policy's approach, such as how it quantifies nature, and the lack of third-party oversight to ensure developers meet the 10 per cent increase in biodiversity units. Sutton Council shared valuable insights and learnings with the Panel based on their experience operationalising BNG.

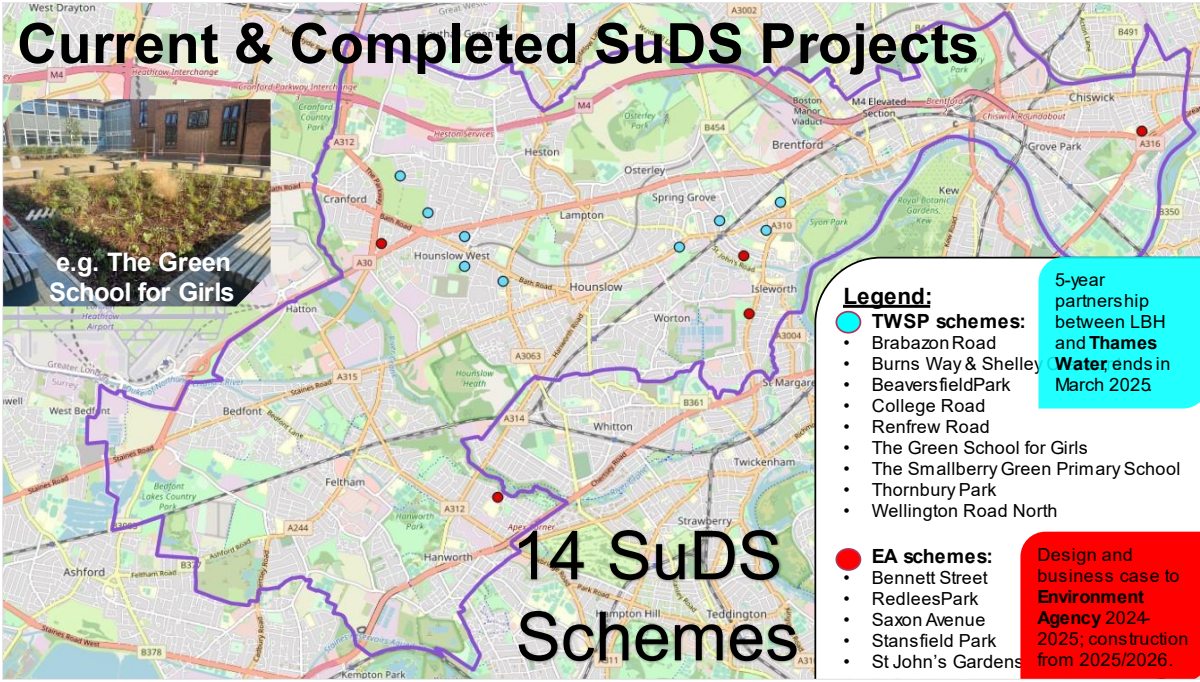
While there have been marked improvements in in-house ecological expertise within LBH, the Panel noted the challenge of ensuring that borough-wide developments sufficiently compensate for the habitat damage that they cause. This is driven by the lack of wider governance and enforcement mechanisms over the long-term. The Panel considered the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) as a measure that could address gaps identified in BNG, supporting biodiversity net gain as well as sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS).

The highest risk areas across the Borough for surface water flood risk are Bedfont, Hanworth Park, Heston West, Hounslow Central and Isleworth. These areas are home to a cluster of current and completed SuDS projects, some of which are the result of a Thames Water-LBH partnership, while others are set to be Environment Agency funded schemes. There are also a number of Priority Habitats (those deemed to be of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity) present in areas of Hounslow where there are no 'Friends of Parks' group(s) – namely Heston West, Heston East and Cranford. It was therefore deemed by the Panel that these areas should be where future conservation efforts are focussed.

Current & Completed SuDS Projects



e.g. The Green School for Girls



Legend:

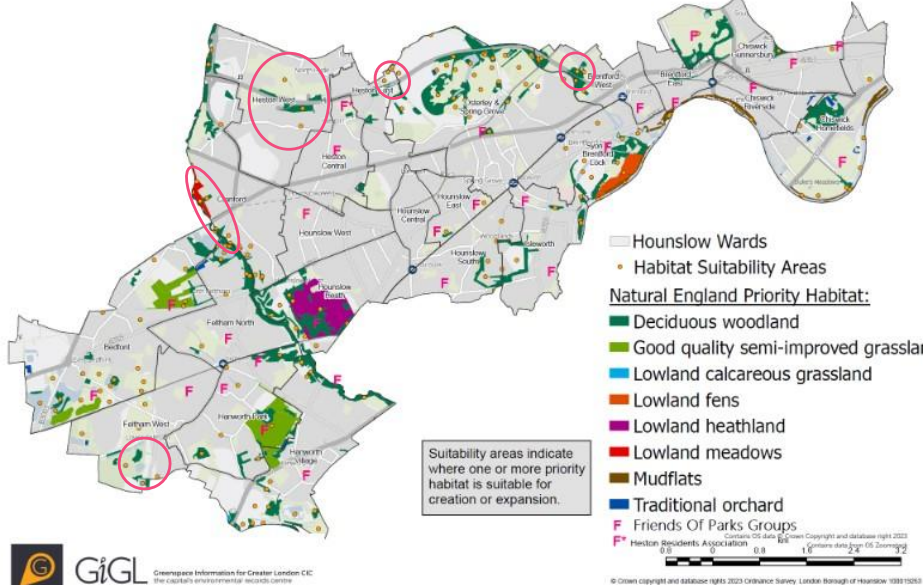
- TWSP schemes:**
 - Brabazon Road
 - Burns Way & Shelley
 - Beaversfield Park
 - College Road
 - Renfrew Road
 - The Green School for Girls
 - The Smallberry Green Primary School
 - Thornbury Park
 - Wellington Road North
- EA schemes:**
 - Bennett Street
 - Redlees Park
 - Saxon Avenue
 - Stansfield Park
 - St John's Gardens

5-year partnership between LBH and Thames Water ends in March 2025

Design and business case to Environment Agency 2024-2025; construction from 2025/2026.

Priority Habitats and Suitability Areas

Produced by Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC, on behalf of the London Borough of Hounslow, November 2023



Priority Habitats are those which are deemed to be of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity, being listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

There are currently 26 Friends Of Groups across the borough though activity levels may vary.

Heston West, Heston East and Cranford are the only three wards with habitat suitability areas and no Friends Of Parks Groups.

Habitat clusters with no nearby Friends Of groups are circled in pink.

The Hounslow Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP), published in February 2024, was accompanied by the launch of a Nature Recovery Stakeholder Board. The strategy's mission is to "enhance biodiversity as a broad and cohesive network across the borough alongside wider environmental benefits such as flood alleviation, carbon sequestration and strengthening climate change resilience". Alongside the NRAP, the Single Local Plan, Green Infrastructure Strategy, BNG, Green Flag Management Plans, and Friends of Groups were identified by the Panel as being interdependent policies that have direct effects on Hounslow's biodiversity and flood resilience. It is expected by the Panel that interdepartmental discussions around these policies will increase – providing an increased opportunity for consolidation and collaboration.

The Panel found that a thriving ecosystem in Hounslow would require time, scale, and coordination. Panel guests provided a breadth of case studies: from the reintroduction of Beavers in Ealing to de-

paving and replacing concrete with wildflowers in Rotterdam. Going forward, the Panel believes that green or disused urban spaces with low resident participation and formal representation could provide opportunities to scale up biodiversity – which the Council could support by facilitating, removing barriers, providing advice, and offering incentives.

Resident Training/Up-skilling								
Method	Residents			Community Groups	Education sector			
	Households	Individuals	Streets		Nursery	Primary	Secondary	College
De-Pave	▲	▲	▲	▲		▲	▲	▲
Green Roof	▲	▲	▲	▲		▲	▲	▲
Managing Wildly	▲	▲		▲		▲	▲	
Solitary pollinators	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Basic Gardening	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Installing Water Butts	▲	▲	▲	▲			▲	▲
Creating Habitats	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Water quality safaris	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Bat Walks	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
Wildlife safaris	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Basic Plumbing	▲	▲		▲			▲	▲

Overall, despite challenges stemming from a lack of clear government guidance on BNG, the Panel commends ongoing efforts by officers within LBH. The recommendations set out below represent practical first steps, based on key findings of the deep dive, for the Council and community partners/members. The intention behind these recommendations is to empower residents to take environmental action, however small, to strengthen the borough-wide ecosystem of activity that sits behind our biodiversity and flood resilience.

Following the deep dive, recommendations were formulated based on the findings. These recommendations are based on planning, environmental, and community needs:

1. LBH should include the Urban Greening Factor in the Local Plan to address gaps in Biodiversity Net Gain.
2. LBH should use our Local Plan to ensure developments within critical drainage areas provide increased storage through Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS).
3. LBH and GreenSpace360 should conduct an annual tree audit for the 20,000 pledged trees, to confirm survival rates for previously planted trees and pinpoint areas in the borough which would benefit from increased tree planting.
4. LBH and GreenSpace360 should increase environmental stewardship in areas with priority habitats and flood resilience potential, but limited voluntary presence, by helping to form community groups or allocating extra resources.
5. LBH and relevant partners should launch a borough-wide ‘Hounslow Wildlife Network’ to connect individuals, community groups, and schools around nature.
6. LBH should integrate community participation and consider social value when commissioning ‘Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)’ surveys through citizen science initiatives.
7. LBH should provide fiscal or in-kind support for communities seeking to implement Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) or de-pave areas, encouraging street-level participation through initiatives like ‘neighbourhood garden awards’.

Children and Young People



“I am greatly pleased with the children and young people scrutiny panel’s deep dive research and recommendations this municipal year. The topic of school readiness is fundamental to preparing children to thrive in a formal school environment, with further impacts to longer-term life outcomes. Our research sheds light on the current picture of school readiness within Hounslow across diverse demographics and areas, highlighted barriers to child development, and looked at the vital work the Council currently does to support families.

I would like to extend thanks to my fellow panel members for their contribution to the panel – Cllrs Butt, Joseph, Rehman, Sharma, Siddhu, and Smith alongside our co-optees: parent governor representatives Jennie Tweedy and Kamran Asghar, and Youth Council representative Deya Kudaibergenova.

Additionally, I greatly appreciate the efforts of the officers and external guest speakers - across education and public health, the VCSE sector, and the NHS - who provided the panel with invaluable insight and expertise throughout the process.

I look forward to the next municipal year’s deep dive, and continuing the great work of the panel.”

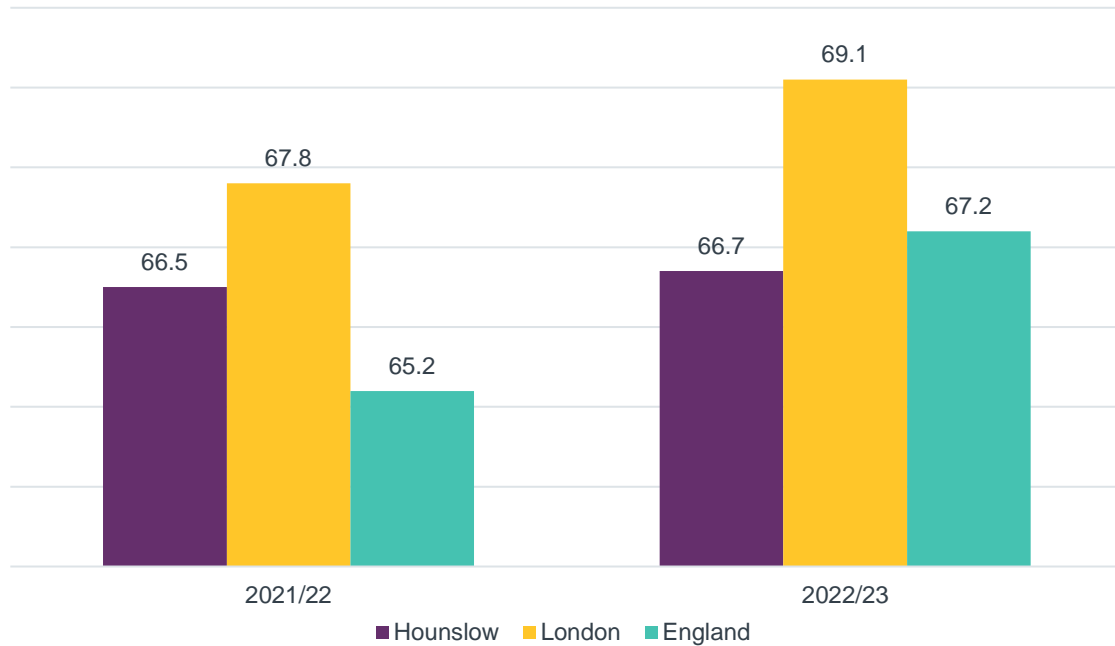
Cllr Emma Siddhu, Chair

Over the last year, the Panel has conducted a deep dive into ‘school readiness’: the development of children between the ages of 0-5 years. As a metric, school readiness incorporates many areas which make up a child’s development and indicates their life chances and long-term outcomes. In particular, the Panel wished to consider how circumstances following the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as wider socio-economic and wellbeing factors affect school readiness. The Panel sought to investigate how the health, education and voluntary sector as a system can increase the number of children reaching ‘good development’.

During the municipal year, there have been four meetings, and two additional panel sessions. The first additional session consisted of a site visit to the Beavers Childrens Centre, involving observation of a Childrens activity group session alongside an opportunity for engagement with parents and facilitators. Secondly, a Family Hubs information session took place, where current programmes and partnerships across the borough to support school readiness were summarised.

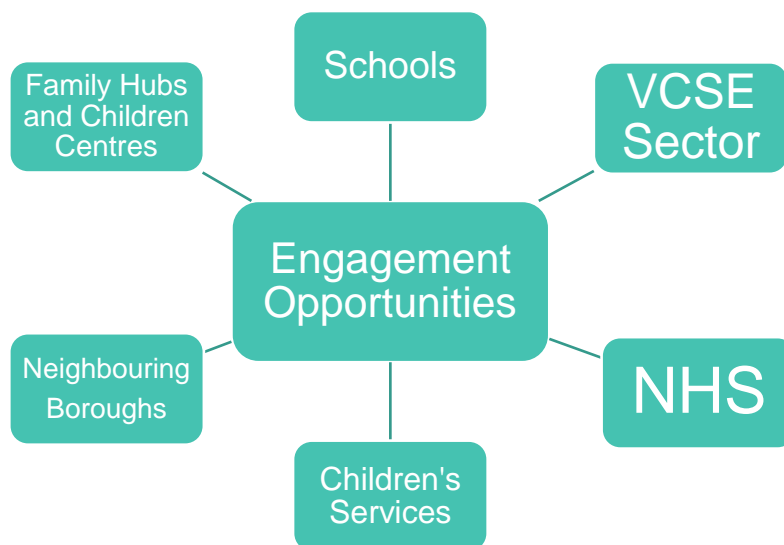
Date	Event	Activity
6 Sep 2023	Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Background discussion on selected topic ▪ Establishing scope of the deep dive, developing Terms of Reference
13 Nov 2023	Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduction from the Lead Member for education, skills and employment, and Executive Director of Children’s and Adult Services ▪ Overview of school readiness from the directors of lifelong learning, and public health ▪ Contributions from headteacher of Green Dragon Primary, with support from headteacher of Ivy Bridge Primary School
15 Jan 2024	Engagement	<p>Site visit to Beavers Childrens Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shadowing a session and engagement with parents and facilitators
29 Jan 2024	Meeting	<p>Received evidence from external organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reach Foundation ▪ Home Start ▪ NHS
26 Feb 2024	Presentation	Family Hubs Information Session
19 Mar 2024	Meeting	Review of evidence and discuss recommendations

Percentage of children achieving 'good level of development' by the end of reception (%)



While school readiness - measured using the Government’s standardised Early Years Foundation Stage Framework - was found to be increasing in all areas, Hounslow’s increase has not been as pronounced as London’s or England’s. In addition to this, Hounslow ranked below national average in terms of universal check-ups entitled to 2-2½-year-olds, with only 47.2 per cent of children in the borough receiving a review by the time they turned 2½ years old, in 2022/23. The Panel noted the importance of entitlement uptake in being able to support parents and determined that promoting these check-ups through the wider system could contribute to school readiness.

The Panel adopted a systems-based approach to considering school readiness and heard from representatives across several areas feeding into school readiness. A central link through these areas is the Children Centres, of which there are 10 across the borough that exist to support the development of children aged 0-5. Three of these centres have been transformed into Family Hubs under a Department for Education national pilot programme.



The Panel were shared learnings from Richmond Borough (which currently has the highest school readiness in London), spreading awareness of their plans to set up a cross-borough network of Early Years professionals. In addition, the Panel received information on the Council's current offer, as well as understanding how VCSE organisations and the NHS play a role too. For instance, the Reach Foundation outlined their work in building capacity and developing the Early Years Workforce, Home-Start described their use of peer support to help families with at least one child under 5, and the Hounslow & Richmond Community Health Trust shared the NHS support that is available through them. This approach to the deep dive made it clear that cross-borough networks are vital in boosting school readiness, alongside partnership between organisations with a common cause.

Overall, the Panel recorded the key barriers to achieving school readiness, informed by discussion and stakeholder engagement. These included the challenge of being a first-time parent (particularly without a wider network or experience raising children); awareness of and access to support available in the Borough through Family Hubs or children's centres; physical health; unmet demand for SEN support; and socialisation hindered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Concluding the deep dive, recommendations were formulated based on the findings:

1. Summary sheet/leaflet of all provided services within borough as a digestible and accessible promotional leaflet/handout. To be distributed throughout the system and through councillors out in the community. To be produced in different languages and not only in a digital format.
2. More information sent to Councillors around the current services supporting school readiness, so they can signpost whilst engaging with the community and communicate service information out. This includes relevant NHS provision and may be communicated through leaflets or email updates.
3. More showcasing/exposure of partners that directly support school readiness (for example, Home-Start) at a wider range of community events, such as Area Forums.
4. Advocate for implementation of standardised school readiness 'checklists' with goal milestones to be met before starting school, to raise awareness of expected development at this age (toilet training, washing hands, tying shoelaces etc). Checklists to be distributed before nursery/reception starts, and signposting to be included to FH/CC for any support needed. Distribution through schools upon registering, but also more widely through FHs and NHS too. Setting clear expectations for what children should be able to do from nursery to reception.
5. Restart summer programmes for school readiness through the Family Hubs/ Childrens Centres e.g., what used to be the 'Let's Get Ready' Programmes. To be run in the summer term before starting nursery and/or reception and collates a series of sessions that are already run by the Family Hubs (but branded to raise awareness and suggest what support families may find useful ahead of the start of nursery/ reception).
6. Engage with cross-borough networks to learn from other Council's best practice (Richmond's prospective multi-borough network). This is to benchmark and observe how other boroughs are dealing with duplication of statutory programmes (especially relevant for closer statistical neighbours). A potential avenue being to link with other Council's on the Family Hubs Programme.

Health and Adults Care



“I am very happy to have been able to participate in the OSC and JHOSC in this last municipal year. As panel chair for the Health and Adult Care scrutiny panel, we took a deep dive into employability support available to individuals with special educational needs and disability (SEND) as we were keen to identify best practice and to improve existing support.

I would like to thank my vice chair Cllr Farah Kamran and councillors on the panel for their enthusiastic support throughout the municipal year. Thanks to the following for their contributions: Sally Malit and Sarfraz Kherdin, Speak Out in Hounslow; Aastha Binjarjka, co-optee (Healthwatch); Karen Adam, Our Barn; Shafali Shown-Keen, McDonalds Franchise Operator; and staff and volunteers at Our Barn. Further, our deep dive work would not have been possible without contributions from officers representing children and adults’ services, lifelong learning, skills & employment, organisational development, and community and day provisions.

My hope for the following year is that the panel continues the great work that they have been involved over the last 2 years. I hope they continue to highlight the excellent work of officers and departments, by working collaboratively as a critical friend.”

Cllr Marina Sharma, Chair

The 2023-24 municipal year has seen the Panel take a deep dive into employment support available for individuals with special educational needs and disability (SEND) in the Borough. In particular, the Panel was keen to identify examples of best practice and how existing support could be improved or spread further.

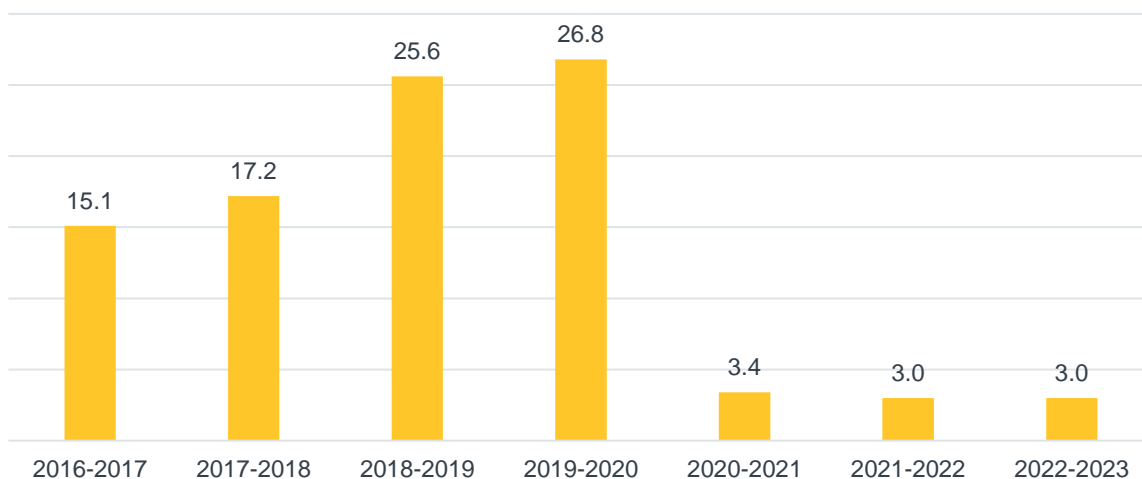
Over the course of the year, the panel has met four times, and has had one engagement session. During the engagement session, panel members visited Our Barn in Brentford, providing an opportunity to engage with an important VCSE group that contributes to the learning, life skills and social interaction of individuals with SEND aged 16-35.

Date	Event	Activity
11 Jul 2023	Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Panel agreed on deep dive topic ▪ Explored statistics available relating to SEND individuals ▪ Drafted the terms of reference

15 Nov 2023	Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of SEND services offered by LBH Officers from the Community Provisions team provided information about our offer to SEND individuals Outline of work by Speak Out in Hounslow
15 Jan 2024	Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation from Community Provisions Manager, about the service and Project SEARCH. Contribution from a franchise owner that provides work experience opportunities to SEND individuals
8 Mar 2024	Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visited Our Barn at the Brentford Museum of Water and Steam
14 Mar 2024	Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the evidence and develop findings and recommendations

The Panel’s investigations brought important insights into Hounslow’s circumstances – the Borough is home to 1,135 adults (25+) with a learning disability, neurodivergence, and those with learning support needs. Although this falls below the London and England averages, the current raft of support is targeted specifically at young adults (below the age of 25). This is likely to reflect on the fact that employment of adults with SEND in Hounslow has fallen from 26.7% in 2020 to 3.2% according to the most recent figures.

Proportion of adults with a learning disability in paid employment in Hounslow (%)



The SEND local offer refers to the Council’s statutory responsibility – covering education; Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs); health; support; and preparing for adulthood. In addition, Hounslow has a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (IASS) which predominantly supports children. For individuals aged 17-24-years-old, Hounslow’s DFN Project SEARCH programme provides additional support into employment.

Speaking to officers within the Council highlighted the wide array of barriers to employment for adults with a learning disability, neurodivergence, and those with learning support needs. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Stigma and stereotypes
- Limited access to education and training
- Communication challenges
- Social isolation
- Sensory sensitivities
- Transportation and mobility barriers
- Inaccessible technology
- Lack of support for job coaching and supported employment
- Age-related challenges
- Lack of job coaches
- Lack of self-esteem and confidence
- Discrimination and bias
- Fear of losing benefits
- Parent/carer issues

On top of barriers faced by those looking to enter employment, the Panel also recognised the challenges that employers face in employing or recruiting adults with a learning disability, neurodivergence, and those with learning support needs. These include a lack of awareness and understanding around appropriate accommodations, a lack of job coaches or adequately trained mentors internally, use of inaccessible technology, and internalised discrimination and bias. The Panel deemed the sharing of success stories and case studies to be a potential first step to challenging misconceptions and stigma around employing individuals with SEND.

One of the Panel's guests oversees Hounslow's Project SEARCH internship programme, which forms a key part of the local offer supporting SEND individuals into paid employment. This is done in collaboration with well-established local businesses, such as GSK and the Marriott Hotel. The Panel were inspired by the success of Project SEARCH. While the programme has a national success rate of 60 per cent of participants finding full-time employment, that figure stands at 70 per cent in Hounslow – the Panel were keen to replicate this success for over-25s.

The Panel was also joined by co-optees from Speak Out in Hounslow, a charity supporting adults with learning disabilities and autism and are an important partner for many VCSE organisations in the Borough. The Panel felt that an expansion of the bid-writing support that charity partners can obtain would further the impressive work already taking place.

Overall, the Panel heard many examples of positive work being done across Hounslow, from local employers who have well-established schemes for employing SEND individuals. However, it became clear through the investigation that the majority of the support available locally is targeted at those aged 25 and below. The recommendations made by the Panel reflect a desire to continue work alongside the VCSE sector, and use success stories to shift the narrative around employing individuals with SEND.

Informed by engagement, data, and evidence provided, the Panel has made six recommendations to address service users' needs using Council resources:

1. Expansion of the employment and skills offer from the Council and its partners to adults (25+) with a learning disability, neurodivergence, and those with learning support needs, supporting more to access 'good work'.
2. Share success stories of adults (25+) with a learning disability, neurodivergence, and those with learning support needs who have been supported into work by the Council and its partners and use these cases to promote to local employers the benefits of employing adults (25+) with a learning disability, neurodivergence, and those with learning support needs.

3. Develop relationships with locally based organisations and employers to further encourage them to create schemes for employing adults (25+) individuals with a learning disability, neurodivergence, and those with learning support needs. This includes working with the Opportunities Alliance (of employers) supporting the Youth Skills Employment Guarantee programme.
4. The Council's SEND Employability Plan should create clear employability pathways for young people, 19+, who are eligible for support from Adult Services, supporting more adults (25+) with a learning disability, neurodivergence, and those with learning support needs to access and sustain 'good work'.
5. Increase of specialised job coaches to support, expanding the capacity of Council teams to engage with adults (25+) with a learning disability, neurodivergence, and those with learning support needs.
6. Increased support for the bid-writing process for charitable partners. While we do provide some training the panel would like to see this be expanded.

North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Since agreeing its work plan in June 2023, JHOSC has met four times over the course of 2023-24, reviewing a wide range of issues across the region. Hounslow was represented by Cllr Marina Sharma.

July's meeting saw the Committee look at the North West London (NWL) strategy for acute beds. Progress against standardising ophthalmology services was also reviewed, covering the closure of Operose in Ealing and Hounslow.

September brought a review of NWL Mental Health and Estate Strategies, along with methods to maximize the use of acute beds – considering the closure of inpatient mental health services at Gordon Hospital. The Committee considered a proposal for consultation on palliative care.

In December, Hounslow had the privilege of [hosting the Committee](#) at Hounslow House. The Committee assessed the NWL workforce strategy and questioned ambulance service performance, which has seen delayed response times for Category 2 calls. It was noted that Hounslow had remained particularly resilient, thanks to the training at Brentford's paramedic centre and the success of virtual wards at West Middlesex.

The Committee also received an update on the new orthopaedic centre in Central Middlesex, which is now operational. In response to the committee's feedback, the NWL Integrated Care System (ICS) implemented a ring-fenced transport facility, using ambulances to provide free travel for those facing complex or costly journeys to the centre.

During the final March meeting, the Committee questioned the proposed rollout of 'same-day access hubs'. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) has temporarily shelved plans for the April 1st introduction following concerns raised by GPs, patient groups, and councillors.

The Committee also considered the prevalence of obesity and weight management services, noting that NWL has higher childhood obesity rates than its other London counterparts. The ICB's plans to invest £107.2 million in dental activity, across 315 practices, were also reviewed. Finally, the Panel looked at 'Pharmacy First', an initiative which allows pharmacists to prescribe antibiotics for certain conditions, which should reduce healthcare pressure in the system.

5 PLAYING A ROLE IN SCRUTINY

How to get involved

Scrutiny is designed to serve the best interests of residents, and address challenges that residents in the Borough are facing. This report has outlined what OSC and the three Scrutiny Panels have done this year, and we welcome residents' views on what our investigations should centre around next year.

If you are interested in getting involved in Scrutiny, there are a few ways that you can do this:

Join a meeting

Scrutiny Committee [meetings](#) are open to the public to attend. Otherwise, all Committee meetings can be streamed via [YouTube](#).

Participate in a call for evidence/views

Where relevant, Scrutiny Panels or the Committee call for contributions from residents and/or experts on their views. These calls for evidence are shared via:



The ['What's on in Scrutiny'](#) webpage



[London Borough of Hounslow Facebook](#) page



[London Borough of Hounslow Instagram](#)

Submit a scrutiny topic

Members of the public and community groups are encouraged to suggest possible scrutiny review topics, where they deem that an issue should be included on the scrutiny work programme.

Scrutiny is more likely to consider an issue if it is shown to affect a significant number of people in Hounslow, and we greatly appreciate supporting evidence along with your concern.

Individual service complaints, planning issues, and/or issues that have been addressed by another council [committee](#) in the last 12 months (except where relating to a process) are unable to be considered.

For further information – or to get involved – please contact us or visit our website using the details below.



scrutiny@hounslow.gov.uk



[About Scrutiny | London Borough of Hounslow](#)