

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2018-2019

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Acknowledgements

I am pleased to present this year's Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report, which contains information about the Committee's activity over the past year.

It has been a demanding year for the Council which continues to face challenges in delivering services to the residents of South Derbyshire. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been tasked with analysing and monitoring services in order to provide constructive feedback to increase efficiency as well as, where possible, reduce costs.

This Annual Report demonstrates the wide range of issues that have been considered within the scrutiny process and providing committee members the opportunity to select areas to review. It has also been noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's interest in a number of work programme areas has inspired action aimed at improving key services elsewhere in the Council's democratic structure, e.g. waste collection and street scene, which can only be a positive move for the benefit of local residents.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognises and appreciates the valuable contributions that Elected Members, Officers and representatives of organisations have made towards its work, and acknowledges that without this support and co-operation, it could not fulfil its aim to improve services for the benefit of South Derbyshire residents.

Councillor Stuart Swann
Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

1. Background

1.1 Purpose of the Report

This is the Annual Report to Council from Overview and Scrutiny, as required by Article 6 of the Council's Constitution.

Overview and Scrutiny plays an important part in local government decision-making and is a principal way of achieving open, democratic accountability for the provision of public services. The aim of Overview and Scrutiny is to improve public services and quality of life for local residents. Its main value is in holding the Council and other service providers to account, monitoring performance and in its capacity to inform and influence the actions of the Council and its partners. Overview and Scrutiny is a legal requirement, introduced by the Local Government Act 2000, extended in later legislation, and consolidated in the Localism Act of 2011. Overview and Scrutiny allows Councillors to examine, question and evaluate various functions of the Council and other providers of public services on behalf of the public in an open and effective way.

The report outlines how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has discharged its functions during the municipal year 2018/19 and details the current position and outcomes of its activities.

1.2 Composition of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee consists of eight Members; five Members of the Conservative Group and three Members of the Labour Group, in accordance with the political balance of the Council.

For the period of May 2018 to May 2019, the following Members were appointed to the Committee:

Conservative Group

Councillor Swann (Chairman), Councillor Wyatt (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Atkin, Councillor Murray and Councillor Mrs Patten

Labour Group

Councillor Bambrick, Councillor Dr Pearson and Councillor Mrs Stuart

1.3 Main Purposes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The main purposes of the Committee are as follows:-

- (a) Write reports and/or make recommendations to Council, Policy Committees or Area Forums in connection with the formulation of policy and the discharge of any functions.
- (b) Consider any matter affecting the District or its residents.

- (c) Review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions.
- (d) Exercise the Call-In procedure in respect of decisions made, but not yet implemented, by any Policy Committee or Area Forum.
- (e) Oversee the appropriate processes and report findings to the relevant Policy Committee.

1.4 Functions of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- (a) Holding the Council and its statutory partners to account in the public interest, enabling transparent and effective decision-making. This includes the power to 'call-in' a decision made by any policy committee that has not yet been implemented. (See 1.6)
- (b) Supporting effective policies and initiatives, which have a beneficial impact on the community through policy review and development.
- (c) Contributing to continuous improvement in services through monitoring quarterly departmental performance reports and the implementation of improvement plans.
- (d) Having a positive impact on the work and outcomes of external agencies and providers of public services.
- (e) Aiding Councillors in engaging with their communities and playing the role of community representatives and leaders.

1.5 Meetings

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee usually meets every six weeks, on Wednesday evenings at the Council's Civic Offices. In order to engage on a more direct level with residents, meetings can also be taken out into the community. Meetings are held in Open session, unless there are Exempt items for consideration by the Committee. Additional task groups can be set-up to undertake work on the Committee's behalf, which usually happens when there is a need to review a topic in greater depth.

1.6 Call-In of Policy Committee Decisions

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to determine 'call-in' requests of any policy committee decision made but not implemented. During the year 2018/19, the Committee was not required to deal with any 'called in' decisions or requests from Policy Committees for specific investigations.

1.7 Member Requests

Any Member of the Council is able to request an item, relevant to the functions of the Committee, to be included in the Work Programme for review. During the 2018/19 municipal year, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a Member of the Council requested Multi-Team Working and Section 106 Health Allocations be added to the Work Programme for a detailed review.

2. Specific Areas of Activity

2.1 The Annual Report

In March 2019, the Committee considered the draft Annual Report for the 2018/19 municipal year, which looks at each of the priorities in turn and provides an overview of some of the outcomes achieved by the Committee and how it has discharged its function throughout the year.

2.2 Setting the Committee Work Programme

The Committee held a scoping meeting in June 2018 outlining suggestions on how the Committee might identify and agree possible issues to form the basis of its Work Programme during the forthcoming municipal year. Members considered a range of potential areas for the Committee to review and the specific focus of their attention.

The key areas identified were:

- (a) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000
- (b) The Budget 2019/2020
- (c) Update on Section 106 Health Allocations
- (d) Rural Play Provision
- (e) Universal Credit
- (f) Rural Broadband
- (g) Customer Services/Engagement
- (h) Housing Stock/Allocations/Monitoring
- (i) Litter Collection
- (j) Multi-Team Working
- (k) Safer Neighbourhood Grants

A short summary of the Committee's work during the year is set out below.

(a) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)

The Committee has a standing function to monitor the Council's use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIPA) on a quarterly basis, following the Council's Inspection by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners. The Committee noted the Council's use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 Policy and Guidance during the municipal year 2018/19.

(b) The Budget 2019/20

The Committee has a responsibility to assist the Finance and Management Committee to review the budget proposals. The Committee considered the Budget, the General Fund and capital at a meeting in January 2019. Members were also invited to attend policy-setting meetings and Area Forums where detailed presentations were given. The Committee was satisfied with the work undertaken and the outcome of the review of the Budget. The Committee Chairman also delivered a verbal update to the Finance and Management Committee, noting its review of the budgetary matters presented by the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources). He reported that the Committee had carefully considered the budget reports and acknowledged the potential financial challenges facing the Council, but no matters of significance from an overview and scrutiny perspective were cited for further investigation.

(c) Update on Section 106 Health Allocations

The Committee invited a representative from the Clinical Commissioning Group to attend a Committee Meeting, where an update was provided by the NHS Senior Primary Care Commissioning Manager, who informed Committee the four Clinical Commissioning Groups in Derbyshire were developing a Derbyshire-wide Strategy and Sustainable Transformation Plan, updating the Estates Plan and a South Derbyshire influenced Section 106 template was now in place across Derbyshire.

In relation to Section 106 matters, monies were being used flexibly to accommodate recruitment challenges to support existing resources. The Committee took note that strategic planning was improving, which was allowing for an improved ability to meet changing needs with better working practices.

(d) Rural Play Provision

Following the completion of an audit on play facilities within the District carried out by an external contractor, the draft findings were presented to the Committee to be reviewed. It was determined that overall, the play facilities within the District were above average quality, though there were identified issues with some sites relating to poor signage and appearance. A proposed action plan would include the development of a rolling programme to ensure signage remained up to date. A further recommendation, which was welcomed by the Committee, was the move to a bespoke electronic system to improve the accuracy of recording identified issues and efficiency in responding.

(e) Universal Credit

The Committee was updated by the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) on the preparations undertaken by the Council in anticipation of the full rollout of Universal Credit. Actions taken to date have included contacting tenants affected by the rollout, securing IT facilities to accommodate electronic application submissions, applicable staff have received necessary training through the Department of Work and Pensions, budgeting support surgeries for tenants have been implemented and a revision of performance processing monitoring has been completed. Members considered the preparations made to ensure a smooth transition, but remain vigilant to the potential impact Universal Credit may have on debt and arrears.

(f) Rural Broadband

A presentation was delivered to the Committee by the Programme Manager from Digital Derbyshire, which outlined the progress of supplying fibre broadband to 105,000 households by 2020, with a majority of premises having been completed. The scheme was initiated to assist those in rural communities, though there remained some difficulties for some local residents and businesses to access broadband, even though this was now available and is something Rural Broadband will continue to address.

(g) Customer Service/Engagement

This item was added to the Work Programme as the Committee wished to monitor the measures taken to ensure a consistent approach to customer services and engagement was instilled across the Council. The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) updated the Committee that a new matrix to monitor service provision would be piloted, which would assist in identifying and tailoring training requirements.

(h) Housing Stock/Allocations/Monitoring

The Housing Services Manager provided the Committee with specific details of the current housing stock and outlined Savills had been commissioned to undertake a physical survey of 10% of current housing stock to help assist in revising the management strategy and planned improvement programme; an analysis of fire safety of Council owned dwellings was also being undertaken. The Committee was updated on the Council's Allocations Policy and explored the priority banding system based on housing needs. The Allocations Policy is due to be reviewed following the introduction of the new choice based lettings software. The Committee also noted the service plan to monitor Housing Services performance outlined proactive approaches to address challenges, which had been identified for over the next five years.

(i) Litter Collection

The Committee reviewed the current activities undertaken by the Council to tackle litter within the District that is complimentary to the Government's Litter Strategy for England. Such activities reviewed included evaluating the Council's proactive response to fly tipping, including the legal powers utilised by the Council and using social media to deter people from fly tipping, and the Green Dog Walkers Pledge initiative, which encourages the community to be invested in reducing issues of dog fouling. The Committee noted the main provisions outlined from the litter strategy and the possible implications upon Council resources.

(j) Multi-Team Working

The Chairman requested this item was brought to Committee for discussion. The Strategic Director (Service Delivery) advised the Committee, outlining the strategies that have been developed to ensure a consistent performance standard is carried out across all remits of service delivery.

(k) Safer Neighbourhood Grants

The Committee was updated on the performance of the Safer and Stronger Neighbourhood funding stream, specifically the community development initiatives successfully supported through the scheme. The Committee gave consideration on how the funding stream should continue to operate and the different approaches to advertising were noted.

3 Challenges for 2019-2020

- To build on, and update, the achievements of Overview & Scrutiny.
- To ensure that Overview and Scrutiny continues to make a positive contribution to the development of policy and the continuous improvement of the Council's operations.
- To continue to ensure the Overview and Scrutiny work programme reflects concerns of service users, community and the public.
- To continue to ensure Overview and Scrutiny works with the community and key partners to respond to local concerns.
- To continue to ensure that the work of Overview and Scrutiny has a positive effect on decision-makers and provides evidence that it has made a real difference.
- To ensure Overview and Scrutiny takes a more active, appropriate role in respect of the work of the Policy Committees and their decisions.
- To balance the focus of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee both inward on existing and proposed Council services, and outward to other areas of the community and partner organisations.
- To build on the existing scoping procedure to make it more robust, to ensure the original scope is used as a point of reference for each work programme item and a tool to measure progress and the value being added by the committee as it completes its work.

Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
March 2019