

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2019-2020



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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 Jim Hewlett
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 2019/20 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 2019 to May 2020, the following Members were appointed to the Committee:

Conservative Group

Councillor Hewlett (Chairman), Councillor Brady (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Atkin, Councillor Corbin and Councillor Dawson

Labour Group

Councillor Bambrick, Councillor Gee 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 2019/20, 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 2019/20 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 2020, the Committee considered the draft Annual Report for the 2019/20 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 2019 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 20/21
- (c) Update on Section 106 Health Allocations
- (d) Rural Play Provision
- (e) Update on Universal Credit
- (f) Affordable Housing
- (g) Balancing Ponds
- (h) Rural Broadband
- (i) Cycling Provision in South Derbyshire
- (j) Performance Measures and Benchmarking

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 2019/20.

(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 2020. 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 Planning Delivery Team Leader provided a verbal update to the Committee highlighting that a central contact at the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had been appointed and was working collaboratively with officers. Noting that the CCG are currently developing a strategy to ensure their requests for funding are appropriately targeted

All Members were invited to attend training on Section 106 Agreements

(d) Rural Play Provision

The Committee was updated by the Cultural Services Manager who outlined the report and advised on the contents and implications of the Play Audit and Action Plan. The Audit was conducted by an independent consultant and included preliminary recommendations for improvements in the Action Plan. The Committee noted that Action Plan following on from the completion of the District-wide play audit and considered the implications for play provision across the District.

(e) Update on Universal Credit

The Committee was updated by the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) impact of Universal Credit during the past year, following a further phased roll-out in November 2018. Members were also updated on the impact for Council tenants and the HRA, the Council's wider role in supporting claimants, together with the impact on benefits processing and the emerging impact on Council resources in that service area.

The Committee considered the current position and progress in implementing actions for supporting tenants and potential claimants of Universal Credit as well as the impact on resources in Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits, together with planned actions to mitigate the risks associated with changes in working practices

(f) Affordable Housing

The Strategic Housing Manager provided Members with a visual and verbal presentation which included how this Council delivers affordable housing. The Strategic Housing Manager advised that affordable housing for 2019/2020 with 250 new homes to be completed by end of March 2020 were on target. The presentation included a breakdown of affordable housing by Ward and dwelling type and the Strategic Housing Manager

advised that challenges to delivery had been identified in the procurement process which could be addressed additional staffing

(g) Balancing Ponds

The Planning Delivery Team Leader provided a verbal update with advice to the Committee that there could be adoption and maintenance guidance available for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) from Derbyshire County Council by next year. The guidance could provide this Council with the required standards for balancing ponds

The Committee agreed to further study of balancing ponds and SUDS by the Environmental and Development Services Committee.

(h) Rural Broadband

Digital Derbyshire gave a presentation to the Committee giving an overview of the Fibre Broadband installation Programme across the County, from 2015 and explained what it to be expected in the future until the end of 2020, highlighting the progress in South Derbyshire. Digital Derbyshire also informed Members of a number of external schemes that are available to companies and residents to enable possible access to broadband.

The Committee have invited Digital Derbyshire to come back to give update them on progress in the future.

(i) Cycling Provision in South Derbyshire

The Sport and Health Partnership Manager and the Planning Policy Officer updated the Committee on the Derbyshire Cycle Plan 2016 to 2030 which included the emerging proposals to improve the cycling infrastructure and cycling participation in the County and specifically in South Derbyshire. The Committee was also informed of the current cycling provision across South Derbyshire and was updated on the development of a Key Cycle Network for Derbyshire and the implication for proposed routes in South Derbyshire.

The Committee was interested in how elements of the County Council's proposed cycle network can be secured through approved Planning Applications and requested that this be explored.

(j) Performance Measures and Benchmarking

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) provide an overview of the Council's arrangement for measuring performance and benchmarking as part of the Committee's work programme for 2019/20 Members were updated on the Council's

established performance management system which measures performance against key performance indicators in the Corporate Plan and other performance measures contained within Service Plans. Quarterly Performance Reports go to the relevant Policy Committees and highlight successful performance but also focus on areas that are performing below target to ensure that corrective action, where possible, is put in place.

The Committee suggested that Procurement be the next focus.

3 Challenges for 2020-21

- 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 2020