

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2020/21



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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.

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 Sean Bambrick
Chair 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 2020/21 and details the current position and outcomes of its activities.

1.2 **Composition of Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

From May 2020 until January 2021 the Committee consisted 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 2020 to July 2020, the following Members were appointed to the Committee:

Conservative Group

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

Labour Group

Councillor Bambrick, Councillor Gee and Councillor Stuart

For the period of July 2020 to January 2021, the following Members were appointed to the Committee:

Conservative Group

Councillor Hewlett (Chair), Councillor Roberts (Vice-Chair), Councillor Atkin, Councillor Brady and Councillor Corbin

Labour Group

Councillor Bambrick, Councillor Gee and Councillor Stuart

From January 2021 until May 2021 the Committee consisted of eight Members: three Members of the Labour Group, three Members of the Conservative Group, one Member of the Independent Group and one vacancy in accordance with the political balance of the Council.

For the period of January 2021 to May 2021, the following Members were appointed to the Committee:

Labour Group

Councillor Bambrick (Chair), Councillor Stuart Councillor (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Gee

Conservative Group

Councillor Atkin, Councillor Hewlett and Councillor Muller

Independent Group

Councillor Roberts

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 2020/21 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 2020/21 municipal year the Chair and Members requested that Procurement be added to the Work Programme.

2. Specific Areas of Activity

2.1 The Annual Report

In May 2021, the Chair and Vice-Chair considered the draft Annual Report for the 2020/21 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

Due to Covid 19 in October 2020 the Committee outlined suggestions and agreed possible issues to form the basis of its Work Programme during the remainder of the 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 21/22
- (c) Procurement
- (d) Vision Derbyshire
- (e) Update on Cycling Provision
- (f) Drs Surgery Provision in South Derbyshire
- (g) Covid-19 Impact on Universal Credit and Council Tax
- (h) Update on Tourism and Regeneration

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 2020/21

(b) The Budget 20/21

The Committee has a responsibility to assist the Finance and Management Committee to review the budget proposals. The Committee considered the Budgets the General Fund and Housing Revenue Accounts at a meeting in February 2021. The Committee supported budget and policy development..

(c) Procurement

Following the annual scrutiny of the Council's Budget proposals for 2020/21 and its medium-term spending plans to 2025 in January, the Committee agreed to review the current arrangements for Procurement across the Council. In particular, to review the business case for current service provision, together with an overview of regulations and procedures governing procurement activity across the Council.

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) delivered an overview of the report highlighting the support services provided by Derbyshire Support and Facilities Services Limited and set out the business case as to why the Council agreed to go into a Shared Service arrangement for procurement. The Committee noted the report and proposed any additional work within the scope of the review.

(d) Vision Derbyshire

In response to the central Government drive towards unitary councils the Committee was asked to review and consider the Programme towards collaborative working with other local authorities across Derbyshire. The Committee noted the report and

recommended that the Leader and Chief Executive continued involvement with the Vision Derbyshire process but that no commitment be made at that time. Vision Derbyshire was referred to Full Council in January 2021 where the decision was made that South Derbyshire District Council should no longer pursue the formal collaborative working programme of Vision Derbyshire.

(e) Update on Cycling Provision

The Committee was updated on completed cycle routes and reviewed the proposed cycle routes. The Committee was informed how key cycle network routes would be linked with Staffordshire and Leicestershire to connect to the national network. The Planning Policy Officer confirmed that the Woodville Regeneration programme would be completed in summer 2021. The Committee welcomed the updated report.

(f) Drs Surgery Provision in South Derbyshire

An NHS representative, Clive Newman, delivered a presentation to the Committee regarding how General Practice had responded to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members raised questions about local surgeries and the processes for replacing and extending services in South Derbyshire. Members were informed that a process for Section 106 funding had been developed. NHS representative agreed that contact details would be made available to all Members to enable local concerns to be raised information regarding the complaint's procedure would be provided.

(g) Covid-19 Impact on Universal Credit and Council Tax

At a meeting in March 2020 the Strategic Director (Corporate resources) provided a briefing to the Committee about the impact of Universal Credit and the recovery of Council Tax during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Committee considered the position regarding the impact of Universal Credit and Council Tax recovery and provided feedback to inform policy and service improvement.

(h) Update on Tourism and Regeneration

The Chief Executive delivered a verbal update to Committee at a meeting in March 2020. The Committee noted that regeneration had not slowed during the pandemic and supported the work carried out by the Council to be ready for future tourism following the Pandemic. The Committee was reassured regarding grants offered to small businesses during Covid-19 as well as the support available to encourage employment opportunities going forward.

3 Challenges for 2021-22

- 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.

Chair, Vice-Chair and Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
May 2021