



**MINUTES of
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
4 DECEMBER 2025**

PRESENT

Vice-Chairperson Councillor P L Spenceley
(in the chair)

Councillors V J Bell, J R Burrell-Cook, A Fittock, L J Haywood, A M Lay,
C P Morley, E L Stephens and N J Swindle

373. CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through some general housekeeping arrangements for the meeting.

374. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S J N Morgan.

375. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 September 2025 be approved and confirmed.

376. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

There were none.

377. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests had been received.

378. MEMBER SCRUTINY REQUEST - LEISURE CONTRACT: COMMUNICATIONS AND MESSAGING (REQUEST BY COUNCILLOR A M LAY)

The Committee considered the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group (the Working Group) advising Members of its initial assessment of a scrutiny request relating to the Leisure Contract submitted by Councillor A M Lay.

The request submitted by Councillor Lay was detailed in a proforma attached at Appendix A to the report. Members were advised that this focused on the communications and messaging following the decision by the Council on 14 November 2024 to award a new leisure contract to its preferred bidder, Places Leisure. The report

provided detailed information regarding the process taken along with communications made by the Council and Places Leisure following the decision taken.

It was noted that the Working Group had made an initial assessment of the scrutiny request and concluded that this Committee should be recommended to include its conclusions (as set out in section 4 of the report) as part of the proposed Leisure Contract Post-Implementation Review (PIR) which is the subject of a separate report on this agenda.

The Chairperson put the recommendations set out in the report and these were duly seconded.

Councillor Lay advised he was pleased that these matters would be adopted as part of the PIR in relation to the Leisure Contract. He explained the importance of communication and in particular the impact and messaging that had gone out to residents in relation to the Leisure Contract.

In response to a question the Commercial Manager advised Members of the impact of the redevelopment of the sports hall at Blackwater Leisure Centre on users and the work undertaken by Officers to contact all affected parties and the ongoing work to offer support. It was confirmed that the Council was working with the Plume School regarding possible use of their facilities by affected local groups.

During the discussion that followed Members commented on the impact the changes had on local groups using the Leisure Centre, scrutiny of the procurement process and communications. The Chairperson agreed that there were several lessons to be learnt and then put the recommendation as set out in the report. This was duly seconded and agreed

RESOLVED that having received the report on the Working Group's initial assessment, the conclusions of the Working Group be included as part of the proposed Leisure Contract Post-Implementation Review.

379. MEMBER SCRUTINY REQUEST - LEISURE CONTRACT: POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW (REQUEST BY COUNCILLOR E L STEPHENS)

The Committee considered the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group (the Working Group) providing its initial assessment of a scrutiny request from Councillor E L Stephens regarding the Leisure Contract Post-Implementation Review (PIR).

A scrutiny request had been received from Councillor Stephens (as set out in Appendix A to the report) focusing on the need for a PIR of the Leisure Contract and the report set out the initial assessment undertaken by the Working Group. It was noted that this request had been considered alongside the separate scrutiny request from Councillor A M Lay regarding communications and messaging associated with the Leisure Contract. As agreed by the Committee in the previous item of business, the Working Group's conclusions from Councillor Lay's scrutiny request would be included within this PIR review.

The Working Group had concluded that the Committee should be recommended to add this item to its scrutiny workplan to allow a further detailed review in the form of a PIR of the Leisure Contract.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the bullet point in the recommendation regarding 'defining the scope' related to the entirety of the Leisure Contract.

The Chairperson put the recommendation as set out in the report and this was duly seconded.

It was questioned whether inclusion of risk management relating both to the Council and residents / users of the facilities and in particular lessons learnt to ensure any future projects would benefit could be added to the bullet points in the recommendation. In response, the Corporate Governance Project Officer suggested that the recommendation did not need revision so far as the principles of the proposed review were concerned but that the points raised along with similar points of this nature would be noted and included.

The Commercial Manager agreed with the point raised regarding risk management and advised that when defining the scope, the procurement specification and financial risk and service delivery could be included. This work would be done in collaboration with Members so if there was anything that needed to be included it could be done as part of the process.

The Chairperson referred to the Council's Play Strategy which she hoped might benefit from and be informed by the proposed review. She commented that it may be useful to hold some of the Working Group meetings on this review in person. The Chairperson then put the recommendation to the Committee and this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the scrutiny request raised by Councillor E L Stephens relating to the Leisure Contract Post-Implementation Review be added to the Committee's scrutiny workplan to enable further scrutiny to be undertaken in the form of a Post Implementation / Performance Review involving all relevant stakeholders to cover the following points:

- defining the scope;
- selecting the Procurement contractor;
- decision on whether to go ahead, or re-run the procurement;
- communications.

380. MEMBER SCRUTINY REQUEST - LOCAL PLAN POLICY H2 HOUSING MIX

The Committee were reminded of the scrutiny request submitted by Councillor A Fittock (attached as Appendix A to the agenda). The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group (the Working Group) had held a special workshop session on 13 November 2025 as part of its initial assessment of this request. A summary of the conclusions were set out in Appendix B to the agenda.

The Corporate Governance Project Officer provided the Committee with a brief outline of the scrutiny request, along with the conclusions and initial assessment from the Working Group, set out in Appendix B. He advised that in light of the publication of an updated Local Housing Needs Assessment accompanied by Technical Guidance, the Working Group was content to await the implications of this and had proposed that the request be reviewed in six months.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation set out on the agenda and this was duly seconded.

In response to comments regarding the housing mix, including the type of properties, the Director of Place, Planning and Growth advised that although the Working Group would be reviewing the housing mix in six months as agreed, this would also form part

of annual monitoring. He highlighted that the key point was regarding market housing and those who did not qualify for affordable homes but struggled to access homes in the market.

The Chairperson put the recommendation and this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the Member Scrutiny request regarding the Local Plan Policy H2 Housing Mix should not be added to the scrutiny workplan but that the Committee reviews implementation of the new approach in six months based on the monitoring year to the end of next March and having regard to the housing mix within the permissions granted.

381. MEMBER SCRUTINY REQUEST - PLANNING SERVICES PERFORMANCE

The Committee was reminded that a scrutiny request from Councillor V J Bell regarding Planning Services Performance had been submitted and the related proforma was attached to the agenda. This had been reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group (the Working Group) in September 2025. However, since the matter had not first been raised with Officers of the Council or the relevant Committee the request was contrary to this Committee's operating protocol in terms of being actioned. The Committee was therefore requested to take no further action in respect of this request.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation set out on the agenda and this was duly seconded. In seconding the proposal, Councillor Bell advised she was happy to take no further action at this time.

The Director of Place, Planning and Growth reassured Members that he was in discussions with an independent company regarding undertaking a peer review of the service in 2026.

The Chairperson then put the recommendation which was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that no further action be taken in respect of the scrutiny request from Councillor V J Bell regarding Planning Services Performance.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 8.15 pm.

P L SPENCELEY
CHAIRPERSON