



**REPORT of
CHAIRMAN OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**to
ANNUAL COUNCIL
20 MAY 2021**

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee since October 2019 and to seek approval to future arrangements for the Committee to report to Council on an annual basis.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the principle of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitting an annual report on its work to each statutory annual meeting of the Council is endorsed, and that this update is both noted and also accepted as the annual report for 2020 / 21.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was set up afresh initially under the Council's new Constitution with effect from October 2019. One of its responsibilities is to report to the Council on an annual basis, and it is therefore necessary to establish a firm arrangement by which this happens. Although the Committee also acts as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee, its scrutiny remit is quite specific and relates to outside bodies and agencies involved with crime and disorder. The Committee's annual report to Council will therefore be confined to its scrutiny role other than in relation to crime and disorder.
- 3.2 In the early stages, the Committee was primarily involved in determining how the residual work programme at the time would be disposed of. Allied to revised meeting arrangements brought about by the pandemic, and also due to a general lack of new and actual scrutiny business, the Committee did not meet on a regular basis for a while. Later last year, the constitution of the Committee was further revised, and in October the Committee agreed a new Operating Protocol and to focus on its process for the consideration of potential scrutiny items to ensure efficiency and clear outcomes linked to strategic goals.
- 3.3 While the Committee has broadly the same remit as before, the Operating Protocol reflects updated Government Guidance which has to be taken into account. This refines the role of the Committee as being positive and forward looking, providing more of a 'critical friend' challenge, and generally assisting the Council and its Committees by identifying improvements and making recommendations. The intention is that Committee time will predominantly be spent on the planning and carrying out of actual scrutiny work. It has established a Working Group which can be used to manage items of a 'watching brief' nature or where information has been requested, and to assist with the planning of scrutiny.

- 3.4 The Committee also agreed a process for the initial consideration and review of potential items of scrutiny requested by Members. The Working Group has been tasked with this and has regard to the remit of the Committee and also the agreed operating protocol in identifying actual scrutiny items. It then reports to the next available meeting of the Committee.
- 3.5 To date, the Committee has two actual scrutiny items in its programme of work:
- 3.5.1 The Council's Transformation Programme – learning from what has been done
- 3.5.1.1 This item was developed out of regular reports the Committee had previously been receiving while the Programme was being implemented and reviewing progress against expected outcomes. As at April 2021, the Committee noted that the finance team were conducting a wider piece of reconciliation of the structure and budgets, which will review the financial delivery of the Transformation Programme. This will inform the final version of the report and findings, completion of which is expected by 31 May 2021.
- 3.5.2 A review of the Council's Debt Recovery Process and its impact on local residents
- 3.5.2.1 A wide remit and set of outcomes were agreed by the Committee in January 2021. An interim report by way of response to these was considered by the Committee in April. While the Committee noted that the existence of a corporate policy and related processes, it wished to see more detailed information in relation to the enforcement stages of debt recovery supported with relevant and analysed data. Given the current resource pressure on the Revenues and Benefits Team, the Committee agreed to an extension of time to the end of August for this further information to be provided. Progress with this work will be kept under review by the Committee.
- 3.6 In early April Members of the Council have recently received scrutiny training provided by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. The first session was on the fundamentals of scrutiny, its role and functions and also the role of the Chairman. The second session focussed on the effective use of information and effective questioning.
- 3.7 The Council is now asked to agree the future annual reporting arrangements for the Committee. It is suggested that the statutory annual meeting of the Council is a suitable point for this, which will enable the Committee to endorse the report at its last available meeting in a municipal year. This timeline then gives the Committee an ideal basis from which to work for the next municipal year.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Council has now established a sound basis for the operation of its Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the annual reporting arrangements will ensure a degree of accountability of the Committee to Council.

5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

- 5.1 Thorough scrutiny processes underpin the Performance and Efficiency Corporate Goal.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – None directly, but individual scrutiny reviews will enable the impact on customers to be assessed.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – Equalities are considered as part of the reporting on review work undertaken by Officers.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Scrutiny reviews enable potential Corporate Risks to the organisation and their mitigation to be identified.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Scrutiny reviews offer the potential for an assessment of financial impact to the organisation.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Scrutiny reviews offer the potential for an assessment of any resource impact to the organisation.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – None.
- (vii) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** – None.

Background Papers: None.

Enquiries to: Councillor V J Bell, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.