



REPORT of OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP

to
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 OCTOBER 2021

REPORT ON REQUESTED SCRUTINY ITEMS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Committee on Working Group discussions and recommendations on two requested scrutiny items.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That the Committee receives and considers the recommendation of the Working Group on the requested scrutiny item (Councillor K Lagan) as set out in **APPENDIX A** for inclusion in the Scrutiny Workplan;
- (ii) That the Committee endorses the conclusions of the Working Group in relation to the request by Councillor C Swain that this item is not added to the Scrutiny Workplan but dealt with as set in paragraph 3.3 of this report.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 In accordance with the agreed initial review process for scrutiny items requested by Members, the Committee's Working Group met on 20 August 2021 to consider two new requests.
- 3.2 The first request by Councillor K Lagan regarding the decision-making processes associated with the proposed conversion of a seating shelter at Promenade Park, Maldon was supported by the Working Group for inclusion in the Committee's Workplan, and is detailed at **APPENDIX A**. The questions to be addressed through scrutiny have been drafted by Officers to reflect the views of the Working Group. In acknowledgement of the fact that it was not being asserted that the necessary delegated powers did not exist or that Officers had stepped beyond them, the Working Group concluded that in a wider context there were concerns over the actual exercise of these powers in relation to certain operational matters.
- 3.2 The second request was by Councillor C Swain in relation to flood risk in Heybridge. He noted that various agencies are involved with a variety of different assets and felt that the Council needed to be assured that each is maintaining its assets in a proper management scheme and what the latest assessment of the state of those assets is. Further, he wished to ascertain whether there are any disputed assets or assets with uncertain ownership. This had not been raised with any other Committee or with Officers, and the Working Group concluded that as presented this was essentially an information gathering exercise designed to provide a clearer understanding of the respective responsibilities and also a level of assurance that those responsibilities are being met.

- 3.3 The Working Group was advised that Officers had provided an explanatory note of the Council's responsibilities alongside those of its partners, the various liaison and joint working arrangements, and an updated management response to the issues raised in the Internal Audit Report on Flood Risk Management approved by the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee in September 2020. Further, Officers were prepared to run a Q&A information session for Members to promote greater understanding and assurance. In the absence of the identification of anything specific to be scrutinised, this approach was supported by the Working Group for endorsement by the Committee. The Working Group did however observe that despite all the plans, liaison, and joint working there was still a flooding problem in Heybridge and felt that the Council's understanding of the reason for this needed to be better communicated to the public.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The information set out is provided to update the Committee on the recent Working Group meeting and recommend an item for the Scrutiny Workplan that has been identified as a result.

5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

- 5.1 The challenge and work of overview and scrutiny can help assure the organisation that we are working to our Strategic Themes.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Good scrutiny will provide assurance that our processes are effective for our customers.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – Good scrutiny will provide assurance that we are working in a fair and equal way.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Good scrutiny and processes help to minimise organisational risk.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The investigations are not expected to incur any additional costs.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – The investigations will be carried out by existing officer resource.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – Not Applicable (NA).
- (vii) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** – N/A.

Background Papers: None.

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