

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



Council Offices,
Urban Road,
Kirkby in Ashfield
Nottingham
NG17 8DA

Agenda

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Wednesday, 25th September, 2019**

Time: **7.00 pm**

Venue: **Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road,
Kirkby-in-Ashfield**

For any further information please contact:

Lynn Cain

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01623 457317

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Membership

Chairman: Councillor Sarah Madigan
Vice-Chairman: Councillor Andrew Harding

Councillors:
Jim Blagden Ciaran Brown
Andy Meakin Phil Rostance
Caroline Wilkinson

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SUMMONS

You are hereby requested to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held at the time/place and on the date mentioned above for the purpose of transacting the business set out below.



R. Mitchell
Chief Executive

AGENDA

Page

1. **To receive apologies for absence, if any.**
2. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests.**
3. **To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18th July, 2019.** 5 - 10
4. **Petition Received - S106 Agreement Local Infrastructure Funding.**

In accordance with the procedures set out in the Council's Petition Scheme, the petition named 'S106 Agreement Local Infrastructure Funding', having received in excess of 500 signatures, is presented for consideration as follows:-

"We the undersigned petition the Council to look into using S106 Agreement funding to assist local residents currently suffering detriment from granted planning permission and loss of local infrastructure on Carsic Lane, Sutton-in-Ashfield and the adjoining streets, Davis Avenue and Percival Crescent."
5. **Scrutiny Review: Impact of Universal Credit.** 11 - 18
6. **Scrutiny Review: Wildlife Protection.** 19 - 24

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Thursday, 18th July, 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Sarah Madigan in the Chair;

Councillors Ciaran Brown, Melanie Darrington,
Andrew Harding, Andy Meakin and Dave Shaw.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Phil Rostance and Caroline Wilkinson.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Joanne Froggatt, Mike Joy, Nicky Moss
and Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Councillor Jason Zadrozny.

OS.27 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.28 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6th June, 2019, be received and approved as a correct record.

OS.29 Corporate Scorecard Performance - Year End Out-Turn 2018/19

The Assistant Director for Corporate Resources and Transformation undertook a presentation to the Panel in relation to the year-end outturn for the Council's Corporate Scorecard.

Various methods were utilised to assess how well the Council was performing including delivery of the Corporate Plan, outcomes from the service review programme, feedback from the LGA Peer Challenge, the Place/Star Surveys and performance scorecards.

The Council's Corporate Plan was currently being reviewed and updated and the Committee were advised as to its main purpose and its influence on the Council's allocation and prioritisation of resources. Members acknowledged the three different performance scorecards (Place, Corporate and Service) and their roles in providing key organisational and operational performance data to management as part of the Council's Performance Framework.

Over the period of the current Corporate Plan (2016 – 2019) over 83% of corporate scorecard measures have indicated an improved position since 2015/16. The outturn for April 2018 to March 2019 revealed that 88% of measures were achieving or had exceeded their target or were within a 10% variance of the target. 71% of measures had also indicated an improved position compared to the same period in the previous year or were within 5% of previous years' performance levels.

To illustrate some areas of performance (via performance indicators) that were failing to meet their targets, Members considered five performance indicators as follows:-

- percentage of household waste recycled and composted;
- number of resident generated service requests received for fly tipping;
- number of user attendances at ADC leisure facilities;
- number of long term empty homes and derelict properties being brought back into use;
- percentage of rent collected from total rent due.

Committee Members discussed the performance indicators and some of the mitigating factors as to why the areas were failing to achieve their performance targets as set:

Percentage of household waste recycled and composted

The reintroduction of garden waste charges in 2018 and a sustained period of dry weather and slow growing grass had initially impacted on performance. However, subscribers were now increasing year by year and glass recycling rates had also increased.

Number of resident generated service requests received for fly tipping and litter

The number of service requests to tackle fly tipping and litter had increased but this was showing as both a national and local trend. Hotspot areas were being targeted along with the use of overt surveillance cameras as required and it was acknowledged that residents were now much more inclined to report an issue once spotted. It was suggested that the performance indicator for this service might need to be updated to enable officers to reflect a more accurate picture.

Number of user attendances at ADC leisure facilities

User attendance numbers had fallen following the transfer of Selston Leisure Centre to the local High School, the unavoidable closure of the Lammas ice rink for maintenance works and the perceived uncertainties surrounding the longevity of the Festival Hall.

Number of long term empty homes and derelict properties being brought back into use

The number of long term empty and derelict private sector homes brought back into use had reduced by 16% but the performance had still significantly exceeded the target for the year. The lower outturn figure reflected the work undertaken by the Private Sector Enforcement Team over the previous 5 years to reduce the overall number.

Percentage of rent collected from total rent due

Current rent arrears were £20,000 higher than at week 52 from the previous year, with performance affected by the wider roll out of Universal Credit. However, the Council was still performing in the upper quartile when compared nationally.

RESOLVED that

- a) the 2018/19 year-end outturn for the Corporate Performance Scorecard, as presented to Committee, be received and noted;
- b) the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources and Transformation be requested to review the current performance indicator (PI) for measuring incidences of fly-tipping to ensure that the target reflects more accurately the national trend thus enabling the capture and analysis of more appropriate data over the longer term.

(During consideration of this item, Councillors Andy Meakin and Sarah Madigan entered the meeting at 7.17pm).

OS.30 Scrutiny Review: Impact of Universal Credit

The Service Manager for Housing Management and Tenancy Services took the opportunity to speak to Committee Members about the impact of Universal Credit on the Council.

Preparations had been underway since 2012 and the service first went live on 22nd June, 2015 for all new claimants and single households in all areas apart from Hucknall. A full service was then introduced incrementally by area from June 2018 to November 2018.

The Council currently had 627 Universal Credit cases and of these, 383 cases were already in arrears (61%). This equated to £161,985.36 with an average of £422.94 per case. The Committee acknowledged that current rent arrears (not Universal Credit) were continuing to improve but the Universal Credit arrears were continuing to increase. Extrapolation of figures associated with this trend could see an estimated debt of £11m should the arrears increase at the same pace for the remainder of the year.

The introduction of Universal Credit has had a profound impact on residents with many having to cope with the change from fortnightly to monthly payments through a fully digital online claim portal. Many residents had no real experience in budgeting their money and were already dealing with further hardships from the switch including universal credit deductions, payday debts, foodbanks and fuel poverty. The payments to cover housing costs were therefore being spent on other things.

The Council had been endeavouring to mitigate against the impacts of Universal Credit and assist residents with the following:-

- Welfare Reform Board/Partnership working
- roadshows/presentation to tenants
- digital zones with officer support
- Universal Credit information points
- tenant surveys and profiling
- officer support and guidance
- a shift of officer resources to prevention work with additional staff rather than enforcement work
- consistently reviewing the way the support team works.

The service had recently also employed a Welfare Reform Apprentice as an additional fixed term resource to assist tenants with the transfer over to Universal Credit.

The Committee, having considered the impact of Universal Credit on the Council thus far, acknowledged the good work and support the Housing and Revenues/Benefits Teams had shown to Ashfield tenants to enable them to transfer across to the new regime with minimum stress. The work was continuing to offer support and guidance as needed.

The Service Manager for Scrutiny and Democratic Services drew Members' attention to the proposed terms of reference for the review as outlined on page 49 of the report.

Being conscious of time constraints, the Committee were asked to consider meeting as an informal group to enable the review to progress in a timely manner and ensure that any investigative research was completed in time for the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting scheduled for 5th September, 2019.

It was suggested that some insight into the experience of an Ashfield Universal Credit claimant might be beneficial to the review and to extend an invite to a willing participant to participate in an informal group meeting.

The Service Manager for Housing Management and Tenancy Services advised that some of the problems being experienced with the introduction of Universal Credit had been from the service being provided to residents by the Department of Work and Pension (DWP). Their Universal Credit Call Centre was not locally based and many of the staff were being perceived as ill-equipped to assist residents with their ongoing enquiries.

The Scrutiny Research and Support Officer advised the Committee that he was intending to invite a DWP representative to attend the first informal group meeting to obtain their perspective as to the impact Universal Credit was having on their work requirements and the residents of Ashfield.

Committee Members concluded by discussing the best focus for the review and to align the terms of reference accordingly.

RESOLVED that

- a) the report, as presented, be received and noted;
- b) the terms of reference for the review 'Impact of Universal Credit' be approved with the addition of some focus being directed towards how the Council and its partners are working together to assist claimants in achieving a smooth, successful transition over to the Universal Credit scheme and maintaining their finances responsibly thereafter;
- c) the Scrutiny Research and Support Officer be requested to facilitate Members meeting as an informal group during August 2019 to enable the review to progress in a timely manner and ensure any investigative research is completed in time for the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting scheduled for 5th September, 2019.

(During consideration of this item, Councillor Melanie Darrington left the room at 7.45pm and returned to the meeting at 7.47pm. Councillor Dave Shaw also left the room at 8.28pm).

OS.31 Scrutiny Workplan 2019/2020

The Scrutiny Research and Support Officer presented an update in relation to the work of the Committee and Panels as follows:-

Scrutiny Panel A

The Panel had commenced the 'Community Engagement' review and had held the first meeting on 4th July, 2019. Informal working groups had been arranged during August 2019 to progress the work accordingly.

Scrutiny Panel B

The Panel had commenced the 'War Memorials' review and had held the first meeting on 27th June, 2019. Four interim recommendations had been presented to Cabinet on the 15th July, 2019 to endeavour to secure funding to ensure the four priority war memorials, as identified, were professionally cleaned and restored in readiness for remembrance events in November 2019. The review was ongoing and an informal working group would be meeting during August 2019 to progress the work accordingly.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee had just commenced the 'Impact of Universal Credit' review and were meeting as an informal group during August 2019 to progress the review.

The Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services then requested Members to consider the following scrutiny review suggestions for inclusion on the Workplan:-

Food Poverty

(as suggested by a member of the public)

To consider the alarming increase in the use of foodbanks with many food packages being obtained by struggling parents specifically for children;

Town Centre Regeneration

(as suggested by a member of the public)

To consider the continued regeneration of the Council's town centres including the market facilities currently being provided.

Digital and Service Transformation Programme

(previously suggested by a Member)

To consider the Council's Digital and Service Transformation Programme which is endeavouring to provide a blueprint on how digital technology can improve the way the Council will work with and support local residents, partners and businesses within Ashfield in the future.

Community Protection Officer Service

(suggested by a Member at the meeting)

To consider the work and remit of the Council's Community Protection Officer Service and how it assists Nottinghamshire Police in undertaking their duties to reduce anti-social behaviour within the District.

RESOLVED that

- a) the update in relation to the work of the Scrutiny Panels and Committee, be received and noted;
- b) the following items be included on the Scrutiny Workplan for 2019/20:-
 - Town Centre Regeneration
 - Community Protection Officer Service;
- c) the review of 'Food Poverty' be amalgamated with the ongoing 'Impact of Universal Credit' review which commenced in July 2019;
- d) the review of the 'Digital and Service Transformation Programme' be declined and not included on the Scrutiny Workplan for 2019/20.

(During consideration of this item, Councillor Dave Shaw returned to the meeting at 8.32pm).

The meeting closed at 8.43 pm

Chairman.

Report To:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Date:	25 SEPTEMBER 2019
Heading:	SCRUTINY REVIEW: IMPACT OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT		
Portfolio Holder:	NOT APPLICABLE		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with further information requested at both the last formal meeting of the Committee on July 18 and the informal working group held on August 7. This includes Universal Credit payment methods, support offered, and food and fuel poverty.

Recommendation(s)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members are recommended to:

- a. Note the information contained in this report.
- b. Give consideration to any further information needed to conclude the review.
- c. Discuss potential recommendations with a view of concluding the review at the next formal meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Impact of Universal Credit was approved as a topic for review to the Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20 in June 2019.

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options have been considered at this stage of the review process.

Detailed Information

Informal Working Group – 7 August 2019

An informal working group was held on the 7 August 2019, with attendance from Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Nicky Moss, Service Manager – Housing Management & Tenancy Services, Peter Curry, Housing Management Advisor, Craig Scott, Service Manager – Revenues and Benefits, and Sue Fielding, Senior Employment & Partnership Leader – Department for Work and Pensions.

The working group provided an opportunity for Members and Council Officers to discuss the working relationship between the Council and the Department for Work and Pensions regarding Universal Credit, and what payment and support processes are in place. Members and Officers discussed the following at the informal working group:

- The process of applying for Universal Credit
- The Council's Universal Credit case load management
- Universal Credit payment processes such as:
 - Third Party Deductions
 - Managed Payments
 - Advanced Payments
- The Help to Claim service
- How Council Tax has been impacted by Universal Credit
- Information sharing between the Council and the DWP
- Food and Fuel Poverty

At the conclusion of the informal working group, Members agreed that the Scrutiny Review: Impact of Universal Credit should explore the different payment processes available through Universal Credit, and how the introduction of Universal Credit has impacted food and fuel poverty nationally and in Ashfield.

Universal Credit

Advanced Payments

Through Universal Credit, advanced payments are available if a claimant needs help to pay their bills or cover other costs while waiting for their first Universal Credit payment. For example, if a claimant cannot afford to pay rent or buy food.

An advanced payment is paid back through future Universal Credit payments, or other means such as wages or other benefit payments. A Universal Credit help adviser assesses the advanced payment application, and if agreed, informs the applicant of when the first repayment is due, and the monthly repayment amounts.

Deductions are made from a claimant's monthly Universal Credit payment, and up to 12 months can be taken to repay the advance. In exceptional circumstances, this can be delayed for up to three months if the repayments are unaffordable.

Some criticisms of the advanced payments system have been a lack of flexibility in repayment options and a lack of adequate affordability and repayment assessments.

Third Party Deductions

Due to difficulties managing money, some claimants may struggle to pay household bills and can get into arrears.

In some circumstances, the DWP can deduct money from Universal Credit payments and pay it direct to the organisation that is owed, such as a landlord or utility supplier. Third party deductions can be taken without the claimant's consent and are often for things like:

- Rent
- Fuel costs
- Council Tax
- Fines
- Child maintenance

Only three third party deductions can be taken from a claimant at any one time. A claimant is notified through their Universal Credit Journal when a third party deduction is made. A third party deduction is a fixed percentage that cannot be changed

Financial Hardship

If a claimant is experiencing financial hardship, a financial hardship decision can be requested to reduce the amount of debt they are currently repaying. A financial hardship decision can be considered by the DWP if the claimant has deductions being taken from their Universal Credit payment for the following:

- Tax credits debt
- Benefit debt
- Social fund loan
- Rent arrears (if the deduction for rent arrears is being taken at a rate greater than 10%)

If the DWP makes a decision to reduce a claimant's deductions, the new reduced deduction rate will be applied automatically to their next Universal Credit assessment period.

Alternative Payment Arrangements

If a claimant is experiencing financial difficulties, such as being behind on their rent, the claimant or their landlord may be able to apply for an alternative payment arrangement.

This alternative arrangement can be:

- To have rent paid directly to a landlord
- To get paid more than once a month
- To receive split payments, if part of a couple

Alternative payment arrangements are applied for through a claimant's work coach.

Help to Claim

Help to Claim is a service provided by Citizens Advice aimed at supporting claimants in the early stages of their Universal Credit claim, from the application through to the first payment. It is a

confidential, independent, and free service with trained advisers assisting claimants on how to gather evidence for an application, and how to prepare for jobcentre appointments.

Help is tailored to the individual, and is available face-to-face, over the phone, and through an online web chat service. The Help to Claim service is funded by £39 million from the Department for Work and Pensions.

Fuel Poverty

The Energy and Utilities Alliance is a not-for-profit trade association that provides an industry voice to help shape future policy direction within the energy sector. *Fuel Poverty: Ending the Vicious Cycle of Vulnerability* is a 2018 report prepared by the Energy and Utilities Alliance explores the state of fuel poverty in the United Kingdom.¹

The issue of fuel poverty is worsening in the United Kingdom, with England experiencing the second highest rates of fuel poverty in Europe. As of January 2018, it is estimated that around 10 to 12% of households in the country are fuel poor.²

The issue has been worsened by policy changes and welfare reforms, particularly with the introduction of Universal Credit. Universal Credit leaves households waiting for up to six weeks for the first payment, pushing more people towards making dangerous decisions regarding the heating of their homes – the ‘heat or eat’ dilemma. Such high levels of fuel poverty has significant consequences, being a significant contributor to the 28,584 excess winter deaths that occur in England and Wales each year.³

Food Poverty

The Trussell Trust is a national anti-poverty charity supporting a network of food banks nationwide, providing emergency food and support to people locked in poverty, and campaigning for change to end the need for food banks in the UK.

The Trussell Trust has over 1,200 food bank centres in their network, estimated at around two thirds of all food banks in the UK. Trussell Trust food banks gave 1.6 million emergency food supplies to people in crisis in 2018/19.

As the largest welfare reform in a generation, the Trussell Trust has been monitoring the introduction of Universal Credit, and how it has impacted food poverty. As part of this monitoring, the Trussell Trust has released a series of reports exploring the impact of the introduction and design of Universal Credit on claimants and food banks.⁴

In *The Next Stage of Universal Credit*, the Trussell Trust explores the links between Universal Credit, financial hardship, and foodbank use.

The key findings set out in this report are:

1. When Universal Credit goes live in area, there is a demonstrable increase in demand in local Trussell Trust foodbanks. On average, 12 months after rollout, foodbanks see a 52% increase in demand, compared to 13% in areas with Universal Credit for 3 months or less.

¹ Energy and Utilities Alliance, *Fuel Poverty: Ending the Vicious Cycle of Vulnerability*, January 2018.

² *Fuel Poverty: Ending the Vicious Cycle of Vulnerability*, 2018.

³ *Fuel Poverty: Ending the Vicious Cycle of Vulnerability*, 2018.

⁴ The Trussell Trust, *The Next Stage of Universal Credit: Moving onto the New Benefit System and Foodbank Use*, April 2018.

This increase cannot be attributed to randomness and exists even after accounting for seasonal and other variations.⁵

2. More detailed foodbank referral data show that benefit transitions, most likely due to people moving onto Universal Credit, are increasingly accounting for more referrals and are likely driving up need in areas of full Universal Credit rollout. Waiting for the first payment is a key cause, while for many, simply the act of moving over to a new system is causing hardship.⁶

Left Behind: Is Universal Credit Truly Universal? sets out findings from a survey of people referred to 30 Trussell Trust food banks in areas of full Universal Credit roll-out, between February and March 2018.⁷

Key findings explored in this report include:

1. The wait for a first payment had severe and immediate consequences. 70% of survey respondents found themselves in debt, 57% experienced issues with their mental or physical health, and 56% experienced housing issues. Ultimately, the wait for a first Universal Credit payment had severe financial and other implications.
2. There was little statutory support available during this waiting period. 63% of respondents were offered no help, and the most likely form of help offered was a food bank voucher. Advanced payments proved helpful for some, while others said they were too little, or unaffordable to repay.
3. Only 8% of people surveyed by the Trussell Trust said their full Universal Credit payment covered their cost of living. This was even less for disabled people, or people with ill-health.
4. Poor administration of the Universal Credit process was a persistent concern outlined in the surveys. 35% had waited, or were waiting, longer than six weeks for their first payment. A third of those surveyed had experienced poor communication. Over and underpayment were particularly rife amongst claimants in work.

The outcomes of the surveys conducted by the Trussell Trust led to a series of recommendations:

1. Local authorities should provide a true Universal Support service which supports people transitioning onto the benefit or making a new claim, and expands support for people with the greatest need.
2. People should have longer to repay advanced payments, and more frequent payments and payments direct to landlords should be offered to all in financial risk or need.
3. Benefit payments should be uprated in line with inflation.
4. An urgent inquiry is needed into poor administration within Universal Credit and its effects.
5. More flexibilities for requirements should be introduced particularly for disabled people and people with ill health.

⁵ *The Next Stage of Universal Credit*, 2018.

⁶ *The Next Stage of Universal Credit*, 2018.

⁷ The Trussell Trust, *Left Behind: Is Universal Credit Truly Universal?* March 2018.

Using their findings, the Trussell Trust has suggested numerous ways in which adverse side effects following the introduction of Universal Credit could be mitigated.⁸

1. **Universal Support:** More information about the shape and form of Universal Support locally would bring welcome clarity to food banks.
2. **Six week wait:** A reduction of the initial six-week waiting period for Universal Credit would make a significant difference to a claimant's ability to cope with no income.
3. **IT & Flexibility:** Increased flexibility in the administration of Universal Credit is needed to support people moving onto the new system.
4. **Conditionality:** Continued monitoring the impact of conditionality, which has been linked to increased food bank usage.

The Trussell Trust has further advocated for a pause in the full roll-out of Universal Credit across the country, better availability of affordable advanced payments, and changes to the cost of calling the Universal Credit helpline. It is clear from the research and exploration carried out by the Trussell Trust that use of and reliance on food banks has increased with the introduction of Universal Credit.

Next Steps

Members are requested to consider what further information is required to conclude the review at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 7 November 2019. This would allow the presentation of a final report on the review to Cabinet later in the month.

⁸ The Trussell Trust, *Early Warnings: Universal Credit and Foodbanks*, April 2017.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

This review is focused on the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Community and Customer Focused
- Putting People First
- Collaborative Working
- Commitment to Residents

Legal:

Any legal implications relating to the introduction and subsequent impact of Universal Credit will be considered as part of the scrutiny review process.

Finance:

Any financial implications relating to the introduction and subsequent impact of Universal Credit will be considered as part of the review process.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	None.
General Fund – Capital Programme	None.
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None.
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None.

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
None at this stage of the review.	None at this stage of the review.

Human Resources:

None at this stage of the review.

Equalities:

Any equalities implications will be considered as part of the scrutiny review process.

Other Implications:

None.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

- Department for Work and Pensions, *Universal Credit Test and Learn Evaluation: Families*, September 2017.
- Energy and Utilities Alliance, *Fuel Poverty: Ending the Vicious Cycle of Vulnerability*, January 2018.
- The Trussell Trust, *Early Warnings: Universal Credit and Foodbanks*, April 2017.
- The Trussell Trust, *Left Behind: Is Universal Credit Truly Universal?* March 2018.
- The Trussell Trust, *The Next Stage of Universal Credit: Moving onto the New Benefit System and Foodbank Use*, April 2018.

Report Author and Contact Officer

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Report To:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Date:	25 SEPTEMBER 2019
Heading:	SCRUTINY REVIEW: WILDLIFE PROTECTION		
Portfolio Holder:			
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

Wildlife Protection was added to the Scrutiny Workplan in June 2019, following consultation with Elected Members. This report sets out a draft terms of reference for the consideration and approval of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members.

This will assist the Committee in planning and undertaking a robust review of Wildlife Protection. The draft Terms of Reference is attached to this report attached to this report as Appendix A.

Recommendation(s)

Committee Members are recommended to;

- a) Discuss and agree the objectives of the review;
- b) Agree key information required to undertake this review;
- c) Discuss potential stakeholders to engage and consult with;
- d) Agree a review timeline;
- e) Approve a Terms of Reference to inform the review.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Wildlife Protection was added to the Scrutiny Workplan in June 2019.

Alternative Options Considered

To be considered as part of the review.

Detailed Information

In approving Wildlife Protection onto the Scrutiny Workplan, Members of the Panel agreed that they were interested in considering the services available in the district to people reporting wildlife crimes and how effective this currently was. This includes;

- How reports of wildlife crime are reported and to who;
- Number of reports being submitted in Ashfield;
- Local charities within the area;
- Legislation in place to combat wildlife crimes;
- Partnership working between the Police and the RSPCA;
- Methods for raising awareness.

Wildlife Crime

Wildlife Crime includes the following;

- Hare coursing
- Deer poaching
- Fish poaching
- Badger persecution, including baiting, snaring, shooting and the disturbance of setts.
- Bat persecution, including the destruction of habitat and roosting sites
- Egg theft/collection
- Bird of prey persecution through poisoning, trapping, shooting, disturbance of nest and/or theft of chicks.
- The disturbance of breeding birds and nest destruction
- The trade in ivory, tortoises, rhino horn and other protected species covered by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) including caviar, traditional Chinese medicines and orchids.
- Non-registration of certain birds and animals that require licensing through DEFRA/Animal Health if kept in captivity or sold.
- Offences relating to the introduction and sale on non-native invasive species (flora and fauna)

Current Reporting Methods

When reporting a wildlife crime, Nottinghamshire Police currently ask for the following information;

- Any people involved in the incident, including descriptions of their appearance and clothing.
- Any vehicles involved or seen in the vicinity at the time of the incident, including details of the vehicle make, model and registration number.
- Any other animals – including dogs – involved in the incident.

RSPCA

The RSPCA prioritise all calls about cruelty, neglect or injured animals according to their severity and urgency. Due to the high volume of calls they receive and their limited resources they aren't always able to respond in the way that would be ideal or as quickly as the emergency services can with more resources.

They advise that if an animal is a wild bird or mammal smaller than the size of a rabbit, the quickest way to get help is to contact a local vet or rehabilitation centre as they will not usually charge for treating wildlife.

Local Charitable Organisations

Local animal charitable organisations often have to assist injured animals that fall outside the criteria for urgency, prioritization or criminal activity. Many of these organisations operate through volunteers and donations.

Next Steps

In carrying out this review Members should consider agreeing a clear Terms of reference with objectives and potential outcomes. A draft Terms of Reference is attached as Appendix A for Members of the Committee to discuss.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

This review is mainly outward focussed, however the Councils Corporate Plan 2016-19 states that Ashfield District Council will ensure the foundations for a good quality of life are in place; reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and facilitating cleaner and more attractive neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, the Council will work with partners to ensure we deliver services centred on the needs of people and places, rather than existing teams, agencies or institutions.

Legal:

Consideration of the legislation relating to wildlife crime will be considered as part of this review.

Finance:

There are no financial implications relating to this report.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	None
General Fund – Capital Programme	None
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
None at this stage of the review	None

Human Resources:

There are no Human Resources implications at this stage of the review.

Equalities:

There are no equalities implications at this stage of the review.

Other Implications:

None

Reason(s) for Urgency

None

Reason(s) for Exemption

None

Report Author and Contact Officer

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SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPIC TERMS OF REFERENCE APPENDIX A

REVIEW TOPIC

Wildlife Protection

RATIONALE FOR REVIEW

Some Members work closely with local charitable organisations that assist injured or distressed wildlife. Concerns have been raised in relation to resources and capacity within the District in dealing with wildlife protection and wildlife crime. Therefore the topic was added to the workplan to consider what support is available locally, the level of demand and capacity to deal with issues.

PURPOSE OF REVIEW/OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the review is to gain an understanding of the demand in Ashfield for wildlife protection assistance, partners involved and capacity of those partners.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

A clearer understanding of the issues locally, legal powers available, increasing local awareness of what can be done to deal with wildlife crime and improving partnership working between organisations.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

- Interviewing local charitable organisations
- Reviewing demand and levels of wildlife crime,
- consideration of legal powers
- consideration of partner agencies

KEY WITNESSES

- Police
- RSPCA
- Local Charitable Organisations

SPECIFIC EVIDENCE AND INFORMATION REQUIRED

To Be Confirmed