

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



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

Agenda

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Thursday, 16th July, 2020**

Time: **7.00 pm**

Venue: **[Ashfield District Council's YouTube Channel](#)**

For any further information please contact:

Lynn Cain

l.cain@ashfield.gov.uk

01623 457317

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Membership

Chairman: Councillor Andrew Harding

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Dale Grounds

Councillors:

Jim Blagden

David Walters

Caroline Wilkinson

Phil Rostance

Lee Waters

FILMING/AUDIO RECORDING NOTICE

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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 mentioned above for the purpose of transacting the business set out below.



Carol Cooper-Smith
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 20 February 2020.** 5 - 10
4. **Corporate Scorecard Year End Position.** 11 - 18
5. **LGA Peer Challenge 2020.** 19 - 28
6. **Scrutiny Workplan Refresh 2020/2021.** 29 - 38

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,
on Thursday, 20th February, 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Sarah Madigan in the Chair;
Councillors Ciaran Brown, Andrew Harding,
Andy Meakin, Phil Rostance and Caroline Wilkinson.

Apology for Absence: Councillor Jim Blagden.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Joanne Froggatt, Peter Hudson, Mike Joy
and Shane Wright.

OS.19 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.20 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 January 2020, be received and approved as a correct record.

OS.21 Budget Update

The Corporate Finance Manager (and Section 151 Officer) attended the meeting to provide a presentation on the 2020/21 Annual Budget and an update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Members were advised of the General Fund corporate, service related and other savings being made during 2020/21 and 2021/22 to endeavour to close the funding gap and balance the budgets accordingly.

Highlighted areas of saving were as follows:-

Corporate

- a base budget review had been undertaken with all Service Managers to consider their particular budgets on a line-by-line basis to highlight any over or under-spending;
- the contribution charged to the Housing Revenue Fund (HRA) for finance work undertaken by officers had been increased by £100,000;
- the 'vacancy factor' had been increased by 1% over the two years;
- a stationary saving of £10,000 had been achieved;

- the sale of Ashfield Business Centre and its associated maintenance costs;
- a reduced ICT revenue budget due to capitalisation of various hardware assets;

Service Related

- a terminated Trade Waste agreement;
- outsourcing of the Building Control Function;
- Regeneration Service being brought back in-house;
- completion of the Transport Review;
- transfer of the Lifeline Service to Notts City Homes;
- completion of the HR/Payroll Review;
- accrual of additional income in the Pest Control Section;
- changes in the Depot canteen targets;
- completion of the Democratic Services restructure;
- completion of the Environmental Health restructure;
- completion of the Finance Team Service Review;

Other

- a change in Community Foundation Grant contribution;
- new car parking facilities at Kings Mill Reservoir;
- additional rental income from the Police.

The Committee were guided through the Council's proposed investments in Corporate Communications, an 'Office 365' rollout programme and Lone Worker Devices.

Members were asked to consider the Council's increasing property investment portfolio and acknowledged that the rental being achieved was a key income stream with a net total of over two million being achievable year on year. Investments has equated to £58 million thus far with an anticipation of a further spend of 26 million and 20 million over the next two years.

The current commercial property investment by sector was advised as follows:-

Leisure – 11%
Retail – 12%
Industrial – 36%
Office – 41%.

An update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy was further presented and Members considered options for closing the funding gap beyond 2020/21 which included:-

- Further Investment Property Acquisitions
- Service Reviews
- Annual review of Fees and Charges
- Review of Council Tax Reduction Scheme
- Procurement Savings
- Council Tax Base / Inflation increases
- Rationalisation of Council owned Properties
- Digital Service Transformation (DST) efficiencies.

In relation to the Digital Service Transformation Programme, the outcomes from the recent Peer Review had indicated that the programme was ambitious and would need expediting without any undue delay. Work had now commenced to determine what could be done earlier and to revise the timetable accordingly whilst identifying all costs associated with this acceleration of project implementation

To conclude the Corporate Finance Manager (and S151 Officer) outlined the current Housing Revenue Account (HRA) position as follows:-

- Cabinet had recently approved a rent increase at CPI plus 1%;
- the 30 year HRA Business Plan was currently sustainable to 2036/37;
- budget savings for 2020/21 of £98,000;
- HRA investment to engage Housing Management Advisors on fixed term contracts to assist with the full roll-out of Universal Credit.

Following the presentations, Members discussed the Council's budget and in particular, the potential impact of the Universal Credit roll-out on the Council's finances and the escalating levels of fraud surrounding the 'Single Persons Council Tax Discount' scheme.

RESOLVED that

- a) the presentation of the Corporate Finance Manager on the 2020/21 Annual Budget and the update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy, be received and noted;
- b) as a result of (a) above, the following Member comments/suggestions be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration as part of their budget deliberations at the meeting scheduled for 24 February 2020:-
 - a thank you be extended to the Corporate Finance Manager and Finance Team for the production of an excellent budget and the associated medium term planning strategy;
 - concerns raised regarding the levels of fraud surrounding 'Single Person Council Tax Discount' with acknowledgement that a county-wide group has been established to tackle the problem;
 - a desire to raise awareness and more fully advertise the commercial services offered by the Council's (i.e. pest control) through the Council's media platforms;
 - a further review should be undertaken to consider further savings around printing requirements including the use of paper copy committee agendas;
 - the importance of the Council recognising the impact (i.e. wellbeing and work/life balance) on existing staff being required to cover gaps in staffing as part of the 'vacancy factor'.

OS.22 Corporate Scorecard Performance - April to September 2019 Update

The Assistant Director, Corporate Services and Transformation presented the Quarter 2 Corporate Scorecard for April to September 2019 to enable Members to review the levels of performance achieved and discuss any issues as required.

Members were asked to consider the methods for assessing how well the Council were performing which included:-

- Delivery of the Corporate Plan via programme and project management
- Service Review Programme
- Results of the LGA Peer Challenge
- Place Survey/Star Survey
- Performance Scorecards.

The Performance Scorecards were split into three categories to incorporate Place outcomes and priorities, Corporate key organisational measures and Service operations. The Corporate Scorecard perspectives focussed on Customer and Community, Funding the Future, Organisational Effectiveness and Our People.

As at the end of Quarter 2, 84% of Corporate Scorecard measures were achieving or exceeding target or were within 10% variance of their targets. 75% of measures were indicating an improved position compared to the same period in the previous year or were within 5% of the previous year's performance levels.

Members' attention was drawn to two particular Performance Indicators, which were not currently meeting their targets and had resulted in a reduction in performance.

Rent Collection from Total Rent Due

Current rent collection rates were down 4% on the previous year having been significantly impacted by the wider roll out of the Universal Credit full service within the District. Tenants were experiencing issues with budgeting and financial hardship which had resulted in the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) changing the way they paid and managed arrears payments to the Council.

User Attendance at Council Leisure Facilities

User attendance at the Council's leisure centres was currently lower than predicted with sales of fitness memberships slowing down. Attendance had been affected by budget gym competition in the area but it was hoped that the new leisure facility in Kirkby, once completed, should help the Council see an improvement in footfall.

To conclude the Assistant Director, Corporate Services and Transformation advised Members that she was intending to report the outcomes from the recent LGA Peer Challenge and the year-end performance outturn to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course.

Following the presentation, Members took the opportunity to discuss the corporate scorecards and highlight the following:-

- a request for further information in relation to sickness absence performance data and the methods utilised by officers to support employees back into work at the earliest opportunity;
- the remit and objectives of the bi-annual Council's Performance Boards (attended by the Chief Executive, Assistant Director, Corporate Services and Transformation and relevant Director) to discuss risk, sickness levels, performance data and audit recommendations with Service Managers;
- the high performance and 100% achievement rate for the Tenancy Sustainment Officers in Housing who provide support to vulnerable tenants to ensure they remain in their tenancies for 6 months or more.

RESOLVED that

- a) the level of performance achieved against the Quarter 2 Corporate Scorecard for 2019/20, as presented, be received and noted;
- b) the Assistant Director, Corporate Services and Transformation be requested to submit an additional item alongside the Quarter 3 Corporate Scorecard report, outlining the latest sickness absence data and the methods utilised by officers to support employees back into work at the earliest opportunity.

OS.23 Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20

The Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services provided an update to the Committee regarding progress against the Scrutiny Workplan. Five topics were still ongoing and would not be concluded by the end of the 2019/20 municipal year, and would therefore be finalised in readiness for consideration by Cabinet in June/July 2020.

Some of the original timelines had not been met due to the cancellation of all meetings in November 2019; a decision that had been taken to enable the Council to undertake the preparatory work for the General Election held during December 2019.

With regard to new items for the 2020/21 Scrutiny Workplan, Members were asked to think about any possible topics of interest and to forward any ideas to the Service Manager or the Scrutiny Research Officer over the next couple of months.

It was intended to consider extending the standard format for Scrutiny reviews to include shorter 'desktop' reviews, thus building in more flexibility to the Workplan and ensuring Members can better meet changing priorities as they arise. It was also suggested that the use of Update/Information items had a place on the Workplan and could be of benefit to the function to accommodate items of interest with more challenging timelines.

To conclude, the Committee concurred with the suggestions and acknowledged that a further report in relation to the updated Workplan would be submitted in due course.

RESOLVED

that the update regarding the work of the Scrutiny Panels and Committee and progress against the Scrutiny Workplan, be received and noted.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Chairman.

Report To:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY	Date:	16TH JULY 2020
Heading:	CORPORATE SCORECARD YEAR END POSITION		
Portfolio Holder:	COUNCILLOR JASON ZADRONZY, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	YES		
Subject to Call-In:	YES		

Purpose of Report

This report presents to Overview and Scrutiny the year end out-turn position of the Corporate Scorecard.

Recommendation(s)

1. For Overview and Scrutiny to consider and proactively review the successful delivery of the Corporate Plan, and levels of performance achieved against the Corporate Scorecard, as at year-end 2019/20.

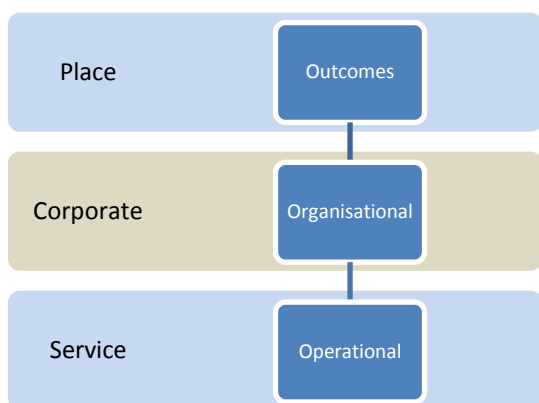
Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The Council's ambitions for the period 2019 – 2023 are clearly identified in a set of revised and updated Corporate Priorities which are presented in our Corporate Plan. These were developed by Cabinet last year and have since been reviewed and updated, with particular consideration of the impact of the pandemic and our intended recovery activity.

Our priorities for the future and the key projects and initiatives we intend to deliver, are then translated and cascaded, through our Performance and Strategic Planning Framework, into specific Service Plans to facilitate focussed delivery.

The Corporate Plan sits above a wider strategic context which includes the Corporate Project Management Framework, Corporate Performance Indicators and a range of strategic documents relating to the organisation and its services.

Our performance framework incorporates balanced performance scorecards on three separate levels as indicated below.



Our Corporate Scorecard measures organisational performance, and as such typical perspectives of a balanced scorecard have been adopted including Community and Customer, Funding the Future, Organisational Effectiveness and Our People. The Corporate Scorecard is aligned to our Corporate Priorities and key initiatives identified in the refreshed Corporate Plan 2019-2023.

Every four years we also undertake a Peer Challenge Review, engaging peers from across the sector through the Local Government Association sector led improvement offer, with an independent evaluation of the organisation which is mostly focussed on leadership, governance, corporate capacity and financial resilience. The outcome of the most recent Peer Challenge Review, on 29th to 31st January, 2020, is reported separately to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

We are a Values based organisation whose purpose is to create a future where everyone has the chance of a better quality of life, as such we are currently developing our approach to measuring and understanding Social Value which will be incorporated into our Performance Management and Project Management framework. A Social Value Policy has recently been developed and approved by Cabinet.

Alternative Options Considered

None

Detailed Information

The Council's Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023 was approved by Cabinet and endorsed by Full Council in September 2019. This new Corporate Plan set out our revised priorities for the future and the key projects and initiatives we intend to deliver.

The Corporate Plan sits above a wider strategic context which includes the Corporate Project Management Framework, Corporate Performance Framework and a range of strategic documents relating to the organisation and its services.

In March 2016, Cabinet agreed the use of a balanced scorecard methodology to enhance the organisation's performance framework and ability to understand how successfully the Corporate Priorities are being delivered, the approach providing a more rounded view on performance with a greater emphasis on customer satisfaction and quality.

The Corporate Plan has been reviewed in light of the first year progress and performance outturn, and also significant factors impacting upon the organisation such as the COVID pandemic. The plan has been refreshed to ensure alignment to the Council's future ambitions and Corporate Priorities for the four year period of the plan (2019-2023) and will be presented to the next forthcoming Cabinet in 2020 for approval.

Corporate Plan progress is monitored through both the successful delivery of key projects and initiatives and performance achieved against the Corporate Scorecard.

This report details progress against delivery of the Corporate Plan in 2019/20 as measured through our Corporate Scorecard.

It should be noted that Ashfield is the only local authority in Nottinghamshire that has delivered all tier 1 and 2 critical services without interruption during the pandemic. The whole organisation has worked effectively together as one council, re-deploying staff into important roles outside of their normal duties to ensure continuance of service, whilst also delivering humanitarian services across the District.

Despite the impacts of the pandemic, overall, the corporate scorecard position for April 2019 to March 2020 indicates the following:-

- 74% of measures achieving or exceeding target, or within 10% variance of target.
- 64% of measures indicating an improved position compared to the same period in the previous year, or within 5% of previous year's performance levels.

We are pleased with Corporate Plan key successes delivered within the year:-

Health and Happiness Priority

- Kirkby Leisure Centre - the project is underway to provide a new facility on the Festival Hall site, including a swimming pool, leisure water, sports/ events hall, café and climbing wall. Provisional allocation of £1.5m of funding secured from the LEP and Expression of Interest submitted to Sport England for £1.5m. £10,000 was secured from Sport England to develop a Strategic Outcomes Framework, to enable us to apply for Sport England facilities funding and also to help shape the new operator contract. The new leisure operator contract was developed and a very successful bidder's day was held in January. Five Operators were invited to ITT stage, with a deadline of 10 June 2020 to submit their applications.
- Lammas Health Hub has been launched, and is being accessed by many groups, supporting individuals living with dementia, autism, and long term health conditions. Free usage of the Health Hub is available to groups that support vulnerable residents.
- Hucknall Rotary Community Games event was delivered in partnership with Hucknall Rotary Club: 24 Care leavers have accessed free leisure centre use since July 2019. 3 Carers Roadshows have also been delivered with 22 referrals.
- Through our Community Engagement Volunteer Policy 182 volunteers have registered, with 29 new inductions during this period.
- Feel Good families was launched in May 2019. To date 532 families have signed up, including 1,037 children. All receive regular communication about free or low cost activity. Themed trails have taken place in local parks, family ice skating and dancing sessions have been fully booked, 63 people took part in cycle ability and a new junior Parkrun started attracting 80 participants in the first week. This project was a finalist for the Active Notts. Project of the Year award.

Homes and Housing Priority

- Non-decent housing stock has remained at 0.18% for the year which is considerably better than the target figure of 0.40%.
- Whilst the target for households prevented from becoming homeless continued to be exceeded throughout the year, there is a small reduction in the number of preventions from the previous quarter. This has continued a trend over the past few quarters. Difficulty in accessing alternative accommodation/enabling applicants to remain in their current accommodation is influenced by Government policies such as Welfare Reform which have had an impact. In addition the small reduction from last quarter could be attributed to a 'lag' in recording following difficulties brought about by the COVID 19 outbreak. This has also impacted on the ability of the service to carry out prevention work for the last 2 weeks in March.
- Covid-19 had an impact on void relets during the last 2 weeks of March; however performance for the year end was still above target. As reported during Quarter 2, effective management and a lower number of empty homes are key reasons for this.
- We have continued throughout the year to consistently support 100% of our tenants to remain in their tenancy for 6 months or more following completion of their support package. This is through the hard work of the Tenancy Sustainment Officers, both by carrying out pre-tenancy work and by providing comprehensive support during the first few months of their tenancy to vulnerable tenants. This includes proactive partnership working with other external agencies and charities etc.

Economic Growth and Place Priority

- The Kirkby Town Centre Masterplan was completed in February of this year.
- The Kirkby and Sutton Towns Funding consultations have now completed, with over 1,400 responses in total, with results being published in the near future.
- Car parking charges have been suspended during COVID lockdown until a new two hours free parking scheme in town centre car parks comes into force in September 2020.
- Idlewells indoor market employment has risen quarter on quarter throughout 2019/20, pre-covid.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funded project for Kings Mill Reservoir progresses, the dredging contract has now been completed and demobilised. Work to decommission protective cages has been added which will be implemented Jan – Feb 2021. The café refurbishment has been completed with some remedial works still to complete.
- Planning applications continue to be processed well above nationally prescribed standard targets, with 100% of major applications being processed within 13 weeks.
- All dilapidated commercial buildings on the Dilapidated and Empty Buildings Priority list have received some form of intervention over the year. The group has dealt with 10 long standing empty properties this year with a range of outcomes, being either demolition, redevelopment or significant improvement. There are currently 11 long standing empty properties being worked on. The Council has undertaken a number of very positive actions which has resulted in 13 premises being taken off the dilapidated buildings list.

Cleaner and Greener Priority

- The number of resident generated reports of dog fouling during the year has seen another 10.7% reduction compared to last year, which is definitely a positive sign of continued progress through collaborations with Keep Britain Tidy and Tickspac, cross departmental working with ASB and continuously developing new and improved means of grounds

maintenance and street cleansing schedules through service reviews. This lowering trend of incidents of dog fouling is expected to reduce even further during 2020/21.

- 2019/20 has seen a reduction in fly tipping incidents by 11.5% compared to last year, which is a first following a five year rise of incidents District-wide. It is clear campaigns like 'Not in Notts.' as well as the annual 'Big Ashfield Spring Clean' have educated residents of the impacts of fly tipping and empowering communities towards the conservation effort.
- For litter and fly-tipping requests combined there has been a 2.6% decrease, going against the increasing trend of previous years. We are continuing to collaborate with organisations like Keep Britain Tidy and APSE which provides the Council a variety of campaigns and information from other local authorities on their own struggles with litter. We are also undergoing an Environmental Service review that seeks to optimise its street cleansing and grounds maintenance schedules to assure quicker recovery as well as re-organising the distribution of litter bins across the District to the areas that require it the most.
- In addition to this, the proactive engagement and intervention work undertaken by the Enforcement and ASB teams in investigations and the subsequent issue of fixed penalty notices for offenders has also seen a 41% increase in overall actions. For 2020/21, the enforcement team is also having more resources allocated to it with an extra member of staff being assigned, which is expected to result in more investigations, fixed penalty notices and a reduction in overall incidents long term.
- Whilst 2019/20 has maintained recycling and glass levels between 40-44% for each of its quarters, recycling tonnage has seen an increase of 14% when compared to 2018/19 from 7,264.50 to 8,294.88 tonnes. In regards to residual waste, there has been another 2.6% reduction compared to last year, from 27,796.14 tonnes to 27,057.72 tonnes.
- The end of the 2019/20 garden waste season saw 20,800 subscribers to the garden waste service, 1,300 more than the previous year (6.7%) there has been a 10.5% increase in garden waste tonnage for 2019/20 when compared to last year, from 5,679.24 tonnes to 6,275.76 tonnes.
- Kirkby, Sutton and Hucknall have maintained an average grade of B for street cleanliness during the last 3 quarters of 2019/20. This includes rates of litter for each surveyed street. Graffiti and Fly Posting has been awarded an A grade for each of the three quarters, only Detritus has seen a dip to a B- in Q4 19/20, but maintained an A grade for Q2-3 19/20.

Safer and Stronger Priority

- Anti-social behaviour - Work is taking place with Nottinghamshire Victim Care to make Ashfield District Council a victim case hub. Local Area Tasking Meetings have been taking place to increase identification and active targeting of offenders and hotspot locations.
- CCTV – Police and Crime Commissioner Funding was approved for redeployable CCTV in Ashfield with three new cameras having been purchased and potential for a fourth camera. An infrastructure was being put in place using existing lamp columns and rewiring with commando switch for those in pre-determined hotspot locations with Privacy Impact Assessments produced.
- Complex case and safeguarding - Targeting of cases has been taking place in the last 12 months using a complex case methodology.
- Domestic abuse - All complex case workers are being trained in the MARAC process. Funding arrangements for the management of refuge accommodation have been concluded and government evaluation submitted.

Innovate and Improve Priority

- We have successfully acquired £61.77m of commercial investment property to date, delivering much needed annual (gross) income of circa £4m to support the delivery of key services in our 2020/21 budget and MTFS.

- The continued review and implementation of changes to call handling has seen average call waiting time continue to decrease over the year: 38 seconds reduction since the first quarter of 2019/20, at 39 seconds which is well below our current target of 1 minute 6 seconds
- There has been a further reduction in the level of abandoned calls since the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Online payments continue to show a significant increase, 10% compared to last year, the last quarter shows a slight reduction in council tax instalments but an increase in garden waste payments, which has contributed to the increase overall
- Our new online payment 'e-store' was launched in January 2019. The e-store offers customers the choice of online payment for over 160 of the Council's paid for services. We have realised a 9% reduction in paypoint and post office payments over the last year (nearly 11,000 transactions), saving the Council around £5,000 in transaction costs.
- Nearly half of businesses across the District are now signed up for e-billing, a 30% increase on last year.
- Sickness absence out-turn for the year has seen a slight reduction compared to the previous year. HR is working with managers and CLT on absence management. This includes reviewing hotspots/high risk areas, common ailments and whether these are area/post specific, reviewing the preventative support offered and looking at alternatives/temporary adjustments that support employees back into work at the earliest opportunity. It also includes monitoring of the impact of Covid on absence levels.

The Administration is keen to see high levels of performance across all Council services and has identified areas for improvement including but not limited to:-

- Attendances at our leisure centres have been slightly lower for the year than originally predicted. Quarter 4 outturn target has been missed in part to the Covid-19 pandemic, causing public concern and a decrease in overall footfall, before the nationwide lockdown in late March.
- There has been a gradual increase in rent collection rates over the year, however the rate is still below the target. Collection of rent for both current and former tenants has become increasingly difficult since the implementation of full service Universal Credit within the District. This has caused some tenants to experience financial hardship and others are choosing not to prioritise the payment of their rent when they receive their housing costs directly. Also, long delays in receiving managed and arrears payments directly from the DWP contribute towards a decline in performance in this area. We continue to work proactively with these tenants to minimise any long term financial losses.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The report relates to the delivery of the Corporate Plan Priorities. The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's proposed priorities for the period 2019 to 2023, and intended deliverables which will be monitored and managed through the Corporate Performance Framework.

It covers performance for the period April 2019 to March 2020. The Corporate Scorecard is currently being reviewed and refreshed to align with the refresh of the Corporate Plan and associated Corporate Priorities as a means of identifying their successful delivery.

Legal:

The Council’s new Corporate Priorities and strategic plans have been developed in consideration of current and forthcoming legislative requirements.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	<p>The Corporate Plan has been developed in alignment with the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the financial sustainability of the organisation. The ‘Innovate and Improve’ Priority proposes key programmes and projects which will be focussed on identifying and delivering efficiencies and more effective working practices to support financial sustainability, whilst concurrently delivering improved customer focussed services.</p> <p>Financial performance is included within a detailed Corporate Scorecard reported to CLT and Scrutiny. Financial PI’s form a key element of the balanced scorecard approach, reviewed to reflect future priorities in alignment with the new Corporate Plan 2019-2023.</p>
General Fund – Capital Programme	
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Absence of a Corporate Plan would result in a lack of prioritisation and focus on delivering what matters	Agreed Corporate Plan every four years and refreshed when appropriate, which is delivered via the organisation’s project management framework.
Poor performance would potentially result in inability to deliver the Corporate Priorities as specified in the Corporate Plan	Regular monitoring of performance and robust performance management through the authority’s performance management framework.

Human Resources:

The ‘Innovate and Improve’ Priority proposes key programmes and projects which will be focussed on delivering the People Strategy and developing employees.

High levels of performance can have a positive impact upon employee engagement and retention which in turn can enhance performance further.

Environmental/Sustainability

The 'Cleaner and Greener' Priority proposes key programmes and projects which will be focussed on delivering environmental improvement.

Equalities:

There are no direct implications on equality and diversity as a consequence of the proposals and recommendations outlined in this report.

Other Implications:

(if applicable)

Reason(s) for Urgency

(if applicable)

Reason(s) for Exemption

(if applicable)

Background Papers

(if applicable)

Report Author and Contact Officer

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Report To:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY	Date:	16TH JULY 2020
Heading:	LGA PEER CHALLENGE 2020		
Portfolio Holder:	COUNCILLOR JASON ZADRONZY, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

For Overview and Scrutiny to consider the LGA Peer Challenge key recommendations and current progress.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. To consider the LGA Peer Challenge key recommendations and progress to date.**
- 2. To note the expectation for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to monitor the implementation of the key recommendations and supporting action plan.**

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

In April 2020 Council endorsed the findings of the Local Government Association Peer Challenge.

The Peer Challenge Review undertaken by the Local Government Association in January 2020 is designed to support Councils and is part of a sector led improvement programme. There is an expectation from the LGA and government that the findings will be used to support improvements. Cabinet sanctioned all actions arising from the LGA report.

Alternative Options Considered

(with reasons why not adopted)

There are no alternative options in relation to the noting of the draft summary outcomes of the Corporate Peer Challenge report or the endorsement of the actions taken to date to meet some of the recommendations.

Detailed Information

1. Background

Peer Challenges are improvement focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The current LGA sector-led improvement support offer includes an expectation that all councils will have a Corporate Peer Challenge every 4 to 5 years. Ashfield District Council had a Corporate Peer Challenge in July 2013, and a second in March 2017. The Council's performance management framework includes a commitment to undertake a LGA Peer Challenge review every three years to provide external and objective assessment of the Council's improvement progress.

The findings from the previous 2017 Peer Challenge Review were very positive for the Council. The review demonstrated that the Council is more focused on the needs of its communities and has a strong and growing reputation with its partners as a good organisation to work with. The LGA report also highlighted areas of development and improvement which were successfully implemented.

2. Peer Challenge Approach

The Corporate Peer Challenge Team consisted of:

- Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson – Leader, Portsmouth City Council
- Alison Broom – Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council
- Andrew Seekings – Interim Chief Executive, Allerdale Borough Council
- Rob Gregory – Assistant Director for Communities and Neighbourhoods Stevenage Borough Council
- Esther Barrott – Care and Health Improvement Adviser, NGDP/Local Government Association
- Becca Singh – Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association Strategic Leadership

The peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent three days onsite at Ashfield District Council, during which they:

- Spoke to over 100 people including a range of Council staff, Councillors and external stakeholders
- Gathered information and views from 28 meetings, visits to key sites and additional research and reading
- Collectively spent nearly 300 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending around 8 weeks at the Council

The peer team considered the following five questions which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges. These are the areas we believe are critical to councils' performance and improvement:

1. Understanding of the local place and priority setting: Does the Council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
2. Leadership of Place: Does the Council provide effective leadership of place through its elected Members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
3. Organisational leadership and governance: Is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?
4. Financial planning and viability: Does the Council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
5. Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the Council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

3. Peer Challenge Findings

The Peer Challenge team in its Executive Summary concluded that:

- The Council is a council where the politicians provide strong community engagement, are involved, passionate and resident-focused.
- Councillors are particularly active in seeking residents' views and wants and use them to identify priorities for action.
- The Council is successful in using resident views in influencing service delivery.
- The Council has clear ambitions and it is clear which Directors and Departments are responsible for delivering them.
- The Council has a clear aspiration to take a One Council approach.
- The Council has adopted values and associated behaviours through a participative approach which are displayed across the organisation.
- Staff are very positive about working for the Council and are committed to delivering the best for the Council's residents and customers. They are also enthusiastic about using their untapped potential for the good of the Council and its residents.

4. Key recommendations and Current Progress

The key recommendations and suggestions for improvement, the Council's initial response and our current progress to date are shown, by theme, in the table below. The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) has identified a Lead CLT Officer for each of the recommendations to facilitate successful delivery of improvement.

Strategic Leadership and Partnerships Theme:

Key Recommendation	Initial Council Response	Current Progress
<p>Ensure that the achievement of the more-strategic ambitions for the District, meeting challenges and exploiting opportunities along the way, provides appropriate drive for the Council moving forward, so that it is not unduly focused on responding to current operational issues</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>The Corporate Plan is developed and reviewed by cross organisational representation relevant to each corporate priority.</p> <p>Our performance management framework, is structured and driven by priority rather than function.</p>	<p>The Corporate Plan and Corporate Priorities have been reviewed in the light of Covid 19 and the tier 1 and 2 essential task matrix.</p>
<p>Develop a partnership approach to strategic plans for the District. Work with others to develop and adopt shared plans and thereby share risks, responsibilities and delivery.</p> <p>The next 12 months are key in establishing the Discover Ashfield brand and the Towns Fund opportunities could galvanise the partnership through a practical project.</p>	<p>Where relevant, ADC officers will take a more proactive leadership approach to partnership plans, seeking joint delivery with key partners, and providing measurable benefits and case studies</p> <p>We will review voluntary/community sector capacity issues in the light of Covid19 and target future support to the sector to improve their delivery.</p> <p>Wider support is required for the development of the Discover Ashfield Board which has increased significantly following the Government's announcement of Towns Funding for Kirkby and Sutton.</p> <p>The Council will continue working with our partners to ensure people feel safe and are safe by reducing levels of crime and disorder and antisocial behaviour.</p> <p>A review of the Community Safety Section is underway involving Scrutiny Panel B as part of the process.</p>	<p>We have revisited our strategic partnerships and determined where added value is achieved.</p> <p>59 organisations have been contacted during the pandemic, of which 22 were able to offer services, 12 didn't respond and 25 have closed due to Covid-19. 12 organisations who have demonstrated they play an important role in Ashfield's response to Covid-19 have been awarded funding.</p> <p>The Ashfield Community Development Group will be reviewed with potential to align to the Discover Ashfield Love Where You Live theme.</p> <p>A post has been created (Discover Ashfield Project Officer) to support the Chair and the development and completion of projects within the Discover Ashfield Delivery Plan. The post is required to support the corporate priority of Economic Growth and Place. The post is funded from the savings from the mutually agreed dissolution of the Regeneration Shared Service.</p>

One Council:

Key Recommendation	Initial Council Response	Current Progress
<p>Further develop a 'one council' approach, including corporate strategy, policy, project management and data analysis functions. As part of this, the team recommend reviewing corporate functions and structures,</p>	<p>A programme of essential building works have been agreed at leadership level</p> <p>Re-branding to facilitate a one council culture is already underway</p>	<p>Re-branding of Brook Street is now completed.</p> <p>The Working Together Group are currently finalising recommendations for a One Council approach to uniforms. CLT to agree and implement.</p>

Key Recommendation	Initial Council Response	Current Progress
<p>moving office-based housing staff to the main building with other Council staff and proactively ensuring that staff from all departments are engaged with the transformation programme. It would involve some initial outlay, including investing in the building so that it can be flexible enough for the additional staff, and potentially different teams, as well as some level of re-branding of former housing ALMO assets. The positive impact on the culture of the organisation could potentially be massive and improve productivity. Investing in the fabric of the building and improving its efficiency would also help demonstrate the Council's commitment to declaring a climate emergency</p>	<p>There are numerous examples of current corporate working involving staff from cross-Council, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response to Coronavirus Officer Working Together Group • Digi Champs • Digital Steering Group • Leisure Transformation <p>However, there is a need to develop an approach to engage more widely across the organisation.</p> <p>The Leader and the Chief Executive are providing weekly update videos for officers during the Coronavirus pandemic</p>	<p>A review of accommodation at Urban Road to enable the housing team to move from Brook Street has been delayed, as a whole building approach needs to be considered post covid (an indicative plan to locate in hub and top floor does however exist).</p> <p>Significantly more space will be required for the housing team if EDRM scanning is not completed (this has also been impacted by Covid-19)</p> <p>The Leader has also realigned his two Deputy Leaders to the Housing and Assets and Community Safety portfolios to ensure senior member leadership to improve and implement those recommendations</p>
<p>Learn from where things have worked. Within Ashfield, the business park developments and the refurbishment of the Idlewells Market are good examples. The team recommend learning from other Councils that have reintegrated the housing function from an Arms-Length Management Organisation (ALMO) back into the Council, for example considering membership at the Association for Retained Council Housing (ARCH).</p>	<p>Recommendation is erroneous. ADC is an active and vocal member of ARCH and has been for over 2 years</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>

Financial Sustainability:

Key Recommendation	Initial Council Response	Current Progress
<p>Publish a Medium-Term Financial Strategy as soon as possible. This should include the Council's position on future increases in the council tax base and council tax levels. It should also be clear about the cost and borrowing requirements</p>	<p>Agreed. It was the intention that a detailed MTFs would be produced in 2019 aligned to the expected 3 year Spending Round. As a single year funding announcement was made by the Government which provided far less certainty about Government funding after 2020/21 a decision was taken to produce an update to the MTFs. The MTFs will include a sensitivity analysis of potential changes</p>	<p>The MTFs will be produced in Autumn/Winter 2020 and will in part be informed by the outcome of the external audit of the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts which have recently been finalised. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is now likely to result in a further single year settlement for 2022/23. This adversely affects longer term financial planning but is understandable given current</p>

Key Recommendation	Initial Council Response	Current Progress
<p>of the new Leisure Centre, and the offset in revenue costs expected in commissioning the new leisure provider.</p>	<p>to the Council Tax base and Council Tax increases. The numbers included in the MTFS update do reflect the costs and income associated with the building of the new Leisure Centre and recommissioning of the Council's Leisure contract.</p>	<p>circumstances. The new MTFS will reflect this uncertainty.</p>
<p>Consider what proportion of overall Council income should derive from commercial investments. The team also suggest considering diversifying the commercial income portfolio to minimise the impact of a failure in one sector.</p> <p>The strategy of acquisition is reliant on one key officer. This puts the Council at risk if he leaves and so consideration should be given to sharing this responsibility and therefore understanding more widely. A wider range of income generation and commercial activity would reduce risk of all being within commercial property.</p>	<p>It is agreed that the Council should determine what proportion of its income should be derived from Commercial Investments. This will be driven by both greater certainty over central Government funding now expected in Autumn 2020 and the expected cashable savings from the Digital Transformation Programme. The Council considers that its Investment Portfolio is suitably diverse and future acquisitions will maintain that diversity. No future out of District acquisitions will be in respect of High Street retail.</p> <p>An assessment and Options Appraisal is currently being developed with an imminent review of future approach. This will consider significant changes on restrictions to external capital fund borrowing, the impact of Coronavirus and Brexit.</p> <p>Assessment will cover skills, capacity, resilience and need to review risk assessments, risk appetite and target levels of income generation</p>	<p>As above</p> <p>CLT have considered a status and options report on future delivery of investment acquisition including skills, capacity and increased resilience and strengthened realignment of elements within finance and estate teams</p> <p>Contractual agreement has been updated to retain services of an external agent to provide specialist expertise on commercial investments; both acquisition and development and renegotiation on existing tenancies and lease agreements.</p>
<p>Improve engagement in financial planning and management. Rolling out Business Partnering in finance and other support services will help this. This would involve the S151 officer (or the finance team) at an earlier stage in planning services and changes, who could then be more proactive about what could be done and ensure that changes are reflected in both budget planning and the medium-term financial strategy</p>	<p>Agreed. This work has already started with Staff and elected Members receiving Finance training with more training planned. Once the upgrade to the Finance system is complete and embedded, it is the intention at this point to further strengthen Finance Business Partnering arrangements. Budget Managers and Budget Holders are already fully involved in the annual Budget Setting process.</p>	<p>Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic this will now take place towards the latter end of the financial year.</p>

Organisation Development:

Key Recommendation	Initial Council Response	Current Progress
<p>Ensure further Member training on behaviours, roles and responsibilities. This should include work with political groups, and on how members and officers work together, to ensure members understand and keep to their roles, and ensure their approach is appropriate</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Members underwent a comprehensive induction programme following the District Elections in May 2019 which included elements relating to the Members' Code of Conduct, the roles of Members and Officers. Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs attended an LGA led member development session on 14 October 2019.</p> <p>Further development sessions will take place to refresh Members regarding their roles and behaviours. Training will also take place with relevant officers in relation to Member/Officer roles and responsibilities to ensure there is a mirrored understanding.</p> <p>The Standards and Personnel Appeals Committee has been involved in considering the ethical governance report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life over the past year with a view to reviewing the Members' Code of Conduct and related processes and procedures. The Local Government Association will be launching a consultation period shortly regarding its proposed new model code of conduct and Members and relevant Officers will contribute to this consultation process in due course.</p>	<p>Development of a training package has been delayed due to COVID-19.</p> <p>The LGA Model Code of Conduct consultation was delayed due to COVID19. The Consultation commenced on 8 June and runs until 17 August. The Consultation will be considered by the Standards and Personnel Committee at its next meeting in order to submit a formal Council response. All Members have been provided with the details of the consultation and asked to provide comments to the Monitoring Officer to feed into the Committee for consideration as part of the response. It is understood the LGA's new Model Code will not now be launched until the Autumn.</p>
<p>Maximise the contribution of the shared service for Internal Audit to ensure that the Audit Committee are supported to keep up with the pace and topics that the council wants to develop. For example, as the commercial programme develops further, the Audit Committee will need to be continually ensuring that governance arrangements and levels of risk are appropriately evaluated.</p>	<p>Agreed. Members underwent a comprehensive induction programme following the District Elections in May 2019 which included training relating to the role of the Audit Committee, treasury management and fraud and commercial investments. Whilst these sessions were aimed at Audit Committee Members, all Members were invited to attend if they wished. Some of these sessions took place immediately before an Audit Committee meeting.</p> <p>Further development sessions will be developed to refresh Members regarding these topics and ongoing training for Audit Committee Members is being planned with our partners from the Central Midlands Audit Partnership.</p>	<p>Discussions regarding training have commenced with CMAP.</p>

Key Recommendation	Initial Council Response	Current Progress
<p>Consider long-term political support for the leadership. As an Independent group, the group lacks the political support of a party structure. This may hamper it in horizon scanning and strategic policy development. It is suggested that the Cabinet works with the LGA to explore support options. This would complement strengthening of corporate strategy and policy development by the organisation itself</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>Council report will be prepared for approval at the AGM on 23 April 2020 to appoint political assistants in accordance with the relevant legislation.</p>	<p>Recommendation approved at the AGM on 23 April.</p> <p>Appointment has been made to the Political Assistant role .</p>
<p>Vary how the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) pro-actively engages with staff. Although there are engagement mechanisms, many staff do not feel involved or always know what it is happening. Using different engagement mechanisms could reach staff that currently feel disengaged. For example, floor walking, drop-ins and engagement events across all work locations, including the Depot and Brook Street.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>There already exists a number of different engagement and communication approaches though an outcome from the Employee Survey was about enhanced engagement from CLT including visibility and recognition of work undertaken across all services.</p> <p>CLT members already work from a variety of locations in order to show visible leadership and also undertake “back to the floor” activities in their departments.</p>	<p>The Working together group have considered the positive impact of the pandemic and areas for improvement which will be developed further, with case study examples and benefits measurement.</p> <p>Work has commenced to integrate Employee Survey outcomes into the Working Together Group work programme,</p> <p>A different range of approaches are being used by CLT to support healthy engagement with all employees through Covid whether operational, office or working from home/remotely e.g. visibility, weekly updates, videos, briefings, video conferences.</p> <p>We are continuing to encourage proactive use of cross organisational working teams. The digi-champs group will shortly be refreshed to encourage wider engagement</p>

Digital Services Transformation (DST):

Key Recommendation	Initial Council Response	Current Progress
<p>Invest resources in the Digital Transformation Plan sooner rather than later. This will make it easier to achieve the £2.2m saving predicted over the next four years. Use the transformation programme to help achieve cross-departmental working, using untapped staff potential and enthusiasm and to develop capacity within the</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>An initial review of capacity gaps in digital and technology resource has been completed in order to inform a decision for additional £400k to be set aside in 2020/21 for this purpose. An intended timeline has been aligned to our transformation programme to prioritise additional resources.</p> <p>We will embed the new digital ‘business as usual’ for employees, elected Members and residents, fast</p>	<p>Capacity review completed. Initial focus on new Programme Manager role, Customer Services Manager, Innovations and Solutions Architect and Web Content Lead. Interim Innovations and Solutions Manager to commenced in June to lead on our solution architecture roadmap.</p> <p>Digital team skills development was hindered by COVID ceasing training availability. Online training has now been developed, several members of the team will pursue this whilst we are supported by</p>

Key Recommendation	Initial Council Response	Current Progress
<p>organisation. Consider how to backfill posts of those getting directly involved in the transformation</p> <p>Adequate consideration needs to be given to ICT architecture investment and staff development to enable the effective deployment of the digital strategy</p>	<p>tracked in response to remote access and service provision whilst capturing changes being made including channel shift and financial savings.</p>	<p>our low code solution supplier to build and deliver.</p> <p>Progress against our digital blueprint is being reviewed through the ongoing development and refinement of a detailed priority programme plan, this enables the mapping of resources more directly. A weekly programme highlight report outlining progress is shared with all key stakeholders.</p> <p>A benefits realisation report is being developed that outlines and tracks actual outcomes against targets involving financial savings, customer experience and social value.</p> <p>The new website project and transition to Microsoft Office 365 are scheduled for implementation by September 2020.</p>
<p>Third tier managers are keen for greater data management training and to understand how to embed, improve and implement their current data management skills.</p> <p>The team recommend further training and support in qualitative as well as quantitative research and analysis for key staff, and consideration to appoint dedicated data analysts.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Digital working groups will seek ideas of what data and trend information they might find useful in their services and then work through how this is best delivered. We will determine our key datasets across the whole organisation, such as UPRN, and review the requirement of a specific data officer role.</p>	<p>We have agreed with Nottingham Trent University Business School to engage MBA students in a project brief to understand, through a gap analysis, what elements of good practice data architecture have been implemented, what needs to be done, and recommendations for next steps. The project commenced on 22nd June, the outcomes of which will inform consideration of our data usage business requirements, what we create that adds value and is used</p>

5. Progress Monitoring

At the next meeting, Cabinet will be asked to sanction and endorse the Peer Challenge Action Plan, and approve that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor the implementation of the key recommendations and supporting action plan.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The Corporate Plan sets the strategic direction of the Council. The Corporate Plan has been, and will continue to be reviewed annually, particularly clarifying the organisation's key priorities and measured outcomes, in line with the LGA peer challenge recommendations.

Legal:

There are no significant legal issues identified in this progress report.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	none arising from this report
General Fund – Capital Programme	none arising from this report
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	none arising from this report
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	none arising from this report

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Lack of focus for further organisational improvement leading to a decline in performance.	Monitored delivery of LGA key recommendations Continuous review and enhancement of performance, project and financial management frameworks.

Human Resources:

There are no significant human resource issues identified relating to the recommendations in the report

Environmental/Sustainability

There are no environmental/sustainability issues identified relating to the recommendations in the report.

Equalities:

There are no significant equalities issues identified relating to the recommendations in the report

Other Implications:

Reason(s) for Urgency

Reason(s) for Exemption

Background Papers

LGA Peer Review report

Report Author and Contact Officer

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Report To:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Date:	16 JULY 2020
Heading:	SCRUTINY WORKPLAN REFRESH 2020/2021		
Portfolio Holder:	NOT APPLICABLE		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

The Scrutiny Workplan is a rolling plan of in-depth reviews, undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Panels A and B. It is a standing item on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda, with each item monitored by Committee Members to ensure appropriate terms of reference and progress.

Each year, the Workplan is revised and refreshed with new topics for review. This report aims to focus Members on discussing and approving appropriate topics for the 2020/2021 Scrutiny Workplan annual refresh. This report also briefly details the topics from the 2019/2020 Scrutiny Workplan that will be carried over due to the disruptions of the previous year. Additionally, this report provides a summary of recently released guidance from the Centre for Public Scrutiny regarding the role of scrutiny during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, details of the proposed establishment of a COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel are included.

Recommendation(s)

- a. Consider topics for approval to the 2020/2021 Scrutiny Workplan.
- b. Note the guidance provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.
- c. Note the ongoing Scrutiny Workplan topics.
- d. Note the recommended establishment of a COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Ensuring that the Scrutiny Workplan is refreshed annually, as well as reviewed consistently throughout the municipal year, is crucial

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options have been considered. Approving the Scrutiny Workplan is part of the Overview and Scrutiny Rules of Procedure set out within the Council's Constitution.

Detailed Information

Scrutiny Workplan

What is the Scrutiny Workplan?

Scrutiny at Ashfield District Council follows a Scrutiny Workplan approved annually by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The work programme is a rolling plan of in-depth reviews, undertaken by Scrutiny Panel A and Scrutiny Panel B. Alongside topic reviews, standing items are considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

These standing items are:

- Crime and Disorder
- Performance
- Budget
- Scrutiny Workplan

The Scrutiny Workplan outlines areas of work to be scrutinised over the next year by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Panels. Any topics added to the Scrutiny Workplan should have anticipated outcomes that will add value to services delivered by the Council and its partners and improve quality of life in Ashfield.

The Scrutiny Workplan is a live document and consultation on potential topics will be continued throughout the year with Service Directors, Third Tier Officers, and Members. Community engagement will also form part of the ongoing consultation process. All suggestions received will be discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the Scrutiny Workplan as a standing item.

Sources of Workplan Topics

There are many sources where topics for scrutiny review can be identified, including:

- Issues of community concern
- Service delivery concerns
- Review, audit, and inspection outcomes
- Issues relating to Council outcomes, objectives, and priorities
- Partnership objectives
- The Forward Plan
- Peer challenge outcomes
- Performance
- Budget
- Improvement plans

Selecting Workplan Topics

Scrutiny Workplan topic selection should be stringent, and Committee Members should use effective processes to select topics that will contribute towards the best and most effective

Workplan. This means having clear terms of reference in mind and considering many different sources of information to help inform the Workplan.

This involves approving topics:

- Of community concern
- That contribute to the Council's Corporate Priorities
- With defined objectives and clear outcomes
- That add value to the Council's overall performance
- That has potential impact for more than one section of the District's population
- That adequate resources are available to carry out a review
- That have not been reviewed recently

A common pitfall for Overview and Scrutiny can be the inclusion of topics on the Workplan that are unsuitable for review due to different factors.

It is advised that Overview and Scrutiny Members avoid topics that are:

- Unmanageable
- Purely for informational purposes
- Have limited anticipated outcomes
- Fail to add value to service delivery
- Fail to improve community wellbeing and quality of life

Scrutiny has limited time and resources meaning the Workplan must be manageable. It is impossible to include every topic suggested throughout Workplan consultation. Effective and successful scrutiny is about reviewing a beneficial topic in the

The selection and prioritisation of topics is critical to the effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny function. A clear topic selection process ensures in-depth and effective reviews, resulting in impactful recommendations and improvements.

Due to the various delays in scrutiny work over the previous municipal year, four topics from the 2019/2020 workplan will need to be carried over to the 2020/2021 workplan. Therefore, it is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members approve **no more than two new topics** for the 2020/21 workplan. It is also recommended that Members develop a 'reserve list' of topics to be approved to the workplan later in the year.

Ongoing Workplan Topics

Bus Provision in Ashfield

Members approved the addition of Bus Provision in Ashfield to the scrutiny workplan at the June 2019 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members agreed an initial remit for the review, focused on social inclusion, local businesses, community transport schemes, areas of need, and funding opportunities.

Scrutiny Panel A has held two formal meetings on the topic, with involvement from the Director of Commercial Services for Trent Barton, and two representatives from community transport scheme Our Centre.

To progress the review, Members will be seeking involvement from a Nottinghamshire County Council representative to discuss funding opportunities for bus services in Ashfield, and how bus services may be changing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community Protection Service

Members approved the addition of the Council's Community Protection Service to the scrutiny workplan at the 18 July 2019 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members wished to review the objectives and remit of the service, how the service works with partners to achieve objectives, and to ensure the service remains fit for purpose while providing value for money.

Scrutiny Panel B has since held two formal meetings reviewing the topic with involvement from the Service Manager – Community Safety, Community Protection Team Leader, and Community Protection Officers. Terms of reference have been set, and Members have this far focused on:

- The origins, structure, and resourcing of the service
- The role of a Community Protection Officer
- Challenges facing the service
- The value of the Integrated Services Hub

To progress the review, Members may wish to revisit the previously set terms of reference to ensure they are still fit for purpose. Members also indicated a desire to explore the progress of software improvements within Community Safety, exploration of public consultation exercises, and how the successes of the service could be better communicated to the public.

Climate Emergency

A review of the climate emergency, considering climate change and how ADC can lead mitigation efforts. This topic was added to the Workplan in 2019. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was agreed that this review would commence once the conclusions of the County study were published. An update on this will be provided in due course.

Service Personnel

Following its formation by Council, the Service Personnel Scrutiny Commission was established to consider the current policies and procedures in place across the Council's services and whether there were any areas for improvement that could better support veterans and service personnel.

This review will be carried out in collaboration with a local armed forces veteran, providing advice, experience and guidance. Originally intended as a stand-alone Commission prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the work will now commence through Scrutiny Panel A to ensure it is progressed in a timely manner. Additional work will be carried out between the formal meetings and then reported back to the Panel.

Preliminary work has already commenced regarding collecting the service area specific information through a questionnaire.

Centre for Public Scrutiny Guidance

The Centre for Public Scrutiny has released a series of online guides designed to support councils on governance and scrutiny during COVID-19 and throughout the aftermath. The guides are intended to support councillors and officers on managing some of the challenges associated with the COVID-19 crisis.

The online guides produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny include:

- Guide 1: Behaviour and Etiquette for Remote Meetings
- Guide 2: Scrutiny
- Guide 3: Councillors Access to Information
- Guide 4: Council's Support to Vulnerable People
- Guide 5: Council Finances, Scrutiny, and Audit (not yet published)

GUIDE 2: SCRUTINY

This guide covers the key arguments in favour of continued, robust member-led scrutiny during the COVID-19 crisis and sets out an approach to provide that scrutiny in a way that is proportionate and fits within the constrained resources that councils will have at their disposal.

Why Carry on with Scrutiny?

The guide states that maintaining scrutiny in the current crisis is critical for several reasons:

- Substantial decisions will be being made which are likely to have an impact on the lives of residents and the places they live.
- The council and its partners should be trying to draw on the perspective of as broad as possible a range of people as it responds to the crisis.
- Scrutiny activities do not take senior officers and members away from the task in hand – they *are* the task in hand. Councillors have a vital role in feeding into and bolstering the COVID-19 response in the communities they serve, and the scrutiny function provides a mechanism for this work to feed into broader strategy.
- The COVID-19 crisis will not be ending any time soon.

Overview and Scrutiny – Outreach and Support

The Centre for Public Scrutiny outlines a shift to recognise that scrutiny can be doing two additional things during the crisis:

- **Outreach** – getting an understanding from the local community and from councillors about the kind of issues and challenges that local people are experiencing.
- **Support** – understanding and supporting the council and its partners as they grapple with an unprecedented situation, aiding in understanding complex issues and in resolving associated problems.

A New Substantive Focus for Scrutiny

The council and its partners will be engaged in a significant amount of activity relating to the operational emergency response.

- Scrutiny can consider how well partners are working together, overseeing the systems that contribute to smooth, effective decision-making, and bringing influence to bear on disagreements or blockages.
- There will be services in the local area exposed to unique pressures. Scrutiny can productively keep a watching brief on council and partner action on these matters.
- Scrutiny can act as a conduit for community experiences. Local people will feel isolated, and councillors will be doing their best to provide support and assistance at ward level. Councils need a way of understanding how these trends are developing, and scrutiny can be a convenient way to draw those insights into the council's corporate work.

A Practical Model for a COVID-19 Scrutiny Panel

Having established the altered role of scrutiny during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, the guide continues to outline a practical scrutiny structure that can support this role. Some guidelines are provided as to the form a COVID-19 related Scrutiny Panel could take:

- **A COVID-19 Scrutiny Committee** – meeting for 60-90 minutes every three to four weeks.
- **A single substantive agenda item for every meeting** – with discussion being supported by a short covering report complemented by verbal updates from officers and other witnesses.
- **A clear outcome and objective for this discussion** – these outcomes will have been agreed beforehand by the Chair and others, usually by way of a pre-meeting.
- **An expanded space for questions from the public** – questions submitted in advance, if confidence/usability of remote tools/virtual meetings increased, it may be possible to allow for a form of live questioning.
- **An accompanying update report at each meeting** – prepared by (or for) and presented by the Chair, setting out:
 - Matters the committee are aware of but where it isn't proposed the committee acts now.
 - Reflections on the council's and partners' overall response on the issues where the committee is carrying out work based on community insight and general review of documentation.

Support: Members' and Officers' Roles

Many democratic services and scrutiny staff have been deployed to assist in the operational response to COVID-19. Councils must bolster their ability to manage this for a sustained period and its right that councils' workforces be managed in a flexible way.

Awareness of the resource constraints under which scrutiny will need to work informed this guide produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. Members should assume throughout the crisis that the amount of officer support available for their work is likely to be limited and will need to direct themselves accordingly.

After the COVID-19 Crisis

Further guidance will be issued by the Centre for Public Scrutiny as the pandemic restrictions ease and councils begin the task of reflecting on the crisis and its many consequences. The Centre for Public Scrutiny maintain that scrutiny can play a strong – and perhaps leading – role in the debrief activity in the aftermath of the crisis. For now, there is little that can be done to plan directly for this.

COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel

At the 30 June 2020 meeting, Cabinet considered a report providing a summary of what the Council has done to respond to COVID-19, a comprehensive update of the COVID-19 decisions taken to date, and exploration of arrangements for the recovery stage of the crisis.

Within the report, the proposed establishment of a new COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel was presented to Cabinet, with a view to Cabinet recommending the establishment of the Panel to the next meeting of the Council. The Panel would be made up of 7 Members who are appointed in accordance with the requirements of political balance.

As set out in the report, it is suggested that the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel will review the Council's response to the pandemic, and take an active role in respect of the Council's recovery plans as requested by the Cabinet or as agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the Scrutiny Workplan.

Draft terms of reference for the Panel:

1. Responsibility for the review of the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and taking an active role in respect of the Council's recovery plans as requested by the Executive or as agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the Scrutiny Workplan, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Reviewing the Council's response to COVID-19, and identifying any short-term actions arising which improve operational and corporate resilience.
 - b. Policy development in respect of the Council's recovery from COVID-19, including preparedness for future waves of COVID-19.
 - c. Policy development in respect of respect of the Council's approach to the renewal of the local economy.
 - d. Policy development in respect of the renewal and reform of local government services, including the future structure of local government in Nottinghamshire.
2. To report any recommendations or considerations to the Executive in respect of the responsibilities outlined above.
3. The Panel will receive updates in respect of the implementation of the Council's Recovery Action Plan.

Following the 30 June meeting, Cabinet have formally recommended the establishment of a COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel to Council. Council will consider this recommendation at the 9 July meeting. The outcome of this consideration will be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The Scrutiny Workplan should include issues based on performance, priority objectives, and community concerns; many of which contribute to the Council's corporate priorities outlined within the Corporate Plan.

Legal:

Consultation with Members on items for the Scrutiny Workplan is in accordance with the Rules of Procedure set out within the Council's Constitution.

Finance:

Any financial implications identified through items approved to the Scrutiny Workplan will be appropriately considered as part of the established scrutiny 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
Failure to adequately monitor and refresh the Scrutiny Workplan could lead to items being added that fail to add value and fall outside of the remit of the Council's scrutiny function.	The Scrutiny Workplan is a standing item on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda, ensuring Members can appropriately monitor review progress and suitability.

Human Resources:

Any HR implications identified through items approved to the Scrutiny Workplan will be appropriately considered as part of the established scrutiny review process.

Environmental/Sustainability

Any environmental or sustainability implications identified through items approved to the Scrutiny Workplan will be appropriately considered as part of the established scrutiny review process.

Equalities:

Any equalities implications identified through items approved to the Scrutiny Workplan will be appropriately considered as part of the established scrutiny review process.

Other Implications:

Any other implications identified through items approved to the Scrutiny Workplan will be appropriately considered as part of the established scrutiny review process.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

- Scrutiny Workplan 2019/2020

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