

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



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

Agenda

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Thursday, 24th September, 2020**

Time: **7.00 pm**

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

For any further information please contact:

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



Carol Cooper-Smith
Chief Executive

AGENDA

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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 16 July 2020.** 5 - 10
4. **Scrutiny Workplan Management.** 11 - 20

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Virtual Meeting held on Thursday, 16th July, 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Andrew Harding in the Chair;

Councillors Jim Blagden, Dale Grounds,
Phil Rostance, David Walters, Lee Waters and
Caroline Wilkinson.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Joanne Froggatt, Vicky Green,
Mike Joy and Shane Wright.

OS.1 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.2 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 February 2020,
be received and approved as a correct record.

OS.3 Corporate Scorecard Year End Position

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 Corporate Plan has been updated for the period 2019-2023 with the
Council's Corporate Priorities being reviewed and developed by
Cabinet last year and more recently, paying particular consideration to the
impact of the pandemic and the Council's intended recovery activity.

Committee were advised that the Corporate Plan sat above a wider strategic
context which included the Corporate Project Management Framework,
Corporate Performance Indicators and a range of strategic documents relating
to the organisation and its services. 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.

Notwithstanding the impacts of the pandemic, the Corporate Scorecard position for April 2019 to March 2020 indicated that 74% of measures had been achieved or exceeded their target or were within 10% variance of target. Also, 64% of measures had indicated an improved position compared to the same period in the previous year, or were within 5% of their previous year's performance levels.

Members were presented with the Corporate Plan's key successes delivered over the full range of the services during 2019/20, which included:

- non-decent housing stock remaining under target;
- consistent support for tenants remaining in their tenancy for 6 months or more following completion of their support package;
- planning applications processed well above standard targets;
- 20,800 subscribers to the garden waste service; 1,300 more than the previous year with an increase in garden waste tonnage collected;
- average call waiting time decreased over the year;
- online payments showing a significant increase compared to the previous year;
- reduction in staff sickness absence out-turn compared to the previous year.

Members also considered a couple of identified areas for improvement in relation to rent collection and rent arrears, which had been severely affected by the full rollout of Universal Credit during November 2019. Coupled with a delay in payments made to claimants by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the financial uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak, this had resulted in a substantial decrease in funds to the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Committee took the opportunity to discuss the rent collection and rent arrears issues and considered amongst other things:

- acknowledgement that the increase in rent arrears due to Universal Credit had been expected and in mitigation, the additional support being provided by the Council to alleviate some of the anxieties being experienced by claimants during this period;
- the exceptional work ethic of staff who had continued to support claimants and deliver services during the COVID-19 outbreak including the recruitment of additional staff to meet the growing demand;
- the demand for social housing, the Council's response to bringing any non-decent homes into use and the operational arrangements for delivering the Council's planned maintenance programme for housing stock;

- the increase in people and families presenting as homeless which had been exacerbated further due to the recent pandemic and the need to bring vulnerable people off the streets and into a safer environment;
- the possible reasons for the significant reduction in rent collection showing during January of each year.

To conclude, the Scrutiny Research Officer took the opportunity to remind Members that the Committee had considered Universal Credit as a topic in the previous year and had made some valuable recommendations to Cabinet that had been approved in February 2020. It was hoped that the recommendations would complement and enhance the wide range of services already being provided by the Council to support claimants and manage the difficulties associated with facilitation of the Universal Credit regime.

Members acknowledged that previous practice had seen the Committee invite Cabinet Portfolio Holders (on a rolling programme) to attend meetings and give updates and felt this would be a good time to reintroduce the arrangement to enable Overview and Scrutiny Members to receive feedback and progress reports in relation to their recommendations as submitted.

RESOLVED that

- a) the 2019/20 year-end outturn for the Corporate Performance Scorecard, as presented to Committee, be received and noted;
- b) the Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services be requested to reintroduce the programme for inviting Portfolio Holders to attend Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings and offer updates/feedback in relation to their Portfolios.

OS.4 LGA Peer Challenge 2020

The Assistant Director for Corporate Services and Transformation presented the report and reminded the Committee that in April 2020, the Council had endorsed the findings of the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge that had been undertaken by the Local Government Association in January 2020. The Peer Review was requested by the Council on a three-yearly basis.

The review was designed to support the Council and was part of a sector led improvement programme. There was an expectation from the LGA and Government that the findings would be used to support improvements and Cabinet had subsequently sanctioned all actions arising from the LGA report. Five themes were worked upon and the Peer Challenge Team were on site for three days whilst speaking to around one hundred people over a period of three hundred hours collectively.

The Peer Challenge team, within its Executive Summary, had concluded that:

- The Council was 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.

Following receipt of the report, a detailed Action Plan had been developed based on the recommendations and five themes, with progress being monitored through Pentana, the Council's performance management solution. Members discussed some of the key recommendations as outlined in the report and considered how best they could be kept updated as to their progress, or otherwise.

RESOLVED that

- a) the development and monitoring of the Action Plan in relation to the implementation of key recommendations following the LGA Peer Challenge review, as presented, be received and noted;
- b) based on each of the five themes contained within the Action Plan, the Service Manager; Scrutiny and Democratic Services be requested to invite the most appropriate Portfolio Holder to future meetings of the Committee, to give updates in relation to progress against the key recommendations as required.

OS.5 Scrutiny Workplan Refresh 2020/2021

The Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services presented the report and outlined the main requirements of the Council's Scrutiny Workplan.

Under normal circumstances, the Scrutiny Workplan once finalised and approved by the Committee, would outline the Council's yearly rolling work programme of in-depth reviews and standing items considered by Panels A and B and the Committee respectively.

However, due to various disruptions to the Council's scrutiny work over the previous municipal year and the COVID-19 outbreak, four topics from the 2019/2020 Workplan needed to be carried over to the 2020/2021 Workplan, namely:

Bus Provision in Ashfield
Community Protection Service
Climate Emergency
Service Personnel.

Therefore, Members were asked to approve no more than two new additional topics for the 2020/21 Workplan (to add to the 4 ongoing topics) to avoid any unnecessary backlog, and to additionally compile and approve a 'reserve list' of topics for commencement as and when space became available later on in the municipal year.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre for Public Scrutiny had recently released a series of online guides designed to support councils with governance and scrutiny during the outbreak and throughout the aftermath. The guides were intended to support councillors and officers on managing some of the challenges associated with the COVID-19 crisis.

Guide No 2 covered the key arguments in favour of continued, robust member-led scrutiny during the COVID-19 crisis and set out an approach to enable Councils to provide scrutiny in a format that would fit within the constrained resources that councils would have at their disposal.

Following receipt of the guidance, the Council felt it would be prudent to establish a time-limited COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet made a recommendation to Council, to that effect, at its meeting on 30 June 2020.

The Panel was made up of 7 Members who were appointed in accordance with the requirements of political balance. It was agreed that the Panel would review the Council's response to the pandemic and take an active role in respect of the Council's recovery plans.

Members took time to consider new topics for the 2020/21 Workplan and made suggestions for the following:-

1. Accessibility, equipment and support for disabled children on the Council's play parks;
2. Performance of the Council's Commercial Investment Portfolio and its ongoing management during the COVID-19 outbreak and onwards;
3. The recent fall in recycling collection figures and methods for improving collection rates and providing education and support for residents;
4. How to improve the Council's digital resource provision;
5. The increase of loneliness and isolation within resident's homes;
6. 5G technology advances and current issues;
7. The increase in reports of children suffering from mental health difficulties;

8. To review the Council's provision of electrical charging points and support for green transportation.

RESOLVED that

a) the following items be included on the Scrutiny Workplan for 2020/21:-

- accessibility, equipment and support for disabled children on the Council's play parks;
- the recent fall in recycling collection figures and methods for improving collection rates and providing education and support for residents;

b) the following items be included on the Scrutiny Workplan reserve list for 2020/21:-

- performance of the Council's Commercial Investment Portfolio and its ongoing management during the COVID-19 outbreak and onwards (to be undertaken as part of the Committee's annual budget review process);
- how to improve the Council's digital resource provision (to provide a watching brief as a Member/Officer Working Group already established to deliver this project).

The meeting closed at 8.21 pm

Chairman.

Report To:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Date:	24 SEPTEMBER 2020
Heading:	WORKPLAN MANAGEMENT		
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 provide Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the work being undertaken by Scrutiny Panel A and B, as well as the recently established COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel, in accordance with the Panel's terms of reference.

Workplan management is a key responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out within the Council's Constitution. This involves ensuring topics currently under review are progressing sufficiently and align with agreed terms of reference and taking an overview of the work each Panel is undertaking. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also has a key role in delegating work to each Panel and managing workloads.

Recommendation(s)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members are recommended to:

- a. Receive an update on the work of Scrutiny Panel A, Scrutiny Panel B, and the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel.
- b. Consider any suggestions to be put forward to the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel regarding the Panel's work programme.
- c. Set terms of reference for the additions made to the Scrutiny Workplan 2020/2021 at the July 2020 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
 - a. Accessibility Support in Ashfield
 - b. Recycling and Collection Rates in Ashfield

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a responsibility to monitor the work of Scrutiny Panel A, Scrutiny Panel B and the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel. This responsibility is set out in the Committee's terms of reference within the Council's Constitution.

Alternative Options Considered

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee could not receive updates and manage the work of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel. However, this would not align with the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Scrutiny Panels A and B, and the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel. Failure to adequately manage the workplan could also lead to the duplication of work. As such, the scrutiny workplan is a standing item on this Committee's agenda and is consistently monitored.

Detailed Information

SCRUTINY WORKPLAN 2020/2021

Workplan Item	Panel	Approximate Timescale
Community Protection Service	Scrutiny Panel B	Jan 2020 – October 2020
Veterans and Service Personnel	Scrutiny Panel A	September 2020
Accessibility Support in Ashfield	TBD	TBD
Recycling and Collection Rates in Ashfield	TBD	TBD
Bus Provision	Scrutiny Panel A	On hold following COVID-19, awaiting new legislation and initiatives regarding public transport.
Climate Change	Scrutiny Panel B	November 2020

Please see below updates on the work of Scrutiny Panel A, Scrutiny Panel B, and the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel. Both the Service Manager – Scrutiny and Democratic Services and the Scrutiny Research Officer will be in attendance at the meeting to expand on the work of each Panel and answer any questions Committee Members may have.

COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY SCRUTINY PANEL – WORK UPDATE

At the July 2020 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members were informed of the potential establishment of a COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel. The establishment of this Panel followed recommendations from Cabinet made to Council.

The establishment of this Panel was formalised at the 9 July 2020 Council meeting, set up to review the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to take an active role in the Council's recovery plans.

As a reminder, these are the approved 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.

Since the establishment of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel at July's Council meeting, two formal meetings have been held.

COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel Meeting – 30 July 2020

At the introductory meeting of the Panel, Members were presented with the following information:

- Up-to-date guidance from the Centre for Public Scrutiny regarding the role of scrutiny during and in the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A broad overview of the response measures taken by the Council, details of executive decisions taken as a response to COVID-19, and initial recovery plans and strategy.
- Details of the updated Corporate Plan.
- Latest COVID-19 guidance from Central Government

The primary focus of the Panel at this initial meeting was to:

1. Discuss and identify initial areas of focus, ensuring these areas are in line with the Panel's terms of reference.
2. Establish a work programme to assist the management of the Panel's agenda and the scheduling of the Panel's business.

The Panel established a work programme, with the intention of maintaining flexibility within the programme in line with the unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 recovery phase. The Panel also agreed meeting dates for the rest of 2020, ensuring these dates align with meetings of the Cabinet to allow appropriate reporting of the Panel's work, alongside any recommendations, to the Council's Executive.

Meeting Date	Meeting Theme	Attendees	Cabinet Update
3 September 2020	Local Recovery Themes	Corporate Leadership Team	15 September 2020
6 October 2020	Small Business and High Street Recovery/Local Government Reorganisation	Local Business Representatives/CLT	13 October 2020
5 November 2020	Multi-agency Working	Police, NHS, Charities, Discover Ashfield, County Council	1 December 2020
10 December 2020	TBC	TBC	20 January 2020

Discussions also took place regarding a memorial within the District for key workers. Since then, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Panel have held numerous meetings discussing the feasibility of a proposed memorial, including potential locations and funding opportunities.

COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel Meeting – 3 September 2020

At the second meeting, the Panel welcomed attendance from all members of the Corporate Leadership Team, with the focus of the meeting being local recovery themes.

The meeting took a question and answer format as questions from the public were put to the relevant CLT member, alongside questions from Panel Members.

In discussions with CLT, Panel Members identified the following areas of interest to be picked up on as part of the Panel's agreed work programme:

- Further support that could potentially be offered to small businesses in Ashfield
- Further support that could potentially be offered to the charity and voluntary sectors
- Homelessness and rent arrears and the tangible possibility of these issues escalating
- Preparations for a second wave

COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel Meeting – 6 October 2020

The next meeting of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel will focus on the main theme of small business support in Ashfield in the recovery stages of the pandemic. This will involve attendance from various business representatives across a variety of sectors.

Focus will also be given to local government reorganisation, as Members will receive an update on the Council's position regarding recent proposals.

SCRUTINY PANEL A – WORK UPDATE

Scrutiny Panel A will be holding its first formal meeting of the municipal year on 22 September 2020 where a new review will commence on the Veterans and Service Personnel workplan topic.

Originally this review was set to take place as a separate scrutiny commission as announced at a July 2019 meeting of the Council by the Leader of the Council. Due to several circumstances over the past year, work on the commission was delayed.

At the July 2020 meeting of this Committee, Members agreed the most appropriate course of action would be to incorporate the planned Veterans and Service Personnel Scrutiny Commission into the annual Scrutiny Workplan 2020/2021 to ensure the review can be undertaken and any findings and recommendations can be submitted to Cabinet.

At this upcoming meeting of Scrutiny Panel A, Members will consider an introductory report and begin to set terms of reference to shape the review.

Primary objectives for this review have already been identified as follows:

- Examine all relevant Council policies and strategies, ensuring all important information for veterans and service personnel is clear and easily accessible.
- Consider the Council's relationship with the veterans and service personnel charity sector.
- The development of a policy document to support the armed forces community, including detailed information regarding:
 - General support
 - Benefits and finance
 - Jobs and employment
 - Housing
 - Health and wellbeing

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be updated on the progress of this review, as it gets underway over the coming months. Any comments and suggestions from this Committee will be passed on the Scrutiny Panel A to inform the review process.

SCRUTINY PANEL B – WORK UPDATE

Scrutiny Panel B has been undertaking a review of the Council's Community Protection Service since January 2020. The item was originally added to the 2019/2020 workplan, but due to circumstances discussed earlier in this report, it was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the work of Scrutiny Panel B on this item should continue through the 2020/2021 workplan.

The next meeting of Scrutiny Panel B will be held on 15 October where Members will be considering the Community Protection Service with a view to finalising recommendations to be put to Cabinet in November.

Plans are in place for Scrutiny Panel B to commence work on the Climate Change workplan topic following the conclusion of the Community Protection Service review.

SETTING TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members are asked to set terms of reference for the following reviews added to the Scrutiny Workplan at the previous meeting of the Committee:

- Accessibility Support in Ashfield
- Recycling and Collection Rates in Ashfield

This will involve discussions between Members and Officers with the objective of considering the following terms of reference criteria:

Review Objectives

- The broad objectives of the review
- Any anticipated outcomes

Review Methodology

- How the review will be carried out
- Desktop based/site visits/comparator data

Indicators of Success

- A way to measure the progress of a review

Key Involvement

- Essential involvement to be sought through the course of a review i.e. specific Council Officers/Outside representatives

Key Information

- Key information that will be needed to undertake a review i.e. a specific Council strategy/legislation/data

Setting terms of reference for both of these workplan topics at an earlier stage will allow each review to hit the ground running when they are undertaken, as Panel Members will have a clear idea of the review structure.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

As part of the recovery phase, the Corporate Plan has been reviewed to consider the impacts of COVID-19 with a forward look to recovery plans. The refreshed Corporate Plan was approved at the July 21 meeting of Cabinet.

The refreshed Corporate Plan sets out the three main National recovery themes of Health Recovery, Economic Recovery, and Social and Community Recovery. The Council's two main strands of recovery are:

Ashfield as a Place – Community and Economic Recovery

Supporting the community and businesses in achieving stability and a new normality following COVID-19., assisting in rebuilding, restoring, and rehabilitating the community's emotional, social, economic, and physical wellbeing.

The Council – Organisational Recovery

Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on Council services, finances, and employees, and planning for future financial resilience and how the Council may need to operate differently.

Local recovery themes have been identified through the refreshed Corporate Plan:

External Housing and Communities

- Health and Happiness:
 - Building on humanitarian work with the Community and Voluntary Sector.
 - Re-introduction of events when safe to do so.
 - Ensuring workplace health.
- Homes and Housing:
 - Reviewing the Homelessness Strategy to understand the impact of COVID-19.
- Cleaner and Greener:
 - Delivering the 'Bag It' campaign.
 - Safe re-opening of park buildings.
- Safer and Stronger:
 - Providing refuge accommodation for victims in abusive relationships.
 - Raising awareness of domestic abuse and ensuring support is provided to victims.

External Economy and Place Finance

- Economic Growth and Place:
 - Opening the District's Town Centres safely and in accordance with COVID-19 Secure guidelines.
 - Ensuring eligible businesses receive COVID-19 grant support funding.
 - Ensuring transport is safe.

Internal Council Services

- Innovate and Improve:
 - Fast tracking the digital transformation delivery to improve accessibility and online capability, centred on the customer.
 - Supporting employees to increase digital skills.
 - Working in partnership to increase digital inclusion across the District.
 - Enabling employees, where appropriate and relevant, to work from home, having adequate digital tools and equipment, and a safe working environment.
 - Ensuring employee wellbeing at home or when returning to the workplace.

Legal:

There are no legal implications resulting from this report.

Finance:

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

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

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to adequately manage the Scrutiny Workplan 2020/2021.	Ensuring the workplan is effectively managed as a standing item on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda.

Human Resources:

There are no HR implications resulting from this report.

Environmental/Sustainability:

There are no environmental/sustainability implications resulting from this report.

Equalities:

There are no equalities implications resulting from this report.

Other Implications:

There are no other implications resulting from this report.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

None.

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