

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



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

Agenda

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Thursday, 17th June, 2021**

Time: **7.00 pm**

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

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:

Chris Baron

Will Bostock

Lee Waters

Jim Blagden

David Walters

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SUMMONS

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



Carol Cooper-Smith

Chief Executive

AGENDA

Page

1. To receive apologies for absence, if any.
2. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non Registrable Interests.**
3. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 February 2021. 5 - 10
4. **Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/2022.** 11 - 18

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Virtual Meeting held on Thursday, 11th February, 2021 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.

Apology for Absence: Pete Hudson.

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

OS.13 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.14 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 November 2020,
be received and approved as a correct record.

OS.15 Corporate Plan Performance - April to September 2020 Update

The Assistant Director, Corporate Services and Transformation presented the Quarter 2 Corporate Scorecard for April to September 2020 to enable Members to review the levels of performance achieved and further consider the impact of the pandemic on the Council's performance.

The Council has worked extremely hard since the pandemic began and were the only local authority in Nottinghamshire that has continued to deliver their Tier 1 and Tier 2 critical services without interruption. The Council had also delivered a variety of humanitarian services across the District and had continued to facilitate many of their waste collection campaigns.

As at the end of September 2020, 71% of Corporate Scorecard measures were achieving or exceeding target or were within 10% variance of their targets. 61% of measures were also indicating an improved position compared to the same period in the previous year or were within 5% of the previous year's performance levels.

The key highlights regarding performance were as follows:

Health and Happiness

- work had commenced on the new leisure centre build in Kirkby
- many voluntary organisations had benefitted from community funding especially through the Council's 'Feel Good Food' project

Homes and Housing

- service delivery to Council owned stock had been maintained throughout
- prevention of 35% more households becoming homeless
- 99.6% of properties had received their annual gas and safety checks
- the acquisition of 32 additional properties to add to the Council's housing stock

Economic Growth and Place

- Covid Information Officers had continued to support high street businesses
- an award of £6.2 million from the Future High Streets Fund

Cleaner and Greener

- increases in incidences of fly tipping (most probably due to closure of local recycling centres) but showing signs of reducing in late 2020/early 2021
- the success of the 'Bag It' campaign
- a reduction of 9% in reported incidences of dog fouling and littering

Safer and Stronger

- responses delivered to 2,500 reported incidences of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and nuisance (more prevalent during lockdowns)
- increases in incidences of domestic violence and the recruitment of a Domestic Violence Support Officer

Innovate and Improve

- the use of digital and online facilities had increased, in no small part due to the introduction of the Council's new website and an easier journey for customers
- the effective administration of the online Business Grants Scheme applications
- the proposed enhancement of e-billing to reach more local businesses (currently around 50% of businesses are billed electronically)
- Council's staff sickness absence levels shown a reduction since the same period last year.

The pandemic had unfortunately had a negative impact on some of the Council's critical functions and these were outlined as follows:

Business Rates Collection

At the end of Quarter 2, business rates collection stood at 46.1% which was considerably lower than the target of 53.8%. It was acknowledged that it would be a long term commitment for the Council to improve and recover this current position.

Rent Arrears

There had been a significant increase in rent arrears due to many households experiencing financial difficulties and the timelines for seeking possession being extended from 3 months to 6 months.

Void Property Turnaround

Void property turnaround had slowed down from the target of 21 days due to difficulties accessing building/refurbishment materials during the lockdowns. This position had now started to improve.

Following the presentation, the Scrutiny Research Officer took the opportunity to remind Members of a previous review regarding the implementation and impact of Universal Credit and suggested that it would be timely to receive an update from the Council's Service Manager, Housing Management & Tenancy Services as to the current Council position regarding rent arrears and collection.

Scrutiny Panel A were also considering a new topic at its meeting on 18 March regarding tenancy support and the methods of support provided by the Council to tenants to sustain their tenancies, to avoid eviction and being made homeless.

Members then debated the following:

- the methodology of data collection and presentation in the Corporate Scorecard
- the current position with regards to recycling within the District and the inevitable lag of receiving current data with regards to bottle/clothing banks etc.
- the importance of prioritising support for residents experiencing domestic violence and the key priorities of the new Domestic Violence & Vulnerability Officer
- how the pandemic has affected the Council's markets with acknowledgement that the Idlewells Indoor Market and Hucknall Outdoor Market has been defying the odds and performing well throughout the pandemic
- recent investment in additional CCTV cameras for the District
- recent changes in legislation and the resultant cessation of investment in commercial properties
- options for the Council to bridge future funding gaps including programmed service reviews, digital delivery, a procurement review and changes to use of Council assets.

RESOLVED

that the level of performance achieved against the Quarter 2 Corporate Scorecard for 2020/21, as presented, be received and noted.

OS.16 Annual Budget Update

Committee Members were advised that the Corporate Finance Manager (and Section 151 Officer) could not be in attendance at the meeting and the agenda

item was therefore withdrawn. Members would be afforded the opportunity to comment on the content of the 2021/22 annual budget via alternative means.

OS.17 Scrutiny Workplan Update

The Scrutiny Research Officer provided an update to Committee regarding progress against the 2020/21 Scrutiny Workplan as follows:

Play Park Inclusivity

The review in relation to play park inclusivity had commenced at the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting but as a result of officers having to consider differing priorities at this present time, it had been agreed that the review would be held in abeyance for the next couple of months and resurrected as soon as practicable.

Members were however informed that progress in relation to play park inclusivity was going on in the background and it had been agreed that a swing at the new park at Sorrel Drive would be relocated to ensure full access by children with disabilities and a 'sign board' was also to be erected to assist vision impaired children. The news was welcomed and showed how Member scrutiny continued to have an influence on the delivery of Council services.

Veteran and Service Personnel

The veteran and service personnel review was now drawing to a close with a set of draft Cabinet recommendations being considered at the Scrutiny Panel A meeting on Thursday evening. The recommendations included additional training opportunities for employees and the creation of a welcome pack for ex armed forces personnel.

Tenancy Support

The terms of reference for this new review were due to be considered at the Scrutiny Panel A meeting on Thursday and it would potentially include consideration of tenant money management, the content of introductory tenancies and legislative evictions procedures for seeking possession of properties.

Climate Change

The climate change review was ongoing through Scrutiny Panel B and so far, had conducted one meeting and an informal working group. The range of climate change topics to potentially consider was expansive so Members were currently narrowing down options for consideration.

Covid-19 Response and Recovery

The Covid-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel continued to meet monthly and had welcomed Richard Mitchell, the Chief Executive of the Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to its last meeting. The dialogue at the meeting was both interesting and insightful and it was intended to consider the impact of the pandemic on local charities and the voluntary sector at the next meeting.

Waste and Recycling

This waste and recycling review topic had not been commenced to date and would most probably roll over onto the 2021/22 Scrutiny Workplan.

To conclude, Members were asked to note than due to the challenges faced during the last year, most of the review topics from the 202/21 municipal year would be rolling over into the new Scrutiny Workplan for 2021/22. However, Member were still being encouraged, with caution, to suggest new Workplan topics for possible consideration. Members acknowledged this position and two new topic suggestions were made in relation to 'supporting local businesses and buying local' and 'management of roadside memorials'.

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 8.02 pm

Chairman.

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Report To:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Date:	17 JUNE 2021
Heading:	SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2021/2022		
Portfolio Holder:	NOT APPLICABLE		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

The scrutiny work programme is a rolling plan of 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 Members to ensure appropriate terms of reference, progress, and outcomes.

Annually, the work programme is revised and refreshed with new topics for review. This report aims to focus Members on discussing and approving appropriate topics for the 2021/2022 scrutiny work programme. This report will also provide Members with an overview of ongoing review topics.

Recommendation(s)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members are recommended to:

- a. Note the update on the ongoing review topics from the 2020/2021 scrutiny work programme.
- b. Consider topics for approval to the 2021/2022 scrutiny work programme.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Ensuring that the scrutiny work programme is both refreshed annually and monitored consistently as a standing item is a key responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Alternative Options Considered

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

Detailed Information

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

What is the Scrutiny Work Programme?

Scrutiny at Ashfield District Council follows a scrutiny work programme 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 Work Programme

The programme 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 programme 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 work programme 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 work programme as a standing item.

Sources of Work Programme 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 Work Programme Topics

Scrutiny work programme 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 selection.

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 programme 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 work programme must be manageable. It is impossible to include every topic suggested throughout work programme consultation. 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.

ONGOING TOPICS

Play Park Inclusivity

The review in relation to play park inclusivity had commenced at the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting but as a result of officers having to consider differing priorities at this present time, it had been agreed that the review would be held in abeyance for the next couple of months and resurrected as soon as practicable.

Members were however informed by the Vice Chairman, Cllr Dale Grounds, that progress in relation to play park inclusivity was ongoing and it had been agreed that a swing at the new park at Sorrel Drive would be relocated to ensure full access by children with disabilities and a 'sign board' was also to be erected to assist vision impaired children. The news was welcomed and showed how Member scrutiny continued to have an influence on the delivery of Council services.

The Play Park Inclusivity will recommence with Members seeking involvement from Council Officers to gain a further understanding of the Council's inclusivity efforts and plans going forward.

Veteran and Service Personnel

A final report in relation to the scrutiny review of Veterans and Service Personnel was presented to Scrutiny Panel A in February for approval. The report presented Panel Members with each of the draft Cabinet recommendations agreed at a previous meeting.

Members approved a set of recommendations to be presented to Cabinet in July as follows:

- a) to further explore the possibility of expanding the e-training modules regarding the Armed Forces Covenant, Housing and Homelessness for frontline staff, across all sections of the Council.

- b) to commend the work undertaken so far by the Council's Senior Community Engagement Officer in supporting the Ashfield Armed Forces community.
- c) to explore the potential to designate an Armed Forces representative in each section of the Council.
- d) to support and continue to commit to achieving the MoD Gold Employer Recognition Award through the Defence Employee Recognition Scheme.
- e) to continue to develop a robust and purposeful Reservist Policy to assist and support employees as required.
- f) to commit to increasing awareness across the Council and embedding ongoing support for the local Armed Forces Community within the Council's Corporate Plan.
- g) to develop an Armed Forces Welcome Pack designed to support the Armed Forces Community with the transition to civilian life in Ashfield.

Tenancy Support

The terms of reference for this new review were due to be considered at the Scrutiny Panel A meeting on Thursday and it would potentially include consideration of tenant money management, the content of introductory tenancies and legislative evictions procedures for seeking possession of properties.

Members of Scrutiny Panel A have met with the Service Manager for Housing Management and Tenancy Services and the Service Manager for Strategic Housing and Lettings as part of an initial scoping meeting for the tenancy support topic.

At this scoping meeting, Members also considered a broad amount of information on tenancy support, including the Money Management Team, Tenancy Sustainment, prevention of eviction and homelessness.

This review will recommence at the next meeting of Scrutiny Panel A with continued involvement from key Council Offices and external partners.

Climate Change

The climate change review is ongoing through Scrutiny Panel B which so far has conducted a formal meeting and an informal working group meeting. Members have met with the Council's Assistant Director for Assets and Investment and Strategic Asset Manager to gain an understanding of the Council's commitment towards climate change mitigation and future plans and policies that may impact this.

At the previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members agreed that the topic of waste and recycling should be incorporated into the climate change topic in order to not duplicate the work of the committees.

The range of climate change topics to potentially consider is expansive and there have been some difficulties in identifying a clear focus for the review. As part of the annual refresh of the scrutiny work programme, Members should consider this topic and look to provide some clear direction as it moves forward.

TOPICS PREVIOUSLY SUGGESTED

Buying Local

At the previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the topic of 'Buying Local' was put forward for potential inclusion on the scrutiny work programme, following a motion submitted to Council in February 2021 that was debated and endorsed.

The motion read as follows:

"This Council notes that the United Kingdom is the oldest and most profitable union in history. The UK. now in this post Brexit era should be a position to make its own laws and decisions but this is not yet the case.

The pandemic that we are living through has highlighted just how dependent the United Kingdom still is on other countries, for example the reliance on Personal Protective Equipment from abroad. Our Country has all the skills to have provided that much needed PPE, especially here in Ashfield where there is an abundance of garment making skills.

This Council believes that if our businesses are to compete on a worldwide stage it is crucial to have support at home. If we don't like, or don't want to be dependent on other Countries we must put our own house in order by purchasing UK. goods. Our UK. companies need to provide alternatives to foreign commodities as UK. competitiveness is critical, if as a country we want to be able to stand alone in the world. With support from UK. residents and organisations buying goods from our own Country, jobs and more investment will follow. The history and capabilities of our Country proves that the UK. can succeed on the world stage, for example, Great Britain led the world in developing the Covid-19 vaccine.

Ashfield Independents want this Council to take a lead in buying UK. goods and set a positive example to our residents, other local authorities and nationally by supporting UK. companies wherever possible. This, however, is very difficult as the Government has failed to change laws surrounding procurement post Brexit. A raft of laws has simply been carried over unchanged from the EU. This Council unfortunately is still forced into advertising large contracts in Europe so therefore the UK. and this Council is not able to make its own decisions. On this matter Ashfield needs Parliamentary representation which is sadly lacking.

This Council therefore supports the Leader of the Council lobbies by letter, the Members of Parliament for the District. Calling on them to take forward these concerns and by so doing save and keep jobs and encourage new and old UK. based companies and businesses to invest in this country.

To be clear, it is the firm will of this administration, that as soon as the restraints are lifted from the authority, that as many purchases as possible will come from UK. based organisations, and further that we will support as local trades and companies as is possible."

Roadside Memorials

At a previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the topic of 'Roadside Memorials' was put forward for potential inclusion on the scrutiny work programme.

A roadside memorial is a marker that usually commemorates where a person died unexpectedly, providing a visible focus of grief for families and friends, as well as a warning to road users that

exist. However, those involved in creating tributes, and the authorities responsible for local infrastructure often have differing needs, views, and desires and this can often create conflict.

Now, no existing legislation adequately covers the laying of roadside tributes to the victims of accidents. The Highway Act 1980 is likely the most pertinent piece of legislation to this issue, but it contains no provisions for the creation or removal of roadside memorials.

Instead, the governance of roadside memorials is often left to local councils who, in the absence of a national standard, create their own policies, resulting in discrepancies between responses across the country.

As the popularity of roadside memorials has increased, growing numbers of councils have attempted to define their response to the tributes by developing comprehensive written policies.

While some councils have argued that it's not their place to put a time limit on the grieving process, others have begun to impose limits on the amount of time a memorial can remain in place. These limits are regularly set at 30 days, though this policy has been poorly met by supporters of such tributes.

In some areas, the debate over roadside memorials has reached such proportions that there are calls for the development of a nation-wide response in the form of new legislation.

Currently, no authority seems to be calling for a ban on the practice entirely. Instead, councillors are looking for assistance from central government to create a set of legal best practices that provide local authorities with the means to make consistent decisions regarding the removal of roadside tributes.

Though there is no legislation pertaining directly to the legality of roadside memorials, local authorities are within their rights to remove them should they wish. However, due to the sensitive nature of these tributes, most will be reluctant to do so unless a considerable amount of time has passed.

In almost every case, close communication with the relevant authority – be it the local council or a police liaison officer – will go a long way to reducing the possibility of conflict and ensuring an appropriate tribute is permitted. It's also true that many councils are willing to work with the bereaved to ensure an appropriate permanent memorial can be created in place of temporary tributes.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The scrutiny work programme 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 work programme 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 work programme will be appropriately considered as part of the established scrutiny review process.

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 monitor and refresh the scrutiny work programme 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 work programme 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 work programme 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 work programme will be appropriately considered as part of the established scrutiny review process.

Equalities:

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

Other Implications:

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

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

None.

Report Author and Contact Officer

Shane Wright
Scrutiny Research Officer
shane.wright@ashfield.gov.uk
01623 457318