

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

on Thursday, 23rd June, 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Kier Barsby in the Chair;

Councillors Will Bostock, Andrew Harding and
Lee Waters.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Chris Baron, Jim Blagden and
Daniel Williamson.

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

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

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.2 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 March 2022, be
received and approved as a correct record.

OS.3 Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23

The Scrutiny Research Officer welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave
Members an overview of the current Scrutiny Work Programme position
including three specific reviews carried over from the previous municipal year.

Gambling Related Harm Review

The Gambling Harm review had commenced at the Scrutiny Panel A meeting
in March 2022 and had considered how the review might empower the Council
to work proactively in partnership with other key organisations to assist,
support and mitigate against families struggling with gambling issues.

The Council's Licensing Manager, Julian Alison, also gave an outline of how
the Council currently facilitates licensing applications and regulates gambling
on premises within the District. The next meeting of the Panel was due to take
place in July 2022.

Social Housing White Paper Review

This review was added to the Work Programme in December 2021 and
following publication of the White Paper, the Council had been working to
identify the key implications of the paper with an action plan being developed

through the Housing and Assets' Departmental Management Team. The review was still awaiting commencement.

Waste and Recycling

Following a report to Committee on the Council's Corporate Risk, the review had been agreed as a result of the Government's emerging Waste Strategy becoming an identified risk for the Council. The review was still awaiting commencement.

In relation to the standing items on the Work Programme and in particular the annual budget review process (taking place prior to the Council's Tax Setting meeting in March each year), it was suggested to Members that the Committee could review the Council's budgets more frequently throughout the financial year, spotlighting certain service areas/spending programmes as desired.

Scrutiny of the Council's Corporate Performance still took place on a quarterly basis, and it was anticipated that the dedicated Crime and Disorder Scrutiny meeting would take place this year following difficulties facilitating the event over the last couple of years due to the pandemic. Members could start to consider a preferred key theme for this year's debate.

The Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services opened up the discussion and made some suggestions for review topics for the forthcoming year:

Budget Scrutiny

As mentioned previously, Members were asked to consider whether it would be beneficial to start the annual budget process earlier and take the opportunity to engage with residents as part of the process. It was also noted that the funding gap was widening to 2.4 million for the 2022/23 financial year.

Crime and Disorder Meeting

Committee were asked to consider what format they might like the meeting to take and submit any suggestions to the Scrutiny Team.

Mental Health in the Workplace

Following the pandemic amongst other things, many employees were now struggling with stress and anxiety issues and sickness absence levels were rising. Members could examine what services the Council's HR Team currently provide to assist staff within the workplace and their home environments.

Recruitment and Retention

It had been acknowledged by the Corporate Leadership Team recently that recruitment and retention was now becoming an issue for the Council. A timely review could reveal if the Council is currently doing enough to train and retain employees whilst also offering attractive terms and conditions to newcomers.

Dog Fouling and Litter Offences

The Council had previously undertaken reviews regarding dog fouling issues, but it was suggested that a spotlight review might be judicious as recent data was showing that incidences of dog fouling and littering offences were on the rise.

Feedback from Outside Bodies

Many Members continued to be appointed to a range of outside bodies each year to act in the capacity as the Council's representative. However, it had been acknowledged that representatives were not currently asked to feedback on the work/achievements of the organisations. Members were requested to consider if a desktop exercise might be useful to develop a process for enabling this information sharing to be achieved.

Towns Fund Progress

The Chairman advised Committee that he wished to see a review in relation to Towns Fund progress and how the numerous projects/initiatives were developing, if timelines were being met and how the funding was being spent and distributed.

Cost of Living Crisis

Due to the current cost of living crisis and its impact on many Ashfield residents, it was suggested, again by the Chairman, that the Council could consider how to offer local people a basket of tips to help alleviate their financial difficulties. In addition, the Council could host a special meeting (State of Ashfield Debate?) and endeavour to invite a high-profile financial advisor (i.e. Martin Lewis) to offer advice and support as required.

Wildlife Protection

Due to recent concerns being highlighted regarding the unacceptable treatment of wildlife on a new housing development site in Skegby, it was suggested that a review could enable Members to speak with wildlife protection organisations to spotlight the issue and seek solutions to alleviate the problem.

RESOLVED that

- a) the update regarding ongoing review topics from the 2021/2022 Scrutiny Work Programme, be received and noted;
- b) the following topics be added to the 2022/23 Scrutiny Work Programme:
 - Mental Health in the Workplace
 - Recruitment and Retention
 - Dog Fouling and Litter Offences
 - Feedback from Outside Bodies
 - Towns Fund Progress
 - Cost of Living Crisis
 - Wildlife Protection.

c) the Scrutiny Research Officer be requested to undertake the following:

- to liaise with the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and the Community Safety Manager, to consider the most appropriate topic for the annual 'Crime and Disorder' scrutiny meeting;
- to liaise with the Leader of the Council regarding the suggestion to focus the 2022 State of Ashfield Debate on the current cost of living crisis.

The meeting closed at 7.48 pm

Chairman.