

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



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

Agenda

Principal Select Committee

Date: **Thursday, 28th September, 2023**

Time: **7.00 pm**

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

For any further information please contact:

Lynn Cain

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Principal Select Committee

Membership

Chairman: Councillor Kier Barsby

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Julie Gregory

Councillors:

Jodine Cronshaw

Warren Nuttall

John Smallridge

Trevor Locke

Phil Rostance

FILMING/AUDIO RECORDING NOTICE

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SUMMONS

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



Theresa Hodgkinson
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 8 June 2023.** 5 - 8
- 4. No Mow May Campaign.**

Members to receive an update on progression of the 'No Mow May' review and to consider any recommendations to Cabinet as deemed appropriate.
- 5. Ashfield District Council - 50 Year Anniversary.**

Member to consider options for marking the 50-year milestone of Ashfield District Council's existence.
- 6. Select Committee Co-optees.** 9 - 12
- 7. Select Work Programme.**

Members to receive an update in respect of ongoing Select Committee reviews and to consider proposals for additional Work Programme topics.

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Agenda Item 3

PRINCIPAL SELECT COMMITTEE

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

on Thursday, 8th June, 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Kier Barsby in the Chair;

Councillors Jodine Cronshaw, Julie Gregory
(Vice-Chair), Trevor Locke, Warren Nuttall,
Phil Rostance and John Smallridge.

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 16 February 2023, be received and approved as a correct record.

OS.3 Scrutiny Function and Work Programming

The Scrutiny Research Officer welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave an introduction to the content of the agenda, which included a precis of guidance for scrutiny practitioners, an overview of the Council's refreshed scrutiny function following approval at the Annual Council meeting and a request to consider and select topics for the 2023/2024 work programme.

Refreshed Scrutiny Function

Following approval at the Annual Council meeting, the former Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been renamed the Principal Select Committee and would continue to maintain a watching brief over the work undertaken by the new Outward and Inward Focus Select Committees.

Further responsibilities included management of the Select Work Programme, monitoring the Council's performance through regular reports and regular examination of the Council's finances with particular attention to the annual budget and tax setting process.

The previous Scrutiny Panels A and B had also received a refresh and had been renamed the Outward and Inward Focus Select Committees. These committees had been appointed by Council to carry out reviews of topics added to the scrutiny work programme by the Principal Select Committee. On rarer occasions, the Committees could also be instructed to undertake work requested by Council or the Executive.

Scrutiny Practitioners Guide

The Scrutiny Practitioners Guide was a research paper published by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to provide a comprehensive introductory guide as to the main facets of scrutiny including a summary of some of the key tools and skills needed to improve and enhance scrutiny.

Select Work Programme 2023/24

Members were introduced to the work programme and advised that topic ideas came from many different sources including:

Residents
Debate at Scrutiny Meetings
News Reports
Corporate Performance Data
Cabinet/Council Suggestions.

It was acknowledged that the scrutiny function was definitely a Member-led process with ongoing support from officers as required.

A typical scrutiny review of a selected topic would involve the gathering of information and data, speaking to appropriate officers, Member consideration of policy and procedure document content as appropriate and an examination of any budget costs and future financial implications. Following these steps, the Committee Members would draw their conclusions and present draft recommendations to Cabinet for consideration as necessary.

As an additional step and following approval of the recommendations by Cabinet, a monitoring/performance report could be requested further down the line to ensure Members kept a watchful eye over implementation and progress of any such decisions made.

The following topics were then presented for consideration by Members and potential inclusion on the 2023/24 work programme:

Potential Reviews

- Celebration of the 50 year anniversary of Ashfield District Council
- Preparatory investigations and requirements in relation to the 2024 renewal of the Council's current 'Christmas Lights' contract
- the extent of damp and mould problems in social housing within the District
- Refresh of the Council's Homeless Prevention Strategy for 2024-2029

Progress/Update Reports

- Progress regarding roll-out and managed migration of the national Universal Credit programme within Ashfield following the previous review
- Update on progress of Towns Fund projects.

Following the presentation, Members discussed the work programme and suggested the following topics for inclusion:

- A review of internal officer response times and availability for dealing with Member enquiries (phone calls/emails)

(Committee were advised that a review into effective communication between staff and Members was already underway and would be finalised within the next few months. There was therefore no need to duplicate work at this present time).

- A review of the current, somewhat restrictive criteria for allocation of additional red bins to larger family properties
- How the Council could best monitor and ensure maintenance works on designated green spaces within new estates are undertaken by Developers (or assigned contractors) as agreed
- The No Mow May national campaign and its potential impact on the Council's responsibilities in respect of visual splays and safety concerns at road junctions as the month progresses.

RESOLVED that

- a) the CfGS guidance notes for scrutiny practitioners, as appended to the report, be received and noted;
- b) the revised structure for the Council's scrutiny function following changes made at the Annual Council meeting in May 2023, be received and noted;
- c) the following topics be added to the 2023/24 Select Work Programme:

Reviews

1. 50 year anniversary of Ashfield District Council
2. Christmas Lights Provision
3. Damp and mould
4. Homeless Prevention Strategy 2024-2029
5. General Waste Bin Allocation
6. Maintenance works on estate designated green spaces
7. The 'No Mow May' national campaign

Progress/Update Reports

8. Roll-out and managed migration of the national Universal Credit programme within Ashfield
9. Update on progress of Towns Fund/Future High Streets Fund projects.

The meeting closed at 7.32 pm

Chairman.

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Report To:	PRINCIPAL SELECT COMMITTEE
Date:	28 SEPTEMBER 2023
Heading:	SELECT COMMITTEE CO-OPTees
Executive Lead Member:	NOT APPLICABLE
Ward/s:	ALL
Key Decision:	NO
Subject to Call-In:	NO

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to ask Principal Select Committee Members to consider the options relating to appointing non-voting co-opted members to the Principal Select Committee and/or the Inward and Outward Focus Select Committees.

Recommendation(s)

The Principal Select Committee is recommended to:

- a. Consider the options relating to appointing non-voting co-opted members to the Principal Select Committee and/or the Inward and Outward Focus Select Committees.
- b. Discuss the methods for engagement and consultation of non-voting co-opted members.
- c. If agreed, formulate a formal recommendation to Council regarding the appointment process for non-voting co-opted members.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The Council's scrutiny function recently underwent an audit carried out by the Central Midlands Audit Partnership. One of the outstanding recommendations from this audit is that there has not been a recent discussion regarding the potential added value of appointing non-voting co-opted members to the Principal Select Committee and/or the Inward and Outward Focus Select Committees.

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options have been considered. This report is a result of an outstanding audit recommendation that needs to be evidenced and actioned appropriately.

Detailed Information

BACKGROUND

In 2022, Central Midlands Audit Partnership (CMAP) undertook an audit focused on the function of the Council's formerly established Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Panels A and B during the financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

At the conclusion of the audit review, one of the control weaknesses and recommendations identified by CMAP was that:

“The decision on whether to use co-opted members had not been formally considered within the current Administration”.

Along with the following suggested actions:

“We recommend that the Scrutiny team remind Scrutiny Members of rights to use co-opted members to assist with workload and provide expertise, if requested. The discussion should be formally documents in the scrutiny functions minutes, for transparency”.

The reasoning below was used for the identified control weakness and recommendation regarding co-opted members:

“We expected that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would have considered co-opting people from outside the Council to assist with its workload, but also to provide additional expertise and a more diverse representation.

We found through review of minutes that the Scrutiny panels had enlisted the assistance of people from outside the Council. These people attended meetings to provide additional expertise and information to assist with the review.

The Rules of Procedure included in the Council's Constitution stated: “The Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Sub-Committee or Scrutiny Panel shall be entitled to recommend to Council the appointment of non-voting co-optee(s)”.

Discussion with the Scrutiny Research Officer highlighted that there had been no indication from Chairs, Vice Chairs, or other Scrutiny Members for a desire to co-opt none voting members. This had formed a discussion with the previous Administration; however, they had also decided not to go down this route.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny issued the Good Scrutiny Guidance in 2019 which suggested Councils could use co-optee(s) members to provide particular technical skills or knowledge for specific tasks and/or the use co-optee(s) could provide a more diverse representation on a committee.

If the current Administration has not considered the appointment of non-voting co-optee(s), there is a risk that additional expertise and a more diverse representation has not been sought. This may lead to scrutiny being ineffective if the Panel or the Committee feel they do not have the correct skill set to undertake tasks or could lead to a perception of ineffectiveness by stakeholders, resulting in reputational damage to the Council.”

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

It is set out in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution:

The Principal Select Committee or Sub-Committee or Scrutiny Panels shall be entitled to recommend to Council the appointment of non-voting co-optee(s).

PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION

A report was presented to the then Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2022 for consideration. At the conclusion of this consideration, Members acknowledged that the term of office for sitting Councillors at that time was due to end in May 2022 and that the decision might be best made by the new Administration and new Members of the Principal Select Committee following the District Elections in May 2022. Consequently, the report has been deferred to the September 2023 meeting of the Committee.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The Council strives to ensure effective community leadership. This is achieved through good governance, transparency, accountability, and appropriate behaviours. All of these factor into the Council's scrutiny function.

Legal:

There are no direct legal implications resulting from the recommendations within this report. As set out in the Part 4 of the Council's Constitution, the Principal Select Committee and Inward/Outward Focus Select Committees are entitled to recommend to Council the appointment of non-voting co-optees.

Finance:

There are no direct financial implications resulting from the recommendations within this report. If the Principal Select Committee decides to recommend to Council that the Principal Select Committee and/or Inward/Outward Focus Select Committees should undertake the process of appointing non-voting co-opted members, there is potential that a fee would be paid to anyone appointed. This would be outlined in a further report should the appointment process be undertaken.

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

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Failing to respond to, evidence, and action recommendations resulting from an audit review.	Committee will consider a report covering a identified weakness and recommendation resulting from a recent audit review of the Council's scrutiny function.

Human Resources:

There are no direct HR implications resulting from the recommendations within this report.

Environmental/Sustainability:

There are no direct environmental or sustainability implications resulting from the recommendations within this report.

Equalities:

There are no direct equalities implications resulting from the recommendations within this report.

Other Implications:

There are no other implications resulting from the recommendations within this report.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

None.

Report Author and Contact Officer

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