

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.