



Annual Council

Monday, 20 May 2019

Subject: Challenge & Improvement Annual Report

Report by:

Executive Director of Operations

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Purpose / Summary:

To present the draft annual report for Members' comment and agreement prior to submission to Annual Council

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1) That Members receive the Annual Report from the Challenge and Improvement Committee.**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: The Chairman of the Committee is required constitutionally (Part 2, Article 7, paragraph 7.6) to submit an annual report to Council on the work his Committee has undertaken.

Financial: FIN/8/20

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Staffing: None arising directly from this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: N/A

Risk Assessment: N/A

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: N/A

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Agendas and Minutes arising from the meetings of the Challenge and Improvements Committee held during 2018/19 located on the website

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Chairman of the Committee is required constitutionally (Part II, Article 7, page 17, paragraph 7.6) to submit an annual report to Council, in which he details the work his committee has undertaken through the previous civic year and summarises the proposals for the work plan over the coming year. In line with the terms of reference for the committee, the Chairman should also update Annual Council with any amendments to the committee's operating methodology.
- 1.2 The Chairman's Annual Report is set out below.

2. Chairman's Annual Report

- 2.1 The past Civic Year has been an eventful one for West Lindsey's scrutiny committee. As agreed in the Constitutional Review at last year's Annual Council, the scrutiny function has been reviewed throughout the year with the aim of ensuring ongoing efficiency and efficacy. Colleagues may recall the excellent scrutiny training delivered to us in early 2018 and the review this year has sought to build on those foundations. The proposed amendments to the committee name, the membership of the committee and the alterations to the terms of reference, were agreed at the Governance and Audit Committee in January this year and, if approved at Annual Council, will come into effect this coming Civic Year.
- 2.2 We have also seen the conclusion of two significant pieces of work for the Challenge and Improvement Committee: the Rural Public Realm review and the Health Commission, in partnership with the Prosperous Communities Committee. Both of these have had, or will have, far-reaching impact on our local communities and we should all be proud of the work achieved.
- 2.3 As is the expectation of this scrutiny committee, we have welcomed a number of external visitors and received substantial assurances from some of our partnership agencies as to their dedication to serving the people of West Lindsey. At the last meeting of the year we welcomed a representative from Thames Ambulance Services Ltd and our expectations for a session of robust and honest conversation were well exceeded.
- 2.4 A summary of our work focus is given below and I shall expand on key areas throughout this report.
 - Ongoing involvement of scrutiny committee Members with the Progress and Delivery Working Group to ensure appropriate measures are in place for performance management across the council.
 - Completion of the Rural Public Realm Working Group with recommendations made to the Prosperous Communities Committee in January 2019.

- Conclusion of the Health Commission, with a final update received at committee in June 2018.
- Focus on our customers, with regular updates regarding the Customer First Strategy and the work of the Customer Experience Officer with regards to comments, complaints and compliments.
- Renewed scrutiny of the enforcement performance data (as highlighted within Progress and Delivery reports).
- Items selected for pre-scrutiny and overview of policies, such as the leisure contract implementation (first update), garden waste charges and the selective licensing initiative.
- Involvement from Lincolnshire Police as required by law and our Constitution.

3. Review of Operating Methodology

- 3.1 Colleagues will be aware that the annual review and agreement of the operating methodology is a constitutional requirement for the committee. In recent years there have been only minor changes made in line with the objectives of the committee.
- 3.2 This year, the methodology was updated to reflect the management structure of the Council and to clarify the options for requesting items for pre-scrutiny.
- 3.3 As a result of the scrutiny review, the operating methodology will be further refined and taken to committee in June 2019.

4. Scrutiny Review

- 4.1 As explained in the report to the Governance and Audit Committee, it had been identified in the annual Constitution Review and the Governance Action Plan for there to be a review of the scrutiny function within the Council.
- 4.2 As a committee based council, there is no legal requirement for West Lindsey District Council to maintain a scrutiny function. It has been acknowledged, however, that the scrutiny committee does provide a means of additional transparency for the decisions made through the policy committees. This is as well as fulfilling the statutory duties of the Council under Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006.
- 4.3 Following the training undertaken in February 2018, the review took into consideration the recommendations from the trainers at KPMG as well as national recommendations given in the APSE scrutiny report of 2017. There were three options identified as possible outcomes of the scrutiny review:

- Make no changes to the Challenge and Improvement Committee; or
 - Make limited changes to the functions of the committee, review the terms of reference and include a change in the criteria for membership; or
 - The removal of the Challenge and Improvement Committee from West Lindsey's committee structure but retain a call-in function.
- 4.4 Comparisons were drawn up with other fourth option councils which demonstrated a variety of scrutiny functions but did not highlight any particular 'best practice'. It was reiterated at the Governance and Audit Committee meeting that to have a scrutiny function was to provide robust and transparent challenge to the decision making process.
- 4.5 As a result of the discussions at the Governance and Audit Committee, it was agreed that simple changes to the number of required meetings each year, the name of the committee, the criteria for membership and a clearly defined purpose of being through amendments to the terms of reference would take effect from the new Civic Year, subject to approval at Annual Council in May 2019.

5. Progress and Delivery

- 5.1 There have been two main strands of the committee's progress and delivery work throughout the year. Early in the Civic Year, we were joined by the Housing and Enforcement Manager to provide details of the management of the enforcement caseload. The service area is regularly highlighted within progress and delivery reports and it is within the terms of reference for the committee to scrutinise improvement measures.
- 5.2 The information from the Housing and Enforcement Manager provided us with an overview as to how enforcement issues were dealt with previously, how they would be dealt with under the new enforcement policy and what was envisaged for the future monitoring of cases. We were assured that positive steps were being taken to ensure performance was enhanced in the future.
- 5.3 Enforcement has continued to be a focus for the committee through the quarterly progress and delivery reports with ongoing monitoring of timescales and resolution details. This is likely to be a continued theme through the next Civic Year.
- 5.4 The committee has also been involved in the yearly review of the measures used to assess the effectiveness of each service, through the P&D Working Group. This is in line with recommendations from internal audit and has been a key function of the committee over recent years.
- 5.5 Throughout the coming Civic Year, the committee will continue the scrutiny of progress and delivery reporting and focus on those service areas which are highlighted within the reports.

6. Conclusion of the Public Realm Working Group

- 6.1 Back in 2017, the Public Realm Working Group was established with the purpose “to investigate the efficiency and effectiveness of the services (both those provided by West Lindsey and others) which impact upon the public realm in the district and make recommendations to the Prosperous Communities Committee on any improvements which have been identified as being necessary”.
- 6.2 In January this year, the culmination of 18 months’ worth of investigations, interactions and survey responses were presented to committee along with the final five recommendations to make to the Prosperous Communities Committee. These were agreed to be:
- Undertake to review existing communication and reporting channels between WLDC and parish/town councils;
 - Establish a scheme or clear suite of tools/support that WLDC can provide to parish/town councils to support local action on dog fouling, fly-tipping and littering;
 - Undertake a review of legal responsibilities for grass verges and explore options for transfer of ownership/responsibility with LCC;
 - Review current ability to provide community support and advice to parish/town councils on local issues and community projects; and
 - Consider the need to re-allocate funds within the Community Grants Programme to respond to and support local issues around public realm.
- 6.3 These recommendations were heard by the Prosperous Communities Committee at the end of January where it was resolved that Officers prepare and submit to the Prosperous Communities Committee in June 2019, detailed proposals as to how to take forward the recommendations made by Challenge and Improvement Committee, as detailed above.
- 6.4 The focus of this work has been to help reconnect our parish and town councils with our Council and district, and, with the actions recommended from the working group there is real potential for small changes to make big differences across all areas.

7. Conclusion of the Health Commission

- 7.1 In June 2018 the committee received the final report from the Health Commission, in which Members were asked to support the recommendations to the Prosperous Communities Committee for the future of health and wellbeing initiatives across the district.
- 7.2 As the end of the two year term of the Health Commission neared completion, it was agreed that, although there is no statutory role with regards to health, the Council has embraced the importance of the health

and wellbeing agenda and such aspects are now incorporated into the day to day functioning of the Council.

- 7.3 Members and Officers alike are conscious of the focus on the health and wellbeing needs of the district and work hard to maximise opportunities to positively impact on the health and wellbeing of residents.
- 7.4 The inclusion of health and wellbeing into so many aspects of the Council's work is not only testament to the work of the Health Commission but also promises untold benefits for years to come.

8. Focus on Customers

- 8.1 In the past Civic Year we have welcomed reports from the Customer Experience Officer, detailing the new policy for dealing with customer complaints, comments and compliments, as well as the Strategic Lead for Customer First who has been providing information regarding the Customer First strategy and what it means for the Council. We have also heard the results of the staff survey which demonstrated increasing levels of job satisfaction across the board, which can only help to have a positive impact on our interactions with our customers.
- 8.2 We heard from the Customer Experience Officer that the process for dealing with complaints has been streamlined and centralised to ensure continuity of complaint handling across all service areas. The committee learned that compliments and comments are now also being logged and responded to which gives a wider view of the customer experience rather than focussing on the complaint data. It was agreed that the committee's focus on customer care would continue into the new Civic Year with the committee receiving the annual Voice of the Customer report.
- 8.3 We also heard from the Strategic Lead for Customer First about the focus of the Customer First Strategy and received updates regarding the progress of numerous projects within the strategy. As a three year programme of works, it was explained that some areas of work will be continuing in the longer term, although some smaller projects have already been completed.
- 8.4 We welcomed the work underway to make the Council more accessible to all customers within the district and will continue to focus our attentions next year on areas for further improvement, such as the website and consultation for the service hub.

9. Requested Reports – Pre-Committee Cycle

- 9.1 In keeping with the remit of the scrutiny committee, we have requested to see a selection of reports before they proceed through the committee process.

- 9.2 Following the implementation of the leisure contract, the committee requested to see the summary report regarding the commencement of the contract and how it had progressed to date. We were heartened to hear the positive feedback from customers to the leisure centre and also to see the user numbers to be so greatly increased. This is a real success story for the area and promises continued progress.
- 9.2 The committee also heard from the Strategic Manager – Services, regarding the introduction and continuation of the garden waste collection fee. This has proved to be another success story for the Council, with initial take up in excess of predictions and early collection issues being resolved swiftly. It had been requested for committee to be provided with details regarding any other impact of the charge, such as an increase in fly-tipping or contaminated waste collections and it was pleasing to hear that there has been no discernible increase in either problem. The decision to continue the charge at the current amount was welcomed and the committee praised everyone involved for their hard work.
- 9.3 As a continuation of the work arising from the South West Ward Working Group of 2016/17, we heard from the Housing and Enforcement Manager about the ongoing selective licensing scheme. This has been another positive change in the area and the scheme will now continue through until December 2020. We were told of significant improvements within the ward and it was welcome news that the focus of the original working group had continued to have an impact for the benefit of residents.

10. Programme of Outside Agencies

- 10.1 As referenced in the terms of reference for the committee, we have welcomed several visitors from outside agencies throughout the Civic Year.
- 10.2 We have had a significant health and wellbeing focus, welcoming representatives from East Midlands Ambulance Service and Thames Ambulance Service Ltd as well as representatives from the Gainsborough Foyer regarding accommodation and associated support services for young people in the area.
- 10.3 In line with our Constitution, and the Police and Justice Act 2006, we have been happy to welcome Chief Inspector Stewart Brinn and Inspector Nigel Key. On the back of their disturbing accounts of funding cuts, budget pressures and the prospect of staff shortages, I wrote on behalf of the Committee to Sir Edward Leigh, MP, commending the work of Lincolnshire Police and requesting support for them and reviewed funding strategies.
- 10.4 We were pleased to receive a comprehensive reply from Sir Edward Leigh who fully supported our concerns and calls for fairer funding for rural police forces. Time will tell what the future holds for our Police Force

but we, as a committee, have committed our continuing support and we look forward to hearing of any improvements when they return to committee with their next update.

11. Conclusion and Look Forward to Next Year

- 11.1 At the committee's last meeting of the 2018/19 Civic Year, Members gave consideration to areas they may wish to incorporate into their work plan for 2019/20.
- 11.2 It has been agreed that the committee will continue the focus on customer service across the Council. This will be both through the Voice of the Customer annual report and further updates on the progress of the Customer First Strategy.
- 11.3 It has also been proposed that through the Progress and Delivery reports, enforcement continues to be a focus for Members and Officers alike, with suggestions for improvements made through the working group.
- 11.4 The committee will also give frequent consideration to the Forward Plan in order to identify areas where greater scrutiny may be required.

12. Other Areas

- 12.1 The committee will oversee the introduction of the revised Performance and Delivery Monitoring Reporting and evaluate its effectiveness.
- 12.2 The committee will continue to respond to direct requests to undertake work made either by Council or the Policy Committees.
- 12.3 The committee will continue to build on effective working relationships with Lincolnshire Police.
- 12.4 The committee will establish a programme of external visitors to attend throughout 2019/20.

13. Concluding Remarks

- 13.1 In the way that we have come to expect with our scrutiny committee, it has been a busy year with varied and all equally worthwhile areas of focus. It was fulfilling to come to a feasible conclusion with the Public Realm work and I am sure I speak for us all in looking forward to where this work may lead in the future. Likewise the evidence that the focus of the Health Commission has become business as usual across the Council is testament to the importance of health and wellbeing for our district.

13.2 As is my wont in this annual report, I must express my thanks and gratitude, not only to our dedicated Members but also to our Vice Chairmen who work alongside me with integrity and enthusiasm and who uphold the very definition of impartial scrutiny. At this time of change, both for the Council and the Committee, it is particularly important to focus on our 'purpose of being' and it is with thanks that I commend Mark for his patient guidance over the past year and beyond. Finally, may I express my appreciation to our Democratic Services team who keep all of our committees running without a hitch, despite sometimes being faced with any number of trials and difficulties. As we enter not only a new Civic Year but with a newly formed Council, it is with excitement and slight trepidation that I look forward to the opportunities in front of us and a new focus on effective scrutiny within West Lindsey District Council.