



Annual Council

Monday, 12 May 2025

Subject: Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2024/25 and Review of Operating Methodology

Report by:

Councillor P. Howitt-Cowan
Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To present the Annual Report from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Members receive the Annual Report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

IMPLICATIONS

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

Financial: FIN/21/26/CL/VA

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Staffing: The Committee is supported from existing resources and there are no other implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

Data Protection Implications:

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

Health Implications:

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

Agenda and minutes arising from the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held during the 2024/2025 civic year, all of which are located on the West Lindsey District Council website and can be found [here](https://democracy.west-lindsey.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeed=386)

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Risk Assessment:

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

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No

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Key Decision:

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

Yes

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No

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Chairman of the Committee is required constitutionally (Part II, Article 7, 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 summarise 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 This year, as is customary, we have been involved in the Progress and Delivery work programme, with scrutiny of the policy committees' debate of the six-monthly reports and the working group assisting with the review of the P&D measure set. We have welcomed visitors and guest speakers, with some already set to return next civic year, and we have continued with work streams which had commenced in previous years.
- 2.2 At the start of the year, we undertook a review of the Operating Methodology, with this again due to take place at the start of the 2025/26 Civic Year. The Operating Methodology is attached at Appendix 1, with further details of the review provided in Section 5 of this report.
- 2.3 As I write this report looking back over the year, it is hard to believe that we are already at the halfway point through our current term of office. We have strong expectations for the coming year, with the biennial review of the Members' Handbook and options for a refresh of our training, and I look forward to welcoming new invited guests and focusing on the work of the Directorates within the Council.

3 Progress and Delivery

- 3.1 We are well accustomed now to the scrutiny of the Progress and Delivery (P&D) reporting through the two policy committees, with plenty of debate welcomed. As I do every year, I would like to extend my thanks to Darren Mellors and Claire Bailey of the Change, Programmes and Performance Management team, they really do a wonderful job with their reports.
- 3.2 Members of the Committee also formed a working group in order to review the P&D Measure Sets. Whilst this is usually something which takes place very couple of years, having a new Administration in place from the 2023 elections meant it was prudent to undertake a mini-review after the first year of data collection and performance review. The amended measure set has progressed through the policy committees and been approved for use from April 2025.

- 3.3 The coming Civic Year will see a continuation of the P&D reporting through our Committee, and it will be interesting to see whether the wider national and international context starts to feed into our West Lindsey data. No doubt Darren and Claire shall keep us well informed!

4 Programme of Outside Agencies and Presentation Items

- 4.1 We have continued our programme of invited guests and presenters. We again welcomed Inspector Michael Head, from Lincolnshire Police, which although is arranged in line with statutory requirements, always proves to be an engaging and in-depth discussion piece. We shall look forward to hearing his next update around the autumn time.
- 4.2 We were also joined by Everyone Active, who show clear signs of extending the community outreach programmes the Council has been so keen to see. They have offered to return after the summer, when they hope to report further gains and successes.
- 4.3 The Committee had hoped to receive a presentation from Safer Lincolnshire Partnership, sadly unforeseen circumstances led to a change of plans, but we were very happy to hear instead from our own Andy Gray, Housing and Environmental Enforcement Manager. In summarising the role of the Partnership, we also heard how Officers at West Lindsey District Council both feed into, and benefit from, the partnership working arrangements. It was very reassuring to understand the behind the scenes work which keeps our communities safe.
- 4.4 At our final meeting of the year, on 15 April 2025, we received not only a comprehensive presentation from Mr Matthew Harrison, Lincolnshire County Council Flood and Water Manager, regarding an overview of the responsibilities of the Lead Local Flood Authority and how those responsibilities are applied during West Lindsey District flooding events, but also a further update from Mr Andy Gray, regarding the work of the Flood Risk Management Working Group. Members will be aware of the various flooding incidents we have had in our district, and the concerns our residents have around the risk of future troubles. As a Committee, we took the opportunity to ask the necessary questions, whilst understanding there is a myriad of agencies and parties involved who share responsibilities. It was heartening to hear that the work of the Working Group has become business as usual within the Council, with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continuing to receive updates from the Group in the future, with additional information to be received should there be any specific incidents of flooding. We did express our thanks to both Mr Harrison and Mr Gray, for their efforts in presenting some complex information succinctly for us, and it was comforting to know the level of work which goes on behind the scenes.

5 Operating Methodology

- 5.1 Following the amendments which had been enacted after the 2023/24 review, this current year saw no changes being made to the Operating Methodology (Appendix 1).
- 5.2 In line with the established approach to review the Operating Methodology at the end of each civic year, for any proposed amendments to be considered in line with the Constitution Review and for approval by the O&S Committee at the start of the next civic year, the current Operating Methodology formed a part of the discussions at our meeting in April 2025. There were no suggested amendments arising from those discussions and the document will now proceed for agreement at the first meeting of the O&S Committee in the new Civic Year.

6 Look Forward to Next Year

- 6.1 As we move into the third year, there will be a continuation of our P&D work, as detailed above, and we anticipate a full information session on the much-awaited legislation updates relating to Battery Energy Storage Systems. We already have a 'waiting list' of returning guests to be scheduled into the work plan, and there will be returning updates as work streams progress.
- 6.2 As is always the case, the Committee welcomes the opportunity to focus on areas as requested by the two policy committees, and I envisage a continuation of our close working relationship, whether that be the P&D work or task and finish groups.
- 6.3 The Committee will also undertake the biennial review of the Members' Handbook, particularly welcome as it was a new tool introduced in 2023 and it is always good to review such things, but it will also hopefully go hand in hand with a refresh of our training.

7 Concluding Remarks

- 7.1 I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to all Members of the Committee, for their commitment to carrying out their role with vigour. Effective scrutiny requires understanding and diligence, which our Members demonstrate unfailingly. Our work plan has been full and varied, and we look forward to the opportunities in the upcoming year.
- 7.2 I would also like to thank our Officers for the support and guidance they have given us throughout the year. The Officers who have presented, contributed, or worked behind the scenes to ensure we as a Committee can fulfil our scrutiny role as effectively as possible, and of course Nova Roberts, as our Lead Officer, and our democratic support officers.