



Council

Monday, 28 June 2021

Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

Report by:

Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To present the Annual Report from the Overview
& Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1) 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:

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Staffing: None arising directly from this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: N/A

Data Protection Implications: N/A

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: N/A

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations: N/A

Health Implications: N/A

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 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 civic years, all of which are located on the West Lindsey District Council website.

Risk Assessment:

N/A

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

X

Key Decision:

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

Yes

No

X

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 she details the work her 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 Council with any amendments to the committee's operating methodology.
- 1.2 Owing to the impact of the global pandemic and the cancellation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings for the first six months of the 2020/2021 civic year, this report covers a two year period.
- 1.3 The Chairman's Annual Report is set out below.

2 Chairman's Annual Report

- 2.1 The 2019/2020 civic year saw the implementation of several changes to the scrutiny committee following the review that took place in 2018/2019. With a new name to the committee, an amended membership and of course, a new Chairman, it was an unprecedented opportunity to really reflect on the role of scrutiny within the council.
- 2.2 With a condensed and user-friendly operating methodology in place (in part as a result of the scrutiny review), alongside a well-structured training session in early September, the committee set to with inviting outside agencies, investigating options for pre-decision scrutiny items and continuing the work with the quarterly Progress and Delivery reporting.
- 2.3 As we, as a committee, gained confidence in our role, we identified recommendations for the policy committees; we influenced the future of P&D reporting across the council through the Progress and Delivery working group; and the session with the Environment Agency proved to be a real success.
- 2.4 The previously identified areas of scrutiny, such as Voice of the Customer and Selective Licensing, continued to be a part of the committee's work plan in 2019/2020 and we welcomed the opportunity to hear the success stories in these areas.
- 2.5 As we are all aware, the global pandemic of Covid-19 took hold in March 2020 and the country was plunged into a national lockdown. The last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee took place in February 2020 with the next meeting not taking place until eight months later in October 2020.
- 2.6 Despite the shortened year for this committee, we undertook to continue with previously agreed work areas, such as the Focus on Leisure in West Lindsey and a review of flood risk management across affected areas.

- 2.7 Through the course of these work streams, we have invited representatives from several outside bodies and, given the work that has been undertaken thus far, we are anticipating the continuation of these topics into the new civic year.

3 Review of Operating Methodology

- 3.1 In June 2019, as constitutionally required, the committee gave consideration to our operating methodology. As a result of the scrutiny review, the operating methodology had been re-written to ensure it was clear, concise and reflected the working methods of the committee. The detail of how the committee should work had not been changed but the resulting methodology was an easier working document than had previously been presented. The current version can be found at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Given the amended committee membership, as well as several newly-elected councillors holding a seat on the scrutiny committee, this proved invaluable with detailing the working methods of the committee and how to address scrutiny within an authority where it is not actually a legal requirement.
- 3.3 The committee accepted the updated version of the operating methodology and it remained unchanged for the 2020/2021 civic year. It is not anticipated for there to be any significant amendments required for the upcoming civic year.

4 Provision of Scrutiny Training

- 4.1 Following the all-out election in May 2019, the Induction Programme included relevant training and development sessions for all of the main committees and for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, this took the form of a two hour workshop provided by Mazars, the council's external auditors.
- 4.2 The scope of the workshop covered not only the role of the committee within the council but also the role each Councillor could play in ensuring effective scrutiny across all committees.
- 4.3 The session was attended by members of the scrutiny committee and those from other committees and everyone was in agreement that the session was both thought-provoking and encouraging.
- 4.4 As Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, myself and Councillors Mrs Rodgers and Mrs White were invited to attend a one-day scrutiny conference, hosted by East Midlands Councils. Councillors and Officers alike were able to share best practice as well as common difficulties and it was of significant benefit to be able to attend.

5 Progress and Delivery

- 5.1 In 2019/2020, through the P&D working group, the committee was involved in the annual review of the measures used to assess the effectiveness of each service. The reporting methods for the P&D data were also reviewed by the working group.
- 5.2 Where possible, I endeavoured to attend the policy committee meetings in order to be able to understand their discussions of the P&D reports first hand. This was particularly useful given the remit of the scrutiny committee to consider the challenge made by the policy committees. Having that first hand record of their deliberations proved invaluable.
- 5.3 The terms of reference for the scrutiny committee ensure that we are involved with P&D reporting and, whilst this has been largely suspended in 2020/2021 as a result of the pandemic, I anticipate this continuing throughout the coming civic year.

6 Pre-Decision Scrutiny – Specifically 2019/2020

- 6.1 In keeping with the remit of the scrutiny committee, we called for a selection of reports to be presented for pre-decision scrutiny, that is to say, before they proceeded through the committee process for final decision by the policy committees.
- 6.2 The committee heard from the Senior Growth Strategy & Projects Officer in relation to the proposals for 5 – 7 Market Place, Gainsborough. She explained the background for us and presented the proposals. There were significant discussions between Members and whilst the proposals overall were supported, the committee felt there were elements where further options could be considered. This was reported to the parent policy committee in the final version of the report.
- 6.3 During the same meeting, we also heard from the Interim Assistant Director of Operations regarding the future of Gainsborough Markets. There was some lively discussion from Members! The partnership work and provision of specialist markets was praised and Members were assured that sufficient consideration was being given to the relevant options.
- 6.4 The last of the pre-decision scrutiny items was in fact a project that has been ongoing within the council for several years: the Southdale development in Caistor. Having brought this to a point of realisation, the scrutiny committee heard from the Monitoring Officer, on behalf of the Executive Director of Economic and Commercial Growth. Based on the information shared with the committee and the level of work that has gone into this project already, Members were both assured that all best options for the area had been considered and that there remained scope for the council to influence the future of the development. As a committee

we proposed several minor amendments or recommendations prior to being presented to the policy committee later in the year.

- 6.5 In consideration of the impact of Covid-19, the committee has, this year, chosen not to call any reports for pre-decision scrutiny. As the committee timetable returns to normal, as restrictions continue to be eased, and as focus shifts from pandemic recovery to a return to life as normal, we anticipate there being greater scope for pre-scrutiny items at the committee in the coming year.

7 Programme of Outside Agencies

- 7.1 In 2019/2020, the committee welcomed Detective Inspector Jenny Waddington to provide an update on crime and disorder across the district. We heard information in relation to the ongoing funding issues as well as the areas in which the police force had been making real headway. This included a focus on knife crime and offensive weapons as well as the ongoing work regarding drug-related crime and the seasonal road safety campaigns.

- 7.2 We were also joined by representatives of the Environment Agency. Given the flooding in the area, this proved a well worthwhile presentation and it was heartening to see so many Councillors attending. We heard there was continued work to repair and improve flood defences but it was clear there is a strong commitment across all agencies to make real changes. This has been an ongoing piece of work this year and we will be welcoming back representatives from the Environment Agency to an upcoming meeting.

- 7.3 This year, through our Focus on Leisure work stream, we have welcomed representatives from three leisure groups: Active Lincolnshire, Everyone Active and the Gainsborough Trinity Foundation. Whilst the leisure industry has been hit hard by the lockdowns and national restrictions, it was inspiring to hear how organisations such as these are working within local communities to encourage residents of all ages to 'get out and be active'.

- 7.4 For the coming civic year, we will be welcoming the return of the police, the Environment Agency and, later in the year, hopefully a return of the leisure organisations to hear how they have progressed in a post-covid world.

8 Returning Annual Reports – Officer Presented

- 8.1 In 2019/2020, in addition to the pre-decision scrutiny items, our external visitors and the P&D reports, we also heard from the Customer Experience Officer detailing really impressive statistics on complaint handling and increased compliments across the council, as well as the Housing and Enforcement Manager in relation to the success of the Selective Licensing programme.

- 8.2 Both of these presentations were previously requested by the scrutiny committee and we felt it was important to continue the narrative. With an increased use of the Member Newsletter to share data such as customer experiences, it remains to be seen whether the scrutiny committee is the best forum for such reports but we would of course welcome both Officers back for future updates.

9 Look Forward to Next Year

- 9.1 Given the much shortened timetable in which we were working during 2020/2021, we anticipate the focus of the coming civic year to be a continuation of the leisure and flood risk work streams. This work has moved at pace in the past four months and it would be disappointing if we lost that focus.
- 9.2 As mentioned previously, we anticipate there being more scope in which to re-introduce other areas of work for the committee, such as reports for pre-scrutiny and involvement with the P&D reporting will continue, although given the changes to the reporting schedule this is likely to be a lower priority for the committee.