



Annual Council

Monday, 13 May 2024

Subject: Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24

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):

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: FIN/20/25/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 2022/2023 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?CId=386&Year=0>

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

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 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 We started the 2023/24 Civic Year with an election, a change of Council Leadership and a significant number of newly-elected Councillors. This year has been a period of learning for all of us: some learning the ropes, some refreshing our memories, all of us learning how to work together in a new Council. This learning has been reflected through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and I am confident when I say, we finish this year in a stronger and more informed position than when we started it.
- 2.2 This year for the first time, Members of the Overview and Scrutiny were provided with a Members' O&S Handbook in order to cover some of the main functions and responsibilities of the Committee. This handbook (attached at Appendix 1) will be reviewed at least every four years, although I do anticipate we shall do a 'light touch' review over the summer, once we have a full year's experience to help guide us.
- 2.3 In addition to the handbook, we also received an excellent training session from Bethan Evans Governance Training and Consultancy Ltd, on 15 January this year. We heard not only where we do things 'correctly' at West Lindsey, but also how we as a Committee can strengthen our role as that 'critical friend'. It really was an excellent session, and I would like to again extend my thanks to Bethan. I do hope delivery of that session becomes standard training practice for our Committee.
- 2.4 Moving on to Committee business, this year we have again 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.
- 2.5 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 2024/25 Civic Year. The Operating Methodology is attached at Appendix 2, with further details of the review provided in Section 5 of this report.

- 2.6 As I write this report looking back over the year, it is humbling to see how far the Committee has come in a short space of time, and I look forward to continuing our work together in the coming year.

3 Progress and Delivery

- 3.1 As I mentioned, the Committee has been involved, as always, with the scrutiny of the Progress and Delivery reporting through the two policy committees. Good debate is enjoyed by all, and we are well in the habit of scrutinising the scrutiny, so to speak! I would like to express 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. This is a piece of work that happens every couple of years and is strongly supported by the O&S Committee. I am pleased to report that the amended measure set has progressed through the policy committees and been approved for use from April 2024. No doubt we shall see the benefit of these once the six monthly reporting cycles are underway.
- 3.3 It would be remiss of me not to mention the success of the Performance Improvement Plans, which have been in place now since 2022 and were, in part, the result of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee pushing for increased monitoring of those areas where there were repeated concerns. I must say, the plans are clear, concise and easy to follow, and assist the Committee no end when we are considering whether there is need of a service performance review through Overview and Scrutiny processes.
- 3.4 I am certain the role of Overview and Scrutiny through the Progress and Delivery reporting will continue in the coming year and I look forward to welcoming Darren and Claire to our meetings again.

4 Programme of Outside Agencies and Presentation Items

- 4.1 This year the Committee has continued apace with a list of invited guests and presenters. There has been the attendance by 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 have again welcomed Everyone Active, who show clear signs of extending the community outreach programmes the Council has been so keen to see, and we have also welcomed Rachel Stamp, regarding the successes of the purple-lidded recycling bins across our district and the county. Prior to each presentation, the Committee uses time in the preceding meeting to prepare for attending guests, in order to set questions and for the Committee to understand what we want to gain from each visit. This has proved invaluable, and is a practice that we shall carry forward into the coming year.

- 4.2 There have been three areas of ongoing work which have been presented to the Committee for input or update purposes. Mr Selby, our Director of Commercial and Operational Services, has presented to the Committee on several occasions regarding the progress of the Markets Working Group and also the well-established Flood Risk Management Working Group. I must make mention of the flooding our district has experienced, and I do hope our communities impacted by the flooding earlier this year are on the way to recovering some kind of normality.
- 4.3 The third area of work through Overview and Scrutiny this year, which has been a new one for many of us, was an update on the progress of the Cultural Strategy. We heard from Sally Grindrod-Smith, Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities, providing us with a very thorough understanding of the background and development of the strategy and the potential benefits for the district. The Committee made two recommendations to the Prosperous Communities Committee regarding the continuation of the Cultural Strategy, both of which were accepted at their meeting on 19 March 2024. The Cultural Strategy and Terms of reference for the Leisure, Culture, Events and Tourism Working Group (LCET) were then presented to the Prosperous Communities Committee at their meeting on 23 April 2024, where I am pleased to say both were approved.

5 Operating Methodology

- 5.1 As is usual practice, we gave consideration to the Committee's Operating Methodology at our first meeting of the Civic Year. As a new Committee, with many new Members, this proved to be excellent opportunity to understand the role of the Committee and how the Operating Methodology guides and supports our scrutiny role.
- 5.2 At the end of the previous civic year, Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had suggested amendments to the Operating Methodology as a part of the Annual report and Constitution Review. These amendments were discussed in detail and subsequently agreed by the Committee, with the approved Operating Methodology available here as Appendix 2.
- 5.3 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 March 2024. 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 I have no doubt we will again have a full and varied work plan throughout the 2024/25 Civic Year. We will of course welcome Lincolnshire Police again, and possibly see a return of Everyone Active.
- 6.2 The first meeting of the 2024/25 civic year will spend time considering the work plan for the Committee. Following the agreement of the Operating Methodology, the Committee will be able to review the Forward Plan, as well as raise other areas of work which may be suitable for scrutiny.

7 Concluding Remarks

- 7.1 I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to all Members of the Committee, many of whom have been new not just to the world of scrutiny but also to the Council. We have all come together to understand the scrutiny role and to carry out that role with diligence. Our work plan has been full and varied, and we have had opportunity to learn on the job, so to speak, obviously alongside the excellent training we received.
- 7.2 I would also like to thank our Officers for the support and guidance they have given us throughout the year. Nova Roberts, as our Lead Officer, and Ele Snow as our democratic support, and of course all 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. I am sure the coming year will bring new areas of focus for us, and we look forward to continuing our scrutiny journey.