

Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report

Report of the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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Key Decision? NO

Local Ward Members



1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 To report the work and outcomes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Member Task Groups for the year 2021-2022. All information has been taken from previously approved minutes and decision notices.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the outcomes of the Overview & Scrutiny function for 2021-2022

3. Background

3.1 The Overview & Scrutiny function at Lichfield District Council.

Following a review by a member task group, the overview and scrutiny function was changed from a four committee system to one overarching scrutiny committee and a greater emphasis on the use of member task groups. This was to create greater focus both on matters of importance and making a difference as this is key to Overview and Scrutiny reaching its potential and being of value to the District Council and to local people

The 2021 to 2022 year has been the first of the operation of this new system. This annual report, as required by the Council's Constitution, is to highlight the work and the outcomes of the Committee as well as any Member Task Groups that have or are in operation. The terms of reference for the Committee can be found at Appendix 1. A Toolkit has been developed to help all Members of the Council understand the function with training also provided. Copies of this Toolkit available upon request.

The recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge noted the changes in the O&S function and noted in their feedback that

"The council recently reviewed its arrangements for scrutiny and now has a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee in place. These new scrutiny arrangements are being embedded and this change still needs time to see how it works in practice. The peer team recommend that this is kept under review to ensure scrutiny is as effective as it should be for the council."

Council resolved at their meeting on 20 April 2021 that there be an evaluation of the effectiveness of the new committee structure be undertaken after the next District Council Local Elections in 2023.

ITEMS COVERED BY THE FULL COMMITTEE AND OUTCOME

Scheme of Delegation

At its first meeting in July 2021, the Committee received a draft of a revised Scheme of Delegation and views were given. It was requested that definitions be highlighted if required for example what significant objections actually means when dealing with Planning applications. .It was noted that guidance around Planning decision making was being updated where this may be more appropriate.

Outcome - The Scheme of Delegation was amended and published.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

The Committee has received reports on the MTFS at its September 2021, November 2021 and January 2022 meetings.

The Committee has continuously reviewed the Strategy and given Cabinet views notably on the following areas. The outcome of these individual views are reported below each bullet point

- The level of general reserves there was compared to what was required as it was higher.
Outcome - This was noted by Cabinet and debated at their meeting. Reported that it was to be prepared for the outcome of the funding reform and the uncertainty it could present to the Council.
- That it was right to keep Shopmobility and Burntwood public conveniences remained in the budget.
Outcome - These items have remained in the Strategy agreed.
- It was requested that wording be added to the Corporate Fees and Charges Policy to make clear that it related to revenue or net income or costs and on what basis costs were being done as it could give a different as to whether something was profitable. Similar with the Cost Recovery Pricing Policy and again requested wording be reviewed and made clearer. It was also asked that the costs of applying discounts be made clear.
Outcome - The Strategy was amended to show full cost recovery in line with the legislative framework as well as terms have been updated to income and surplus.
- That a rise in Council Tax should not be considered when the Council has a high level of reserves and residents have been affected financially by Covid. It was noted that there needed to be middle ground and resident needs would be considered however increasing costs to deliver services would be also.
Outcome - This was considered and debated at Full Council. Cabinet view was that a freeze had been considered however in a time of uncertainty did not think this would be the best decision
- That hybrid meeting continuation and enhancement be supported, as budgeted for, if legislation was passed to allow it.
Outcome - This budget has remained in the MTFS
- That changes to Car Parking proposals be deferred to allow night time economic recovery due to Covid and Omicron.
Outcome - There has been a deferral in proposals
- That when looking ahead to the 25 projections on both revenue and capital, there is no mention of any funding set aside for either the Burntwood Town Deal or the emerging Staffordshire County Deal.
Outcome - Noted there wasn't anything firm that could be added at this stage.
- That ways of engaging for the Budget Consultation should be explored.
Outcome - It was reported that this was already being undertaken including the use of third party platform.

A Better Council

The Committee received a presentation on the Be A Better Council (BABC) programme including the associated Themes and intended outcomes. There were views given on the need for some milestones or gateways to be included to aid success measuring. Members felt that data gathering and data use to inform the delivery of services was key and requested that proposals on how this would be done be brought forward to the Committee.

Outcome – That further information on data use will be considered further as well as briefing papers giving updates provided.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Strategic Allocation Funds Assessment

At their January 2022 meeting, the Committee were asked to give views on whether the current guidance and criteria used by the Strategic Infrastructure Group (SIG) when determining applications should be amended especially as there had been a significant oversubscription against accrued monies available on the most recent bidding round. The Committee gave the following views

- That retrospective applications should be excluded as the projects have been delivered. It was suggested that an exceptional circumstance option be considered.
- That areas that do not have a neighbourhood plan should still be considered. It was noted that there could be instances that schemes are not in neighbourhood plans as they are referred to in other areas like the district wide Local Plan and therefore should still be deemed valid. It was also noted that those areas with neighbourhood plans already benefited from up to 25% of CIL regardless.
- That projects should be “shovel ready” to ensure delivery and not sit in abeyance whilst other funding was being sourced. However it was noted that there could be instances that securing CIL could open up other funding opportunities making schemes more viable. A “in exceptional circumstances” option could be considered. It was highlighted that the four external bids were not “shovel ready” and that may be due to their smaller organisational nature. It was felt that it should not become a situation where monies are only spent in-house/other authorities.
- That the proposed projects recommended to be allocated CIL be accepted as agreeable by the Committee.
- That any remaining unallocated monies be retained for future bids.
- That areas that are not putting applications in, be encouraged to do so.

Outcome – The criteria was amended to include the above views.

Disabled Grants Facilities

At their January 2022 meeting, the Committee considered delivery options for Disabled Grants Facilities. This item was held in private as it included confidential information.

Outcome – The decision made by Cabinet were in line with the views given by the Committee.

Corporate Peer Challenge - Update

The Committee received a verbal report on outcomes of the Corporate Peer Challenge and resulting Action Plan. An update on what areas of the Action Plan had already been achieved was also received. Views were given that included that a report should come back to Overview & Scrutiny at the end of May to consider what actions had not been achieved and why. This would also coincide with the review date set with the Peer Challenge Group along with interim progress briefing papers

Outcome – that an update report be on the next Work Programme for its first meeting after the review of the Peer Challenge Group

Health Matters

The Chair is also a co-opted Member of Staffordshire Council Council's Health and Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The responsibility for the scrutiny of health matters lies with the County Council however there is a mechanism through these co-optees to raise local issues.

Over the year, the Chair has received the following comments that have been passed to SCC.

- The lack of public transport to Derby hospital especially to attend appointments
- Issues being experienced around where Covid-19 booster jabs were available. It was noted that appointments booked via GPs were offered at the Samuel Johnson hospital however those booked without GP referral eg via online, were sent outside of the district including Tamworth and Norton Canes and this was very difficult for some residents. The Cabinet Member for Community Engagement requested details of these instances so he could raise the issue directly
- Concerns that there were difficulties getting the second dose jab for the Moderna vaccine.
- Ambulance long waiting times as Members had been contacted regarding these and it was asked to have it raised where they were positioned when waiting for calls.

3.3 CALL IN

The Committee can exercise the right to call in, for reconsideration, key decisions made but not yet implemented by the Cabinet. The full Call In process can be found in the Council's Constitution.

There have been no Call In requests made in the year 2021-2022

3.4 MEMBER TASK GROUPS

There have been six Member Task Groups in operation throughout the 2021-2022 year. The below give further detail on each.

New Leisure Centre

Chaired by Cllr Baker, this Task Group was created in April 2020 but due to the nature of the project is still meeting. They have met twice in the 2021-2022 year. The outcomes of their work has included the review of all responses received on the S122 Consultation. A review of all possible sites and the recommendation to Cabinet of appropriation of the Stychbrook Park. A continuous review of possible funding opportunities as well as general oversight of the project.

Lichfield City Masterplan

Chaired by Cllr Ball, this Task Group was created in May 2021 and has met a total of six times so far. The outcomes of this group to date is to consider the Car Parking Strategy, Public Realm Strategy and BRS Delivery Strategy which have all subsequently been approved by Cabinet.

Climate Emergency

Chaired by Cllr Norman this group has met twice so far. The group has agreed the scope of their work and invited and heard from external parties as witnesses. They have reviewed the current Organisational Carbon Reduction Plan and investigated other Authorities Action Plans and associated webpages resulting in feedback to Officers. There will be future meetings where the Cabinet Member will be invited.

Dual Waste Recycling

Chaired by Cllr Matthews, this group to date has met once to consider the communication strategy planned for the roll out of the dual recycling system. They reviewed leaflets and the utilisation of social media and were largely supportive of the plan but reserved the right for a follow up meeting if deemed necessary.

Councillor Community Fund

Membership of this task group has now been established and the first meeting was scheduled for the 11th May. It had been requested that the group consider the processes and any risks of the current scheme.

Local Council Tax Support Scheme

Requested by the Cabinet Member to review scheme and consider options to ensure the maximum help can be provided to local residents. Membership has now been established and a date for the first meeting is currently being sought.

Alternative Options	Overview & Scrutiny is required to hold the Executive to account and can help shape policy, contribute towards the continuous improvement of Council services and review or investigate matters of particular concern either within the District Council or within the Community. The Council could choose to govern in a different manner from the current executive arrangements. .
Consultation	None
Financial Implications	None arising from this report.
Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	The Scrutiny function reviews and helps progress the delivery of the Strategic Plan through feeding views into matter pre-decision.
Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	The Committee consider these matters when deliberating reports and items
Crime & Safety Issues	1. Insert whether the recommendation(s) will impact (positively or negatively) on our duty to prevent crime and disorder within the District (Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, 1988).
Environmental Impact	1. These are considered via individual items however the Committee are still conscious of reducing any impact. Task Groups are held virtually where possible to reduce the usage of energy at the Council House as well as the need to travel. Printing of papers is only permitted in exceptional circumstances.
GDPR/Privacy Impact Assessment	None undertaken

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	Risk Description	How We Manage It	Severity of Risk (RYG)
A	No O&S Function leading to no democratic check and balance for the decision making body.	Ensure there is a functioning O&S Committee and the importance of its function made clear through the Constitution.	State if risk is Red (severe), Yellow (material) or Green (tolerable) as determined by the Likelihood and Impact Assessment.
B			
C			
D			
E			

Background documents

Meeting minutes
O&S Toolkit

Relevant web links

www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/council