

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2023

PRESENT:

Councillors Norman (Chair), Leung (Vice-Chair), Ball, Booker, Ho, Hill, Trent, Whitehouse, Woodward and B Yeates

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Holland, Ray and Robertson.

The Chair thanked the previous chair of the Committee, Councillor M. Wilcox for his work in the role over the past year.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

The Chair reminded the Committee that Overview & Scrutiny should not be subject to party whips. It was noted that the Committee should consider items for the whole district.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference as stated in the Council's Constitution were considered by the Committee. Members were content with the terms and noted them. It was agreed that the Terms of Reference would be helpful to refer to at the forthcoming review of the Overview & Scrutiny function at the Council following the change to a one Committee system.

5 TRAINING FOR MEMBERS

The Chair introduced the Committee to the Overview & Scrutiny Toolkit which outlined the objectives and process to carry out the O&S function at Lichfield District Council.

There was focus discussion on how all Members of the Council could request a subject matter be considered and investigated by the Committee. It was noted that once a request was received, the Chair and Vice Chair would consider it against criteria including link to the Council's Strategic Plan and impact the subject has on the District.

There was suggestion and it was agreed to look at training for Committee Members on areas such as questioning skills.

RESOLVED: That training providers for Overview & Scrutiny skills be sourced.

6 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee discussed the work programme. It was reported that it currently showed items carried over from the previous Council term or already known to be required, for example the Medium Term Financial Strategy, had been listed and Officers were awaiting the Committee's views and instructions to add more.

The Committee heard a request from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Commissioning to have a special meeting in December to help bring forward items in the forthcoming budget. It was agreed that this worked well in the previous year and would aid a more consensual and transparent approach to setting the budget and ensure equality of funding across the District. It was noted that a date had been set aside however it was noted that it clashed with a City Council meeting and so it was agreed for Officers to find a new date to be circulated to Members.

When asked, it was confirmed that a review of the Civic function and matrix had been requested as the type events attended by the Chair of Council had changed since Covid but also there had been a request by the Independent Remuneration Panel for the Council to review the expenses scheme, It was agreed that this had to be dealt with, though it was not considered a priority, that Overview and Scrutiny was the right place and would not require a lengthy report at a future meeting.

Task Groups were discussed and it was agreed that there will be notes of meetings due at every O&S Committee meeting. It was also reported that any recommendation from a task group would be presented to the full Committee for consideration. It was noted that task groups should also aim to be as transparent in their work as possible and when confidential matters are required to be discussed, the usual process for this is followed. It was agreed to review all current task groups to ensure their remit and membership is still relevant.

It was requested by the Committee that the following items be added.

- City Centre Pedestrianisation Trial
- Empty Homes Policy
- Funding for Infrastructure in Burntwood and rural areas
- Update on the Cinema project
- Review of the Overview & Scrutiny function at the Council

It was noted that the Forward Plan was a guide to help Committee Members formulate the work programme. It was reported however that many items on the Forward Plan were the decisions due at the end of the process as a sign off and so the O&S Committee to look at everything on the Forward Plan would not be an efficient use of their time. It was requested by the Leader of the Council for the Committee to notify Cabinet of what they wish to investigate or be part of the policy's development.

RESOLVED: That the process of setting the work programme be noted and the agreed items be added.

7 PLANNING PROTOCOL

This item was deferred to the 14th of September meeting which will have given new members of the Planning Committee time to be able express a considered view of any changes proposed.

(The Meeting closed at 7.18 pm)

CHAIRMAN