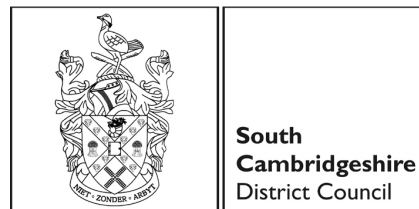


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21 March 2012

To: Chairman – Councillor James Hockney  
Vice-Chairman – Councillor Bridget Smith  
Members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee – Councillors Richard Barrett,  
Alison Elcox, Jose Hales, Roger Hall, Tumi Hawkins, Liz Heazell, Mike Mason,  
Ted Ridgway Watt, Bunty Waters and David Whiteman-Downes

Quorum: 6

**There is a pre-meeting session at 1.15pm for members of the Committee only, to plan their lines of enquiry.**

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**, which will be held in the **SWANSLEY ROOM, GROUND FLOOR** on **THURSDAY, 29 MARCH 2012** at **2.00 p.m.**

Members are respectfully reminded that when substituting on committees, subcommittees, and outside or joint bodies, Democratic Services must be advised of the substitution *in advance of* the meeting. It is not possible to accept a substitute once the meeting has started. Council Standing Order 4.3 refers.

Yours faithfully  
**JEAN HUNTER**  
Chief Executive

**The Council is committed to improving, for all members of the community, access to its agendas and minutes. We try to take all circumstances into account but, if you have any specific needs, please let us know, and we will do what we can to help you.**

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## AGENDA

## PAGES

### PROCEDURAL ITEMS

- 1. Apologies**  
To receive apologies for absence from committee members.
- 2. Declarations of Interest**  
Please note that the Constitution requires that when considering any decision in respect of which a member of the Committee is subject to a party whip, the member must declare the existence of the whip. Under the Code of Conduct, any Councillor who has a personal or prejudicial

interest should declare this at the meeting.

**3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

To authorise the Chairman to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2012 as a correct record. These minutes can be accessed online:

<http://scambsm.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=417&MId=5458&Ver=4>

**4. Public Questions**

**5. Localism**

The Leader of the Council has been invited to discuss the opportunities that localism may present for South Cambridgeshire.

**6. Corporate Communications: Report of the Task and Finish Group**

**1 - 8**

**7. Annual Scrutiny & Overview Report**

**9 - 28**

The Committee is asked to agree the report, subject to amendments made by the Chairman, following discussions at the meeting

**8. Monitoring the Executive**

Scrutiny monitors are invited to inform the Committee regarding Portfolio Holder meetings attended and specifically report on:

- Issues challenged and the result
- Issues where the Committee could add further value

<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Dates of meetings</b>	<b>Monitor(s)</b>
Environmental Services	14 February	Jose Hales Mike Mason
Finance & Staffing	21 February & 20 March	Roger Hall Tumi Hawkins
Housing	15 February & 5 March	Liz Hezell Jose Hales Bunty Waters
Leader	16 March	James Hockney
Northstowe & New Communities	6 March 2012	Alison Elcox Mike Mason
Planning & Economic Development	24 February	Jose Hales Ted Ridgway Watt Bridget Smith
Policy and Performance	9 February	Roger Hall Bridget Smith

**9. Scrutiny Work Programme**

**29 - 32**

**10. To Note the Dates of Future Meetings**

The following meeting dates have been agreed for 2012/13:

**2012: 5 July 7pm, 6 September 7pm, 1 November(Finance Workshop) & 5 November 2pm**  
**2013: 10 January 2pm, 11 February (Finance Workshop), 14 February 2pm, 21 March 2pm & 23 April 7pm**

### **Exclusion of Press and Public**

The law allows Councils to consider a limited range of issues in private session without members of the Press and public being present. Typically, such issues relate to personal details, financial and business affairs, legal privilege and so on. In every case, the public interest in excluding the Press and Public from the meeting room must outweigh the public interest in having the information disclosed to them. The following statement will be proposed, seconded and voted upon.

"I propose that the Press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item number(s) ..... in accordance with Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that, if present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) ..... of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act."

If exempt (confidential) information has been provided as part of the agenda, the Press and public will not be able to view it. There will be an explanation on the website however as to why the information is exempt.

### **OUR VISION**

- We will make South Cambridgeshire a safe and healthy place where residents are proud to live and where there will be opportunities for employment, enterprise and world-leading innovation.
- We will be a listening Council, providing a voice for rural life and first-class services accessible to all.

### **OUR VALUES**

We will demonstrate our corporate values in all our actions. These are:

- Trust
- Mutual respect
- A commitment to improving services
- Customer service

## **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR VISITORS TO SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE HALL**

While the District Council endeavours to ensure that visitors come to no harm when visiting South Cambridgeshire Hall, those visitors also have a responsibility to make sure that they do not risk their own or others' safety.

### **Security**

Members of the public attending meetings in non-public areas of the Council offices must report to Reception, sign in, and at all times wear the Visitor badges issued. Before leaving the building, such visitors must sign out and return their Visitor badges to Reception.

### **Emergency and Evacuation**

In the event of a fire, a continuous alarm will sound. Evacuate the building using the nearest escape route; from the Council Chamber or Mezzanine viewing gallery this would be via the staircase just outside the door. Go to the assembly point at the far side of the staff car park.

- **Do not** use the lifts to exit the building. If you are unable to negotiate stairs by yourself, the emergency staircase landings are provided with fire refuge areas, which afford protection for a minimum of 1.5 hours. Press the alarm button and wait for assistance from the Council fire wardens or the fire brigade.
- **Do not** re-enter the building until the officer in charge or the fire brigade confirms that it is safe to do so.

### **First Aid**

If someone feels unwell or needs first aid, please alert a member of staff.

### **Access for People with Disabilities**

The Council is committed to improving, for all members of the community, access to its agendas and minutes. We try to take all circumstances into account but, if you have any specific needs, please let us know, and we will do what we can to help you. All meeting rooms are accessible to wheelchair users. There are disabled toilet facilities on each floor of the building. Infra-red hearing assistance systems are available in the Council Chamber and viewing gallery. To use these, you must sit in sight of the infra-red transmitter and wear a 'neck loop', which can be used with a hearing aid switched to the 'T' position. If your hearing aid does not have the 'T' position facility then earphones are also available and can be used independently. You can obtain both neck loops and earphones from Reception.

### **Toilets**

Public toilets are available on each floor of the building next to the lifts.

### **Recording of Business and Use of Mobile Phones**

The Council is committed to openness and transparency. Until such time as the Council's Constitution is updated to allow public recording of business, the Council and all its committees, sub-committees or any other sub-group of the Council or the Executive will have the ability to formally suspend Standing Order 21.4 (prohibition of recording of business) for the duration of that meeting to enable the recording of business, including any audio / visual or photographic recording in any format or use of social media to bring Council issues to a wider audience. To minimise disturbance to others attending the meeting, all attendees and visitors are asked to make sure that their phones and other mobile devices are set on silent / vibrate mode during meetings.

### **Banners, Placards and similar items**

No member of the public shall be allowed to bring into or display at any Council meeting any banner, placard, poster or other similar item. The Chairman may require any such item to be removed.

### **Disturbance by Public**

If a member of the public interrupts proceedings, the Chairman will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chairman will order their removal from the meeting room. If there is a general disturbance in any part of the meeting room open to the public, the Chairman may call for that part to be cleared.

### **Smoking**

Since 1 July 2008, the Council has operated a new Smoke Free Policy. Visitors are not allowed to smoke at any time within the Council offices, or in the car park or other grounds forming part of those offices.

### **Food and Drink**

Vending machines and a water dispenser are available on the ground floor near the lifts at the front of the building. Visitors are not allowed to bring food or drink into the meeting room.

**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Scrutiny and Overview Committee 29 March 2012  
**AUTHOR:** Cllr James Hockney, Chairman of the Task & Finish Group  
**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Tom Bygott, Policy and Performance

---

**SCRUTINY REVIEW – CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS****Purpose**

1. To report on the work of the task & finish group looking at the Council's corporate communications and enable the committee to make recommendations to the portfolio holder.

**Options**

2. The Committee could endorse, amend or reject each of the recommendations in this report before agreeing to forward it to the Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder.

**Background**

3. At the start of 2011/12 the committee expressed an interest in reviewing communication and community engagement, once a new communications manager was in post.
4. At the meeting of 3 February the committee heard that the communications team would welcome scrutiny input on the development of a new corporate communications strategy. This needed to be updated to reflect the latest media channels available, and the growing need for transparency and effective engagement.
5. A cross-party task and finish group was set up, with a scope as set out at Appendix A and a one-day review was arranged for 1 March 2012.
6. The group was comprised of Cllrs Hall, Heazell, Hockney (chair), Murfitt, B Smith and Waters. The portfolio holder, Cllr Bygott, was also closely involved at each stage and attended the session on 1 March.

**Gathering evidence**

7. In preparation for the review, the task and finish group read the Council's 2011/12 communications strategy and strategies from three other councils: Redditch, Horsham and Portsmouth. The objective was to consider what a strategy should cover, and how it should be presented.
8. The group also re-read some of the evidence that had been used during last year's customer contact review: staff social media survey; staff focus group findings; and South Cambs magazine readers' survey. These showed that a majority of staff were becoming active on social media websites and thought that the Council should too. Readers of the council's magazine, when asked how they would prefer to hear Council news, scored the magazine highly, perhaps unsurprisingly. They also valued the Council's website, newspapers and radio but there appeared to be little appetite for social media amongst the magazine readers.

9. The group met the part time communications manager for East Cambridgeshire District Council, Tony Taylorson, who also works for the county council. He spoke about what works well at both councils, and key aspects of the role:
  - establish routes for effective 2-way communication
  - build trust and understanding, internally and externally
  - protect and manage the Council's reputation and 'brand'
  - stay abreast of council activities, news and performance
  - monitor residents' views through survey results and staff, including the call centre
  - provide advice on service areas' communications campaigns
10. Tony agreed with having communications champions in each service area but cautioned that they needed natural aptitude as well as training. Also, additional communication responsibilities may mean re-prioritising or re-assigning some aspects of their main role.
11. He agreed that there was a key role for Members to play in communication. They were the eyes and ears of the organisation, and had an advocacy role that depended on being kept well informed. He recommended regular training in media skills.
12. The task and finish group established that SCDC already uses all of the main internal and external communication routes in use at ECDC and the county council.

### **Meeting SCDC officers**

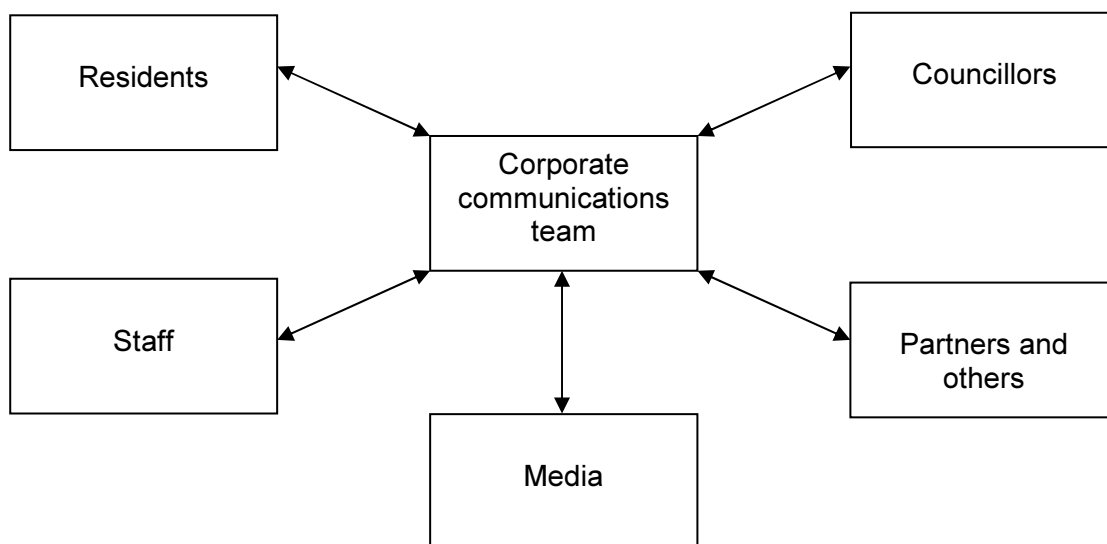
13. The task and finish group met three service-based officers whose work was heavily focused on communication with residents, partners and local businesses: a tenant involvement officer, a team leader for new communities and economic development, and a manager from environmental services who described his role as the service area's 'communications champion'. The task and finish group agreed that every service area needed such a communications champion, especially the new call centre team as they would be able to highlight callers' priority issues.
14. These three officers spoke of communications as a two-way process; the giving out and receiving of information. All spoke of written, online and face-to-face contact. Departmental team meetings regularly identified topics for corporate communication. However they were aware that some colleagues did not view corporate communications as a corporate responsibility in which they had a vital part to play.
15. The communications manager spoke about the need to manage outgoing messages. His team's role was to manage the Council's reputation and 'brand'. His brief was to focus on publishing Council news, and dealing with the increased media interest that this generated. Outcomes might include increased inward investment for the District.
16. This approach had led to a threefold increase in media traffic. However, there were still parts of the council not yet supplying timely information and so he intended to establish a forward plan of activities which would help the team to manage the flow of communication.

**Recommendation 1:** to appoint communications champions in each service area, including the new contact team, to liaise with the communications team, helping to maintain a forward programme of newsworthy events, a customer-focused website and social media presence, and a two-way flow of communication with colleagues, councilors, residents, partners and others.

**Two-way communications**

- 17. Communication is conversation. The task and finish group found many excellent examples of outgoing communication but was keen to explore the routes for inward communication.
- 18. The group recognised that the South Cambs magazine is well regarded and provides a useful route for publicising Council news and information. However, it was felt that more use could be made of it as a means of gathering feedback, for example through pull-out surveys.
- 19. The volume of news releases was felt to be high, and was achieving regular coverage in the press, TV and radio. These activities are vital but by their nature are one-way. It would be possible to gauge the effect of this output by surveying residents' satisfaction with the Council.
- 20. There was evidence that the Housing and New Communities teams provided a wide range of 'listening opportunities' for tenants, residents, parish councils, businesses and other partners: these included many off-site, face-to-face and informal events as well as surveys and on-line forums. It was unclear how this was fed back to the communications team but any possible gap could be addressed via the champions recommended above.
- 21. It was also felt that once the call centre was brought in-house, the communications team would have easy and timely access to residents' views and concerns.

**Recommendation 2:** the corporate communications strategy to address communication as a two-way process which may be expressed by the following diagram:



**Internal communications**

- 22. There was a concern that combining internal and external communications into one strategy had allowed the internal element to be overshadowed. Some councils produce separate strategies and there may be a case for doing so at SCDC. It was agreed that this decision should be left to the communications team.
- 23. Nevertheless, the task and finish group found that there was an excellent range of internal channels for communication output including: Insite, corporate brief, SCene, team meetings and posters. The group also discussed new ideas such as screens

around the council offices to display internal messages, and a regular newsletter from the Leader.

24. Again there was a need to view communication as a 2-way process.

**Recommendation 3:** to express the Council's strategy for internal communication in plain language, with an action plan to be regularly monitored

### **Social media**

25. The task and finish group agreed that social media should not be viewed as a communication panacea, but as a complementary tool that could reach different audiences. Surveys had shown that residents preferred to find out about the Council via the magazine, leaflets and the website, although a growing number were using social media.
26. The communications team had not been sufficiently resourced to follow up the staff survey on social media, which had identified almost 30 staff who would like to be more involved.
27. The group discussed how to target communication via social media; for example whether each service area should have its own Facebook page. From their own experience, they preferred departmentalised information rather than having to trawl through everything from an organisation to find posts on their area of interest. They felt that service areas should be trusted to take responsibility for social media as they were for all other forms of communication.
28. However, the communications manager cautioned that social media demanded constant monitoring and rapid, accurate responses: and that output was published world-wide. The Council currently had over 800 followers on Twitter which was generating a workload that the communications team found hard to resource. Nevertheless he felt that this should continue to be managed by the communications team.
29. The manager also advised that retaining a corporate approach safeguarded the Council's 'brand'. He suggested that instead, there could be social media contacts in each service area who could supply responses to service-related comments and queries on the corporate social media site(s).
30. The group agreed that the Council's approach to social media, as to all aspects of communication, should be based on users' needs which should be identified through broad consultation, rather than on management objectives.

### **The role of Councillors**

31. The task and finish group recognised the role of councillors as ambassadors and advocates. As in the review of Learning from Feedback, they identified the need for councillors and officers to maintain a 2-way dialogue; successful advocacy was based on being kept fully informed. There was also a need for regular media skills training for councillors; sessions would ideally be held monthly and in small groups.
32. The group also identified other possible roles for members: in the news release process, identifying newsworthy stories, test-reading leaflets and magazines, and continuing to serve on the magazine board.

**Recommendation 4:** to provide regular training for members and officers in media skills, presentation skills and communications



## Resources

33. The communications team had recently returned to its full complement of two full-time-equivalent posts following a period of staff changes and maternity leave. It was therefore hard to gauge but the task and finish group wondered whether more staff were needed. Given the increasing demands of social media and the Council's corporate aim to listen to and engage with residents, parishes and businesses, the group suggested a benchmarking exercise to establish whether the team was adequately resourced.

**Recommendation 5:** to carry out a benchmarking exercise on the resources allocated to corporate communications; this to include councils where social media is adequately resourced.

## Drafting a communications strategy

34. The task and finish group heard that there had not been time to monitor the existing communications strategy nor begin to develop a new one. The group was anxious not to further burden this small team but felt that a strategy and action plan would be all the more necessary, to protect strategic objectives from being overwhelmed by the day-to-day.
35. Based on examples of good practice, the task and finish group recommended that the next corporate communications strategy should be written in plain language, and in a short leaflet format so that it would be easily read and referred to rather than filed away.
36. The group felt that communication should be defined as a 2-way dialogue, rather than the issuing of information; and that all strategies and plans - corporate and project-specific - should be designed from the perspective of the customer, or other end user; rather than to meet internal management objectives.
37. The group also felt that there should be an off-the-shelf strategy for easy use during an unexpected episode of media interest, and this could be informed by lessons learned during the Hauxton project for example.

**Recommendation 6:** to develop a corporate communications strategy in plain language, and in a short leaflet format, setting out a clear aim for the document and supported by a separate action plan to be regularly monitored

**Recommendation 7:** all elements of the corporate communication strategy to be designed from the perspective of the customer, or other end user as established through broad consultation

**Recommendation 8:** to develop an off-the-shelf strategy for use during an unexpected episode of media interest, and this to be informed by lessons learned from previous episodes.

## Community engagement

38. Corporate communication contributes to community engagement. The scrutiny committee may therefore wish to return to the broader issue of engagement during 2012/13.

39. **Implications**

Financial	Actions recommended in this report are expected to be achieved within existing resources. However, the recommended benchmarking exercise might identify that more resources would be needed
Legal	None
Staffing/ capacity	As set out in the report
Risk Management	If recommendations in this report are not implemented, there is a risk that opportunities for service improvements may be missed.
Equal Impact Assessment completed	An EqlA was completed in 2011 for social media. All impacts were identified as neutral, except one positive impact for age (young people) EqlAs will be needed for the communications strategies recommended in this report.
Involving young people	The task and finish group would recommend that officers consult with young people when progressing recommendations 6 and 7.
Climate Change	None

**Consultation**

- 40. The portfolio holder for policy and performance was involved at all stages of this review. Views were also provided by an external communications manager, SCDC's communications team, and officers as listed in the report.
- 41. Consultation with staff and magazine readers is also detailed in the report.

**Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives**

- 42. Improvements to the Council's corporate communications will help to meet the Council's commitment to listen and engage with residents.

**Options**

- 43. The Committee may endorse, amend or reject each of the recommendations before agreeing to forward them to the Portfolio Holder.

Contact Officer: Jackie Sayers, Scrutiny Development Officer Tel: (01954) 713451

Contact Member: Cllr James Hockney, Chairman of the task and finish group

## SCRUTINY REVIEW - SCOPING DOCUMENT

<b>Review name</b>	<b>Communications across SCDC</b>
Terms of reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide evidence based recommendations informing the development of a corporate communications strategy</li> </ul>
Summary of review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine SCDC's current communication strategy</li> <li>Identify headline sections for the new strategy</li> <li>For a selection of these categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine current practice at SCDC</li> <li>Help develop plans to improve communications across the organisation and in turn to our residents</li> <li>Examine channels currently used and those needed in future</li> <li>Discuss and develop plans to improve member communications</li> <li>Identify solutions to potential barriers</li> </ul> </li> <li>Make recommendations to the PFH</li> </ul>
Reason for review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current strategy has expired</li> <li>Changes to available media (e.g. social media)</li> <li>Some (new) managers and members unaware of comms as a council-wide responsibility</li> </ul>
Potential outcome/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Framework for 2012/16 Communications Strategy</li> <li>Increased awareness of comms as a council-wide responsibility</li> <li>Improved comms/ PR benefiting all stakeholders</li> </ul>
Relevant corporate and/or community strategy/ies	Being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all
Potential witnesses	Managers, members, comms officers (SCDC's and others')
Existing data	Staff poll re social media Scrutiny review of Customer Contact service Magazine readers' survey
Portfolio holder	Cllr Tom Bygott
Members of the t&f group	Cllrs Hall, Heazell, Hockney, Murfitt, B Smith and Waters
Key stakeholders	Residents, staff, members and partners
Officer involvement	Lead officer: Gareth Bell: Scrutiny Officer: Jackie Sayers Gill Anderton, Anna Efford, Iain Green, Richard Hales
Timing	1 March '12 11am to 3pm
Report dates	SMT; Scrutiny 29 March; Cabinet 12 April

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South Cambridgeshire District Council

Draft to Scrutiny and  
Overview meeting  
of 29 March 2012

**Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee  
Annual Report 2011/12**



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## CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD



Councillor James Hockney  
Chairman  
Scrutiny and Overview Committee



Councillor Bridget Smith  
Vice-Chairman  
Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Welcome to our annual report and I hope you will enjoy reading about the many projects we have been involved in during 2011/12 and our aims for 2012/13, as we strive to help safeguard and improve the services provided for residents of South Cambridgeshire, whether or not they are provided by the District Council.

Two of our most significant projects were carried forward from last year, looking at planning services and customer contact services. Both projects are already making a difference. The customer contact review recommended that the contact centre service should be brought back in-house, saving the Council £250,000 and achieving a more flexible service. Plans are now underway for this to happen by December 2012. That review also provided evidence that helped the council to obtain customer service excellence accreditation in June 2011.

The review of planning services led to improvements to the new online system and the development control service. It also triggered an officer review of the enforcement service.

We completed another large project during the year, regarding the sheltered housing support service. The service needed to be redesigned in view of externally imposed funding changes and our concern was to preserve the quality of the service for those who needed it most.

A one-day review looking at learning from customers' feedback is already leading to improvements in the ways which residents can provide feedback, and the Council's ability to learn from it and make service improvements. Another one-day review helped to develop a new corporate communications strategy, aiming to improve the Council's two-way dialogue with staff, councillors, partners and local people.

At our regular committee meetings we continued to provide robust scrutiny and challenge on issues such as community safety, community transport, council finances, economic development, localism and recycling. We also continued to send monitors to portfolio holders' meetings to provide timely scrutiny and identify ways in which we could contribute further as a committee.

I want to sincerely thank all the councillors who have worked so hard on the scrutiny activities described in this report. My thanks also to the scrutiny officer and indeed the many officers throughout the Council who have helped us this year to make well-informed, evidence-based recommendations that will benefit everyone in the District.

Cllr James Hockney  
Chairman of Scrutiny and Overview Committee



## **What is Scrutiny?**

The aim of a scrutiny committee is to provide an open and transparent forum in which to examine whether policies and services are meeting the needs of local people. The committee cannot make decisions or policies, but it has the power of influence; it can make evidence-based recommendations that are informed by stakeholder and public opinion, performance comparisons, best practice and expert advice. It can be described as a 'critical friend'.

The committee can also challenge Cabinet decisions. The Chairman of the committee or any five councillors can, in certain circumstances, 'call-in' a decision which has been made but not yet implemented. The Committee can then interview the relevant Cabinet member or officers, examine the evidence and suggest improvements to the decision, or refer it to the full Council.

## **Complementing the work of the Council**

Effective scrutiny provides an additional, independent resource for reviewing council decisions and policies without being divisive or confrontational. Scrutiny councillors are in a unique position to influence policy, contribute to decisions and champion local issues of concern.

When working well, overview and scrutiny can help to

- raise the quality of local debate
- get to the heart of issues
- develop new ideas
- engage and provide a voice for service users
- improve decision-making
- strengthen accountability
- contribute to policy development
- monitor and improve services

## **Scrutiny at South Cambridgeshire District Council**

South Cambridgeshire District Council has one scrutiny committee, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, which has twelve members drawn from the political groups in the same proportion as they are represented on the Council as a whole.

Scrutiny is also delivered by members of the committee who act as scrutiny monitors at Portfolio Holders' decision-making meetings which are held in public. Here scrutiny members develop greater knowledge in an area of the Council's work and therefore offer well-informed and timely challenge and influence.

## **How does the committee decide what to scrutinise?**

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee sets its own work programme and the topic suggestions come from many sources:

- Residents' surveys
- Cabinet Members' forward plans
- Customer Complaints system\*
- Councillors
- Local petitions

- Partner organisations
- Officers
- Residents\*
- Portfolio monitors
- The Council's Forward Plan of key decisions

\* The Committee does not scrutinise individual complaints as there are other ways to resolve these; but it would consider any underlying trend or policy where there might be a number of similar cases.

Programme planning takes place at the start of the civic year although additional topics can also be added during the year as they arise. These will be a mixture of one-off topics and some more in-depth reviews.

When selecting topics for scrutiny, the key question to ask is whether any scrutiny input would add value or make a difference. Then councillors use a set of criteria to help decide which topics to pursue:

1. **Public Interest:** the concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen
2. **Ability to change:** priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence
3. **Performance:** priority should be given to the areas of poor performance
4. **Extent:** priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or large parts of the District
5. **Replication:** work programmes must avoid duplication or wasted effort
6. **Strategic priorities:** scrutiny work should relate to the Council's priorities and vision.

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACHIEVEMENTS 2011/12

### 1. Scrutiny and Overview Committee Members

Chairman: Councillor James Hockney  
Vice-Chairman: Councillor Bridget Smith

Councillors:

Cllr Richard Barrett (from November 2011)  
Cllr Alison Elcox (from September 2011)  
Cllr Jose Hales  
Cllr Roger Hall  
Cllr Tumi Hawkins  
Cllr Liz Heazell  
Cllr Clayton Hudson (until November 2011)  
Cllr Mervyn Loynes (until September 2011)  
Cllr Mike Mason  
Cllr Ted Ridgeway Watt  
Cllr Bunty Waters  
Cllr David Whiteman-Downes

The following councillors were available as substitutes during the year:

Cllr Val Barrett  
Cllr John Batchelor  
Cllr Lynda Harford  
Cllr Sally Hatton  
Cllr Charlie Nightingale  
Cllr Deborah Roberts  
Cllr Ben Shelton  
Cllr Edd Stonham

The following additional councillors joined task and finish group projects:

Cllr Nigel Cathcart  
Cllr Cicely Murfitt

### 2. Task and Finish Group Reviews

- 2.1 Some of our most useful work has been achieved away from the main committee, in small task and finish groups. Perhaps this is because the more informal approach and reduced time pressure allow us to really get to the facts. Five task and finish reviews were completed in 2011/12.

#### Customer Contact

- 2.2 In June 2011 we finished a review of customer contact services. This looked at where and how best to provide contact services following the expiry of the nine-year call-centre contract with Cambridgeshire County Council in December 2012.
- 2.3 Working alongside an officer-led project team we visited other councils; surveyed residents, staff and partners; and researched new methods and technologies.
- 2.4 Our research showed that people increasingly wanted to shift from telephones and correspondence to emails, webchat, smartphone apps, texting and online self-service. And recent developments in technology were making this increasingly cost efficient.

- 2.5 While the existing contact centre was achieving high customer satisfaction and comparatively good value for money, it was not planning to upgrade its technology.
- 2.6 Visiting other councils, we saw that on-site call-handlers integrated better with the back-office. They also had the opportunity to combine with reception services and even create a pool of bank staff who could reduce the council's use of agency workers.
- 2.7 Our recommendation, accepted by the Cabinet, was to bring the customer contact service in-house and on-site, saving the Council around £250,000 per year and providing customers with the more modern and flexible service that they wanted.
- 2.8 The task and finish group made other recommendations that have also now been implemented: improving the reception area; training staff and councillors in customer care; and considering inclusion of the post service team within the new service area.

Other achievements during the review

- 2.9 During the review the task and finish group shared evidence with the Cabinet to support closing the contact centre on Saturday afternoons; and this took effect in June 2011.
- 2.10 Also, feedback from residents and partners informed the council's Customer Service Excellence project and its work on setting performance standards. The Council gained Customer Service Excellence accreditation in the summer of 2011.

**Planning Services**

- 2.11 A second review completed in June 2011 looked at the Council's Planning service from the customer's perspective. Again, taking this customer-focused approach contributed evidence towards the council's Customer Service Excellence accreditation.
- 2.12 The scrutiny committee had found that the planning department's previously exemplary service standards had suffered during the introduction of a new IT system, and staff reorganisation. Customer satisfaction was causing concern.
- 2.13 A task and finish group met and surveyed parish councils, planning agents, district councillors, staff and planning applicants.
- 2.14 The recommendations from this group were accepted by the Cabinet in July 2011 and added to an ongoing improvement plan already developed for this service area. They included the need for more systematic and efficient communication, which included more opportunities for two-way dialogue that could inform service improvements.
- 2.15 The group found that the historic buildings service needed to work more seamlessly with other teams. They needed to take a more flexible approach that was more proportionate to the size and significance of applications.

- 2.16 Other recommendations addressed the need for strong leadership, performance management and training in customer service, appeals-handling and presentation skills. Staff training and recruitment of a new Head of Planning are now underway.
- 2.17 Other outcomes include -
- improvements to the pre-application service, which have drawn positive feedback
  - immediate use of the advice provided at the presentation we arranged from English Heritage
  - Parish councils helping to refine the new software and map based information
  - a staff organisation chart now added to the council's website.
  - (awaiting Q3 update to PFH 13 April 2012)
- 2.18 The scrutiny review also led to an operational review of the Council's enforcement services, which will lead to further improvement and efficiency.

### **Sheltered Housing Support**

- 2.19 In July 2011 we set up a small cross-party task and finish group which included four tenants, to review the sheltered housing support service. The group was asked to look at a fresh approach to delivering the support service in response to externally imposed funding changes.
- 2.20 We learned in the autumn that in 2012/13, Cambridgeshire County Council would make a 34% reduction in the Supporting People grant. They also planned to put the support service out for competitive tendering, with a new contract starting in April 2013.
- 2.21 It was not clear how the County Council had reached the funding decision, whom they had consulted, whether an impact assessment had been completed nor where the redirected funding would be spent. The group met with the County portfolio holder and it was clear that the decision would go ahead, and the support service would need to be re-designed within a greatly reduced budget. The group's final report included recommendations that the County Council should address the issues of consultation and impact evaluation, which they accepted.
- 2.22 The group looked at the results of a recent survey of the sheltered housing residents. A 91% return revealed that more than half did not regard their daily visit as important. It seemed that their decision to move into the sheltered housing might be based more on the wish to be near family, to downsize their home, to live in a quiet purpose-built environment and to have access to a pull-cord alarm.
- 2.23 Whilst the task and finish group agreed that work should continue towards increasing efficiency and value for money in the sheltered housing support service, the main recommendation was that the quality of the support service should be preserved for those residents who did need it.
- 2.24 The group developed a set of core values that the future support service should encompass: community links, dignity, human contact, local hub, mutual support, and prevention of poor health. It also endorsed a basic model upon which the

future service should be built, incorporating the best of the existing service, and seeking to correct any existing shortcomings.

- 2.25 Finally, the group recommended that future consideration could be given to developing a set of paid-for optional support services to be offered in addition to services already provided.
- 2.26 The portfolio holder expressed sincere thanks for the work of the task and finish group and the service is now being redesigned based on our recommendations.

### **Learning from Feedback**

- 2.27 The Scrutiny and Overview Committee has regularly looked at the Council's complaints process, and over the years this has contributed to a policy and processes that are now working well. In October 2011 we decided to explore the underlying culture - was feedback actively encouraged and seen as a positive opportunity? Was the Council learning from this feedback and sharing the lessons across the Council?
- 2.28 We also wanted to know whether learning was being captured from other forms of feedback, and whether it was being used to inform service-planning and improvement.
- 2.29 We held a one-day event run by a small cross-party task and finish group, attended by portfolio holders and senior managers. This one-day format was an innovation for us and proved successful.
- 2.30 The task and finish group's first recommendation was that no more time should be spent on categorising feedback as a complaint, comment or compliment. It was all feedback and should all be dealt with to the same high standard. They felt that the expression 'customer feedback' would be more neutral and customers might find this more comfortable too.
- 2.31 The chief executive told the group that she was aiming to build a culture where staff took a holistic view of the customer. She wanted simple methods for communicating "you said, we did" messages. A new leadership programme was equipping managers to develop a no-blame culture where staff would feel empowered, trusted and supported – and where customers' feedback was seen as an opportunity to learn and improve services. The group found that managers shared this vision and were beginning to succeed.
- 2.32 The task and finish group also explored the role of Councillors: the scrutiny committee provided a forum for using customers' experiences to inform service design and improvement; and portfolio holders received quarterly reports. However, there was a need for Councillors' induction and training to include the importance of passing on feedback; conversely staff needed to ask Councillors for their local customer insight.
- 2.33 The group felt that the best placed vehicle for improving learning from feedback was the Executive Management Team (EMT) who had taken on the role of the former Performance Improvement Group in sharing learning across the council.
- 2.34 They recommended that EMT should develop: new methods across the council for collecting and sharing feedback using a 'whole customer' approach; ways to communicate the outcomes from feedback; and ways to ensure that feedback informed service design and improvement.



- 2.35 These recommendations were accepted by the Portfolio Holder who will now monitor progress.

### **Communications**

- 2.36 Another one-day review looked at the council's communications strategy. This needed to be revised to reflect the latest media channels available, and the growing need for transparency and effective engagement.
- 2.37 At the outset, the review group recognised the high volume and standard of work being achieved by the small corporate communications team which had only recently returned to full complement. As recommended in last year's work on value for money, we identified the need for a benchmarking exercise to establish whether the team was adequately resourced.
- 2.38 We found that there was a need to further develop council-wide ownership of a corporate approach to communication. One work area had a communications champion and the group recommended that other areas should also appoint champions. This was especially important for the new customer contact team who would be able to spot trends in customers' concerns.
- 2.39 Based on examples of good practice, we recommended that communication should be defined as a two-way dialogue, rather than simply putting out information. And strategies and plans - corporate and project specific - should be designed from the perspective of the customer, or other end user; rather than to meet internal management objectives. They should also be written in plain language, and in a short leaflet format.
- 2.40 Surveys had shown that residents preferred to find out about the Council via the magazine and website, although a growing number were using social media channels. Again we recommended that our approach to social media should be based on users' needs which should be identified through well-targeted consultation.
- 2.41 Finally, we made recommendations about the role of councillors. As in the review of Learning from Feedback, we identified the need for them to maintain a two-way dialogue with officers. This would support their advocacy work for residents and for the Council. There was also a need for regular media skills training.
- 2.42 These recommendations were developed with the agreement of the portfolio holder and we will monitor outcomes during 2012/13.  
**update following Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting of 29 March**

### **3. Scrutiny and Overview Committee**

- 3.1 The Committee has also sought to add value on several other issues facing the Council in the past twelve months, as follows.
- 3.2 Scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Strategy in December and February was preceded by all-councillor workshops – a practice we established two years ago. This provides an opportunity to develop questions to follow up at the meeting. The council's corporate plan underpins financial decisions and is therefore scrutinised alongside it.

- 3.3 In December we recommended that the council should review, formalise and publicise how it consults with young people, businesses and the community when setting the budget. In February the portfolio holder responded that consultation had concentrated on the corporate aims, approaches and actions (3As), but not the financial aspect as the 3As were to be carried out within existing resources. The committee is likely to return next year to community engagement in financial planning.
- 3.4 In September 2011 we met with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, to examine progress on their rolling plan for community safety. They explained that their funding, and therefore role, was reducing. However a new tasking and coordination group had been set up to address local priorities at a practical level.
- 3.5 In November we revisited the Council's community transport plan. We wanted to explore the impact of the County Council's Cambridgeshire Future Transport project, specifically their franchising pilots. We raised concerns with the County portfolio holder about the limited consultation carried out amongst residents and relevant parish councils. We also recommended that, in light of our loss of national funding, he consider disseminating the Government's £258k community transport grant to SCDC. This recommendation was not accepted.
- 3.6 We also invited the County portfolio holder to return in March to update us on the pilot schemes, lessons learnt and the resulting plan of action. He declined but invited us instead to join a County-led review of the Cambridgeshire Future Transport project in 2012/13. We plan to return to this topic in 2012/13.
- 3.7 During 2010/11 the Council introduced a Blue Bin service and so we received two updates on performance in 2011/12. We found that, while recycling was now approaching the 65% target, the dry summer had reduced green waste. We accepted that, as stated in the corporate plan, the focus should move to waste minimisation.
- 3.8 At our last meeting of the year we considered localism. At a scrutiny network meeting in February, scrutiny chairmen had discussed their councils' various initiatives and so the Committee invited our Leader to discuss the opportunities that localism may present for South Cambridgeshire. **update after 29 March**

#### **4. Monitoring portfolios**

- 4.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council has been praised for its innovative practice of holding meetings in public for each portfolio holder to discuss and agree decisions within their service areas. These meetings also receive quarterly reports on spending and service delivery and policy development.
- 4.2 The scrutiny committee sends at least one monitor to each meeting, offering constructive input and timely scrutiny that adds value to the work of each Cabinet member. The monitors write a short report after each portfolio holder's meeting, summarising their input and influence, and raising any issues which the committee might like to discuss further. They also consider whether there is evidence that each item includes:
- sound data
  - stakeholder involvement
  - risks addressed
  - link to corporate priorities
  - equality and diversity considerations

- 4.3 The monitors' reports are circulated to members of the Committee and to the relevant portfolio holder.
- 4.4 The economic development portfolio holder had only one public meeting - to consider the 2012/13 Service Plan. As he is not required to make decisions, he instead made quarterly updates to Cabinet. It would not be appropriate for the scrutiny monitor to provide input at Cabinet meetings and so the portfolio holder attended a meeting of the scrutiny committee in November to set out the issues he would be working on during 2011/12.
- 4.5 The scrutiny monitors were as follows:

Portfolio	Services / Cross-cutting themes/ Council Priorities	Monitor
Leader	Lead on strategic partnerships, grants coordination and delivery	James Hockney
Finance and Staffing	Finance, support services, staffing, risk, procurement, vfm/efficiency	Roger Hall Tumi Hawkins
Environmental Services	Environmental health, environmental services, public health, private sector housing, land drainage, Member training and development	Richard Barrett Jose Hales Mike Mason
Housing	Housing strategy, housing advice and options, housing landlord services, home improvement agency, equality and diversity	Jose Hales Liz Heazell Bunty Waters
Northstowe and New Communities	Northstowe, Planning Policy, Development of new communities, arts and sports,	Alison Elcox Mike Mason
Planning and Economic Development	Lead on economic development and transport, the LEP, business support, climate change and sustainability, development control, design and conservation, building control	Jose Hales Tumi Hawkins Ted Ridgway Watt Bridget Smith
Policy and Performance	Policy development, information and communications technology (ICT), customer services, community safety	Roger Hall Bridget Smith

- 4.6 Examples of successful scrutiny input at portfolio meetings during 2011/12 included:
- contributed to the discussion formulating an SCDC response to the Government's draft Planning Policy Statement "Planning for Travellers"
  - the Portfolio Holder agreed that accepting cheque payments for pre-planning application advice was inefficient and asked for a review.
  - challenged a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment by the County Council, leading to a call for it to be re-presented; this will happen in June 2012.
  - the portfolio holder agreed to the monitor's suggestions for: allowing retrofitting of energy efficiency measures and renewables in conservation areas; and for a report on how to finance conservation area appraisals
  - the portfolio holder agreed to ask for a review of street naming & numbering charges

## **5. Call-in**

- 5.1 Call-in is used a last resort, when other means of influencing decision-making have failed. Nationally, councils have an average of two call-ins per year; and around a quarter result in an amended decision.
- 5.2 We did not have occasion to use the call-in procedure in 2011/12.

## **6. Monitoring previous reviews and recommendations**

- 6.1 At each meeting the Committee received ongoing progress reports on previous recommendations and we were pleased to find that the vast majority had been accepted and actioned in a timely way.
- 6.2 The Planning service reported good progress on the action plan developed following our review. A review of the enforcement service had also been carried out and would lead to further improvements.
- 6.3 An update on last year's Performance Management review showed that progress had been less noticeable, although the chief executive said there were many examples of the executive management team (EMT) having acted to improve performance. It was intended that EMT would use the 'task and finish group' model to address underperformance; the scrutiny committee will maintain a watching brief.

## **7. Health Scrutiny**

- 7.1 The Council contributes to the scrutiny of health services in the county. Councillor Roger Hall is a member of Cambridgeshire County Council's Adults Wellbeing and Health Scrutiny Committee (AWHSC), and Cllr Bridget Smith is his named substitute.

Over the year, the Committee









- developed links with the emerging GP commissioners and shadow Health and Wellbeing Board
- reviewed and made recommendations to the NHS and County Council on access to support and advice on diagnosis of dementia
- reviewed and made recommendations to the County Council on the quality and cost effectiveness of home care services for older people throughout the County jointly with Peterborough examined Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust plans for major changes to mental health services
- scrutinised the County Council's adult social care budget and 2012/13 plans
- scrutinised performance in relation to quality of care and budget against the 2011/12 adult social care plan
- considered NHS Cambridgeshire's forward plan
- maintained a watching brief on service quality, and established relationships with Circle, which has been contracted to manage Hinchingsbrooke Hospital

- 7.2 In addition to his contribution to the overall work of the AWHSC, Cllr Hall was a member of the Committee's liaison group with NHS Cambridgeshire and a link between the Committee and Addenbrooke's Hospital.

- 7.3 A discussion paper to Cambridgeshire’s shadow Health and Wellbeing Board in February 2012 recognised the likely need for both joint and complementary working between County and District scrutiny committees on issues such as locality based commissioning and district level strategies and actions.

**8. EVALUATING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

- 8.1 In the 2010/11 annual scrutiny report we set out the areas in which we wanted to make improvements in 2011/12. Our progress is shown below.

do a few things well (rather than lots of things less well)	Most meetings limited to 3 substantive items; Only one long-term task and finish group	
further develop our questioning techniques	improvement noted by Cabinet	
encourage greater participation by all committee members	All members of the committee have played their part during 2011/12	
increase joint scrutiny with other organisations	Members of the County Council contributed to scrutiny of Community Transport and Sheltered Housing Support	
increase scrutiny of external organisations	We scrutinised the County Council’s transport programme. Scrutiny of the CDRP and its tasking and coordination group is ongoing	
make more use of performance information and complaints data	Scrutiny monitors use PI data to inform their input at Portfolio Holders’ meetings The Scrutiny Officer supplies Corvu data as appropriate for meetings Our review of customer feedback led to recommendations that will help to ensure that the council learns from customer feedback	
add value on cross portfolio issues	Our reviews of Learning from Customer Feedback and corporate communications touched on all areas of the Council	
achieve even greater public involvement ... achieved 59 in 10/11	89 participants: 85 on the planning review and 4 tenants on the sheltered housing task and finish group	

- 8.2 The committee has a number of ways of measuring its own effectiveness and performance. We annually survey portfolio holders and this year they said that we had completed some useful work on economic development, finances and community transport.

- 8.3 They had noticed improvements in our questioning techniques and the levels of involvement by all committee members.

- 8.4 They also suggested some areas for improvement, for example:

- Scrutinise finances and the corporate plan together – and all scrutiny members should aim to attend the preparatory finance workshop
  - Consider inviting one portfolio holder per committee meeting to examine and challenge their work programme
  - Identify what makes task and finish groups successful
  - Add value by researching and evaluating alternatives before making recommendations
  - Consider more joint scrutiny work with partners
- 8.5 Senior officers were also consulted and most respondents felt that the work of the scrutiny committee, especially via task and finish groups, was having an impact. Scrutiny monitors' attendance at portfolio holders' meetings was valued.
- 8.6 Some suggestions for improvement were also offered:
- need to focus on key issues, not get bogged down in minor issues or red herrings: tease out the facts and develop recommendations; chairing is key
  - work could be targeted more at members and their role
  - more could be done via social media and innovative ways to engage with a wider audience; need to raise awareness amongst staff too.
  - scrutiny of partners should be done carefully, to preserve ongoing working relationships
  - task and finish work could be more "innovative"
- 8.7 In March 2012, we held our annual workshop to evaluate our performance. We identified the following aspects of our work as having gone well in 2011/12:
- task and finish group projects
  - robust scrutiny of County-led projects – community transport and Supporting People
  - good progress on our improvement areas - as listed at 8.1 above
- 8.8 We also identified some areas for further improvement in 2012/13:
- the need to pursue lines of enquiry more rigorously
  - possibly taking more topics out of committee and into a half- or one-day task and finish group
  - improve scrutiny monitors' reports
- 8.9 Another measure of our effectiveness is the percentage of our recommendations that are accepted. In 2011/12 more than 90% were accepted, which is on a par with last year.
- 8.10 We will develop a plan of action to address the areas that we want to improve, and for this we will draw on the support of the Cabinet and officers, the advice of external trainers, and the experience of other councils.

## **9. Training and development**

- 9.1 During 2011/12 Committee members received both in-house and externally provided training to improve our scrutiny skills. This was in the form of short courses, conferences and bulletins about good practice.
- 9.2 In September we held two workshops on skills for successful scrutiny. The first covered the basics and the second focussed on questioning skills. The sessions

were attended by scrutiny councillors from across the county which enable delegates to share their experiences and good practice.

- 9.3 In November and February we held two in-house workshops to prepare for scrutiny of the corporate plan and medium term financial strategy.
- 9.4 In January two members attended a national workshop looking at the impact of the new legislation: Localism, Police and Crime and Health Reform.
- 9.5 In February the scrutiny officer attended a Home Office roadshow about Police and Crime Commissioners and Panels. This helped us to see that 2012 will be a time of change in this area of work.

## **10. Networking**

- 10.1 We continue to benefit from an officer-led scrutiny network in Cambridgeshire, which provided a forum for sharing the learning from good practice and experience. The network also ran two county-wide training sessions for scrutiny councillors, and a meeting for scrutiny chairmen to discuss potential joint working and opportunities arising from the latest legislation.
- 10.2 Officers also belong to a scrutiny network for the whole of the Eastern Region. This is supported by an extranet, for exchanging work programmes, examples of best practice, training resources and offers of help or advice.

## **11. What are our plans for 2012/13?**

- 11.1 The profile of Scrutiny is changing nationally and much is expected from scrutiny members in response to the Localism Act, the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act and the Health and Social Care Bill.
- 11.2 The Local Government Association also feels that scrutiny now has a greater role to play in helping councils to demonstrate openness and accountability, given the reduction in external audit and inspection and the growing emphasis on sector-led self-regulation.
- 11.3 We will continue to have responsibility for: community involvement in scrutiny; scrutiny of and with partners; and supporting the scrutiny of health services. We will still have an annual statutory duty to scrutinise crime and disorder although we have yet to see how this will operate alongside the new Police and Crime Panel arrangements.
- 11.4 We would like our 2012/13 work programme to continue to: drive value for money; support the Cabinet in developing policies and services that meet the Council's aims; and contribute to robust performance management.
- 11.5 We have begun to develop a programme of work which we will finalise at our first meeting in 2012/13. Topics already identified for possible inclusion are:
- community transport
  - Corporate Plan and medium term financial strategy
  - community engagement
  - grants
  - mental health services for young people

- street scene
- 11.6 We also plan to invite one portfolio holder per meeting, to scrutinise their work programmes and explore any areas for further scrutiny input.
- 11.7 Other topic suggestions will be considered and evaluated at the first meeting of the 2012/13 Scrutiny and Overview Committee in July 2012.
- 11.8 We will also monitor progress following the reports of the 2011/12 task and finish groups: customer contact, planning service; learning from customer feedback; sheltered housing support service.
- 11.9 Finally, we intend to play a full part in joint scrutiny initiatives such as the proposed scrutiny of the Local Enterprise Partnership with CCC, Peterborough, all five Cambridgeshire district councils, Forest Heath, North Herts, Rutland, St Edmundsbury, Uttlesford and West Norfolk.

### **How to get involved**

The process of scrutiny is strengthened by involving partners, residents, service users and so on. They bring expertise, local knowledge, fresh ideas and an element of external challenge.

If you would like to know more, please ring the Scrutiny Development Officer, Jackie Sayers on 01954 713451 or email [scrutiny@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@scambs.gov.uk)



## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Scrutiny and Overview Committee

29 March 2012

**AUTHOR:** Scrutiny Development Officer

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**WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12/13****Purpose**

1. To update the committee on progress and outcomes of work to date.
2. To enable the committee to consider potential topics for scrutiny in 2012/13.

**Options**

3. The committee may wish to agree
  - that the draft programme at Appendix A be used as a starting point for 2012/13, subject to amendments made at this meeting
  - that an informal workshop be arranged in early June to enable the 2012/13 Committee to draft a work programme for agreement on 5 July 2012.

**Potential Topics for Scrutiny in 2012/13**

4. A framework for the Committee's 2012/13 work programme is at Appendix A.
5. A list of further potential topics is at Appendix B.
6. Further topics may be chosen from items on the Council's Forward Plan – as at <http://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPIId=293&bcr=1>.
7. A performance Health Card report can be viewed at the meeting although the data will be to 31 December 2011. An end-of-year report will be available from mid-April.
8. In choosing topics for the work programme, Members are reminded of their agreed selection criteria as at Appendix C.
9. Given the reduction in external inspection and the growing emphasis on self-regulation, the Committee may feel that it now has a greater responsibility for helping the Council to demonstrate openness and accountability.

**Progress on past recommendations**

10. Progress on the recommendations made in September to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership were due to be presented at this meeting. However, the Chairman has asked that this be delayed for two reasons. Firstly, the role of the CDRP is less prominent, and its funding less certain. Secondly, there was an all-member briefing on community safety on 7 March which provided an opportunity to discuss the issues being monitored by the Committee.
11. Once the shadow Police and Crime Panel for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is in place in June, this and other scrutiny committees will need to explore how best to discharge the ongoing statutory responsibility for scrutiny of community safety issues.

12. At the February meeting, the committee endorsed the report of the task and finish group looking at Sheltered Housing Support. This was received by the Housing Portfolio Holder later that month and he is now redesigning the service based on the recommendations.

**13. Implications**

Financial	The Committee has a discretionary budget of £5,000. Less than £2000 has been spent in 2011/12, mainly because the training programme was largely delivered in-house. It is prudent to retain sufficient funds to allow for venue hire if needed (for a call-in for example) and for external witnesses' and co-optees' expenses.
Legal	The Local Government Act 2000 requires the Council to have at least one scrutiny committee. The Police and Justice Act 2006 requires that crime and disorder appears on at least one agenda each year. The Constitution states that the Committee will set its own work programme and meeting dates. The Localism Act 2011 seeks to expand the role of scrutiny and will give additional powers to summon the attendance of partner organisations.
Staffing/ capacity	The committee is supported by one scrutiny officer. Each item selected for scrutiny will require support by at least one other lead officer. Capacity for sub committee work is also dependent on the number of elected members available and willing to participate
Risk Management	The potential burden on the organisation of supporting scrutiny work must be balanced against the potential value it can add. External scrutiny carries the risk of affecting the Council's relationship or credibility with partners.
Equal Opportunities	All proposed changes to policy or services will require an Equality Impact Assessment
Involvement of Children and Young People	Children and Young People (CYP) have been invited to suggest topics and this will continue. The Committee has also agreed to involve CYP in reviews and to ensure that all reports to the committee describe CYP involvement

**Consultation**

14. Cabinet, elected members, senior officers and residents, including the Council's nascent consultation panel, have been invited to suggest potential topics. Parish councils continue to be consulted during the year.
15. Ongoing consultation with nearby councils, including the county council, explores the potential for joint scrutiny activities. The chairman also attended a cross-county network meeting where officers and chairmen discussed potential topics for scrutiny work programmes in 2012/13. They intend to meet again in June.
16. Consultation will be extended to include the new Youth Council once it is in place from September 2012.

**Effect on Corporate Objectives**

17. The Committee's selection criteria ensure that any topic selected for scrutiny will contribute to at least one of the Council's priorities. Scrutiny itself helps to demonstrate that this is a listening Council, providing first class services accessible to all.

Contact Officer: Jackie Sayers, Scrutiny Development Officer Tel: (01954) 713451

## Draft Work Programme 2012/13

		Portfolios
Thurs 5 July 7pm	Planning/ Historic buildings service - update Conservation area appraisals Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder Presentation	Planning
Thurs 6 Sept 7pm	Community transport Community Safety (annual duty) Learning from Feedback - update Customer Contact – update Policy & Performance Portfolio Holder Presentation	Policy & Performance
Thursday 1 Nov 5.30pm	Finance workshop	Finance
Mon 5 November 2pm	Grants Progress on corporate plan actions/performance measures Medium Term Financial Strategy Finance Portfolio Holder Presentation	Leader Finance
Thurs 10 January 2013 2pm	Environmental Services Portfolio Holder Presentation	Environmental Services
Monday 11 Feb 5.30pm	Finance workshop	Finance
Thurs 14 Feb 2pm	Corporate Priorities Medium Term Financial Strategy Leader Portfolio Holder Presentation	Leader Finance
Thurs 21 March 2pm	Sheltered Housing Support – update Housing Portfolio Holder Presentation	Housing
23 April 2013 7pm	Northstowe Portfolio Holder Presentation	Northstowe and New Communities

Dates for Portfolio Holder presentations are subject to agreement with the relevant Portfolio Holders once confirmed in post at Annual Council in May

**Joint scrutiny**

1. Health – with CCC and all Cambs DCs: ongoing. Perhaps scope for complementary work at DC level
2. PCC/PCP – with CCC, Peterborough and all Cambs DCs; Autumn
3. Cambridgeshire Future Transport t&f – with CCC and all Cambs DCs; June/July
4. LEP – with CCC, Peterborough, all Cambs DCs, Forest Heath, North Herts, Rutland, St Edmundsbury, Uttlesford and West Norfolk
5. Possibly joint DC work on CCC issues.

### Potential topics for scrutiny in 2012/13

- bus services/ transport
- community engagement
- conservation
- GP appointments: timely access
- litter in hedges
- mental health services for CYP (joint with Youth Council?)
- policy development process
- street scene
  - pavements/ street furniture/ trees
  - dog fouling/ bill posters/ litter
- traffic congestion (especially from new housing developments)

Many of the above topics have been suggested by residents. Other topics will be invited via the press and South Cambs magazine, and from the Youth Council once it is in place in September.

### PAPERS Analysis

When considering whether to adopt an item onto its agenda programme, the Committee will score the item using the following criteria:

1. **Public Interest:** the concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen for scrutiny  
(1= low public interest, 2=medium public interest, 3=high public interest)
2. **Ability to change:** priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence  
(1= little chance of changing, 2=reasonable chance, 3=good chance)
3. **Performance:** priority should be given to the areas in which the Council, and other agencies, are not performing well.  
(1= good performance, 2=moderate performance, 3=low performance)
4. **Extent:** priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or large parts of the District.  
(1= only one ward, 2= multi-ward issue, 3 = the entire District)
5. **Replication:** work programmes must take account of what else is happening in the areas being considered to avoid duplication or wasted effort.  
(1= already well covered, 2=already partly covered, 3=not already covered)
6. **Strategic priorities:** scrutiny work should relate to the Council's priorities and vision.

See also "*A cunning plan?*" published by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, which suggests that perhaps most the most important question is "how will this work make a difference or add value?"