

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Tuesday, 26 July 2022 at 5.20 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Stephen Drew – Chair
Councillor Graham Cone – Vice-Chair

Councillors:	Anna Bradnam	Dr. Martin Cahn
	Sue Ellington	Peter Fane
	Sunita Hansraj	Sally Ann Hart
	Helene Leeming	Richard Stobart

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Aaron Clarke (Democratic Services Technical Officer), Philip Bird (Corporate Programme Manager), Rebecca Dobson (Democratic Services Manager), Bode Esan (Head of Climate, Environment & Waste), Dawn Graham (Benefits Manager), Rory McKenna (Monitoring Officer), Jeff Membery (Head of Transformation, HR, and Corporate Services), Ian Senior (Scrutiny and Governance Adviser) and Liz Watts (Chief Executive)

Councillors Heather Williams and Judith Rippeth (Deputy Leader) were in attendance, by invitation.

Councillors John Batchelor (Lead Cabinet Member for Housing), Peter McDonald (Lead Cabinet Member for Economic Development), Brian Milnes (Lead Cabinet Member for Environment) and Cllr John Williams (Lead Cabinet Member for Finance) were in attendance remotely, by invitation.

1. Chair's announcements

The Chair made several brief housekeeping announcements.

2. Apologies for absence

Councillors Libby Earle, James Hobro, John Loveluck and Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer sent apologies.

In addition, Councillors Bill Handley (Lead Cabinet Member for Communities) and Bridget Smith (Leader of the Council) were unable to be present as they were representing South Cambridgeshire District Council at a meeting of the Northstowe Forum.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Committee authorised the Chair to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2022.

5. Public Questions

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

6. Quarter 1 Performance report

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered a report on the Council's Quarter 1 (Q1) position regarding its operational Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and 2020-25 Business Plan actions.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee began by reviewing the KPIs detailed in Appendix A to the report. In response to a question, Councillor Judith Rippeth (Deputy Leader) explained how KPI CC314 (Percentage of public hybrid meetings run without issues causing downtime exceeding five minutes) would be monitored. It was recalled that this new KPI had been requested by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at its meeting on 3 March 2022 (Minute 7 refers).

In connection with FS112 and FS113 (Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims and change events), Councillor John Williams (Lead Cabinet Member for Finance) and the Benefits Manager clarified the impact made by the Government's recent energy rebate to the occupiers of properties in Council Tax bands A to D.

In response to a further question, the Deputy Leader and the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services explained how data such as that gathered in CC307 (Average call answer time in seconds) would be used to achieve improved outcomes in future.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee said that Cabinet must address the reasons for the past under performance of Council services in order to achieve improved performance in future. Councillor Graham Cone referred to CC305 (Percentage of formal complaints resolved within timescale). The Committee welcomed the extra resource put in place to eliminate the planning complaints backlog as at the end of June 2022. The Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services undertook to investigate a claim made by Councillor Heather Williams that some complaints were being closed accidentally and assured her that this did not deprive complainants of their right to go to the Ombudsman.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee recognised that South Cambridgeshire was a growth area, and that Extension of Time Agreements had an important part to play in providing an effective planning service. Committee members encouraged Cabinet to pay particular attention to strengthening performance under PN511 (Percentage of non-major planning applications determined within eight weeks or agreed timescale).

Following some further general discussion around issues arising from Appendix A to the report, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee moved on to consider Appendix B (Business Plan update).

With regard to C2(iv) (Six free trees initiative), and if not already carried out, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee said that Cabinet should consider an audit of previously offered trees to assess success of the scheme to date. Cabinet should insist on the use of irrigation rings in future to ensure effective management of newly planted trees.

Referring to B4 (Improve the energy efficiency of existing Council housing), the Cabinet might want to consider extending the issue of Energy Performance Certificates to the private sector. Committee members recognised though that this was not viable at the moment and might not be feasible at all.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee noted progress under C1(i) in trialling the use of vegetable oil instead of diesel fuel.

With regard to A1(i) (implementation of a Customer Relationship Management system), the Chief Executive assured Members that they would be kept informed as the project progressed.

With regard to A2 (Skills and training) Cabinet should continue to work closely with the Greater Cambridge Partnership and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to develop a formal engagement programme with local schools and employers but avoid any duplication of effort.

Referring to C3(i) (Complete retrofit of South Cambridgeshire Hall), the Committee welcomed the fact that energy generation data would clearly be visible to Members and staff in, and visitors to, the Council offices. Members were pleased to note that battery storage would be investigated at some point in the future.

Members discussed issues prompted by C12 (action to minimise fly tipping). In response to a query, the Chief Executive explained that publicising the location of Closed-Circuit Television cameras helped to deter fly tipping. On the related topic of fly posting, Councillor Brian Milnes (Lead Cabinet Member for the Environment) cautioned against the removal of notices spotted in South Cambridgeshire.

The Chief Executive referred Members to the Risk Register which was due to be reported soon to the Audit and Governance Committee.

With regard to D6 (working with communities), the Cabinet must seek as much integration as possible between Lifelines and the Integrated Care System.

D2 concerned the staff satisfaction survey, and the Chief Executive assured Members that this was on schedule. The results would help officers to address the issue of staff turnover reflected in KPI FS117, which was currently above target.

Having reviewed the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) results and narrative at Appendix A to the report from the Head of Transformation, Human Resources and Corporate Services and progress against Business Plan actions at Appendix B to that report, and subject to the comments above, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee **endorses** the report, noting

- a. the addition of new KPIs (PN519, AH230 and CC314) and the rationale for each of these, as detailed within the comments section of Appendix A; and
- b. the addition of the new 'Outlook RAG' column in the KPI report at Appendix A (as detailed at paragraph 8 of the aforementioned report).

Upon conclusion of minute 6 (pre-scrutiny of the Quarter 1 Performance report) and prior to consideration of minute 7 (Scrutiny at South Cambridgeshire District Council - a new approach) the Chair and Councillor Heather

**Williams both observed that there were no
Cabinet members left at the meeting.**

7. Scrutiny at South Cambridgeshire District Council - a new approach

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered a report outlining proposals for a new approach to scrutiny at South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The Chair and Vice-Chair were keen to enhance the role of Committee members and all other non-executive councillors so as to improve openness and transparency. This would give Members and, through them, residents a more prominent voice in influencing future decisions affecting both the Council and district. While there was no intention of moving away from pre-scrutiny, there was a desire to supplement pre-scrutiny with the scrutiny of topics not on the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key and Non-Key decisions. Initial suggestions for topics had been invited from all Members in accordance with the scrutiny procedure rules.

Committee members endorsed the idea of considering for scrutiny topics not on the Forward Plan. They would consider in each case whether to

- review by the full Committee, or
- review by a sub-Committee / working group, or
- engage in some form of community outreach, or
- establish a Task and Finish Group, or
- decline to review

So long as topics were not already being looked at by another Council body, or had not recently been analysed, would then be added to the scrutiny work programme for the year as appropriate, considering the amount of preparatory work required to bring a full report to Committee.

The Chief Executive emphasised the importance of Questions 6 and 7 on the topic suggestion form. These asked whether the Member submitting the suggestion had previously contacted the relevant Head of Service and Lead Cabinet Member about the topic and, if so, what the outcome had been, in order to avoid duplication.

Councillor Heather Williams prompted a brief discussion about the relationship between the proposal outlined in the report and call in. The Chief Executive said that the two aspects were separate from each other. However, for clarity, the Monitoring Officer would be asked for his opinion.

Upon a proposal from Councillor Anna Bradnam, seconded by Councillor Peter Fane and by affirmation, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee **approved** the proposal for a formal procedure for the scrutiny of items not on the Forward Plan of Cabinet decisions alongside pre-scrutiny.

8. Work Programme

The Committee noted the work programme attached to the agenda.

9. To Note the Dates of the next two meetings

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee noted that its next two meetings would be on

- Tuesday 6 September 2022
- Thursday 20 October 2022

both starting at 5.20pm.

10. Exclusion of Press and Public

By affirmation, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee agreed that members of the Press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item (minute 11) in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Act). Paragraph 3 concerned information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

11. Contributions during Minute 9 of the meeting held on 23 June 2022

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee received, noted, and agreed a record of comments made during the confidential discussion forming part of the meeting held on 23 June 2022.

The Meeting ended at 7.53 p.m.
