

Report to: Cabinet 16 April 2024

Lead Cabinet Members: Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources

From: Councillor Graham Cone, Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee
Councillor Stephen Drew, Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Update from Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Purpose

1. This report informs Cabinet about the outcome of discussion among members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at the meeting on 21 March 2024.

Peer Review Action Plan

2. Having reviewed the report and received responses to questions posed by Committee members, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee endorses the action plan shown in Appendix A to the Cabinet report and refers Cabinet to the Committee's recommendations set out in paragraphs 4 to 8 of this report.

Peer Review Recommendation 2 (Reset and define relationships at a local and regional level with key partners to support the delivery of business plan priorities)

3. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee endorses the action proposed by the Council and agrees with the Leader of the Council that the word 'reset' reflects a gap in the evidence gathered by the Peer Review Team.
4. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee recommends
 - (a) that the Cabinet should interpret the word 'reset' as meaning to 'take stock' and demonstrate how the Council's approach reflects its vision of nurturing its working relationship with Parish and Town Councils as well as other key partners.
 - (b) that in continuing to build effective relationships with key partners, a single Cabinet member together with a single Leadership Team officer would be more effective in identifying different but still measurable ways of enhancing partnership working.

- (c) that the Cabinet should explore options for capturing meaningful feedback from partners so that the Council can provide an evidence-based response to the Peer Review Team.

Peer Review Recommendation 3 (Finance)

5. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee recommends that in relation to 'accelerating the closure of outstanding accounts' a distinction be drawn between those measures that are achievable internally and the relationship with External Audit over whose work practices and timescales the Council has no control.

Peer Review Recommendation 12 (Effectiveness review of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee)

6. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee recommends that Cabinet notes the steps already taken in addressing this aspect, and the Committee's desire to relate its work programme more closely with those strategic risks most likely to affect the residents of South Cambridgeshire.

Table 2 in Appendix A to the Cabinet report

7. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee recommends that Cabinet identifies the most effective way of ensuring that the proposed residents survey is genuinely independent and asks questions that do not suggest what responses should be.

Recommendation B in paragraph 5 of the Cabinet report

8. In addition, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee recommends that Committee members be given an opportunity to review the draft progress report to the Peer Review Team in Autumn 2024 as well as the Peer Review Team's response.

Report Author:

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