



# South Cambridgeshire District Council

DRAFT

## Scrutiny and Overview Annual Report 2014/15

DRAFT

## Contents

Foreword	2
-----	
What is Scrutiny?	4
-----	
Scrutiny at South Cambridgeshire District Council	4
-----	
How does the Scrutiny and Overview Committee decide what to scrutinise?	5
-----	
Scrutiny Reviews	6
-----	
Work of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee during 2012/13	6
-----	
Monitoring Cabinet Portfolio Holders	9
-----	
Call-in	9
-----	
Cambridgeshire Scrutiny Officer Network	9
-----	
Training and Development	9
-----	

DRAFT

**FOREWORD**

Foreword to be inserted by the Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and the Chairman of the Partnerships Review Committee.

DRAFT

DRAFT

## **What is Scrutiny and Overview?**

The aim of the Council's scrutiny and overview function is to provide an open and transparent forum in which to investigate whether South Cambridgeshire District Council's policies and services are meeting the needs of local people.

Scrutiny and overview committees do not have any decision-making powers, but they do have the power to influence and make evidence-based recommendations to decision-takers. Such recommendations could be informed via performance monitoring, best practice, expert advice, or liaison with stakeholders, partners, service users or members of the public. Scrutiny and overview committees are often described as a Council's 'critical friend'.

Scrutiny and overview committees can also challenge executive decisions, taken by Cabinet, individual Portfolio Holders and occasionally Chief Officers. The Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee or any five Councillors can, in certain circumstances, 'call-in' a decision that has been made but not yet implemented in accordance with the Council's Scrutiny and Overview Committee Procedure Rules. The Committee is then able to interview the relevant member of Cabinet or officers, examine the evidence and suggest improvements to the decision, or refer it to Full Council for further consideration.

Effective scrutiny provides an additional, independent resource for reviewing decisions and policies without being divisive or confrontational. Councillors on scrutiny and overview committees are in a unique position to influence policy and contribute to the decision-making process.

When working well, scrutiny and overview can help to:

- 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 and Overview at South Cambridgeshire District Council**

South Cambridgeshire District Council has two scrutiny and overview committees; the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and the Partnerships Review Committee, both of which consist of nine non-executive District Councillors drawn from the political groups in the same proportion as they are represented on the Council as a whole.

The Partnerships Review Committee was introduced to the Council's committee structure on 23 May 2013 at the Annual General Meeting of the Council, where the size of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee was reduced from thirteen to nine. The Partnerships Review Committee has a specific remit to scrutinise, challenge and hold decision takers to account on issues relating to the work of those organisations in the area of South Cambridgeshire, which may or may not involve formal partnerships. Whilst the Partnerships Review Committee's work is mainly externally focussed, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee retains its role of holding executive decision takers to account and centres on those issues considered as 'internal'.

The following Councillors served on the respective committees for the 2014/15 municipal year:

***Scrutiny and Overview Committee***

Chairman: Councillor Roger Hickford  
Vice-Chairman: Councillor Jose Hales  
Councillors:  
David Bard  
Alison Elcox  
Lynda Harford  
Philippa Hart  
Douglas de Lacey  
David Morgan  
Bunty Waters

The following Councillors were available as substitutes during the year:

Councillors:  
Henry Batchelor  
Anna Bradnam  
Kevin Cuffley  
Neil Davies  
Andrew Fraser  
Roger Hall  
Robin Page  
Deborah Roberts  
Neil Scarr  
Bridget Smith  
Ed Stonham

***Partnerships Review Committee***

Chairman: Councillor Ben Shelton  
Vice-Chairman: Councillor James Hockney  
Councillors:  
David Bard  
Andrew Fraser  
Jose Hales  
Roger Hall  
Janet Lockwood  
Neil Scarr  
Tony Orgee

The following Councillors were available as substitutes during the year:

Councillors:  
Neil Davies  
Alison Elcox  
Tumi Hawkins  
Douglas de Lacey  
Deborah Roberts  
Bridget Smith  
Ed Stonham  
Bunty Waters  
Aidan Van De Weyer



## **How do the scrutiny and overview committees decide what to scrutinise?**

The scrutiny and overview committees set their own work programmes and topic suggestions can be gained from numerous sources, including: -

- individual Councillors
- local petitions
- partner organisations
- officers
- residents
- Portfolio Holder Scrutiny Monitors
- the Council's Forward Plan of key decisions

Programme planning takes place at the start of the municipal year and the committee's work programmes are considered as standing items at every meeting of each committee. Additional items for consideration will usually be added during the year as and when they arise, which can be a mixture of one-off topics and items that may require more in-depth review.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the two scrutiny and overview committees usually meet with officers from Democratic Services to agree upon the agenda content and running order prior to each of their meetings.

The Partnerships Review Committee and the Scrutiny and Overview Committee use a work programme prioritisation tool which enables both committees to assess those items that have been suggested or put forward and ascertain whether they should be included in their work programmes, as well as determine their level of priority. This is attached at Appendix A.

Items included in the work programme usually go through an initial scoping process. This provides an opportunity to consider the rationale behind the Partnerships Review Committee or the Scrutiny and Overview Committee looking into the particular issue, the purpose or objective of scrutiny involvement and a methodology or approach that will be followed for the piece of work.

## Scrutiny Reviews

Scrutiny Reviews provide the Partnerships Review Committee and the Scrutiny and Overview Committee with opportunities to consider specific issues in more detail, sometimes outside of formal meetings involving a small group of Councillors with experience, expertise or an interest in the subject being reviewed. The Partnerships Review Committee or Scrutiny and Overview Committee will ultimately agree whether or not a Scrutiny Review on a particular issue will be undertaken. Any initial requests for Scrutiny Reviews will go through a scoping process to outline terms of reference for the review and identify how the piece of work should be conducted. Reviews could be undertaken through one of the following options:

### ***Scrutiny Review by the Full Committee***

A Scrutiny Review by the full Partnerships Review Committee or Scrutiny and Overview Committee could take place when all Councillors on the relevant committee express an interest in scrutinising a specific issue. These meetings would normally be held in public with the review culminating in formal recommendations to a decision taker.

### ***Scrutiny Review by a Task and Finish Group***

Task and Finish Groups are typically established when significant research and evidence gathering is necessary to assist in the production of a comprehensive report substantiating a set of recommendations to decision takers. An appropriate timetable would be agreed at the commencement of the Scrutiny Review, with most Task and Finish Groups aiming to have completed their reviews by six months. These meetings are usually not held in public.

### ***Scrutiny Review by an Informal Working Group***

Informal Working Groups with relevant officers, Portfolio Holders or external parties are an effective means of undertaking Scrutiny Reviews that do not require significant research or evidence and can be completed in a much shorter timescale. Formal recommendations can still come out of a review carried out by Informal Working Groups, but a comprehensive report is usually unnecessary. The informal format of these meetings would mean that they are not held in public.

### ***Scrutiny Review by a Focus Group***

A Focus Group could carry out a Scrutiny Review on any issue that requires an urgent response. It would take the shape of a significant fact-finding exercise, taking up one or two full days in an intensive session with very little research required and report its outcomes to relevant officers or decision takers.

## **Work of the Partnerships Review Committee during 2014/15**

The Partnerships Review Committee met on five occasions in the 2014/15 Municipal Year. This was as follows:

### **9 July 2014**

#### ***Shared Services and the Health and Wellbeing Board***

The Leader of the Council presented two reports on shared services proposals ahead of their consideration by Cabinet. The first report sought approval of Cabinet to develop a business case for a shared Local Authority Building Control Service between Huntingdonshire District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, including the use of South Norfolk District Council's mobile working solution, and to work towards an Eastern Region Building Control partnership arrangement.

The second report presented set out progress on shared services mainly regarding ICT and Legal services ahead of seeking Cabinet's approval to form a strategic shared services partnership with Huntingdonshire District Council whilst continuing to work with the City Council on services where there was a business case and shared desire to work together.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, presented an update on work to explore the creation of a single, shared waste service between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council.

The Chairman of the Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Board, provided the committee with an overview of the respective roles of the County Council's Health Committee and the Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Board. Members of the Partnerships Review Committee expressed concern that the membership of the Governance Group that sought to influence how the Better Care Fund was used, did not include any elected representatives, an issue which the Chairman would raise at the next meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

### **8 September 2014**

#### ***Ambulance Services***

Representatives from the East of England Ambulance Trust and East Anglian Air Ambulance attended the meeting and provided an overview of these services and current projects.

An in depth discussion took place and Members were able to raise and discuss local issues such as ambulance response and turnaround times, the impact of the new NHS 111 service on the ambulance service, and community defibrillators. As a result of the meeting, the Senior Locality Manager for the East of England Ambulance Trust in South Cambridgeshire, offered to talk to Parish Councils about community defibrillators and informed members that training could be provided to community first responders in the use of these. At the time of the meeting the East of England Ambulance service was undergoing a restructure, which was discussed along with the recruitment of an additional 400 paramedics.

**20 November 2014**

***Connecting Cambridgeshire and Joint Waste Services***

The Head of ICT and Facilities Management, updated the committee on the progress of the Connecting Cambridgeshire project. This was a partnership project between Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and BT. This project sought to ensure comprehensive broadband infrastructure across Cambridgeshire which could be fully exploited by businesses, communities and public service organisations. This included a superfast broadband rollout programme, public access Wifi, mobile voice and data service availability and the development of the Cambridgeshire Public Services Network.

Members of the committee brought a number of local issues to the attention of the Head of ICT and Facilities Management, such as connecting Melbourn Library to the Cambridgeshire Public Services Network, high speed broadband roll out in Lolworth, poor broadband connectivity in Bourn and the positioning of BT cabinets in a number of villages in the district.

The Director of Health and Environmental Services provided an update on the project to establish a shared waste service with Cambridge City Council, and introduced the newly appointed Joint Waste Service Programme Manager to the committee. Committee Members raised local issues and concerns, with the Director of Health and Environmental Services. Amongst local issues raised were missed assisted bins since new bin routes in South Cambridgeshire had started in October 2014, and potential implications of moving to monthly green bin collections between the months of December and February.

**22 January 2015**

***Housing Services***

The committee focussed on housing services with the Director of Housing, Sub Regional Homelink Manager and the Home Improvement Agency Manager in attendance at the meeting to present the committee with an update on housing services and key areas of partnership working. Information was presented on the following aspects of the housing service:

- The Homelink partnership, including the re-tender of its IT service.
- An ongoing review of the Mears contract.
- The Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency, including the system to prioritise home improvement works.

Members raised concern over:

- The flexibility of the Homelink service but were reassured that the service was flexible enough to deal with cases on an individual basis.
- Access to services by those without internet access. Members were assured that it was not assumed that internet access was available to all needing to access the service and other forms of access were in place, such as paper versions of forms being provided and telephone access to the service. Members were also informed that processes were in place to enable people with sensory impairments to access the service, and that a list of vulnerable people on whose behalf nominated individuals could bid for properties was also kept.

**27 March 2015**

### ***Greater Cambridge City Deal***

The Leaders of Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council attended the meeting to update the committee on the Greater Cambridge City Deal. The following points were discussed:

- Linkage of transport with the Local Plan was at the heart of the City Deal, which focussed on three threads; transport, affordable housing and skills.
- The skills thread would provide apprenticeships and focussed on the need to fill the gap between courses that students were studying and what skills business and industry needed.
- The Leaders emphasised that the full benefits of the City Deal would not be realised by 2019, which was the next trigger point for funding.
- The transport thread focussed on long term transport solutions in and around Cambridge City, with a list of projects having been prioritised.
- While transport was a large focus, other important elements to the City Deal were broadband and encouraging business in Cambridge, in order to continue to make Cambridgeshire a place where people wanted to live.
- Members were informed that there was no inflation link with the City Deal investment.
- The Committee endorsed the broad strategic approach that was being taken by the City Deal.

### ***Outside Bodies***

The Council's Civic Affairs Committee agreed on 5 December 2013 that Members appointed to outside bodies should provide written update reports to the Partnerships Review Committee. Updates on the following outside bodies were received by the Committee:

- Comberton Village College
- Denny Farm Museum
- The Farmland Museum
- Papworth Hospital
- Cambridge Airport
- Waterbeach Level Internal Drainage Board
- Regular updates were provided by the Council's Health Champion, which included updates on the following issues and bodies:
  - The Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Board
  - The Cambridgeshire Health Committee
  - The Cambridgeshire Older People's Contract
  - The Better Care Fund
  - Mental Health

## **Work of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee during 2014/15**

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee met as a full committee on five occasions in the 2014/15 Municipal Year, as follows:

### **3 July 2014**

#### ***Year End Position Statement on Finance and Performance***

The Committee considered a report which provided a statement of the Council's position with regard to its General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, capital expenditure and requests for budget rollovers from 2013-14 to 2014-15. The report also presented the Council's year end position with regard to its corporate objectives and performance indicators. Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing presented the report.

#### ***Greater Cambridge City Deal***

The Committee received an update from the Executive Director (Corporate Services) on the Greater Cambridge City Deal which had been recently signed at the time of the meeting.

#### ***Orchard Park – Review of achievements and lessons learned***

At the June 2014 meeting of full Council, Orchard Park was suggested as an area for potential scrutiny. The Development Officer provided the Committee with background on the in-depth review of Orchard Park which had been undertaken by a Scrutiny and Overview Committee Task and Finish Group in 2007. The setting up of another Member/Officer working group was proposed, to investigate what the Council was doing to ensure that the recommendations of the 2007 Task and Finish Group were being incorporated and how any achievements, lessons learned and good practice were being embedded in other new developments such as Northstowe. The Committee agreed that a working group would be set up and agreed its membership.

### **4 September 2014**

#### ***Contact Centre Half Yearly Performance Review***

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services presented the Customer Contact Centre's half yearly performance report, which informed the committee of the Contact Centre's performance for January to July 2014.

Problems with the Contact Centre's performance had been identified, such as the call wait time and number of calls lost during times of peak demand. An improvement plan to resolve these problems was presented. Proposals outlined in the plan were:

- Members of staff from the Revenues Team would provide additional resource to the Contact Centre during times of peak demand.
- Three new full time members of staff would be recruited and be in post and fully trained by November 2014.
- The Contact Centre would be reorganised, with Contact Centre staff providing the reception service at times when calls were less busy, staff working patterns would reflect call volumes with more staff available on busier days.
- Self-service Benefit forms would be introduced to increase the number of residents able to self-serve, as well as providing easier and quicker options for Contact Centre staff to deal with calls.
- Work with the software supplier to improve the reliability of the Call Centre's software as a significant number of calls were being lost on a daily basis due to software issues.

- Options to encourage staff to remain within the Contact Centre would be looked at, such as offering NVQ qualifications which would keep staff in post for two years.

The Committee agreed that an interim report updating the Committee on improvements to the Contact Centre would be presented at its November 2014 meeting, with a further full report at the Scrutiny Committee's meeting in January 2015.

### ***People and Organisational Development Strategy***

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing presented the Council's People and Organisational Development Strategy and Action Plan for 2014-2017. The Committee was informed that the Council had achieved Silver accreditation from Investors in People and that progress was being made to achieve gold accreditation. The staff survey was discussed, with Members emphasising the need for this to be anonymous. The Committee noted the progress that had been made on the People and Organisational Development Strategy and Action Plan, for which it indicated its support.

### ***Quarterly Position Statement on Finance, Performance and Risk***

The Portfolio Holders for Finance and Staffing, and Corporate and Customer Services presented the Council's Quarterly Position Statement on Finance, Performance and Risk. This provided a statement on the Council's position with regard to its General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital budgets, corporate objectives, performance indicators and strategic risks.

## **6 November 2014**

### ***Contact Centre Performance Review***

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services, presented an update on the Contact Centre's performance. Concern was expressed by Members that IT issues could be underpinning problems with the Contact Centre, preventing officers from delivering the quality of service that they wanted to provide. The committee was informed that Revenues staff had been handling calls regarding revenues issues, which had taken 400 calls away from the Contact Centre. Background was provided on the 'Digital by Default' project, which would help reduce the volume of calls to the Contact Centre by enabling those residents who would prefer to self serve via the Council's website, to be able to do so. Members were keen for a 'missed bins' e-form to be made available on the Council's website to enable residents to report missed bin collections online. This was implemented shortly after the meeting. The Committee was informed of contingencies that were being put in place in anticipation of increased call volumes over the Christmas period with the reduction in green bin waste collection.

### ***Quarterly Position Statement on Finance, Performance and Risk***

The Portfolio Holders for Finance and Staffing, and Corporate and Customer Services presented the Council's Quarterly Position Statement on Finance Performance and Risk, ahead of its presentation to Cabinet. This provided a statement on the Council's position with regard to its General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital budgets, corporate objectives, performance indicators and strategic risks. Following the presentation of the report, discussion and questions on a number of issues ensued. Amongst issues discussed were the recruitment of Planning Officers and a Business Excellence Manager to the Planning Department, changes to monthly green bin collections and issues that had been encountered with assisted bin collections when new bin rounds had begun.

### ***Corporate Plan for 2015-2020***

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services presented the updated Corporate Plan before Cabinet was asked to agree this at its next meeting. The Committee was informed that a consortium had been formed to lobby Government to prioritise improvements to the A428.

### **10 February 2015**

#### ***Contact Centre Annual Performance Review***

The Executive Director (Corporate Services) and the Benefits Manager presented the Customer Contact Centre's Annual Performance Review.

Initial results since the implementation of the improvement plan, of which the Committee had been notified at its 6 November 2014 meeting, indicated that there had been a significant decrease in call waiting times. This had been achieved with the use of back office staff during times of peak demand. The Committee was informed that further reduction in waiting times was anticipated once recruitment to two vacancies in the Contact Centre had taken place.

The Committee congratulated officers on the progress made with the Contact Centre's performance and looked forward to continued progress within the service once all actions within the improvement plan had been implemented. The Committee requested annual performance updates on the Contact Centre.

#### ***Medium Term Financial Strategy, Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme 2015/16-2019/20 and Treasury Management Strategy***

The Deputy Leader and Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, Housing Portfolio Holder and Executive Director (Corporate Services) were in attendance to present the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme and Treasury Management Strategy.

The Housing Portfolio Holder addressed the Committee, making particular references to the Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account. The Committee was informed of a 2.2% increase in social housing rent and how rents were calculated by the Council. The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources addressed the Committee, giving an overview of the General Fund and Risk Management

#### ***Corporate Plan 2015-2020***

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, together with the Executive Director (Corporate Services), presented the Council's Corporate Plan for 2015-2020. Referring to the Plan, the following issues were raised:

- It was queried whether tackling human trafficking/domestic abuse and working in partnership with the Police should be included within the Plan. In response it was noted that those issues would be considered within a partnership agreement between the Council, the Police and Fire and Rescue Service, and that a formal Plan would be presented to a future Leader's Portfolio Holder meeting.
- Surprise was expressed by the local Member for Bourn, that the 'Wing' (Cambridge East) application was included in the Plan as it had been understood to that it was not sustainable. In response, the Chief Executive clarified that discussions had taken place with the developer on the viability of the development and were progressing well.

#### ***Quarterly Position Report on Finance, Performance and Risk***

The Executive Director (Corporate Services) presented the Quarterly Position Statement on Finance, Performance and Risk and reported that suggestions made by a member of the Committee would be taken into account during the preparation of the next quarterly report.



### **Scrutiny and Overview Committee Orchard Park Working Group**

Following the June 2014 meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, a Scrutiny Working Group was set up to review the 2007 recommendations made by Scrutiny Committee regarding Orchard Park. The remit of the group was to look at how the recommendations made by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee regarding Orchard Park in 2007, had been implemented on all growth sites and what the effects of them had been. The timescale of the Group's work was 12 months, with monthly meetings taking place.

Membership of the group:

- Councillor Lynda Harford (Chairman)
- Councillor David Bard
- Councillor Alison Elcox
- Councillor Jose Hales

At the time of writing this report, the group had met seven times, with meetings on the following dates:

- 9 September 2014
- 14 October 2014
- 4 December 2014
- 17 February 2015
- 27 March 2015
- 16 April 2015
- 21 April 2015

Work of the group to date:

- The group developed a Growth Site Survey, which was taken to Cambourne, Orchard Park, Haslingfield, Longstanton, Oakington and Westwick, Histon and Impington, Girton, Milton and Fen Ditton Parish Councils. These are all parish councils that have experienced or are experiencing growth. The survey was also sent to relevant District and County Councillors for completion.
- As well as surveying parish councils experiencing growth, the Task and Finish Group met with the following people:
  - Dr Peter Bailey, who was Cambourne's first Lead GP and heavily involved in the early days of Cambourne establishing a community.
  - Orchard Park Community Council.
  - Relevant Planning Officers responsible for growth areas from South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council.
  - The Task and Finish Group also intends to meet with other relevant stakeholders as necessary, such as faith representatives, local residents and residents' associations, to capture their experiences and feedback for those growth areas that cross Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire administrative borders.

Updates continue to be provided to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at each of its meetings. At the end of the Task and Finish Group's work, a full report will outline all the groups findings and recommendations.

### **Monitoring Cabinet Portfolio Holders**

Portfolio Holders at South Cambridgeshire District Council in 2014/15 took the majority of their decisions at public Portfolio Holder Meetings. Members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee were allocated as Scrutiny Monitors for specific Portfolios and attended these meetings to develop greater knowledge in an area of the Council's work, as well as offering well informed challenge and influence. Scrutiny Monitors for 2014/15 were allocated as follows: -

<b>Cabinet Portfolio</b>	<b>Scrutiny Monitor</b>
Leader of the Council	Cllr Lynda Harford
Deputy Leader Finance and Staffing	Cllr Roger Hickford
Corporate and Customer Services	Cllr Jose Hales
Economic Development	Cllr Philippa Hart
Environmental Services	Cllr David Bard
Housing	Cllr Bunty Waters
Planning	Cllr Kevin Cuffley
Strategic Planning and Transportation	Cllr Alison Elcox Cllr Jose Hales Cllr Lynda Harford

### **Call-in**

Call-in is usually a last resort, when other means of influencing decision-making have failed. Any Call-in would be considered by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, but this procedure was not used during the 2014/15 municipal year.

### **Training and development**

Following the training and development session facilitated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny in January 2014 for the Partnerships Review Committee and the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, no further requests for training were received in the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

### **Contact us**

If you would like to know more about the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at South Cambridgeshire District Council please contact the Democratic Services Team Leader, Graham Watts, on (01954) 713030 or [democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk).