



South Cambridgeshire District Council

Scrutiny and Overview Annual Report 2015/16

FOREWORD

Scrutiny and Overview Committee



I have taken the decision not to stand for re-election. It was not a decision I took lightly, or indeed wanted to make.

However, with my responsibilities as a County Councillor as well, I have to allocate much more of my time to County matters and issues. I feel my particular skills are more suited to the County at this moment in time of ever changing political landscape. In addition, I am heavily involved in the housing development program at County, and as this project expands, it might not be prudent if I was a District councillor as well.

I have been Chair of Scrutiny for three years. I would like to thank the Leader for having the faith and confidence in me to carry out and perform this very important role. When a Council is dominated by one Party (and I am writing this before the May elections and so I am assuming it is still the same!) it is crucial that the Scrutiny Committee holds the Executive to account.

It is essential that the Committee is seen as impartial and fair, and that involves not being too close to the decision-making processes of this Council – but close enough to know what is going on. (My role at County has allowed me an informative overview of local government, which I have been able to use as Chair of Scrutiny at District).

I feel we, as a Committee, have achieved impartiality and fairness through updating the way we work and the way we bring items before the Committee. Most importantly, we have continued to strive to be the “critical friend” to this Council and to the Executive.

Critical friend is not always an easy role to take on; especially when a Council is ran well. The Committee is usually asking for clarification on minor details in the papers and reports presented to us. When an issue does need to come back to Committee, as long as it has been, or is being, rectified then the Committee has fulfilled its role, although it may ask for a review in the near future.

I would like to thank all the members that have been part of the Scrutiny Committee over the last three years. Within the Committee I think we have struck a balance between the serious work that needed doing, and enjoyment of fulfilling the Role. I also thank Victoria Wallace as lead officer for all the hard work she does for the Committee.

Scrutiny Committee’s remit is the internal functions of the Council, and is therefore a great way for members (particularly the newer members) to learn more about this Council’s activities.

I wish you all well – I will not be very far away!

Councillor Roger Hickford, Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

FOREWORD
Partnerships Review Committee

It has been a pleasure to be Chairman of the Partnerships Review Committee for another year. The committee has continued its work to look at the external issues that affect our residents, which has become even more important with the increased work the Council does with other organisations and the move to sharing services and partnership working to deliver services to our residents. The Committee has continued to invite key partners to its meetings in order to better understand what they do and the issues affecting other organisations, many of which are very similar to those our Council faces.



It has been another busy year during which we have been fortunate to have key people with us for our meetings. This year we have met with representatives from the Cambridgeshire Constabulary and the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, the Managing Director of Stagecoach buses and representatives of the County Council's Passenger Transport Team. Cambridgeshire County Council's Chief Executive and other senior heads of service attended our final meeting of the year, to discuss the County Council's budget.

We are looking forward to another exciting and challenging year ahead.

I must thank the individual Committee Members who have regularly attended meetings this year for their commitment and also for the regular updates from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies.

Councillor Ben Shelton, Chairman of the Partnerships Review Committee

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 2015/16 municipal year:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Chairman: Councillor Roger Hickford
Vice-Chairman: Councillor Kevin Cuffley
Councillors:
David Bard
Henry Batchelor
Grenville Chamberlain
Graham Cone (from February 2016)
Jose Hales
Philippa Hart
Bunty Waters
David Whiteman-Downes (until February 2016)

The following Councillors were available as substitutes during the year:

Councillors:
Graham Cone
Christopher Cross
Val Barrett
Anna Bradnam
Neil Davies
Douglas de Lacey
Andrew Johnson
Lynda Harford
Deborah Roberts
Ed Stonham

Partnerships Review Committee

Chairman: Councillor Ben Shelton
Vice-Chairman: Councillor James Hockney
Councillors:
David Bard
Henry Batchelor
Kevin Cuffley
Andrew Fraser
Jose Hales
Roger Hall
Janet Lockwood

The following Councillors were available as substitutes during the year:

Councillors:
Grenville Chamberlain
Neil Davies
Douglas de Lacey
Tumi Hawkins
Peter Johnson
Tony Orgee
Deborah Roberts
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.

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 2015/16

The Partnerships Review Committee met on three occasions in the 2015/16 Municipal Year. This was as follows:

16 June 2016

Policing, Crime and Disorder

Cambridgeshire Constabulary's Chief Superintendent and Chief Inspector attended the meeting along with the Director of Public Engagement and Communications and the Outreach Worker from the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner's Office.

An in depth discussion took place which included amongst other issues, discussion around the perception and reporting of crime in South Cambridgeshire. Awareness was being raised in the district about human trafficking and the exploitation of vulnerable people and immigrants, which was also discussed in depth.

Representatives from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office updated the committee on current and future projects and Members were able to raise and discuss local issues, such as Police Community Support Officers and the Rehabilitation of Offenders programme.

22 September 2016

Bus Services

The Managing Director of Stagecoach attended this meeting alongside representatives from Cambridgeshire County Council's Passenger Transport team.

The provision of bus services, school transport, community transport, bus zoning and fares and evening services were discussed. A summary of South Cambridgeshire District Council's Community Transport Strategy was also summarised.

28 February 2016

Cambridgeshire County Council's Budget Proposals

Cambridgeshire County Council's Chief Executive, Service Director for Adult Social Care, Children, Families and Adults (CFA) Directorate and Executive Director for Economy, Transport and Environment attended the meeting to present the County Council's budget proposals. The Service Director for Adult Social Care and CFA gave a presentation which covered the CFA budget and strategy, Adult Social Care, Older people and adults with mental health needs.

The County Council's Executive Director for Economy, Transport and Environment (ETE) gave a presentation setting out the Business Plan proposals for the ETE Directorate.

Members raised local issues with the County Council representatives, including the funding of Adult Social Care, partnership working and the withdrawal of school transport.

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:

- Cambridgeshire Advisory Group on Archives and Local Studies
- The Carers' Trust
- The Farmland Museum
- Cambridge International Airport Consultative Committee
- Waterbeach Level Internal Drainage Board
- Regular updates on Health were provided, which included updates on the following issues and bodies:
 - o The Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Board
 - o The Cambridgeshire Health Committee
 - o The Cambridgeshire Older People's Contract
 - o The Better Care Fund
 - o Older People and Adult Community Services

Work of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee during 2015/16

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee met as a full committee on five occasions in the 2015/16 Municipal Year, as follows:

7 July 2015

Shared Services

The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council presented Shared Services reports and business cases ahead of their presentation to Cabinet. Reports and business cases for Legal, ICT and Building Control Shared Services were presented and discussed. The committee endorsed the recommendations to Cabinet and made two recommendations regarding performance monitoring of the service and scrutiny of the legal practice business plan.

Position Statement on Finance and Performance

As part of his responsibility for overseeing a robust process for managing performance, the Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder presented the Council's Year End Position Statement on Finance, Performance and Risk before this was presented to Cabinet. This enabled Members to maintain a sound understanding of the Council's financial position and performance.

Orchard Park Task and Finish Group

The Chairman of the Orchard Park Task and Finish Group updated the committee on the ongoing work of the group.

3 September 2015

Quarterly Position Statement on Finance, Performance and Risk

The Executive Director (Corporate Services) presented the 2015-2016 first quarterly position statement on finance, performance and risk before it was presented to Cabinet.

Orchard Park Task and Finish Group

The committee received an update on the ongoing work of the Orchard Park Task and Finish Group, the final recommendations of which would be presented to the committee at its November 2015 meeting.

Appointment of Scrutiny Monitors

The committee appointed its Portfolio Holder monitors.

5 November 2015

Quarterly Position Statement on Finance, Performance and Risk

The Portfolio Holders for Finance and Staffing, and Corporate and Customer Services presented the Council's second 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 and was presented to the committee before it was presented to Cabinet for approval.

Review of the Corporate Plan

The Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder presented a review of the Council's Corporate Plan, inviting comments and suggestions on the Corporate Plan from committee members. A number of recommendations were made by the committee regarding wording of some of the sections in the Corporate Plan, which were incorporated.

Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder presented the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy before it was presented to Cabinet at its November 2015 meeting.

Review of Lessons Learned from Orchard Park

A report outlining the findings of the Orchard Park Task and Finish Group was presented by Councillor Lynda Harford who had led the work of the group. 20 final recommendations were presented to and agreed by the committee, which recommended their full endorsement to Cabinet.

At this meeting, the Housing Portfolio Holder also updated the committee on the negative implications for the Council of Government budget announcements regarding housing.

4 February 2016

Business Improvement and Efficiency Programme - Commercialisation

The Council's Corporate Programme Manager presented a report providing the committee with an overview of the Council's Commercialisation Programme approach to service delivery, the aim of which was to generate income for the Council and identify further savings. This was discussed in depth and the committee confirmed its support for the programme.

Customer Contact Service Annual Performance Review 2015

The Benefits Manager presented the Customer Contact Centre's Annual Performance Review. This provided the committee with an annual update on the performance of the Contact Centre for 2015. The committee congratulated the Benefits Manager on the improving performance of the Contact Centre.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy was presented to the committee before its presentation to the February 2016 Cabinet meeting and subsequent approval at February's meeting of full Council.

Corporate Plan 2016-2021

The Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder presented the Corporate Plan 2016-2021 ahead of its presentation to Cabinet.

Quarterly Position Statement on Finance, Performance and Risk

The Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder presented the Council's third Quarterly Position Statement on Finance, Performance and Risk. This was presented and discussed before its presentation to Cabinet at its February 2016 meeting.

7 April 2016

Shared Services

The committee considered the business cases for the ICT, Legal and Building Control Shared Services as well as considering the governance arrangements for these services. Following a lengthy and in depth discussion, the committee supported the business cases and the Terms of Reference for the Shared Services Group, which were then approved by the Leader of the Council.

Planning Performance

Following its consideration of the Quarterly Position Statement on Finance, Performance and Risk in February 2016, the Committee requested a more detailed report on the performance of the Planning department for its April 2016 meeting. This was presented by the Planning Portfolio Holder and Head of Development Management and informed the committee of the issues facing the Planning department, how these were being addressed and how service improvements were progressing. The committee would continue to monitor this, with a further update requested at its next meeting.

Corporate Plan Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators 2016-2017

The committee considered the outcomes of the Corporate Plan and Key Performance Indicators for 2016-2017, which the committee then recommended to the Leader of the Council for approval.

Scrutiny and Overview Committee Orchard Park Working Group

The Orchard Park Working Group continued the work it had started in July 2014, to review the lessons learned from the development of Orchard Park. The group's remit was to look at how recommendations made in 2008 by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee regarding Orchard Park had been implemented, if they had been applied to subsequent developments and what the effects of them had been. The group completed its work and presented 20 recommendations to Cabinet in January 2016, all of which were endorsed.

Membership of the group:

- Councillor Lynda Harford (Chairman)
- Councillor David Bard
- Councillor Kevin Cuffley
- Councillor Jose Hales
- Councillor Janet Lockwood
- Councillor Bunty Waters

The group was supported by the Sustainable Communities and Partnerships Manager and a Democratic Services Officer.

Monitoring Cabinet Portfolio Holders

Portfolio Holders at South Cambridgeshire District Council in 2015/16 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 2015/16 were allocated as follows: -

Cabinet Portfolio	Scrutiny Monitor
Leader of the Council	Cllr Lynda Harford
Deputy Leader Finance and Staffing	Cllr Roger Hickford
Corporate and Customer Services	Cllr Henry Batchelor
Economic Development	Cllr Philippa Hart
Environmental Services	Cllr David Bard
Housing	Cllr Bunty Waters
Planning	Cllr Kevin Cuffley
Strategic Planning and Transportation	Grenville Chamberlain

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 2015/16 municipal year.

Training and development

No requests for training were received in the 2015/16 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.