

ANNUAL REPORT

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

2017/18

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Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Committees 2017/18

Audit and Corporate Governance

Chair - Councillor G Morley
Vice Chair - Councillor C A Smith

Communities

Chair - Councillor T Reader
Vice Chair - Councillor C Tite

Growth

Chair - Councillor J Windle
Vice Chair - Councillor R Smith

Organisation

Chair - Councillor D Skinner
Vice Chair - Councillor T Mansbridge

1 A Summary of the Work Undertaken during 2017/18

- 1.1 Each of the Committees has completed its Work Programme with the time available shared between Scrutiny review work, consideration of key strategies and policies of the Council and performance monitoring.
- 1.2 The Committees have also been monitoring the delivery of action plans from previous scrutiny reviews for The Impact of Town Centre Environments on Community Safety, The A61 Corridor and Health & Wellbeing and Morale. Progress had been made but the action plans had not yet been completed.

2 Current Scrutiny Reviews

- 2.1 Three Scrutiny Reviews were undertaken this year and a number of recommendations were made for improvement. These will be considered by Cabinet on 9th May, 2018. If the recommendations are accepted they will be translated into action plans for delivery. Full copies of the reports and all previous reports can be viewed on the Council's intranet or in the Scrutiny Room

2.2 Domestic Abuse

The Communities Scrutiny Committee decided to review this area as ensuring that our communities were safe and healthy places to live was a key ambition for the Authority. It was also inspired by the Chairs charity this year which was the Derbyshire Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Service, recently renamed The Elm Foundation. The Committee recognised that there was a need to identify the responsibilities of the District Council and be sure it was responding appropriately in addressing issues around Domestic Abuse in North East Derbyshire.

A number of documents and evidence were considered by the Committee to help inform the review. These included the Derby and Derbyshire Domestic Violence and Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2015 -2018, the Derbyshire County Council Domestic Abuse Referral Guide (2017), Working to End Domestic Abuse (The Elm Foundation), Rykneld Homes Domestic Abuse Policy, Guide on the Abusive Behavioural Change Project for perpetrators of Domestic Abuse and a briefing note from the portfolio holder and the Director of Transformation on Domestic Abuse services in North East Derbyshire.

A wide range of stakeholders were interviewed including a number of internal officers which included the Community Safety Manager, the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety , Equality & Diversity and Health, a representative from Derbyshire County Council, a police representative and officers from key partner Rykneld Homes. The Elm Foundation also provided a scene setting presentation on Domestic Abuse and how it affected our communities. In addition to gain an insight from a wider staff perspective a survey on domestic abuse was undertaken on the Councils intranet. It aimed to identify how the Council should support any member of staff who has, or is, experiencing domestic abuse. It also sought to identify staff awareness and attitudes to this issue and knowledge of support available.

The review panel concluded that a number of measures were being undertaken by various sections of the Council to support people suffering from domestic abuse. The

commitment that North East Derbyshire staff and external agencies had to address domestic abuse was made very clear during the stakeholder interviews.

Twelve recommendations for enhancing the current provision were identified around raising awareness, support for staff, producing a domestic abuse policy and dedicated officer support.

2.3 Job Evaluation and Associated Benefits

The Organisation Scrutiny Committee chose to review Job Evaluation and Associated Benefits that the Council provided to support recruitment and retention of staff given the significant amount of change the Council had experienced over recent years. Staff were a key asset of the Council and it was important to understand what the Council could do to attract and keep employees.

A number of documents were considered by the Committee to identify the various benefits the Council provided to staff. These included the Scheme of Flexible Working Hours, Policy on Time-Off-In-Lieu, Home Working Policy, Annual Leave, Learning and Development Policy and Current Employee Reward, Recognition and Retention Initiatives. In addition to help inform the review it was agreed that the Committee would hold some informal discussion groups with staff to gather further evidence.

Two groups took place and the Committee heard a number of positive comments from staff about working for the Authority during its evidence gathering. Numerous benefits were highlighted that the Council provided and these were highly valued by staff, especially the generous leave allowance and the flexi time scheme that supported a work life balance.

However, some ideas for improvement were identified and seven recommendations were made for the Cabinet and the Chief Executive to consider on how the issues raised could be addressed.

2.4 Tourism and Growth

The Growth Scrutiny Committee decided to undertake a review of Tourism and Growth as growth was a key objective for the Authority. Tourism had previously been reviewed by the Committee in 2014. This issue was identified for review again by the Growth Scrutiny Committee as it recognised that this area potentially could provide significant benefit economically for the district.

Interviews were held with a range of stakeholders including the Assistant Director of Economic Growth, the Economic Development and Growth Manager and the Communications, Marketing and Design Manager. The Development and Growth Manager and the Tourism Museum and Events Manager from Chesterfield Borough Council were also interviewed as the Council had a Service Level Agreement for Tourism delivery with the neighbouring Council.

The Committee recognised that this area was a multi-layered arena in which many partners had a role to play. However, from the initial look the Committee concluded

that this was an area that presented opportunities for the Council as part of the Growth Agenda.

Nine recommendations for improvement were made focused around promotion, engagement with partners and more fundamentally the creation of some key strategic documents such as a Tourism Strategy.

3 Scrutiny Committees

3.1 Audit and Corporate Governance

During the year the Committee met on seven occasions. It considered a number of key governance and financial documents of the Council which included the Medium Term Financial Plan, Budget Monitoring, Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of Accounts. It also continued to monitor and keep under review risk management and partnership working arrangements.

The Committee is the body to which both the Council's external and internal auditors report. Key reports from Internal Audit included the Annual Report of the Internal Audit Consortium, Summary of Progress on the Annual Internal Audit Plan, the Annual Review of Adequacy of Internal Audit and various internal Audit reports on individual services. The key reports from External Audit included the report prepared around the audit of the Council's Accounts ISA260, together with the Annual Audit Letter.

In its key role of overseeing the financial governance arrangements of the Council the Committee:-

- Considered and approved the Annual Statement of Accounts;
- Reviewed and commented on both the budget proposals that ultimately went to Council, and considered progress in operating within the constraints of those budgets – including achieving agreed savings targets;
- Considered the Council's systems of internal control and in particular any issues arising from the reports of Internal Audit;
- Kept under review performance against the Council's Performance Management Framework.

It also considered a report on Accounting Policies that it was proposed to adopt for the current financial year in the preparation of the Statement of Accounts 2017/18. These policies determined the accounting treatment that would be applied to transactions during the financial year and in the preparation of the Statement of Accounts at the year end.

Progress made against the corporate target for Empty Properties within the District was reviewed. A summary was provided of the work being undertaken to bring empty properties back in to use, including an annual landlord event, writing to all long term

empty property owners, working with partners including Action Housing, offering a property match service on the website and scoping purchase and repair schemes. Accreditation schemes were also used for landlords working with the Council on these schemes. Performance in bringing empty properties back into use had been limited by the lack of landlords/owners willing to engage with the Council and the reluctance of registered providers to purchase or take on individual properties. The Committee was concerned with the poor performance in this area but were encouraged that a number of initiatives were already underway with further projects being explored to tackle this issue.

3.2 Communities

During the year the Committee met on seven occasions. Early on in the year the Committee received a presentation on the results of the Positive 4 Young People Event at Tupton Hall School. This project aimed to reduce the escalation of poor mental health and self-harm related hospital admissions. It provided effective coping strategies, promoted resilience and improved the emotional wellbeing of young people. Over a 180 counselling sessions had been delivered for young people over a 36 week period. The Committee felt that this had been an excellent project and congratulated the representatives on the fantastic work carried out.

The Committee has considered a number of licensing items during the year. This has included the review of the licensing section, the wider Licensing review in Derbyshire, the review of the Licensing Policy, the Licensed Driver Medical Exemption Policy and the new Licensing Test. The Committee were keen to ensure that the Licensing test was robust and made four recommendations to support this. In addition following consideration of the review of the Licensing Policy four recommendations were also made.

Members had raised concerns over the availability of drugs within the District. The Community Safety Manager and a representative from Derbyshire Police attended a meeting to inform the Committee about the measures being taken to combat this issue. This included yearly visits to schools to raise awareness with children around the consequences of taking and dealing drugs. Other areas discussed included drugs coming across the border from Sheffield, combating issues of drug dealing by designing crime out of areas and the usefulness on the new Community Protection Notice Powers. These powers turned what was seen previously as a nuisance into a crime and there had been a 90% success rate with their use.

The Committee also monitored the delivery of the action plan on their review of The Impact of Town Centre Environments on Community Safety. One of the issues raised had been the difficulty town centres had with regard to the level of parking enforcement undertaken. Often vehicles were parked illegally and caused obstruction and sometimes risk to other drivers and pedestrians. The Committee had raised this issue via the lead officer with Derbyshire County Council and were not satisfied with the response received and felt traffic enforcement timings were not acceptable for dealing with illegal parking after 5:00pm. This issue was being pursued.

The Committee looked at data provided on external complaints within its remit that had been received by the Council. Following consideration further information had

been requested on a couple of complaints relating to Street scene and one of the sports centres. The Committee were satisfied with the explanations provided.

The Committee also heard from the Strategic Director - People on the outcomes of the refurbishment of leisure facilities within the District and the services contribution to the delivery of health targets within the corporate plan. An overview of the service was provided for Active and Healthy Lifestyles, Leisure facilities, Exercise referral, the 5:60 programme and Arts development activities. The Director advised that Leisure Services was showing sustained levels of improvement over the last seven years both in growth terms and service improvements. A subsidy reduction plan was in place and this had contributed largely to increased performance in the service.

Progress against the Healthy North East Derbyshire Partnership was provided by the Partnership Team and Councillor Liz Blanshard (scrutiny representative on the partnership). The Partnership was the delivery vehicle for the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2019, as well as delivering the Public Health Locality Plan for 2015/17. Details were provided of a number of projects that had been commissioned which included a small grant scheme, the employment of a community development worker to increase community engagement in health initiatives across the district, the launch of the NEDDC work well initiative and the commencement of a generation game extra time officer to support people at risk to live independently through the VARM Discretionary Fund.

The Committee had been monitoring the impact of Universal Credit and Welfare Reforms since its introduction. Therefore it considered an update from the Council's Senior Revenues Officer on how its implementation was progressing. He advised that Universal Credit was first introduced in 2013 and rolled out in 2015. Some postcode areas within the District were now on full service and by the end of July 2018 all areas within the District will be operating on full service. He also advised that in order to receive Universal Credit the claimant would need an email address and a bank account. The Council were assisting people to claim in partnership with the Department of Works and Pension and assistance was also being provided by Derbyshire County Council Library staff. An additional PC had been installed in the reception area of the Council Offices with four other PC's being available to the public.

The Committee continued to monitor financial inclusion activities undertaken by the Councils Partnership Team and other departments and partners engaged in facilitating financial inclusion within North East Derbyshire. The Partnership Team were responsible for delivery against six targets identified in the 2015-2019 Corporate Plan, each of which was linked to the financial inclusion agenda. The Team activities included assisting vulnerable people through the Voluntary and Community Sector, supporting the growth in membership of the Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire Credit Union, supporting the development and delivery of the Grassland Hasmoor Big Local scheme and developing an action plan and implementation for the Derbyshire Thriving Families Initiative.

An update was also provided on the various other projects the team supported which included Bolsover-North East Derbyshire LEADER Approach, the Business Growth Fund, the Healthy North East Derbyshire Partnership, Danesmoor Thriving Communities and support to the Armed Forces Community.

The Committee is statutorily required to review the Councils Community Safety Partnership under the Police and Crime Act. The Community Safety Partnership Manager outlined for the Committee progress on delivery of the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2018-2019. The Committee were advised that overall crime was on the increase throughout Derbyshire and through the Country. North East Derbyshire had seen an overall increase of 12.3%. Key areas of concern were increases in thefts of motor vehicles and criminal damage. However, while the percentage increase seemed high the number of crimes was actually low.

The Community Safety Partnership Manager advised the Committee that the NED Community Partnership would pay attention to all the priorities in the plan but the main focus would be local ones such as anti-social behaviour. These included the continuation of monitoring and planning for trends in all crime and other community safety issues, addressing them on the Community Safety Partnership's briefing and other tasking arrangements in order to continue to reduce recorded crime. The Community Safety Manager also highlighted the use of Community Protection Warnings and Community Protection Notices and how effective these had been. Levels of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) were relatively low in North East Derbyshire but keeping these levels low was also a priority for the Partnership.

Some achievements outlined to date by the Partnership to reduce crime included:

- Effective advertising and promotions and regular use of the press to promote positive success stories or reductions in crime
- Improved consultation with local residents through Have Your Say and Targeted hotspot areas. Targeted crime events
- Targeted use of crime reduction campaigns using a Communications Calendar. These included focus on vehicle crime, burglary and domestic abuse in areas with known spikes (POLICE Tasking used to identify hotspots)
- Publicity campaigns use a variety of ways to communicate with residents so many will know how to reduce the chance of becoming a victim of crime
- Frequent joint operations focusing on improving public confidence, reducing antisocial behaviour and focusing on reducing serious acquisitive crime
- Use of new tools and powers for example PSPO (Public Spaces Protection Order) and Police Dispersal Power and 3 Civil Injunctions, 2 Closure Orders and 1 Legal undertaking
- Use of Community Protection Warnings, Community Protection Notices and Fixed Penalty Notices in an attempt to tackle those persistent ASB perpetrators. To date: 37 Community Protection Warnings, 16 Community Protection Notices and 7 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued
- All burglary victims contacted and sent crime reduction advice and a UV pen and offered target hardening which is currently free of charge
- ECINS fully integrated into working on supporting victims and witnesses

3.3 Growth

During the year the Committee met on six occasions. It continued to monitor progress on the delivery of the Local Plan, the Economic Development and Housing Strategy, the Empty Properties Strategy and associated action plans.

The Chief Executive attended the Committee with a representative from Derbyshire County Council to provide a further update on progress with the One Public Estate Initiative (OPE). The programme enabled local authorities and Public Sector Organisations to bid for funding to reconfigure and rationalise their assets base to facilitate the sharing of services and reduce running costs. The programme aims to create economic growth as well as deliver more integrated and customer focused services. The Committee were advised that two projects in the district were to benefit from OPE funding. The first was a successful bid for £85,000 for Clay Cross Town Centre and the second was a project at the Mill Lane Avenue Site, which was a joint piece of work with the HCA. A bid of £50,000 for a feasibility study on the Avenue Site had been successful.

The Assistant Director of Economic Growth provided an update on progress against the action plan for the Growth Strategy including the regeneration of major sites. The Assistant Director of Economic Growth then outlined how the Council was supporting enterprise through a number of measures. Local businesses were helped by ongoing business relationship management support and promoting funding opportunities as they became available. A range of business events had also been hosted at the Council Offices and links with Universities had been created. The Council was also enabling housing growth by increasing the supply, quality and range of housing to meet the needs of a growing population and support economic growth.

A Joint Venture Company had been set up and aimed to reinvigorate the area by creating construction and employment opportunities, through the direct delivery of developments in the local area. Additionally the Council was creating development potential by unlocking the capacity of major employment sites across the district. The Council had collaborated with Derbyshire County Council to secure funding of £12.8 million from D2N2 for the A61 Growth Corridor to improve highway infrastructure.

The Committee also considered an update from Rykneld Homes on garages within the District. This subject was reviewed because of concerns around the provision of garages, their viability and condition. The Director of Property Services and Development advised that 54 garages had been disposed of since 2014 but there were still 168 garage sites remaining around the district with an 85% occupancy rate. There was no plans for new garages to be built and the viability of existing sites was decreasing each year. Rykneld Homes did repair garages where viable but others were demolished if beyond economic repair. Many garages were used for storage by tenants as they were not large enough for many modern vehicles but some were still used for cars.

Consideration was given by the Committee to the use of brownfield sites for housing. The Government used to set a stringent target of 60% for new homes to be built on brownfield sites. However, in recent years this guidance had been relaxed and the emphasis changed in favour of economic growth. All strategic sites in the district lie in brownfield areas and the Council was seeking to use brownfield sites wherever possible, whilst recognising the need for affordable housing and economic growth in

the district. Members of the Committee raised concerns over erosion of the green belt and the practice of developers buying land which is not then developed for several years. The Planning Policy Manager reassured the Committee that there was ways to tackle this by including appropriate clauses in legal agreements. However, it was also acknowledged that this could make the sites less attractive to potential developers. Where businesses closed and opportunities arose, the Council would seek to take a flexible approach to the site, taking into account the locality, future needs and infrastructure requirements.

The Committee reviewed the work of the Partnership Team in support of growth. The Strategic Partnership Co-Coordinator outlined the Partnership Team's contribution to the growth agenda directly through managing funding programmes which facilitated economic growth and job creation within the District and by working with colleagues on the wider Growth Agenda and generating income for the Council. He provided evidence for the Committee on the work the team had undertaken which included working with partners to develop healthy sustainable communities and to enable financial inclusion. The Council were supporting rural areas in terms of job creation and economic growth through the Bolsover-North East Derbyshire (BNED) LEADER Approach. The 2007-13 programme had allocated just under £2 million to 32 projects across the two districts and directly created 75 jobs and supported 54 tourism events attracting over 70,000 visitors. The 2014-20 programme had created seven projects to date and created 7.5 jobs. A further 18 applications are currently in development.

The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager briefed the Committee on Growth Performance Indicators for 2017/18. The majority of indicators were shown to be on target or above target. Five indicators were not on track and explanations were provided on the reasons behind these exceptions and the steps being taken to improve this performance.

3.4 Organisation

During the year the Committee met on seven occasions. At its first meeting the Committee considered the Annual Report of Human Resources and Organisational Development. The report updated on a range of employee related issues that the Committee had been monitoring. This included how effective the Councils recruitment process was and analysis of the reasons why people left the organisation. Data was also provided on the levels of sickness within the organisation. The outturn figure had slightly reduced from the previous year but was still higher than the target set per employees. A number of health and wellbeing initiatives were being used to improve this outturn, such as the introduction of an Employees Assistance Programme which offered 24/7 telephone and on-line support to employees covering a range of topics, including confidential telephone counselling.

The Committee requested the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll to provide a more in depth breakdown of the sickness figures to include age, disability and any reasonable adjustments, this was considered at a later meeting. In response to the previous year's Scrutiny review evidence was also provided of further measures to assist in health & wellbeing and morale. Sessions offered were Yoga classes, Personal Resilience & Mindfulness and Sleep workshops. The Committee were pleased to hear that sessions were being offered to assist staff in reducing sickness absence.

The progress of the Apprenticeships Scheme was reviewed. The new Apprenticeship Levy came into place in April 2017 to support the Government's plan to increase apprenticeship starts to 3 million by 2020. An apprenticeship target was set for public sector bodies to have 2.3% of its workforce comprised of apprenticeships. The apprenticeship Levy would be a levy on employers to fund new apprenticeships and would be 0.5% of the pay bill. As North East Derbyshire had 479 employees, this equated to an annual target of 11 apprenticeships starts per year. Briefings had been held with managers throughout the Council to allow them to identify any opportunities for apprenticeships. Interest was received from ICT, Environmental Health, Leisure, Customer Services, Finance, Street scene, Partnerships, Estates and Communications. The Assistant Director was confident the target for the year would be achieved.

Organisation Scrutiny Committee had also been monitoring progress against the Councils Transformation Programme since it commenced. Most of the original transformation projects had been achieved and the Council had launched a new programme for the future. The Strategic Director – People gave a presentation on the makeup of the new Programme. A key part of this was the need to respond to the reducing support the Council receives from Central Government and to identify new ways of working in the future. The hope was that the Programme would be driven by a change in the 'culture of the Council', with employees taking the lead in identifying, championing and delivering new ways of working. Work had already been done to encourage and enable staff to this and they had submitted over 500 ideas, suggestions and proposals for changing services. These ranged from small scale improvements to substantial alterations in how the Council operates and how it provides specific services or carries out its functions. Members welcomed the high level of engagement with staff in the programme and hoped that it could continue and be built upon.

The Committee heard that the large scale business transformation proposals which had been suggested, could help to achieve significant financial savings. The Council had already made some progress in this area with the recent decision to bring the Procurement process back in-house and then potentially sell parts of the service to other organisations which would help significantly reduce North East Derbyshire's costs. The Committee welcomed this.

Organisational arrangements for assessing the different suggestions were being developed and a Transformation Governance Team would be established. Any decision for changes would then be taken through the normal Council decision making structure. Members were supportive of the programme but were keen to see improvements to the Intranet and more effective use of ICT including mobile phone technology to support staff.

4 The Year Ahead 2018/19

After the appointment of members to the Scrutiny Committees at Annual Council on 21st May, 2018, work programmes for 2018/19 will be discussed and developed. Suggestions for Scrutiny review topics will be invited from a range of stakeholders. These will be discussed at the first scrutiny meetings of the new municipal year to prioritise which subjects should be reviewed.