

ANNUAL REPORT

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

2016/17

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Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Committees 2016/17

Audit and Corporate Governance

Chair - Councillor Derrick Skinner
Vice Chair - Councillor G Morley

Communities

Chair - Councillor T Reader
Vice Chair - Councillor C Tite

Growth

Chair - Councillor C A Smith
Vice Chair - Councillor J Windle

Organisation

Chair - Councillor B Wright
Vice Chair - Councillor T Mansbridge

1 A Summary of the Work Undertaken during 2016/17

- 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 Environmental Despoilment, Safeguarding Arrangements, Vacant Land and Administrative Arrangements and Joint Officers. Progress against three of the action plans has been satisfactory and they have been signed off. The third one is progressing well and will be signed off later this year.

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 10th May, 2017. 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 The Impact of Town Centre Environments on Community Safety

The Communities Scrutiny Committee decided to review this area as ensuring that our town centres were safe, attractive and healthy places to live was a key ambition for the Authority. The Council undertook a number of measures to support this objective, including being part of a Community Safety Partnership. The Committee thought it timely to look at how these arrangements were working.

A number of documents and evidence were considered by the Committee to help inform the review. These included the results of the Town Centre Health Checks undertaken by the Citizens Panel in 2013, a briefing paper on CCTV from the College of Policing and the regeneration frameworks recently produced for Dronfield and Killamarsh. Questionnaires were also completed during visits by some members of the review panel to businesses in the town centres of Eckington and Clay Cross

A wide range of stakeholders were interviewed including the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety , Equality & Diversity and Health, the Portfolio Holder for Environment, the Assistant Director of Community Safety, the Community Safety Partnership Manager, a police representative, the Assistant Director of Street Scene, the Assistant Director of Economic Development and representatives from Eckington and Clay Cross Town Teams.

The review panel concluded that people felt safe within their town centres, particularly in the day time.

Ten recommendations for improvement were made focused around raising the profile of the Community Safety Partnership, improving police presence and enforcement activities and a number of other measures to help support attractive, healthy and safer town centres.

2.3 Health & Wellbeing and Morale

The Council had recently undertaken a Health and Wellbeing Survey and an Employee Survey. The results had been provided to the Organisation Scrutiny Committee. The Committee felt it would be useful to undertake a short review of this area in support of these initiatives. It was agreed that the Committee would hold some informal discussion groups with staff to gather further evidence.

The Committee thought it timely to review this area as the Authority had undergone a significant amount of change in recent years. This had occurred as a result of a number of drivers, including the formation of the Strategic Alliance in 2012, the move to new office premises in 2015 and a number of transformation projects undertaken to respond to the decreasing funding being provided to Local Authorities.

The Committee from the evidence it considered, heard a number of positive comments from staff about working for the Authority and recognition was demonstrated that staff were aware of the difficult environment Local Government as a whole was working in.

However, some ideas for improvement were identified and a recommendation was made to the Cabinet and Chief Executive to consider how the issues raised could be addressed.

2.4 A61 Corridor

This issue was identified for review as the Growth Scrutiny Committee recognised that this was a key project that significantly impacted on several key development sites for the Authority.

Interviews were held with a range of stakeholders including the Assistant Director of Economic Development, Assistant Director of Planning, Planning Policy Manager, Economic Development Project Officer and the Principal Engineer, Development Control and the Project Officer from Derbyshire County Council.

The Committee only had a limited time to look at how this complex project was working but concluded that a great deal of work had been undertaken and progress had been made.

Four recommendations for improvement were made focused around communication and the wish to see the finalisation of some key strategic documents by Derbyshire County Council.

3 Scrutiny Committees

3.1 Audit and Corporate Governance

During the year the Committee met on six 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 reviewed and contributed to the development of the Council's revised policies in respect of risk and partnership working together with consideration of the Local Government Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy 2016-19. This Strategy set out the actions which Councils needed to take to help ensure that they are active in looking for and identifying fraud and embedding a counter fraud culture in the Organisation.

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 2015/16, Summary of Progress on the Annual Internal Audit Plan 2015/16, 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 monitored progress against action plans put in place following Internal Audit reports on Procurement, Commercial and Industrial Property Rents and Section 106 agreements. Additionally it considered a report on Grants and Returns for 2015/16 prepared by KPMG. From the work carried out by KPMG two recommendations were made and an action plan agreed.

The Committee considered a presentation by Arlingclose Limited on Treasury Management for Elected Members. The presentation outlined the framework and enabled an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Council's current arrangements. Included topics were legislation and guidance, the role of elected members, risk and reward, security, liquidity and yield together with a

discussion on both the external and local context. Options on investing and on lifting the restrictions on the treasury management on only investing money in UK banks were also discussed.

A proposed new system of internal audit consortium opinion classifications was also considered by the Committee. These new classifications would be issued as a conclusion for each report issued. The current Internal Audit report classifications had been utilised since the commencement of the consortium. Whilst the present system of classification was tried and tested, current best practice was to focus more on the level of assurance that could be given with regard to the area being audited. This linked more closely with the Annual Governance Statement.

The Committee also undertook a detailed self assessment of its operation, to consider its effectiveness and to recommend any actions to improve its operation where necessary. The Committee recognised that the effectiveness of an Audit Committee was crucial to secure proper operation of the governance arrangements within any local authority. The evaluation was guided by a set of criteria agreed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and a series of questions set out in the publication 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2012)'. The Committee was found to be performing in line with the CIPFA/SOLACE requirements, with a limited number of areas of weakness identified which would be addressed at future meetings.

3.2 Communities

During the year the Committee met on eight occasions. It considered an update from the Chair of the Committee following a meeting held with a representative from EMAS (East Midlands Ambulance Service). EMAS served a population of 48 million people across the East Midlands and each year ambulances responded to over 643,000 emergencies and urgent calls. The organisation wanted to establish links with the District Council to set out how it was operating at present following recent changes. The Committee recommended that EMAS be invited to provide a presentation to Council on the service and also that this item be considered for a future District/Parish Forum.

The Committee received a presentation on Public Health in Derbyshire from the Public Health Manager, Derbyshire County Council. Areas of discussion included Health Profiles, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the annual report on the health of the population. This year's focus had been mental health and for the new year it was proposed to look at Derbyshire as a Healthy Place, including schools and workplaces. The Council's Partnership Team and the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Community Safety, Equality & Diversity and Health also attended the presentation and contributed to the discussion.

Previously the Committee had been monitoring the impact of Universal Credit and Welfare Reforms. Therefore it considered an update from the Council's Revenues and Benefits Manager on how its implementation was progressing. He advised that it should have been in place by 2013 but was still in the early stages of roll-out. Pilots had taken place around Manchester but the roll out to single person claimants had taken 18 months. This had now been rolled out to single person claimants only across the Country with North East Derbyshire going live on 23 November 2015. It was anticipated all existing benefits claimants would be transferred to Universal Credit by July 2019. When fully introduced the Council would cease to process housing benefit as this would be included in Universal Credit. The Council would only process council tax benefit claims. The benefit case load for North East Derbyshire was approximately 8,000 claims per year.

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 Council provided support assisting vulnerable people through the Voluntary and Community Sector, including significant financial investment into the sector to help deliver a range of support. Financial support was provided to Citizens Advice NED, Derbyshire Law Centre, Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre and the Trade Union Safety Team. The Committee were advised that the proportion of residents requiring advice, particularly around welfare benefits and debts was increasing. Members were concerned over the application process for Universal Credit which they felt would have an adverse effect on residents.

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

Last year the Committee had undertaken a review of Safeguarding Arrangements within the Authority. As part of the monitoring of the implementation of the report's recommendations the Committee was consulted on the revision of the Safeguarding Children Policy. A recommendation was made to include reference to Child Sexual Exploitation and Grooming, including signs to look out for within the document.

Progress against the Healthy North East Derbyshire Partnership was also provided by the Partnership Development Officer, Councillor Liz Blanshard (scrutiny representative on the partnership) and the Partnership Chair from Derbyshire County Council. The Partnership had been the delivery vehicle for the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2019. They also delivered the Public Health Locality Plan for 2015/17, which Derbyshire County Council had awarded £94,113 per annum to NEDDC to commission projects on its

behalf to address key health priorities. Details were provided of the health actions and outcomes achieved to date and the Committee felt that good progress was being made.

The Committee also heard from the Assistant Director of Leisure on the work of Leisure Services including its contribution to the delivery of health targets within the Corporate Plan. The service aimed to raise the level of participation in sport, leisure, active recreation and cultural activities. A summary of the performance of each of the operational areas was provided and an overview of the anticipated Leisure Facilities Investment Programme.

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 2017-2018. One area highlighted for attention was in relation to Cyber Crime and Economic Crime. There was a lack of detailed knowledge and understanding locally of the scale and complexity of the issues that needed to be tackled. It had been agreed that the police would be the lead on the development of further information. Work was also being undertaken by the Partnership to assist where appropriate with the Troubled Families Initiative which aimed to secure better outcomes for existing families with multiple needs. 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. 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. 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. The manager also advised that overall crime had decreased for the past two years and calls to the police regarding ASB continue to reduce across Derbyshire.

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

- effective advertising and promotions to promote positive stories or reductions in crime;
- Improved consultation with local residents through Have your Say and Target hotspot areas;
- Targeted use of crime reduction campaigns and publicity campaigns on how to reduce your risk of becoming a victim of crime;
- Events focusing on improving public confidence, reducing antisocial behaviour and reducing serious acquisitive crime;
- Use of new tools and powers such as Public Spaces Protection Orders and Police Dispersal Powers;
- Burglary victims all contacted and sent crime reduction advice and a UV pen and offered target hardening advice;
- ECINS fully integrated into working on supporting victims and witnesses.

3.3 Growth

During the year the Committee met on seven 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 gave 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 the key elements of North East Derbyshire's transformation intervention projects. This included good progress made on the Business Growth Hub and progress on the Rural Development Action Plan. Further details were provided of how the Council was realising Major Housing/mix use regeneration projects on the Avenue site at Wingerworth, the Coalite site, the former Biwater site and the Mill Lane Development site.

Two further issues considered was progress of the Development prospectus which included a demonstration of the new website which would help promote the district to potential developers. The Committee felt it would be helpful to give a demonstration of the new website to full Council and to showcase the website at a developers forum due to be held in October 2016. The Chief Executive also advised the Committee of a plan he had put together with relevant officers to consider the potential impact of the Brexit vote and mitigate any potential impacts. However, he advised that no immediate or apparent impact on the Council's service following the European Union Referendum had yet materialised.

The Assistant Director, Property and Estates provided a briefing on the potential of using joint ventures for developing General Fund land. A Joint Venture Company could be used to deliver open market sales of residential and commercial developments on both Council and privately owned land. He advised that the driver for creating a company was to stimulate economic growth by delivering housing and commercial developments. Options were discussed on potential models for the Joint Venture Company. The Committee discussed at length this type of initiative and were pleased to see Council officers being proactive in looking at such concepts.

The Committee had invited officers from Enforcement and Planning Development Management to come and discuss the powers the Council has in enforcement of unauthorised development within the District. The Committee heard that some developments can take place without the consent of the Local Planning Authority with permission being effectively given by central government. This is called 'permitted development' and the Council has no powers over these matters. However, there was also a variety of steps that the Council can take in other unauthorised development but the powers are discretionary. The department would consider the most appropriate form of action to ensure a positive outcome. The service was mostly reactive to complains received due to the resource that would be needed to be proactive.

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 through managing funding programmes which facilitated economic growth and job creation within the District. 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. A progress report was given on the Bolsover-North East Derbyshire (BNED) LEADER Approach which had a grant level available of around £1.4. This could help in the support of increasing farming productivity to support micro and small enterprises, support rural tourism, the provision of rural services, support culture and heritage activities and help increase forestry productivity. Examples provided on North East Derbyshire projects were holiday lodges in Ashover, dairy modernisation in Shirland and a specialist swimming service with accommodation in Grassmoor. He also outlined the Business Growth Fund for North East Derbyshire. Other work included assisting vulnerable people through the voluntary and community sector and support given to the Armed Forces Community.

The Chief Executive attended the Committee later in the year with a representative from Derbyshire County Council to give a briefing on the One Public Estate Initiative (OPE). The OPE supported the public sector to use its combined assets to deliver integrated services, resulting in people focussed services and innovative working practices for staff. The initiative for this part of the country was the North Midlands Area (Coalition of the Willing) across Derbyshire and Derby City and Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City. A £500,000 funding pot was available in tranches to the area and would help to rationalise buildings in the area. The Committee considered examples of where the One Public Estate had been successful, like the Bullwell Joint Service Centre in Nottingham. There were a number of services within this one building including Nottingham City Council – Safeguarding, Children's Services, Youth Services, Multi Agency Teams, Library, NHS – Health Provision, GP's, Dental Practice. and the Police – Safer Neighbourhood Team

The Assistant Director Customer Services and Improvement briefed the Committee on possible Performance Indicators that Growth Scrutiny Committee might find useful. Indicators for new houses lived in within the District, NNDR and arrears collected, commercial properties and on LEADER funding were suggested. Baseline data for 2015 to March 2016 was available and it was agreed that these indicators would be provided to Growth Scrutiny quarterly.

The Committee had requested an update on the progress of the Digital Derbyshire Programme. A representative from Derbyshire County Council provided a video presentation explaining what the project was, progress on the three phases of the project and specific achievements within North East Derbyshire District. Over the District 50 out of 50 cabinets were live with 13,300 premises enabled with fibre services. There had been a 36% take up of fibre services in Derbyshire but the Committee noted that there had been a low take up of fibre services in Holmewood.

The Committee also considered an update on progress achieved on Employment and Skills by the Authority. The Employment and Skills Officer provided details of current projects being undertaken in support of this agenda. These included the Working Communities Project, Ambition Project, Talent Match Funding, Marstons at Clay Cross, The Avenue, Sheffield City Region City Deal – Skills Made Easy, Apprenticeship Growth Plan, additional Local Enterprise work and Combined Authority work and the adding of additional employment conditions to planning applications. The Committee also looked at a number of other initiatives and their progress which aimed at getting people back into work and assisted them in finding training programmes.

3.4 Organisation

During the year the Committee met on seven occasions. It continued to monitor progress against the Transformation Programme within the Authority. The Executive Director of Transformation updated the Committee on the key projects under this agenda. The Assistant Director of Customer Services and Improvement also attended the meeting to discuss the achievements in both the Contact Centres and the Improvement Team.

Additionally an update on business development projects taking place in the Council was considered. The Transformation Programme was split into three themes: Assets, Workforce and Services. The Director provided details of the projects that had been completed and the cashable achievements for 2016/17. These included a review of the Website and NEDi, review of Saltergate Contact Centre and closure, Media Pack, Street scene vehicle savings, review of fixed lines and calls, review of the HR Team and the Property and Estates Team and Data Protection Savings. Details of Non cashable achievements were also provided. The Director also gave an overview of the savings achieved in Leisure including the net subsidy reduction.

The Committee considered a briefing from the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll on the results of the Employee Survey and the Health and Wellbeing Survey undertaken by the Authority. This provided the background information that formed the basis of the Committees Scrutiny Review of Health & Wellbeing and Morale within the Authority. The Committee had also previously been monitoring sickness levels within the Council. It was now receiving quarterly updates from the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll.

The Committee also considered progress against the Strategic Alliance People Strategy 2016-2019. An action plan for its delivery had been produced with key actions and priorities agreed. One initiative was the development of a health and wellbeing section on the intranet which included local and nation information, as well as services in the area. An overview was also provided of a programme of lunch time activity taster sessions that were being offered to staff. Throughout the year it was intended to promote the workplace challenge to encourage people to be more physically active. Other

activities would include a programme of health MOTs, health and well being sessions, a series of healthy eating stories/information in weekly bulletins and events provided at lunchtime by external providers.

4 The Year Ahead 2017/18

After the appointment of members to the Scrutiny Committees at Council on 15th May, 2017, work programmes for 2017/18 will be discussed and developed. Suggestions for 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.