

# ANNUAL REPORT

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

2020/21

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## **Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Committees 2020/21**

### Audit and Corporate Governance

Chair - Councillor M E Thacker  
Vice Chair - Councillor S Clough

### Communities

Chair - Councillor K Tait  
Vice Chair - Councillor O Gomez Reaney

### Growth

Chair - Councillor A Hutchinson  
Vice Chair - Councillor M Emmens

### Organisation

Chair - Councillor A Foster  
Vice Chair - Councillor M Potts

## **1. A Summary of the Work Undertaken during 20/21**

- 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. They have also discussed the impacts of the Pandemic on their areas.
- 1.2 The Committees have also been monitoring the delivery of action plans from a number of previous scrutiny reviews. Progress against the action plans for Scrutiny Reviews on Domestic Abuse and Homelessness had been satisfactory and they had been signed off as complete.

## **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 and 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 by contacting the Overview and Scrutiny Manager.

### **2.2 Obesity in Younger Residents**

The Communities Scrutiny Committee decided to review Obesity in Younger Residents this year to ensure the Council was taking effective action to tackle childhood obesity in the District.

A number of documents and evidence were considered by the Committee to help inform the review. The Head of Partnerships and Transformation provided a briefing presentation that set the scene for Obesity in Younger Residents and the actions the Council was taking to tackle this issue. The Leisure Operations Manager provided further information on the work of Leisure Services in the District including community based and partnership work the service was engaging with. This was supported by a briefing paper from the Healthy Lifestyles Team on Obesity in Younger Residents (Primary School). Additionally the Sharley Park School Obesity action plan and the Physical Activity and Lifestyle Support – A Behaviour Change Plan were reviewed.

The Public Health Lead from Derbyshire County Council also gave evidence to the review panel regarding the Healthy North East Derbyshire Action plan which had a focus on tackling obesity and mental health issues in North East Derbyshire.

Other information considered was a database and associated documents presented by the Head of Street scene and the Waste and Street scene Manager on the provision of parks, open spaces and sports and recreations sites in the District which support exercise and healthy lifestyles.

The review panel concluded that a number of measures were being undertaken by various sections of the Council and partners to support this area. However, five recommendations for improvement were made focused around timely data, funding of parks and a strategy to ensure people use them.

### 2.3 Tourism – Business and Non Business

The Growth Scrutiny Committee chose to undertake a review of Tourism – Business and Non Business. It was considered timely to review this area because of the significant potential benefits it could provide economically to the District.

The review panel considered a number of documents including the new Visitor Economy Strategy and the Growth Strategy. They considered a scene setting presentation from the Director of Growth and Economic Development which set out the current provision and provided background information on Tourism within the District.

Discussions were also held with the Housing Strategy and Growth Manager, the Portfolio holder for Economic Growth and the Bolsover Countryside Partnership Manager.

The review process identified a number of measures the Council was taking to support local businesses within the District and promote economic growth in support of tourism. However, some areas for improvement which would enhance the current provision were identified around establishing a clear band for the area, better promotion of the Districts tourism attractions and improved connectivity.

### 2.4 Health and Wellbeing -Working from Home during the Pandemic

The Organisation Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of Health and Wellbeing – Working from Home during the Pandemic. The Committee felt it was important to review this area to ensure the Councils staff were supported effectively whilst they were working from home as a result of the Pandemic.

The Committee considered a number of documents which included a presentation by the Human Resources Manager, the current Working from Home Policy and the draft Agile Working Policy. Further specific information produced as a result of the Pandemic was also considered including Health and Safety Briefings, Temporary Working Arrangements Guidance and a selection of Staff Bulletins offering support and advice on Health and Wellbeing. The results of a Survey of staff working from home was also reviewed.

Interviews were held with the Head of Transformation and Partnership, the Director of Environment and Enforcement, the Director of Corporate Services, the Health and Safety Co-Ordinator and the Leader of the Council. Discussion groups were also held with a selection of Managers and Staff.

The review panel heard views from a wide range of stakeholders during the review process. A number of measures that were supporting staff during the Pandemic were identified. However, some suggested areas for consideration were identified around any planned implementation of the Agile Working Policy and learning lessons from the experience of staff working from home during the Pandemic

### **3 Scrutiny Committees**

#### **3.1 Audit and Corporate Governance**

During the year 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 also continued to monitor and keep under review Risk Management and Partnership Working Arrangements. Additionally it reviewed Corporate Debt, Treasury Management, the Money Laundering Policy and Quarterly Performance Management reports.

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 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.

It received a presentation from Mazars, on the audit completion report in respect of the 2019/20 financial year and it was expected that an unqualified opinion on the financial statements would be issued and with regards to Value for Money they anticipated concluding that the Council had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. In response to queries from the Committee regarding considerations about Covid-19 and Brexit, M Norman stated that this audit report for 2019/20 was the final one under the current code of practice which was updated every five years. The National Audit Office had been clear that they expected the focus on financial standing, resilience and medium to long term implications of Brexit and Covid-19 to form part of the 2020/21 Value for Money consideration.

A report was presented to the Committee for them to consider their Scrutiny role. The Committee had statutory functions, such as signing off the annual accounts, as well as undertaking the role of scrutiny. It was highlighted that the Committee should have the opportunity to scrutinise reports that lie within the Committees remit before they were considered by Cabinet. This allowed for any comments or observations of the Committee to form part of the Cabinets consideration. The Chair of the Committee requested that a new framework of Committee meeting dates and a revised Work Plan be drafted and submitted to the Committee. The Work Plan was to include implications of Covid-19, implications of Brexit including a no-deal Brexit, cost of leisure services, financial benchmarking, and risks regarding pensions. Two subsequent reports considered were the financial impact of Covid-19 on the Council including benchmarking information from other local authorities and a report which outlined the Councils Coronavirus Recovery plans.

The Internal Audit Consortium Manager presented a report which set out the results of a review of the Internal Audit Charter. The Public Sector Audit Standards (PSIAS) required the Head of Internal Audit to periodically review the Internal Audit Charter and present it to the Committee for approval. The report stated that the current Internal Audit Charter had been reviewed and it was felt that it was still fit for purpose and that the only update required was in respect of job titles. Previously the Charter

had been reviewed every two years however, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) were now recommending that the Charter be reviewed annually, so the next review would take place in summer 2021.

The Head of Finance and Resources and Section 151 Officer presented a report which requested approval by the Audit and Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee of the accounting policies that it is proposed to adopt for the current financial year in the preparation of the Statement of Accounts 2020/21.

### 3.2 Communities Scrutiny Committee

During the year the Committee met on seven occasions. A large piece of recent work for the Committee was CCTV in Taxis. Members had considered a number of documents over a period of time in connection with Taxi Licensing and had been clear that they would like to see mandatory CCTV in NEDDC licenced taxis. This evidence included the statutory guidance issued by Government, a data protection assessment and the Council's Vehicles and Drivers Policy. A number of proposed changes had been suggested and it was agreed that they would be incorporated into the Policy to be considered by the General Licensing Committee.

The Council's Partnership Officer attended the Committee to update on the progress of the Healthy North East Derbyshire Partnership in the last year. The Partnership was established in 2015 and was chaired by the Public Health Localities Lead for North East Derbyshire and Bolsover at Derbyshire County Council. The NEDDC Partnership Team was responsible for managing the funding and commissioning the projects of the HNED Partnership. Members heard that there were a number of priorities in the Plan including building healthy communities, promoting healthy lifestyles, and supporting access to effective health and social care. The Committee was also updated on the progress of a number of projects including the Clay Cross Obesity Group and the NEDDC Older People' Strategy. Members discussed the projects that the HNED Partnership were delivering and enquired about 'Vision Derbyshire' and the Partnership's plans for the future. The Partnership Officer also advised that Public Health England had moved to a local approach and that the HNED Partnership was part of a partnership between local health authorities.

The Environmental Health Manager and the Environmental Enforcement Team Leader briefed the Committee on a review that was being undertaken on Pest Control Services. The service had committed to a fundamental review of Pest Control in 2018 following an Audit Review. The Committee was being consulted for initial comments and to provide some direction for the Review. A number of issues were highlighted including the Council's role in public health, costs to the Authority and efficiencies. There had been a significant increase in demand for Authorities that had not introduced fees in comparison to those that had. The Council offered a reduced charge for those on income related benefits. The Committee requested that a fees comparison exercise be undertaken compared with other neighbouring local authorities. The service was not a statutory service but the Authority did need to take reasonable measures to keep the District free from mice and rats. It was advised that the service centred on dealing with the

pests that were a threat to public health. Agile working solutions and enforcement were other areas considered.

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 the performance of the Community safety Partnership during 2020/21.

The Committee heard that Crime was on the increase, with a 13% increase from last year which equated to an extra 605 crimes. Violence (without injury) had seen the most significant increase of 45.6%. Members noted that this had been attributed largely to a rise in domestic abuse. The officer also updated Members on what the Community Safety Partnership was doing to tackle anti-social behaviour as well as how Covid-19 had impacted crime. It was stated that due to the public staying at home there had been an increase in domestic violence and neighbour disputes. Members noted that there had been a number of ASB interventions to deal with persistent offenders which included ABC's (Acceptable Behaviour Contracts), Community Protection Warnings and Notices, and Fixed Penalty Notices. The Committee was also updated on the work being done to tackle a number of crimes in the District such as Domestic Abuse/Violence, Hate Crime and Drug/Alcohol and Violence. Members commented that for future updates it would be useful if the crime statistics were presented in a graph so that the Committee could make year on year comparisons.

The Community Safety Manager also provided details and commented on her planning for 2021/22, including issues that needed to be considered. This included:

- Slightly harder to plan events until we are fully out of lockdown.
- Picking up and reacting to issues brought about by Covid19 and "business as usual"
- Extreme Outreach moving back to Extreme Wheels.
- Target Hardening and CCTV for those who are on waiting list.
- Police and Crime Commissioner Elections planned for 2021 – has had an impact on CSP funding this current financial year.

The Committee then received a presentation from the Outdoor Recreation Officer (Bolsover District Council) in regards to 'Extreme Wheels'. Members heard that the service started in 2001, and its concept was to engage with young people in Derbyshire's communities. The officer stated that the service was a lifestyles activity provider that based activities on the response of young people. Members noted that some of the events that had been held included skate parks and discos. The Committee heard that engagement was based around health and wellbeing matters such as mental health, holiday hunger, and vulnerability and Covid-19 advice. Extreme Wheels also provided soft intelligence and liaised with the Community Safety Partnership and Police. It was stated that different areas in the District such as Clay Cross, Holmewood, North Wingfield and Dronfield had received regular visits throughout the week.



The Joint Head of Street scene attended the Committee and provided an update on the service performance of Street scene. Members heard that Street scene was responsible for a number of services including waste and recycling, street cleaning, grounds maintenance and fleet management. An estimated 3.4 million household property bins were emptied per week and the District had a combined recycling rate of approximately 40%. The Committee was informed that kerbside burgundy bins recycling had been brought in house and as a result the service was running more effectively and efficiently. The service was also waiting on advice from Government on the outcome the Extended Producer Responsibility Deposit Return Scheme which could affect the future of the waste recycling service.

Street scene also were responsible for grounds maintenance which included the Council's parks and green spaces, maintenance on behalf of Parish Councils, environmental maintenance arrangements on highways, street cleansing, and trees and grass cutting. The Committee noted that that Street scene held 160 fleet vehicles and used approximately 300,000 litres of vehicle fuel per annum. It was stated that the Authority was looking at green alternatives such as hydrogenated vegetable oil. Discussion was also undertaken on the impacts of the Pandemic on essential services provided by Street scene and heard how the service had been maintained.

### 3.3 Growth Scrutiny Committee

During the year the Committee met on seven occasions. As usual it continued to monitor the Growth Summary reports for the year end. The Performance Officer briefed the Committee on the Growth Performance Indicators for 2019/20. The majority of indicators were shown to be on target or above target. Four indicators were not on track and explanations were provided on the reasons behind these exceptions and the steps being taken to improve this performance where appropriate.

The Committee reviewed the work of the Partnership Team in support of growth. The Strategic Partnership Co-Ordinator outlined the Partnerships Team's contribution to the growth agenda. The Committee heard about a number of programmes and initiatives including the 2014-2020 BNED LEADER programme, Covid-19 Business Grants, NED Business Growth Fund, and indirect growth activity.

The Director of Growth and Economic Development and the Housing Strategy and Growth Manager attended the Committee on a couple of occasions to discuss the new emerging Growth Strategy. It was based around the economic recovery post Covid 19 and what could be done to support the District's economy in the future. Members discussed the importance of the Strategy for delivering investments and jobs for residents in North East Derbyshire, especially the economic impacts of the Pandemic. It was aligned with the D2N2 Local Enterprise partnership priorities which included the Green Agenda, IT and Broadband. The hope was this would maximise funding opportunities. Key priority areas were skills, town centre regeneration, the visitor economy and business engagement and support. Town centre regeneration projects such as the One Public Estate reviews at Eckington and Killamarsh, the progress of the Clay Cross Town Board and the Investment

plan were considered. The Committee noted that around forty projects formed the basis of the Council's Growth Strategy.

The Committee also reviewed the draft Visitor Economy Strategy 2021-24. The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth gave a presentation outlining the Council's vision for tourism within the District. This Strategy linked in to the Committee's Scrutiny Review this year. Members heard that the District is geographically well placed and attracted approximately three million visitors in 2017. This generated 1,949 jobs accounting for the sector being worth £147 million that year. In April 2020 there were approximately 360 businesses in the tourism sector. The impact of the Pandemic on the tourism industry and potential opportunities for the sector once national restrictions were relaxed were discussed. Closer partnership work to grow the District's tourism and visitor economy was being undertaken with partners such as Marketing Peak District, Derbyshire Tourism Board, Derbyshire County Council and D2N2. Priorities included creating a year round visitor economy in the District, developing the visitor offer, developing and promoting the cultural and natural heritage of the area and improving the skills of local businesses.

#### 3.4 Organisation Scrutiny Committee

During the year the committee met on seven occasions. Members considered the previous Scrutiny Review interim report on health and wellbeing of staff. Due to the pandemic the Committee had been unable to triangulate the evidence collated during the last municipal year. It was therefore proposed that the interim report would be sent to Cabinet to make them aware of the work undertaken and the evidence submitted by staff.

The Annual Report of Human Resources and Organisational Development was also considered by the Committee. This report outlined a range of employee related issues during 2019/20 which covered areas of recruitment and selection, employee health and wellbeing, health and wellbeing initiatives, organisation development and apprenticeships. Enquiries were made about the number of employees currently working for the council compared to other District Councils, the number of resignations during the year and the disparities in staff turnover between different services. Sick leave and the target set by the Council were also discussed. There was a consensus that the authority provided good support to employees, which included an occupational health provider and physiotherapy. A request was made for a copy of the Gender Pay Gap Report so the Committee could review this. They also asked the Manager to return later in the year to provide more information on the impact of the pandemic.

The Committee reviewed progress on the Transformation Programme. The Director of Corporate Resources and Head of Paid Service highlighted the main areas that had moved forward and additionally the impact of the Covid pandemic on the following transformation streams: service transformation, transforming finances, digital organisation, organisational transformation and environmental transformation. A discussion on savings targets and headline projects to deliver these was informative. The Committee thanked the staff for the work they had done in transforming the Council and recognised that the programme had been pushed

forward very quickly due to the impacts of the pandemic. The Committee agreed that there should be a focus on how agile working and transformation will fit together.

The Human Resources and Organisation Development Manager discussed the impact of the pandemic on the Councils staff in September 2020. At the time of the report to the Committee no staff had tested positive for Covid 19 but 96 had self-isolated and 27 employees had shielded up to 1<sup>st</sup> August. They heard that the majority of staff were still working from home but some staff had returned to the office on hybrid arrangements. The Committee discussed the existing working from home arrangements prior to the pandemic. They welcomed that a home working group had been established by the Senior Management Team to keep this matter under review.

#### **4 The Year Ahead 2020/21**

After the appointment of members to the Scrutiny Committees at Council on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2021, work programmes for 2021/22 will be discussed and developed. Suggestions for Scrutiny review topics will be invited from stakeholders. These will be discussed at the first scrutiny meeting of the new municipal year to prioritise which subjects should be reviewed.