

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**2019/20**

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## **Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Committees 2019/20**

### Audit and Corporate Governance

Chair - Councillor M Foster

Vice Chair - Councillor K Tait

### Communities

Chair - Councillor K Tait

Vice Chair - Councillor O Gomez Reaney

### Growth

Chair - Councillor C Renwick

Vice Chair - Councillor A Hutchinson (Appointed Chair on 27 February 2020)

### Organisation

Chair - Councillor A Foster

Vice Chair - Councillor M Potts

## **1 A Summary of the Work Undertaken during 2019/20**

- 1.1 Each of the Committees has completed its Work Programme up to the 23 March 2020. The time available has been 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 a number of previous scrutiny reviews. Domestic Abuse, Tourism & Growth and Homelessness were making progress but would be monitored further in the new municipal year.

## **2 Current Scrutiny Reviews**

### **2.1 Residential Parking**

The Communities Scrutiny Committee decided to review district wide Residential Parking following a motion proposed at Annual Council on 20 May 2019.

The Councils Engineer and the Director of Property Services and Development at Rykneld Homes had provided a briefing presentation that set the scene and outlined parking issues within the District. A number of documents and evidence were also considered by the Committee to help inform the review.

A wide range of stakeholders were interviewed, including a number of internal officers which included the Head of Planning and the Head of Street scene. Additionally the Parish/Town Councils of Clay Cross, Dronfield, Eckington and Killamarsh were invited to submit comments to the Committee on behalf of their areas and attend a meeting of the Committee to present their comments to the Scrutiny Panel directly.

The review panel have concluded their report and recommendations but as the final meeting of the Committee was cancelled due to the pandemic these are to be approved at their next meeting prior to their submission to Cabinet for consideration.

### **2.2 Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace**

The Organisation Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of Health and Wellbeing in the Authority. The Committee wished to ensure the service was meeting the needs of our employees.

The Committee considered a number of documents which included a presentation by the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager which set the scene and outlined the approach to Health and Wellbeing within the Council.

A number of key documents and evidence was considered by the Committee. These included the Health and Wellbeing Framework, the Employee Assistance Programme, Sickness information plus the Health and Wellbeing Survey results and resulting actions.

A series of interviews were held with a selection of Managers. Discussions were held directly with employees on a walk round Mill Lane Offices and a site visit to Eckington Depot.

The review panel have concluded their evidence gathering but as the final meeting of the Committee was cancelled due to the pandemic these are to be considered at their next meeting with a view of how to take this review forward given the change in circumstances.

### 2.3 Business Centres and Industrial Units

The Growth Scrutiny Committee did not undertake a full review this year. They chose to revisit the previous year's review on Business Centres and Industrial Units. They had commenced by reviewing the evidence submitted so far but had been unable to complete this work due to their last meeting being cancelled as a result of the Pandemic. The Committee are currently considering how to take this review forward.

## 3 Scrutiny Committees

### 3.1 Audit and Corporate Governance

During the year the Committee met on four 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 corporate debt, 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;
- Monitored the Councils budgets

- 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 2019/20. 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.

The Committee also considered the CIPFA Fraud and Corruption Tracker Survey for 2019. This was an annual survey which aimed to provide a picture of fraudulent activity within local government and illustrate the actions which local authorities were taking to mitigate the risks. The Committee discussed the fraud prevention measures which the Council had put in place. Members made it clear that they continued to support the current zero tolerance approach towards fraud. This approach was set out in the Council's Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy.

A discussion was also held on ICT. An update was provided by the Head of Partnerships with regard to the charging arrangements for the joint ICT Service. It comprised three participating authorities (North East Derbyshire District Council, Bolsover District Council and Derbyshire Dales District Council). The arrangements provided the advantage of pooling resources and knowledge and reducing costs. Significant savings had been made as a result on procurement licenses. Charging arrangements with Rykneld Homes Ltd were also considered. The Committee recommended that reporting protocols be established between the Joint ICT Committee and the Council.

Additionally the Committee received a presentation from Arlingclose Ltd which outlined a number of key themes that related to Treasury Management, including a recap on what Treasury Management was, the role of elected Members, NEDDC's plans and the UK and International economic outlook.

### 3.2 Communities

During the year the Committee met on six occasions. The Committee has considered a number of licensing items during the year. This has included a large piece of work on CCTV in Taxis and the Procedure for dealing with applications for taxi driver licences. The Committee had made a number of proposed amendments to various documents including suggestions on the Licensing Procedure note to include clearer guidance on convictions and a recommendation to Cabinet that they would like to see mandatory CCTV in NEDDC licenced taxis.

The Committee also considered the Animal Welfare Policy. The Authority does not have a legal obligation to have such a Policy but it was considered good practice to do so. The Committee considered what made a fit and proper

person, the level of DBS check that would be suitable and current consultation taking place with licensees, including veterinary practices. These animal welfare facilities will be inspected by Environmental Health Officers.

The draft Anti-Social Behaviour Policy was also reviewed by the Committee. The Council was required to prepare and publish a policy in relation to anti-social behaviour and procedures for dealing with occurrences of anti-social behaviour. The Committee considered how the Council worked with the Police and the role of ward members in taking up cases from constituents. Those committing acts of anti-social behaviour would be given a warning and then a Community Protection Notice. This notice would stay on file for twelve months and if there was a failure to comply then the Authority could fine or prosecute offenders.

In addition the Committee monitored the delivery of the recommendations from the previous Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Review report. The recommendations were making progress. The Committee reiterated that there were different types of domestic abuse and it was vital the Council had a clear plan in place to help and support victims. They also discussed the merits of appointing a dedicated lead officer, and raised concerns about duplicating the provisions of Derbyshire County Council in the event service users became confused about the services provided. The Committee agreed that clarity and consistency was needed for the support service to be effective.

The Committee is statutorily required to review the Councils Community Safety Partnership under the Police and Crime Act. However, as a result of the measures to deal with the Coronavirus Pandemic, this review will take place at the first meeting of the Committee in the new municipal year.

### 3.3 Growth

During the year the Committee met on six occasions. They continued to monitor the progress of the outgoing Growth Strategy and discuss the emerging new Strategy. They also considered the Councils Plan and its implications on growth in the District. A number of key officers and organisations were invited to attend the Committee over the year. Updates were provided on Town Centre Regeneration, New Homes Bonus, Council Tax on Housing Developments, Section 106 agreements, the Councils Transformation Programme, Leisure Facilities, Joint Ventures and Business Support.

The Chief Executive Officer and the Portfolio Holder also attended the Committee later in the year and provided an update on progress of key growth projects within the District, including The Avenue, Biwaters, and Coalite. The Committee also discussed housing supply plans within the District and the disparities in demand in different areas in North East Derbyshire. The Committee was advised that the Council aspired for North East Derbyshire to be a better place to work and live, with a large business and visitor economy. There had been a focus on town centre regeneration, developing better relations with the Local Enterprise Partnerships and improving transport and traffic. The focus on the visitor economy, had included the Council developing

partnerships with a number of organisations in order to attract inward investment and make the most of the Districts potential. Following on from the Committees review of tourism there was wide ranging debate on tourism, jobs and investment.

The Committee received an update on progress with HS2. Members were informed of the opportunities that HS2 presented to the District, which included reduced journey times for passengers, a major upgrade to the railway, a significant investment in infrastructure, an overall increased network capacity, more jobs and more investment. A number of case studies were also highlighted in which local businesses and people would benefit from increased business and employment opportunities.

D2N2 attended the Committee to update on how the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) operated and recent progress it had made. This included, a LEP review, investment to support growth, Local Growth Fund projects –former Coalite site, Seymour Link Road and the A61 Corridor. Following a wide ranging discussion the Committee requested a specific breakdown be circulated to the Committee setting out tangible progress that had been made in North East Derbyshire Districts area since D2N2 published the D2N2 Strategy four years before.

The Committee reviewed the work of the Partnership Team in support of growth. The Strategic Partnership Co-ordinator provided an update on the Partnership Team's activities in that supported Growth. He discussed the Bolsover North East Derbyshire LEADER Programme which was coming to an end and informed the Committee that there was a contract monitoring period to ensure that those who had benefitted from the programme honoured their Commitments. Overall North East Derbyshire had received £707,329.77 in funding which had created 27.07 FTE jobs.

### 3.4 Organisation

During the year the Committee met on four occasions. The Committee considered the Customer Services Performance Report which provided details of the Council's performance in relation to customer service standards across the Organisation. The Customer Services Operational Manager advised the members that the Call Centre staff had answered 96% of calls within 24 seconds and that a 100% of emails and texts were acknowledged within one working day and 100% replied to within eight working days. Details were also considered of compliments, comments and complaints that the Council had received from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. Members welcomed the high levels of performance achieved by the Contact Centre. They also discussed the successful take up of webchat as a way for customers to access information from the Council about its services and resolve any problems. This part of the service had been rated as excellent by 76.5% of users

The Committee also considered the Annual Report of Human Resources and Organisational Development. The report updated on a range of employee related issues. This included details of how the Council advertised vacancies

through Derbyshire County Council's website and also through professional bodies if relevant. In support of recruitments, career days had been held at schools and colleges as well as the provision of an apprenticeship scheme and internship vacancies to attract university students.

A number of managers were also taking part in level 3, 5, and 7 leadership courses and an internal course was commencing in September, 2019 as part of the Councils Transformation Programme. The Committee continued to monitor why people left the Organisation and asked that further statistical analysis on the reasons given by former employees for leaving the Council be provided. Data was also provided on the levels of sickness within the organisation. The outturn figure was 9.7 days per employee, which was a reduction on the previous year

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

Following the appointment of members to the Scrutiny Committees at Council on 18 May 2020, work programmes for 2020/21 are currently being finalised. Suggestions for Scrutiny review topics have been invited from a range of stakeholders and are being considered by the Committees at their first meetings.