

REPORT TITLE: Draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2021/22

14 JUNE 2022

REPORT OF CHAIRPERSON: Councillor Caroline Brook

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WARD(S): ALL

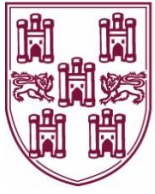
PURPOSE

At the end of each municipal year, the Chairperson of the Scrutiny Committee for that year reviews the work of all overview and scrutiny bodies and provides a report back to the council.

The draft report for the 2021/22 municipal year is attached at appendix 1 so that the scrutiny committee can add its comments before it is finalised for presentation to full council.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the committee consider and make any necessary comments on the content of the report prior to its submission to full council.



Winchester
City Council

Annual Scrutiny Report 2021/22



What is Scrutiny?

Rather than making decisions, the role of scrutiny is to improve decision-making by reviewing decisions taken and suggesting improvements that could be made.

Decisions taken must be monitored in this way to ensure that the council's services are of high quality and that the decision-making process is transparent and that the council's various programmes of work remain on track. It also provides an opportunity for the views of the public, businesses, community groups and others to be considered when reviewing the council's activities.

To achieve this, the council has established three Policy and Scrutiny committees, which are the:

- Business and Housing Policy Committee
- Health and Environment Policy Committee
- The Scrutiny Committee

One of the key roles of scrutiny is to hold decision-makers to account for their decisions. Scrutiny committees have the power to require Cabinet Members to attend their meetings and explain the decisions they have taken. Having heard from decision-makers and gathered any other evidence, policy and scrutiny committees can make recommendations on how things could be improved.

A key part of the role of the two policy committees is also to consider proposals for new policy and recommend new ways forward as well as to review existing policies and strategies.

In addition to reviewing decisions and performance, the policy and scrutiny committees can look at topics in more detail. Establishing a 'task and finish' group is a way to undertake more detailed work, gather evidence on the topic and develop recommendations that can make a difference and add value.

By focusing on a particular topic, a task and finish group can gather evidence from several sources, including customers, other people affected by the issue and experts from outside the Council. This provides the opportunity for the public to influence the policy-making process.

The Committees

The Council has the following policy and scrutiny committees, which, as specified in the council's constitution, carry out the overview and scrutiny function with the following remits:

Business and Housing Policy Committee

To maintain a strategic overview of the progress towards the achievement of the first two priorities in the Council strategy namely:

- a) Making the District a premier business location
- b) Delivering quality housing options

The broad terms of reference are as follows:

- a) It will hold the Cabinet to account by reviewing and scrutinising executive decisions.
- b) Reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Council concerning its policy objectives and performance targets

Health and Environment Policy Committee

To maintain a strategic overview of the following priorities:

- a) Improving the quality of the district's environment
- b) Improving the health and happiness of the community

The broad terms of reference are as follows:

- a) It will hold the Cabinet to account by reviewing and scrutinising executive decisions.
- b) Reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives and performance targets

Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee reviews and/or scrutinises decisions made, or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions, apart from regulatory functions (decisions made in respect of permissions, licences and other similar consents).

It can monitor the implementation of decisions, service performance, and make reports and/or recommendations to the Cabinet. More generally, the Scrutiny Committee can select topics for closer enquiry in the interest of improving the council. It can further review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them and/or invite them to address the Committee about their activities and performance. They can ask questions and gather evidence from any person or body (with their consent) and exercise the right to call in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Leader, Cabinet, or officers.

For Section 19 of the Police & Justice Act 2006, the Committee acts as the Council's Crime & Disorder Committee and as such is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the decisions and work of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

Performance Panel

During the 2021/22 year, the Scrutiny Committee continued to use the performance panel to undertake a detailed review of the quarterly performance and financial information.

The purpose of the panel is to provide a strategic review, on behalf of the scrutiny committee, of the quarterly performance and financial monitoring information which supports the delivery of the Council Plan and budget strategy.

The panel does this through:

1. Reviewing quarterly Performance Monitoring reports
2. Reviewing progress against Council plan delivery, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and agreed targets
3. Reviewing the quarterly Revenue and Capital budget Monitoring report
4. Reviewing project highlight reports for Tier 1 projects and post-project reports at project completion
5. Working with the Lead Officer to investigate areas of concern and request further information, inviting cabinet members and relevant officers to attend to discuss the performance of specific areas

The questions raised, answers provided, and detailed minutes of the panel's meetings are published on the website and circulated to the scrutiny committee and cabinet with each of the quarterly performance papers. In addition, a verbal update

is provided by the chair of the panel.

Membership and Meetings

Business and Housing Policy Committee: The following councillors have attended as a committee member during the year: Councillor Anne Weir (Chairperson), Councillor Caroline Horrill, Councillor Charles Radcliffe, Councillor Chris Edwards, Councillor Fiona Isaacs, Councillor Hugh Lumby, Councillor Jamie Scott, Councillor Jonathan Fern, Councillor Mike Craske, Councillor Paula Ferguson, and Councillor Tony Bronk

Health and Environment Policy Committee: The following councillors have attended as a committee member during the year: Councillor Paula Ferguson (Chairperson) Councillor Caroline Brook, Councillor Chris Westwood, Councillor Frank Pearson, Councillor Hannah Williams, Councillor Jan Warwick, Councillor John Tippet-Cooper, Councillor Jonathan Fern, Councillor Michael Kurn, Councillor Steve Cramoysan and Councillor Susan Cook

Scrutiny Committee: The following councillors have attended as a committee member during the year: Councillor Caroline Brook (Chairperson), Councillor Anne Weir, Councillor Caroline Horrill, Councillor Hannah Williams, Councillor Hugh Lumby, Councillor Kathleen Becker, Councillor Margot Power, Councillor Mike Craske, Councillor Paula Ferguson, Councillor Stephen Godfrey, Councillor Steve Cramoysan, Councillor Susan Cook and Councillor Brian Laming

Dates and times of meetings 2021/22

Business & Housing Policy Committee	
	22/06/21 18:30
	21/09/21 18:30
	30/11/21 18:30
	01/03/22 18:30
Health and Environment Policy Committee	
	06/07/21 18:30
	30/09/21 18:30
	19/01/22 18:30
	02/03/22 18:30
The Scrutiny Committee	
	19/07/21 18:30
	09/09/21 18:30
	15/11/21 18:30
	06/12/21 18:30
	15/02/22 18:30
	03/03/22 18:30
Performance Panel	
	14/06/21 16:00
	23/08/21 16:00
	08/11/21 16:00
	24/02/22 16:00

All items considered in 2020/21 Business and Housing Policy Committee

Meeting Date	Title
22/06/21 18:30	Green Economic Development Strategy BHP017
22/06/21 18:30	High Street Priority Plan BHP018
22/06/21 18:30	HRA Welfare Fund and Preventing Homelessness Grant Spending Plan(s) BHP019
22/06/21 18:30	Update on a Digital Winchester
21/09/21 18:30	A Digital Economy for Winchester - Update
21/09/21 18:30	Local Plan - Verbal Update
21/09/21 18:30	New Homes Programme Update Report
21/09/21 18:30	Presentation - Next Generation Winchester" - Project Update"
21/09/21 18:30	Winchester District Ten-Year Green Economic Development Strategy - Report
30/11/21 18:30	Digital Update - Verbal Update
30/11/21 18:30	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Asset Management Strategy
30/11/21 18:30	Winchester District High Streets Priority Plan up-date and progress report
01/03/22 18:30	Digital Task Force
01/03/22 18:30	Neighbourhood Services - Engagement Programme
01/03/22 18:30	Shop Appy
01/03/22 18:30	The Homelessness Prevention Grant Spending Plan 2022/23
01/03/22 18:30	Winchester City Council - Landlord Letting Policy

Health and Environment Policy Committee

Meeting Date	Title
06/07/21 18:30	Carbon Neutrality Annual Report and Action Plan (HEP013)
06/07/21 18:30	Community and Wellbeing Strategy Update (HEP012)
30/09/21 18:30	Carbon Neutrality Programme - Transport policies/actions (HEP014)
30/09/21 18:30	Core Funding Grants Programme 2022-2025 (HEP011)
30/09/21 18:30	Vision for a sustainable, decarbonised future Winchester District (HEP015)
19/01/22 18:30	Air Quality Briefing Update (HEP019 and Presentation)
19/01/22 18:30	Carbon Neutrality Programme - Energy policies/actions (HEP016)
19/01/22 18:30	Future of Waste and Recycling (HEP020 and Presentation)
19/01/22 18:30	Management of Open Space - Scoping Report (HEP017)
02/03/22 18:30	Carbon Neutrality Programme - Carbon Offsetting (HEP021 and Presentation)
02/03/22 18:30	Carbon Neutrality Programme - Housing/Property policies/actions (HEP024)
02/03/22 18:30	Draft Tree Strategy (HEP022)
02/03/22 18:30	Review of Meadowside and Winchester Sport and Leisure Park provision (HEP023)

The Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Date	Title
19/07/21 18:30	Annual Scrutiny Report - Draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2020/21
19/07/21 18:30	Appointments of external bodies related to scrutiny
19/07/21 18:30	Central Winchester Regeneration Strategic Outline Business Case
19/07/21 18:30	General Fund Outturn 20/21
19/07/21 18:30	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn 20/21
19/07/21 18:30	Q4 Performance Monitoring including a verbal update from the Chair of the Performance Panel
19/07/21 18:30	Scrutiny Report - Exceptions to Forward Plan 2020/21
09/09/21 18:30	Q1 Finance & Performance Monitoring including a verbal update from the Chair of the Performance Panel
15/11/21 18:30	Fees and Charges 2022/23
15/11/21 18:30	General Fund Budget Options and Medium-Term Financial Strategy
15/11/21 18:30	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and Budget Options
15/11/21 18:30	Q2 Finance & Performance Monitoring including a verbal update from the Chair of the Performance Panel
06/12/21 18:30	Central Winchester Regeneration (CWR) Outline Business Case
06/12/21 18:30	Exempt Information - Item 6 Central Winchester Regeneration Outline Business Case - Appendix E
15/02/22 18:30	Capital Investment Strategy 2022-2032
15/02/22 18:30	General Fund Budget 2022/23
15/02/22 18:30	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2022/23
15/02/22 18:30	To note the determination of the Monitoring Officer following a call-in request.
15/02/22 18:30	Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23
03/03/22 18:30	Community Safety Partnership Performance Review
03/03/22 18:30	Land transaction in respect of the River Park Leisure Centre site and associated parking area
03/03/22 18:30	Q3 Finance & Performance Monitoring including a verbal update from the Chair of the Performance Panel

Public participation.

The policy and scrutiny committee welcomes and encourages engagement with residents and other community representatives during its public participation session. During 2021/22 all meetings of the council were live-streamed, recorded and made available on the council's YouTube channel which has improved the visibility and transparency of meetings.

The agenda, minutes, audio and video recordings for all Policy and Scrutiny meetings can be found on [our website](#)

Review of 2021/22

Business and Housing Policy Committee.

Chairperson of the committee, Cllr Anne Weir.

The Committee turned its attention over the year to the Council's work on recovery. It looked ahead to the emerging Green Economic Development Strategy and initiatives to strengthen support for vulnerable sections of our community and move ahead with the Council's housing development programme. The continuing commitment and drive from the housing and the economic development teams in the face of ongoing pandemic related pressures is acknowledged and the teams are thanked for their sustained service and their innovative and purposeful responses to the many unforeseen challenges.

Winchester Tenants and Council Together (TACT) continuing participation and thoughtful contributions to the committee's discussions relating to housing and support for local communities is greatly appreciated.

The chair is particularly grateful for the support given to the Committee in its work on the Next Generation and Digital Winchester Task and Finish groups. The findings of each group make valuable contributions to the development of the local plan and will inform future iterations of the council plan. The Task and Finish groups demonstrated models for future public engagement in emerging policy areas. The Committee recognises that Partner organisations also generously contributed time and insight to these two workstreams.

On its return to in-person meetings in June 2021, the Committee considered proposals for spending additional support and assistance to Council Tenants, included in the 2021/22 budget, to be provided through an HRA Welfare Fund, and for spending the government Homelessness Prevention Grant. The Economic Development team outlined the approach to creating the District's Green Economic Development strategy and presented transitional proposals for support for high streets and district centres that would lay the foundation for a longer-term strategic approach. An update was given on the Digital Winchester call for evidence.

At the September committee meeting, the Housing team presented the finding of the Next Generation Task and Finish group's work which investigated the challenges faced by younger people who want to work and live in the Winchester district and the part the council can play in ensuring the housing mix meets the needs of this generation. The report was warmly welcomed bringing together a wealth of information and insight that would inform housing policy and the emerging local plan.

The housing team also reported on progress with the new homes programme noting that delivery continued strongly and that work was ongoing on a special vehicle for submarket rented housing. The economic development team presented the draft green economic development strategy which provides a road map and practical steps towards a greener, more technology-driven creative economy supported by a well-documented evidence base. The City Council's Local Plan team updated the

committee on the progress with the local plan as it relates to the remit of the committee and a further update on the Digital Winchester project was given.

In November, the committee reviewed the Housing Revenue Account Asset Management Strategy and challenged the team on retrofit and disposals and acquisitions while supporting the prioritisation of funding for fire doors. The economy team introduced a progress report and forward plan of activity for the district High Streets Priority Plan and updated the committee on the Digital Winchester project which was nearing completion following a successful online open forum session.

At its final meeting in March, the committee heard from the housing team about the Neighbourhood Services Engagement Programme and commented on the proposal to add two officers to the team highlighting the importance of collaborative working across the council. A report on the Council's Landlord Letting Policy was discussed and recommendations were made to Cabinet on a range of questions raised. The Spending Plan 2022/23 for the Homelessness Prevention Grant was also reviewed, and the cabinet noted several points raised by the committee.

The economic development team reported back on the impact of the ShopAppy retail platform on the performance of independent businesses. The final report of the Digital Winchester Task and Finish Group was welcomed by the committee observing that, in the light of Covid-19, attitudes and expectations of digital services in Winchester District had moved forward and ensuring access to fast, reliable, and often higher capacity services was of much higher priority across the local area. This should be kept under review by the committee in the year ahead.

The Health and Environment Policy Committee

Chairperson of the committee, Cllr Paula Ferguson

The Health and Environment policy committee met four times during the municipal year, in July, September, January and March and had a full agenda at each meeting. It considered papers covering a range of issues affecting both the district's environment and the health/happiness of the district's residents and communities. These issues ranged from waste management to air quality, to community support, to tree management, to sports and leisure provision in the district, as well as an in-depth consideration of the policies relating to the core strands of the council's Carbon Neutrality Action Plan i.e., transport, energy generation and housing/property. I would like to thank both officers and external guests for their professional input to the meetings, as well as Democratic Services for their support. I would also like to thank all those members of the public who came to speak to the committee plus my fellow councillors who sit on the committee for their detailed engagement with the topics at hand.

At the July meeting, the committee considered two papers.

The first considered the Community and Wellbeing Strategy which had been reviewed and updated, with a greater emphasis on collaborative working with community groups. The committee probed the council's strategy for engaging with community groups, churches, charities, parish and town councils, and the unparished town wards. It welcomed the council's focus on trying to maintain the positive community engagement ignited during the pandemic, together with the need to keep supporting those organisations helping the most vulnerable such as the food banks and the food pantry.

The second considered the council's Carbon Neutrality Annual Report and Action Plan which outlined the progress that the council had made over the past two years to reduce both the council's and the district's carbon footprint. The committee welcomed this progress and probed the various priorities being put forward including retrofitting the council's own housing stock, decarbonising public transport, and more community engagement. The committee, however, asked that a carbon impact assessment be made for any proposed priorities so that there could be a focus on actions which were likely to lead to the greatest carbon reduction,

At the September meeting, the committee considered three papers.

The first looked at the Core Funding Grants Programme 2022 -2025 and how the council would manage this funding over the next 3 years which included a 20% reduction this year. The committee focused on the important role of the voluntary sector in the community, particularly during the pandemic, and acknowledged the vital work that many of the organisations that receive a core grant had done. The committee probed the process by which organisations are selected and while it recognised the need to reduce grant funding by 20% given current restraints on Council's finances, the committee urged that this reduction be reviewed should the financial position change.

The second considered the specific policies/actions the council is undertaking to reduce carbon from transport within the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan. Questions

focused on the likely impact that the shift to more home working would have, whether the projections regarding electric vehicles were realistic, and how the gap between the city's and the county's carbon neutrality targets could be bridged. The committee emphasised the need for officers to calculate the likely impact of carbon reduction on any policies/actions being put forward, and for there to be a focus on those actions which were likely to have the greatest impact, calling for metrics to be developed and reported on, including priorities, targets and timescales.

The third considered the prospect of how the council might produce a Vision for a Sustainable, Decarbonised Future Winchester District, which was jointly presented by WinACC and the Wessex Green Hub. The committee welcomed this report and the prospect of creating such a vision. It probed how this could be done, how this would fit alongside the existing Carbon Neutrality Action Plan, and how residents and community groups could be involved in the process. Given the approach being put forward is based on the concept of 'Doughnut Economics', the committee recognised that training might be needed for officers and members.

At the January meeting, the committee considered four papers.

The first considered the specific policies/actions the Council was undertaking to increase renewable energy generation as part of the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan. Attention focused on the role of the Local Plan to identify and provide an impetus for increased renewable energy generation with solar farms favoured over the potential for onshore wind. The committee noted that external expertise was needed to support the council in this area and called for the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan to include a clear plan for energy generation, again with clear metrics to include priorities, timescales and progress.

The second related to the Future of Waste & Recycling in the District and the challenge of responding to the additional recycling demands within the new Environment Bill. The committee probed the challenges likely to be faced by the council, the impact the changes were likely to have on the council's finances and on businesses, plus the need to work effectively with HCC as the changes are planned for and introduced. It also discussed the need for greater coordination with community groups to encourage behaviour change. The committee asked officers to look at ways to accelerate the recycling of additional items including the possibility of a food waste trial and to provide an assessment of the carbon impact of any proposed changes in future reports.

The third provided an update of the state of air quality within the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Winchester town centre and the wider district, as well as providing possible approaches to how the council might tackle air quality going forward. The committee raised concerns about the growing evidence linking air quality with poor health and probed the likely impact of the new Air Quality Supplementary Planning Document for the town. It also emphasised the need to keep raising public awareness about the negative impact of wood-burning and bonfires.

At the March meeting, the committee considered four papers. The first provided a review of the sports and leisure provision at the new Winchester Sports and Leisure Park and the refurbished Meadowside Leisure Centre, both managed by Everyone Active who presented the report. The committee sought clarity in respect of the core pricing structure, and access arrangements for community groups and military personnel. It also raised concerns about the security of bike storage and the likely impact of rising energy costs. The committee commended both centres and congratulated Everyone Active on the work they had done to open the centres on time during the pandemic.

The second considered the council's actions/policies to reduce carbon from housing/property as part of the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan. Attention focused on the retrofit programme for the Council's own property and raised concerns about the rising costs of materials and the likely impact this could have. The committee highlighted the need for a clear plan to include timescales and overall funding requirements, together with the need for ongoing engagement with tenants. As with previous elements of the Carbon Neutrality Plan, the committee called for metrics to be put in place to allow targets to be set and progress to be monitored effectively.

The third set out the council's option for carbon offsetting and the committee probed both the need for this in the short term, expressing concern about how quickly the carbon offsetting could be achieved if options such as tree planting were used. While it recognised that limited offsetting is likely to be needed if the council is to be carbon neutral by 2024, the committee recommended that offsetting should not be seen as an 'easy option' and that the focus should remain on carbon reduction.

The fourth considered the draft tree strategy, with the committee focusing its discussions on how the strategy could be effectively used to protect the council's existing tree stock, and how it would help the council to manage and respond to requests in respect of trees on private land, including enforcement where trees are cut down illegally. The committee welcomed the new strategy, recommending it be presented in a range of formats to make it more accessible.

The Scrutiny Committee

Chairperson of the committee. Councillor Caroline Brook.

The scrutiny committee has a wide remit in its role of reviewing and scrutinising decisions made, or actions taken, related to the discharge of the council's functions.

Over the year the committee has dealt with several topics which are either contained in its terms of reference as annual responsibilities or were referred to the Committee from other Committees of the Council.

The committee met six times during the 2021/22 municipal year, attendance was high throughout the year with just four apologies received from members. It was also pleasing to note that members of the public attended all but one of the committees' meetings and I am grateful for their contribution to our work.

The following gives an overview of the committee's workload for the year.

- The council's "Central Winchester Regeneration" project and the Land Transaction in respect of the River Park Leisure Centre site featured heavily on the committees' agenda this year with reports being tabled at both the July, December and March meetings before decisions being taken at cabinet.
- As is normal a key part of the work of the committee was to scrutinise the suite of budget papers at our February meeting before the formal decision at both cabinet and council.
- The performance panel met on four occasions to scrutinise each of the quarterly finance and performance reports before those reports were tabled at the scrutiny committee. I am grateful to the panel members for the work they have undertaken during the year.
- At the November 2020 meeting, the committee agreed to establish a task and finish panel to undertake a review of the current provision of mental health services across the district, including those related to the city council's policies and services. The panel met during the year and will meet again during 2022/23 and will report back to the committee.
- Two call-ins were initiated by members in the municipal year.
 1. The first was received on 1 December 2021, regarding a decision taken at the Cabinet meeting on the 23 November 2021, report [reference CAB3324](#) (*A land transaction in respect of the River Park leisure centre site and associated parking area*). This call-in request was not accepted by the Monitoring Officer and a report was presented to the committee at its meeting on 15 February 2022.
 2. The second was received on 17 March 2022, regarding a decision taken at the Cabinet meeting on the 9th March 2022, (report [reference CAB3342](#) "*A land transaction in respect of the River Park Leisure Centre (RPLC) site and associated parking area, bowls club and skate park*"). This call-in request was not

accepted by the Monitoring Officer and a report is due to be presented to the committee at its meeting on 14 June 2022.

- For Section 19 of the Police & Justice Act 2006, the Committee acts as the Council's Crime & Disorder Committee and as such is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the decisions and work of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) which was undertaken at our March meeting, and we were pleased to welcome back Chief Inspector Jon Turton.

Members of the cabinet attended meetings of the committee which allowed for discussion and questions concerning policy and progress during the year. All members of the Committee contributed to the issues put before them in a constructive manner and I am grateful for their support. My thanks also go to the Vice-Chair for their help and advice during the past 12 months.

