

REPORT TITLE: Draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2022/23

3 July 2023

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 2022/23 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:

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

Annual Scrutiny Report 2022/23

1. 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:

1. Business and Housing Policy Committee
2. Health and Environment Policy Committee
3. 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.

2. 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:

2.1. 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

2.2. 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

2.3. 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)

2.4. Performance Panel

During the 2022/23 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:

- a) Reviewing quarterly Performance Monitoring reports
- b) Reviewing progress against Council plan delivery, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and agreed targets.
- c) Reviewing the quarterly Revenue and Capital budget Monitoring report
- d) Reviewing project highlight reports for Tier 1 projects and post-project reports at project completion
- e) 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.

3. Membership and Meetings

Business and Housing Policy Committee: The following councillors have attended as committee members during the year: Councillor Tony Bronk, Councillor Jonathan Fern Councillor Steve Cramoysan, Councillor Fiona Isaacs, Councillor Steve Miller, Councillor Charles Radcliffe, Councillor Jamie Scott, Councillor Anne Small, Councillor Caroline Horrill, Councillor James Batho, Councillor Chris Edwards, and Councillor Caroline Brook.

Health and Environment Policy Committee: The following councillors have attended as committee members during the year: Councillor Brian Laming, Councillor Vivian Achwal. Councillor James Batho, Councillor Angela Clear, Councillor Susan Cook, Councillor Frank Pearson, Councillor John Tippett-Cooper, Councillor Jan Warwick, Councillor Chris Westwood, Councillor Neil Bolton, Councillor Hannah Williams, and Councillor Neil Cutler.

Scrutiny Committee: The following councillors have attended as committee members during the year: Councillor Caroline Brook, Councillor Kathleen Becker, Councillor Susan Cook, Councillor Mike Craske, Councillor Neil Cutler, Councillor Brian Laming, Councillor Chris Westwood, Councillor Steve Cramoysan, Councillor Stephen Godfrey, Councillor Chris Edwards, Councillor Jane Rutter, and Councillor Caroline Horrill

Performance Panel: The following councillors have attended as committee members during the year: Councillor Caroline Horrill, Councillor Brian Laming, Councillor Chris Westwood, Councillor Mike Craske, Councillor Neil Cutler, Councillor Stephen Godfrey, Councillor Steve Cramoysan and Councillor Susan Cook

4. Dates and times of meetings 2022/23

Business and Housing Policy Committee

21/06/22 18:30	6:30 PM
06/10/22 18:30	6:30 PM
29/11/22 18:30	6:30 PM
28/02/23 18:30	6:30 PM

Health and Environment Policy Committee

05/07/22 18:30	6:30 PM
04/10/22 18:30	6:30 PM
06/12/22 18:30	6:30 PM
01/03/23 18:30	6:30 PM

The Scrutiny Committee

14/06/22 18:30	6:30 PM
13/07/22 18:30	6:30 PM
07/09/22 18:30	6:30 PM
29/09/22 09:30	9:30 AM
23/11/22 18:30	6:30 PM
07/02/23 18:30	6:30 PM
27/02/23 18:30	6:30 PM

Performance Panel

06/06/22 16:00	4:00 PM
22/08/22 16:00	4:00 PM
07/11/22 16:00	4:00 PM
15/02/23 16:00	4:00 PM

5. All items considered in 2022/23

The Scrutiny Committee

14 June 2022

Annual Report - Exceptions to Forward Plan 2021/22
Annual Scrutiny Report - Draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2021/22
Determination of Call-In (RPLC)
Q4 Performance monitoring 2021/2022
Appointments of external bodies related to scrutiny 2022/23

13 July 2022

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn 2021/2022
General Fund Outturn 21/22
Update on the Station Approach project

07 September 2022

Q1 Finance & Performance Monitoring
Mental Health Matters: Task and Finish Group Feedback

29 September 2022

Consideration of Local Plan Topic Chapters

23 November 2022

HRA Business Plan and Budget Options
General Fund Budget Options & Medium-Term Financial Strategy
Q2 Finance and Performance Monitoring

07 February 2023

Capital Investment Strategy 2022-2032
Community Safety Partnership Performance Review
General Fund Budget 2023/24
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2023/24
Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24

27 February 2023

Q3 Finance & Performance Monitoring Report
Central Winchester Regeneration (CWR)

Performance Panel

06 June 2022

A detailed review of the draft Q4 Performance Monitoring

22 August 2022

A detailed review of draft Q1 Performance Monitoring

07 November 2022

A detailed review of the draft Q2 Finance & Performance Monitoring

15 February 2023

Key Performance Indicator set.

A detailed review of draft Q3 Finance & Performance Monitoring

Business and Housing Policy Committee

21 June 2022

Empty Homes Strategy 2022 - 2027

Winchester District High Streets Priority Plan - Up-Date and Progress Report

Green Economic Development Strategy - Draft Action Plan

Housing Services - Compensation Policy

06 October 2022

Findings and future plans following the Street Markets Review

Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy

29 November 2022

Sustainable Tourism Strategy - Scoping Plan

Disabled Facilities Grants

Emerging Housing Strategy- Scoping Report

28 February 2023

Draft Housing Tenant Engagement and Communication Plan

Winchester District Cultural Strategy - Scoping

Health and Environment Policy Committee

05 July 2022

Winchester Movement Strategy and Carbon Neutrality Programme
Options for Funding Community Grants
Carbon Neutrality Annual Report and Action Plan

04 October 2022

Review of Health and Wellbeing provision
CNAP Report: Biodiversity Grass Verge Management (pilot road verge project)
Cost of Living Crisis

06 December 2022

Discussion from Solent Freeport by Chair, Mr Brian Johnson
Crowdfunding Options
Air Quality Update
Carbon Roadmap and Actions
Review of the Community Infrastructure Levy

01 March 2023

Water Quality
Air Quality Update - Latest Position
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Review
CNAP: Council Homes Retrofit Programme
Winchester District Youth Provision

Public participation.

The policy and scrutiny committee welcomes and encourages engagement with residents and other community representatives during its public participation session. During 2022/23 all public 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 2022/23

Business and Housing Policy Committee.

Report of the chairperson of the committee, Cllr Tony Bronk.

Business

During the municipal year the Business and Housing [B&H] Committee noted the progress of the High Streets Priority Plan, reviewed and commented on the Green Economic Development Strategy Draft Action Plan for 2022-24, commented on and supported recommendations arising from the Winchester District Street Markets Review, commented on the approach to deliver a Sustainable Tourism Strategy; and commented on the anticipated policy direction and delivery of the Winchester District Cultural Strategy (prepared with the participation of the Art Council England a member of which attended the B&H Committee meeting).

Meetings of the committee in June, October and November of 2022 reviewed and commented on several reports of the Portfolio Holder for Business and Culture which set out proposals dependent upon the Council's receipt of the Shared Prosperity Fund Grant; confirmation of which was finally received on 6th December. It was therefore satisfying to hear that the detailed proposals, carefully considered and commented upon to effectively utilise such funding (with the constraint that the allocation for 2022/23 could not be carried forward), had been a good use of officer and member time.

Reports provided members with large quantities of information and analysis, although such was the high level of interest that underlying data was sometimes requested and subsequently circulated enabling some members to make further comments. I consider such supplementary comments, when both timely and consistent with higher-level comments of the Committee to be valuable to the efforts of officers and committee members to secure the most effective outcomes. I, therefore, thank officers for their willingness to accept my and other committee members' subsequent comments; rather than submit more detailed appendices in committee papers or necessitate prolonging of the committee meeting to cover all points of detail. I hope that the Scrutiny Committee will note and support the continuance of this with the caveat that members endeavor to express all substantive views during a scrutiny committee meeting and any substantive comments communicated and adopted after the scrutiny committee are adequately disclosed in any subsequent report during the decision-making process.

Housing

During the municipal year, the Cabinet Housing Committee was established, and a meeting of officers and selected members discussed and agreed on the allocation of papers to each committee for the remainder of the municipal year. This division aimed to ensure strategy and policy were reviewed by the B&H Committee whilst underlying procedures were to be reviewed and determined by the Cabinet Housing Committee.

The B&H Committee, therefore, commented on the new Housing Services Policy for Compensation and Reimbursement, the replacement Empty Homes Strategy 2022-2027, the updated Private Sector Renewal Strategy; the updated Disabled Facilities Grant Policy 2023-2025; the proposed and emerging priorities for the Housing Strategy 2023-2028; and the Draft Housing Tenant Engagement and Communication Plan.

Consistent with the 'Business' reports referred to above, some 'Housing' papers contained an "approach to" and "anticipated policy direction" as opposed to a draft policy or strategy. The meeting of the B&H Committee in November was presented with an Emerging Housing Strategy – Scoping Report. The committee was asked to comment on the proposed and emerging priorities of the Housing Strategy 2023-2028; with the intention that the Housing Strategy itself would be presented to the Cabinet Housing Committee for review and adoption. By way of example, the committee was asked to provide particular comments on priorities such as access to decent homes for all and responding to the housing need of an ageing and growing population. Amongst the comments made was the request that the District's Housing Strategy should refer to and seek to address the impact of the South Downs National Park on housing strategy in that area of the Winchester District.

The B&H Committee considered and commented on the Scoping Report and whilst it supported the bringing of a scoping report to the B&H Committee, it considered the importance of the actual wording of the resultant Housing Strategy to be too important not to be presented to the B&H Committee to enable it to perform an effective scrutiny function of the strategy itself. This concern was acknowledged by the Cabinet Member for Community and Housing and relevant officers, and it was subsequently agreed that the updated Housing Strategy would be submitted to the B&H Committee in the municipal year 2023-24. I, therefore, ask whether the Scrutiny Committee wishes to comment to clarify its views on the role of scrutiny committees in reviewing scoping of strategy (or policy) or reviewing the resulting strategy or policy, or being involved at both stages.

In November, the B&H Committee considered a draft revision to the existing Disabled Facilities Grant Policy. Amongst other things, the committee was specifically asked to comment on whether the existing Service Charge of 12%

should be reduced to 10.5%. The committee report stated why this was feasible and desirable by increasing the amount available for grants. The committee questioned and discussed the reasonableness of the basis for this recommendation and unanimously supported it.

The subsequent report to the Cabinet Housing Committee referred to consultation and communication but made no reference to abandoning the supported option to adopt a 10.5% service charge. Its reference to the B&H committee is " the committee provided comments and feedback regarding the policy, and it was well supported".

The above Cabinet Housing Committee agenda item was deferred, and a revised version of the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy was considered (as part of the Private Sector Renewal Strategy) at the next Cabinet Housing Committee on 21st March. The March paper provided details of the impact of newly proposed changes to the current policy to reflect new means-testing arrangements. There was no mention that this important change was subsequent to the B&H committee's consideration of the draft policy, giving the impression that the B&H committee considered and supported this (I am not wanting to suggest it would not have done, only that the extent of the B&H Committee's support is unclear).

My reason for raising this for the attention of the Scrutiny Committee is to suggest that a formal process is adopted to cross-check recommendations to and resolutions by scrutiny committees with papers subsequently submitted to other committees and to require that subsequent reports contain an explanation for major changes from papers reviewed by a scrutiny committee (or inaction on a scrutiny committee's resolution). Without this check and any resulting disclosure in a subsequent report, how can the Scrutiny Committee or the wider public take comfort that the resolutions or substantive comments from scrutiny committees are considered in subsequent decisions? My suggestion is not for an excessive addition to already detailed reports, but something more than a single short sentence of support in the existing section of reports intended to summarise the nature of consultation and communication.

Before concluding, I wish to mention that the committee is grateful for the attendance at and contribution to each of its meetings by representatives of TACT (Tenants and Council Together). In particular, it noted that the National Residents' Panel set up to improve tenant engagement and the regulation of the social housing sector included a Winchester City Council tenant and the committee extended its thanks to that person for their involvement.

Finally, I would like to highlight that the B&H Committee supported a 2023-2024 work plan proposal to establish a HMO task and finish group; and to seek a review of the council's policy regarding the installation of showers within its housing stock (in

addition to its scrutiny of strategies and policies that have reached their expiry dates or require update).

The Health and Environment Policy Committee

Report of the chairperson of the committee, Cllr Brian Laming

The Health and Environment Policy Committee met four times during the municipal year, in July, October, December 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 the Winchester movement strategy, a review of the community infrastructure levy, community grants and crowdfunding options, the review of the district's health and wellbeing provision and the Winchester district's youth provision, to the cost-of-living crisis, 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 actions and biodiversity grass verge management. In addition, the committee also welcomed an update from the Chair of the Solent Freeport and received an extensive question and answer session with representatives from Southern Water and Natural England.

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. In addition, 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 three papers, Carbon Neutrality Annual Report and Action Plan, Winchester Movement Strategy and Carbon Neutrality Programme – Transport actions update and Options for Funding Community Grants

At the October meeting, the committee considered three items – a presentation regarding the Review of Health & Wellbeing provision, a report in respect of the CNAP report: Biodiversity Grass Verge Management (pilot road verge project) and a presentation on the cost-of-living crisis.

At the December meeting, the committee considered five items – An update from the Chair of the Solent Freeport, a report and presentation on the Carbon Road Map and Actions, a report on Crowdfunding Options, a presentation on the Air Quality Update and a presentation on the review of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

At the March meeting, the committee considered two items. The Committee held an extensive question and answer session regarding water quality with representatives from Southern Water and Natural England and lastly considered a report and received a presentation on the Winchester District Youth Provision.

The Scrutiny Committee

Report of the 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 seven times during the 2022/23 municipal year, attendance was high throughout the year with just six apologies received from members. It was also pleasing to note that members of the public attended five of the committees' meetings and I am grateful for their contribution to our work. Public attendance was particularly high when the committee received a report regarding the Station Approach project in July 2022 and regarding the Local Plan in September 2022.

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

The council's regeneration projects featured heavily on the committee's agenda this year with reports being tabled at both the July and February meetings before decisions being taken at cabinet.

The committee held a joint meeting with the Local Plan Advisory group in September 2022 to discuss the council's Local Plan Topics and Site Allocations. This 11-hour meeting allowed for specific scrutiny of the detail behind the council's proposals.

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 and then to the cabinet. 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 reported back its findings to the committee at our September meeting.

No call-ins were initiated by members in the municipal year.

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 February meeting, and we were pleased to welcome back Chief Inspector Jon Turton and wished him well on his retirement.

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 constructively put before them 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.