

REPORT TITLE: Draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2023/24

6 June 2024

REPORT OF CHAIRPERSON: Councillor Caroline Brook

Contact Officer: Matthew Watson Tel No: 01962 848 317 Email
mwatson@winchester.gov.uk

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 2023/24 municipal year is attached in 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 makes any necessary comments on the content of the report before its submission to full council.

Annual Scrutiny Report 2023/24

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. Economy 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. Economy and Housing Policy Committee

To maintain a strategic overview of the progress towards the achievement of the relevant priorities in the Council Plan namely:

1. Making the District a premier business location
2. Delivering quality housing options

2.2. Health and Environment Policy Committee

To maintain a strategic overview of the progress towards the achievement of the relevant priorities in the Council Plan namely:

1. Improving the quality of the district's environment
2. Improving the health and happiness of the community

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).

The broad terms of reference are as follows:

1. To review and scrutinise any decisions made or to be made or actions to be taken in connection with the discharge of the Council's functions, including holding the Cabinet to account by reviewing and scrutinising executive decisions.
2. Reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives and performance targets
3. Exercise the right to Call-In for reconsideration of decisions made but not yet implemented by the Leader, the Cabinet and Cabinet Members and Officers

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 2023/24 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

Economy and Housing Policy Committee: The following Councillors have attended as committee members during the year: Councillor James Batho (Chairperson), Councillor Chris Chamberlain (Vice Chairperson), Councillor Fiona Isaacs, Councillor George Prest, Councillor Jamie Scott, Councillor Margot Power, Councillor Nathan Eve, Councillor Steve Miller, Councillor Caroline Horrill and Councillor Sudhakar Achwal. **The following members attended the committee to address the meeting:** Councillor Chris Westwood, Councillor Danny Lee, Councillor Jackie Porter, Councillor Lucille Thompson and Councillor Malcolm Wallace.

Health and Environment Policy Committee: The following Councillors have attended as committee members during the year: Councillor Steve Cramoysan (Chairperson), Councillor (Vice Chairperson), Councillor Charlie Wise, Councillor Hannah Greenberg, Councillor Jan Warwick, Councillor John Tippet-Cooper (Vice Chairperson), Councillor Jonny Morris, Councillor Neil Bolton, Councillor Adrian Brophy, Councillor Caroline Brook, Councillor Jonathan Williams and Councillor Michael Kurn. **The following members attended the committee to address the meeting:** Councillor Caroline Horrill, Councillor Danny Lee, Councillor Kathleen Becker, Councillor Kelsie Learney, Councillor Malcolm Wallace, Councillor Margot Power, Councillor Jackie Porter, Councillor Martin Tod and Councillor Susan Cook.

Scrutiny Committee: The following Councillors have attended as committee members during the year: Councillor Caroline Brook (Chairperson), Councillor Brian Laming, Councillor Caroline Horrill (Vice Chairperson), Councillor Jamie Scott, Councillor Jerry Pett, Councillor Jonathan Williams, Councillor Mark Reach, Councillor Jonny Morris. **The following members attended the committee to address the meeting:** Councillor Chris Westwood, Councillor Danny Lee, Councillor Kathleen Becker, Councillor Kelsie Learney, Councillor Malcolm Wallace, Councillor Martin Tod, Councillor Neil Bolton and Councillor Neil Cutler.

Performance Panel: The following Councillors have attended as panel members during the year: Councillor Caroline Horrill (Chairperson), Councillor Brian Laming, Councillor Jerry Pett, Councillor Jonathan Williams, Councillor Mark Reach and Councillor Neil Bolton. **The following members attended the committee to address the meeting:** Councillor Chris Westwood, Councillor Kelsie Learney, Councillor Martin Tod, Councillor Neil Cutler and Councillor Jackie Porter.

4. Items considered during 2023/24

Scrutiny Committee

03/07/23 18:30	Annual Report - Exceptions to Forward Plan 2022/23
03/07/23 18:30	Annual Scrutiny Report 2022/23
03/07/23 18:30	Appointments of external bodies related to scrutiny.
03/07/23 18:30	Q4 Performance Monitoring
03/07/23 18:30	Strategic Outline Case for Station Approach
06/09/23 18:30	General Fund Outturn 2022/2023
06/09/23 18:30	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn 2022/2023
06/09/23 18:30	Q1 2023/24 Financial and Performance Monitoring
06/09/23 18:30	Scrutiny Request - Update on public convenience strategy.
22/11/23 18:30	Determination of call-in request
22/11/23 18:30	General Fund Budget Options & Medium-Term Financial Strategy
22/11/23 18:30	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and Budget Options
22/11/23 18:30	Q2 Finance & Performance Monitoring
06/02/24 18:30	Capital Investment Strategy
06/02/24 18:30	General Fund Budget 2024/25
06/02/24 18:30	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2024/25
06/02/24 18:30	Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25
06/03/24 18:30	Community Safety Partnership Performance Review
06/03/24 18:30	Q3 Finance & Performance Monitoring Report

Economy and Housing Policy Committee

12/07/23 18:30	Carbon Credit Trading
12/07/23 18:30	Retrofit housing programme.
19/09/23 18:30	Housing Strategy 2023 to 2028
19/09/23 18:30	Nutrient Mitigation Project (presentation)
19/09/23 18:30	UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Funds update
19/09/23 18:30	Winchester City Street Market Mgmt Contract and Operating Policy
28/11/23 18:30	Festivals and Events Programming Policy
28/11/23 18:30	Housing Revenue Account Rent Setting and Business Plan
20/02/24 18:30	Accommodation Strategy for Homeless Households
20/02/24 18:30	Green Economic Development Strategy Action Plan 2024/27
20/02/24 18:30	Scoping Document for The Older Persons Accommodation Strategy
20/02/24 18:30	Winchester District Cultural Strategy (Presentation)

Health and Environment Policy Committee

04/07/23 18:30	Future of Waste and Recycling (Presentation)
04/07/23 18:30	Water Quality in Winchester District (Briefing update)
21/09/23 18:30	CNAP report: Winchester Movement Strategy and Transport Actions
21/09/23 18:30	Cost of Living Programme (HEP035)
21/09/23 18:30	Social Value delivered through Winchester's Leisure Centres
05/12/23 18:30	CNAP Report: Renewable Energy
05/12/23 18:30	Ecological Sites
05/12/23 18:30	Water Quality Update
22/01/24 18:30	Future of Waste and Recycling (Presentation)
31/01/24 18:30	Hampshire Together: Modernising our Hospitals and Health Services

Performance Panel

22/05/23 16:00	Detailed review of draft Q4 Performance Monitoring
21/08/23 16:00	Detailed review of draft Q1 Performance Monitoring
07/11/23 16:00	Detailed review of draft Q2 Performance Monitoring

Public participation.

The policy and scrutiny committee welcomes and encourages engagement with residents and other community representatives during its public participation session. During 2023/24 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 2023/24

Economy and Housing Policy Committee.

Report of the chairperson of the committee, Cllr James Batho.

During the municipal year the previous Business and Housing Committee was renamed to the Economy and Housing Policy (EHP) Committee.

The background to the year is a continuing Cost of Living crisis and pressure on council budgets.

Economy

At the September meeting the Business and Culture team brought forward updates on the UK Shared Prosperity and the Rural England Prosperity Funds, and the Winchester Street Market Management Contract and Operating Policy. The committee were pleased to see progress with the allocation of the Prosperity Funds and commented on the Street Market Policy, asking that it encourages start-up businesses, and that market trader selection should emphasise green credentials and support the council's net zero objectives.

In November the EHP considered the Festivals and Events Programming Policy and welcomed the plans to provide a "one point of contact" for organisations, though wanted to understand the resource implications.

At the final meeting in February the Winchester District Cultural Strategy and Green Economic Development Action Plan explored how Winchester City Council is working with partner organisations in these areas. The committee was impressed by the scale of ambition in each and wanted to ensure that clear governance and measurement mechanisms were put in place.

Housing

Winchester Tenants and Council Together (TACT) continued to support the committee's work with thoughtful contributions to the discussions and their support for local communities is greatly appreciated.

At the first meeting in July the Housing team presented the Retrofit Housing Programme and described a challenging target for our housing stock to be carbon neutral by 2030. The committee were impressed by the dedication to achieve this target and commented that communication with residents and careful project management will be crucial to the success of the programme. The next presentation described an opportunity emerging from the Retrofit Housing Programme to trade and generate credits. The Carbon Credit Trading Report was met with some concerns about the process and how the credits generated should be utilised.

In September the committee explored the Housing Strategy objectives of More homes for all, Greener homes, Homes that better meet different needs and Better managed homes, Better neighbourhoods. The Nutrient Mitigation Project responds to the need to reduce nitrates by upgrading council owned water treatment plants.

The committee supported the programme and requested an update on cost recovery proposals at a future meeting.

In November the Housing Revenue Account Setting and Business Plan was presented and the committee agreed on the importance of ensuring accessibility to services for all whether utilising digital or non-digital methods.

At the final meeting in February aspects of the Housing Strategy were discussed. The Accommodation Strategy for Homeless Households brought the increasing issue of homelessness to the committee. It gave an opportunity to thank both the officer team and our partners, Trinity, Winchester Beacon and Emmaus for their work in this area. A Scoping Document for the Older Persons Accommodation Strategy was also brought forward and the committee acknowledged the comprehensive nature of the work required to address the accommodation needs of the of the older population and the necessity to consider a wide range of accommodation types across the district.

The Health and Environment Policy Committee

Report of the chairperson of the committee, Cllr Steve Cramoyson

Introduction

The Health and Environment Policy Committee met five times during the municipal year, in July, September, December and two additional meetings in January and had a full agenda at each meeting. The topics lined up for the February meeting originally scheduled have been deferred. The committee 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 included Waste & Recycling (twice), the Winchester Movement Strategy, how the district manages its ecological sites, water quality issues (twice), Cost of Living programme and the social value of the leisure centres. The committee welcomed a report from the environment agency on water quality issues in rivers, and a verbal update from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust on the same subject. The committee were also asked to hear and scrutinise the proposals from the Hampshire Together, Hospitals team, about proposed changes to Winchesters Royal Hants County Hospital services.

July meeting, the committee considered two papers,

- **Future of Waste and Recycling:** the purpose of which was to update members of progress in this complex programme which is interdependent on Hampshire County Council decisions as well as national legislation, and funding. The paper gave members the opportunity to challenge and support the policy objectives and to consider what issues might be explored by the City Council in a consultation survey proposed for the public.
- **Water Quality in Winchester District:** This paper was a written submission only by the Environment Agency in relation to water quality in the rivers and water courses in our area. This format did not allow questions to be asked of the EA. Committee Members, and visiting councillors expressed concerns that the water authority is failing to maintain standards of water quality. In addition, that the agencies that monitor and report on these matters are fragmented and lack the powers to take effective enforcement action. The committee requested that a future meeting be held to demonstrate the progress made to remedy water quality issues.

September Meeting

The committee considered three Winchester City Council papers:

- **Cost of Living Programme (CoL)**– which laid out what had been achieved to date and what would be available going forward. This included discussion of some of WCC strategic grants including supporting enhanced CAB services, work done to facilitate better collaboration between the various agencies and voluntary organisations that operate in the district, and details of the CoL grants available.
- **Carbon Neutrality Action Plan (CNAP) Report: Winchester Movement Strategy (WMS) and Transport Actions Update** – was jointly presented by HCC & WCC officers to update members of the progress of the WMS. This provided an update on various schemes intended to encourage walking, cycling as well as use of

park & ride buses and buses more generally. It provided a high level view on HCC LPT4 and the DfT Decarbonisation plan.

- Social Value delivered through Winchester Leisure Centres – This was an interesting paper that sought to put measures on the impact of the participation at WCC leisure centres. An interesting approach to qualify the value of the services delivered rather than just as a cost centre.

December Meeting

This meeting also gave opportunity for members to review three policy areas:

- Ecological Sites: This report included a summary of how ecological sites are currently managed, defined a need for review of how ecological sites are managed and gave opportunity to the Committee to put forward idea on policy principals on how to manage ecological sites.
- Water Quality Update: Representatives from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, provided an update on water quality and water pollution issues in the district, an overview of the current state of the River Itchen, protection for chalk streams, monitoring work being undertaken by other trusts and organisations, community programmes and measures the trust were adopting to improve the position.
- CNAP Report: Renewable Energy: The report set out the council's current and planned work on renewable energy generation and the outcome of consultation carried out earlier this year. The report was about carbon as a whole; not just renewable energy, and a balanced approach on how the council used its resources to achieve the best outcomes needed to be taken.

22 January 2024 (Additional Meeting)

This was an additional meeting not planned at the start of the municipal year. The topic presented was:

- Update on Future of Waste and Recycling since the July meeting.
Since that meeting:
 - Government had released results of consistency consultation
 - HCC had identified key next steps
 - WCC had undertaken a resident survey
 - Modelling had been undertaken on a range of variables
 - Financial estimates of costs included in medium term financial strategy
 - Indicative capital food waste funding from DEFRA
 - Outline timelines developed

The objectives for the meeting included comments to be included regarding the proposals where were due to be heard at a Cabinet meeting on the 8th February.

31 January 2024 Meeting

This was a further additional meeting not planned at the start of the municipal year. The topic this time was a scrutiny meeting of the Consultation papers for the Hampshire Together proposals for a new hospital in Basingstoke, and the downgrading of acute services in Winchester. This was a lengthy and thorough meeting during which the committee raised a range of questions and concerns about how the proposals would affect various parts of the District of Winchester. The

Hampshire Chronicle reported that “CIVIC chiefs grilled hospital bosses...” which is how it should be for a matter of such importance.

To close, I'd like to thank all officers for the time and expertise invested in producing papers for the committee to consider. And to Democratic services, especially Claire Buchanan, ensuring the meetings ran smoothly, and advice on the processes.

Thanks also to fellow councillors who sit on the committee for engaging with each paper and subject and in sharing their expertise and knowledge on these. And of course members of the public who attended to speak on several of the agenda items across the year.

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 five times during the 2023/24 municipal year, attendance was very high throughout the year with just one apology received from members. It was also pleasing to note that members of the public attended three of the committees' meetings and Councillors who are not members of the committee also attended four of the five meetings in order to address the committee.

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

1. At the July meeting, the Committee was updated regarding the Council's strategic outline case for Station Approach and members asked the cabinet to consider several points prior to decision.
2. At the September meeting, the cabinet member was invited to update the committee on the Public Convenience Strategy which had been prompted by feedback from residents.
3. The November meeting considered both the Housing Revenue and General Fund budget option reports and members fed back several detailed points on each report for the cabinet member to consider further.
4. 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.
5. 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 Chief Inspector Korine Bishop who provided a valuable contribution to the meeting.

The performance panel met on three occasions to scrutinise three 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.

One call-in was initiated by members in the year regarding a decision concerning the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan. This call-in request was not accepted by the Monitoring Officer, and this was reported to the committee at its meeting in November 2023.

During the year, a proposal was implemented that enables the committee and the general public to view a 3-month “look ahead” of the council’s key decisions. I welcome this development and believe it will help both the committee to plan its workload more effectively and for residents to see future decisions further in advance.

I am also pleased to report that following a suggestion, a specific learning/training session is being prepared for committee members run by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny early in the new municipal year.

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.