

Scrutiny Committee Annual Report to Council - 2017/18

Remit of the Scrutiny Committee

As per Appendix C of the Council's constitution, "Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules":

1.1 The Council is required by Law to discharge certain overview and scrutiny functions. These functions are an essential component of local democracy. The Scrutiny Committee contribute to the Council's Performance and also hold the Cabinet to account for its decisions.

1.2 The Scrutiny Committee allows a wider involvement in Council business by involving non-councillors from the wider public section, voluntary groups and community groups to help them in their work. They may make reports and recommendations to the Cabinet and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery.

1.3 The Scrutiny Committee also monitors the decisions of the Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committee can "call-in" a decision of the Cabinet which has been made but not yet implemented. They may recommend that the Cabinet reconsider their decision. They may also be consulted by the Cabinet or the Council on forthcoming decisions.

1.4 Scrutiny should be carried out in a constructive way and should aim to contribute to the delivery of efficient and effective services that meet the needs and aspirations of local inhabitants. The Scrutiny Committee should not shy away from the need to challenge and question decisions and make constructive criticism.

"The Scrutiny Committee will comprise a permanent Chairman and Vice Chairman, and 9 other elected Members that follow the political proportionality of the Council. No Members of the Committee may be members of the Cabinet, their deputies or members of any of the Cabinet Advisory Committees."

Approach

Throughout the course of 2017/18, the Scrutiny Committee has drawn up and followed a work plan that has focussed on some key areas. These are:

- Inviting two Cabinet Portfolio Holders to each meeting of the Scrutiny Committee where possible to discuss particular areas of focus/challenge and concerns members may have;
- Inviting a number of external representatives to attend Scrutiny Committee to discuss particular areas of concern and their activities within the district;
- Setting up In-Depth Scrutiny working groups as task and finish groups to investigate particular areas in detail, reporting back to the Committee so that recommendations can be agreed and reported to Cabinet.

- Reviewing performance of services in relation to agreed performance indicators, in particular focusing on red flag indicators.

This approach has ensured that the Committee has scrutinised both the work of SDC and other public bodies across the district, per the Committee's above terms of reference.

Work Covered

Based on the above approach, the following is a summary of work carried out during 2017/18 by the Scrutiny Committee.

Portfolio Holders

Portfolio Holders were asked to provide an update on recent work and future challenges to the relevant meeting, and were subsequently asked a number of questions by Members of the Committee regarding specific challenges and their approach and views. Portfolio holders attended as follows:

Scrutiny Committee	Portfolio Holder	Area of Committee Focus
July 2017	Cllr Robert Piper Planning	Staffing in Planning Sevenoaks Local List Neighbourhood Plans
July 2017	Cllr Roddy Hogarth Economic and Community Development	Council projects in Sevenoaks and Swanley Community Safety Business engagement
October 2017	Cllr John Scholey Finance	Investment Income Future Development/Investment Plans Business Rate Retention Pilot
October 2017	Cllr Anna Firth Legal and Democratic Services	Affordable Housing Company
February 2018	Cllr Roddy Hogarth Economic and Community Development	SupaJam Community Safety Tourism
February 2018	Cllr Robert Piper Planning	Community Infrastructure Levy Local Plan Preparation Staffing
April 2018	Cllr Matthew Dickins Direct and Trading Services	TBC

External Invitees

July 2017 - Jane Paris, Chief Executive of Sencio Community Leisure in attendance.

The Chief Officer Communities and Business and the Chief Finance Officer presented an update on loan arrangements from the District Council to Sencio to fund improvements to Sevenoaks Leisure Centre.

The report detailed financial risks to the Council, trading history and future performance of Sencio following the agreement of a loan of £600,000 to Sencio Community Leisure.

The report also detailed how the repayment of the loan to Sencio for improvements to the Leisure Centre would be affected if the management fee the Council paid was removed. Members were informed that the Licence for Alterations and Loan Agreement had been drafted. Sencio had also issued a letter of intent to their contractor.

Members of the Committee then asked a number of questions relating to areas including:

- Loan agreement to Sencio
- Trading conditions
- Future monitoring

October 2017 - Jim Lusby, Acting Chief Executive Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust and Angela Gallagher, Chief Operating Officer in attendance.

Presentations were given on recent successes and future challenges. This included information on the scope of services provided and performance against key standards.

- Key performance in 2017 comprised of meeting the agreed 4 hours A&E wait time with increase attendances and emergency admissions.
- In regards to Cancer times, there had been continued improvement on the 2 week wait and 62-day standard.
- Other recent developments and achievements included an increase demand for elderly patients and the 'frailty service' provided at Maidstone.
- It was hoped that service would also be provided at Tunbridge Wells but space was an issue.
- The virtual fracture clinics had reduced the number of patients coming in for a check-up by 25%.

Members of the Committee then asked a number of questions relating to areas including:

- Ongoing training for staff
- Levels of staffing resource
- Parking
- Waiting times and alternatives to Accident and Emergency for some cases
- Cyber crime

April 2018 - County Councillor Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Education - TBC

In-Depth Scrutiny Working Groups

At its October 2017 meeting, the Scrutiny Committee resolved to convene an in-depth scrutiny working group to look at matters relating to staffing.

Remit - To look at areas relating to staffing across the organisation including vacancy rates, recruitment, retention and sickness.

Timetable

- April/May 2018 initial meetings and data gathering
- July 2018 - interim progress report to 17 July Scrutiny Committee
- November 2018 - Final report to Scrutiny Committee

Other

The Chairman would like to thank his vice-chairman, other committee members and Officers for the work they have put in over the year.

Councillor Cameron Brown

Chairman - Scrutiny Committee

13th March 2018