

Scrutiny Committee Annual Report to Council - 2021/22

Remit of the Scrutiny Committee

1. 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

2. Throughout the course of 2021/22, the Scrutiny Committee has drawn up and followed a work plan that has focussed on four key areas. These are:

- **Inviting 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. These are discussed at meetings, with explanations being provided by Officers. Matters of serious concern are referred to the Portfolio Holder/ Cabinet as appropriate.

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

3. Based on the above approach, the following is a summary of work carried out during 2021/22 by the Scrutiny Committee.

Portfolio Holders

4. 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
March 2021	Cllr Kevin Maskell Housing & Health	Housing Register Household Adaptations Focus on homelessness prevention The Green Homes low-carbon retrofit project
July 2021	Cllr Margot McArthur Cleaner & Greener	Environmental Health Partnership Direct Services - Restructure Additional Cleaning SDC offices Temporary parking restrictions - Knole Park Electric Charging points
November 2021	Cllr Lesley Dyball People & Places	Deferred due to technical difficulties
November 2021	Cllr Julia Thornton Development & Conservation	Deferred due to technical difficulties
January 2022	Cancelled	
March 2022	Cllr Lesley Dyball People & Places	Community family fun days Community Safety Development of White Oak Leisure Centre Community Grant Scheme

March 2022	Cllr Matthew Dickins Finance & Trading	Continued 10 year balanced budget Administration of Covid grants Multi Asset Investment Funds Capital Programme
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External Invitees

March 2021

Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce

The Chief Executive, Julie Phillips, and the Chairman, Nick Brooker, from the Sevenoaks & District Chamber of Commerce were in attendance and they gave an overview of the activities of the Chamber within the district. The Sevenoaks & District Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit membership organisation which offers support, guidance and networking opportunities for businesses. It primarily operates in Sevenoaks, Swanley and Westerham. Some of the services provided include workshops, webinars, and a LinkedIn group. The Chamber has an active social media presence in order to reach members.

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

- The impact of Covid-19 on businesses within the district.
- Working with other Chambers of Commerce
- Work with Town and Parish Councils
- Young people's employment within the District

November 2021

KCC Highways and Transport

Cllr David Brazier, the Kent County Council (KCC) Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport attended and gave a verbal update on the work carried out by Kent Highways.

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

- KCC Highways consultation on planning applications
- Road safety measures
- Road Safety Enforcement
- School Crossing Officers

In-Depth Scrutiny

CCTV Working Group (July 2021)

Cllr Pender presented the final report as Chairman of the In-Depth Scrutiny Working Group. The Working Group had considered the effectiveness of the Council's CCTV service in supporting Community Safety and its impact on privacy.

Following debate at the Committee, a set of agreed recommendations were made to Cabinet which were considered at its meeting of 16 September 2021.

COVID-19 Response (November 2021)

The Committee resolved to establish an In-Depth Scrutiny working group consisting of Cllrs Osborne-Jackson (Chairman), Layland, London and Pender.

The working group remit is to consider the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and assess the effectiveness of the Emergency Plan and District Emergency Centre (DEC) and areas of improvement. A report from the working group will be brought to a future meeting.

Officer Resource

A number of the members of the Committee at our last meeting raised the issue about the lack of Officer resource in relation to in-depth scrutiny, which is an important and valued component of the Scrutiny Committee. Officers have undertaken to review the position.