

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18



The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee enables councillors to look closely at services and issues that affect the lives of local people with a view to improving them. The committee can examine any matters that affect the council, the area or the residents that live in the area in order to provide greater accountability for the delivery of local services. To be successful scrutiny depends upon active participation not only by the members of the Committee but also input from others, executive councillors, senior officers, representatives from partner organisations and sometimes voluntary organisations and individual members of the public.

The Committee has a number of key roles including:

- Holding the Cabinet to account for their decisions and actions
- Monitoring Council performance to ensure they are meeting the needs of local communities
- Reviewing and developing policy
- Acting as a 'critical friend' for those making decisions
- Making recommendations to the executive arising from the outcomes of the scrutiny process
- Examining external organisations if there are issues of public concern

There are thirteen members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which reflects the political makeup of the full Council. Any Councillor is able to sit on the Committee, except for members of the Cabinet. The committee meets around six times a year. It oversees and monitors the work of scrutiny working groups which are appointed by the full committee to look at specific issues and concerns.

As in previous years, this year saw all Cabinet members report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide comprehensive review of their Portfolios, informing the committee about achievements and challenges over the past year. The committee has monitored progress of a number of initiatives including Gedling Country Park, the Gedling Access Road and Arnold Market.

Legislation requires that Councils appoint a Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee (CDSC) which must meet at least once a year to provide overview and scrutiny of the council area's Community Safety Partnership's work and performance. The Committee undertakes this role and the January meeting considered the performance South Nottinghamshire Community Safety Partnership.

**Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish working groups.**

Should members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wish to look at an issue in more depth time limited task and finish working groups can be established to undertake a review. Working groups focus on a particular issue, gathering evidence using a variety of mechanisms which can include speaking to other local authorities and partner organisations, desk top research using a variety of sources, expert witnesses in addition to discussions with Executive Members and officers. Working group recommendations to improve policies or performance are submitted to Cabinet for consideration. Recommendations are not binding and reasons for accepting or rejecting recommendations have to be made to the Overview Committees who have responsibility for the monitoring the implementation of recommendations. Working groups meetings are held informally and are not open to the general public.

Reviews undertaken this year include:

### **The Gedling Councillor Standard.**

A working group was established following a request from the Joint Consultative and Safety Committee to consider the merits of developing a document to identify a



number of behavioural standards that are expected from elected members. There was a general consensus by the working group that the Code of Conduct, the Nolan principles, internal party procedures and accountability to the electorate were sufficient to monitor Councillor behaviour.

Nevertheless it made a number of recommendations to improve interaction and understanding between Members and Officers, and to better communicate the Council vision to Members. Including

- That a Councillors job description provided as part of the new Members induction pack given to prospective candidates and/or form part of our information available online regarding how to become a Councillor.
- That the Senior Leadership Team hold a member briefing for all Members on at least a yearly basis to communicate the visions, values and position of the Council.
- That the Member /Officer relationship be reviewed to consider how to better communicate with and respond to Members.

### **The Effectiveness of Scrutiny**

Members involved in this review wanted to consider and evaluate the effectiveness of the Scrutiny Committee work programme and explore ways to improve the impact of the scrutiny function and how to increase Member engagement in the process. A number of recommendations which would make changes to the format of the Committee including a reduction in the number of Councillors on the committee and

comprehensive training for scrutiny members were made. Other recommendations included:

- That mechanisms to increase the level of engagement and participation with the Youth and Seniors Council and the wider public are improved.
- A guide to scrutiny which explains the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for members of the public should be developed; this should also include a form which could enable topic suggestions for examination to be put forward. This will require creating a web page dedicated to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- That a streamlined/simplified way to monitor performance is developed.

These recommendations have been submitted to Cabinet and responses will be considered by the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

### **Update on Previous Reviews.**

**Recommendations made by Scrutiny reviews have resulted in positive developments in the delivery of services for the residents of Gedling.**



#### **The Elderly Persons Review**

Members were concerned about the increasingly aging population, in the Borough; there are 23,500 people aged over 64, 45% of which are over 75. Members wanted to establish what support is available for socially isolated elderly people who could be entitled to help, support and advice and how this 'hidden group' of socially isolated people could be identified.

They found out there are a great number of voluntary and statutory organisations who offer a wide range of support services and a whole variety of examples of work being done to help the elderly to tackle loneliness and social isolation and to support people to stay in their own homes.

**They recommended that there should be -**

**Information in the Bereavement Services Booklet that will signpost to relevant support services that offer assistance at a critical point in people's lives.**



The Bereavement Services Information Booklet is currently being updated and when finalised will be available on the website.

**Elected Members and frontline members of staff attend safeguarding training to help them identify elderly people who appear to be lonely, or who self-neglect, and are in need of support.**



The Safeguarding Working Group is currently revisiting training across the Council.

- **Ensure that all information disseminated by Gedling Borough is available in a format that elderly people are able to access and in the places where they go.**



Wherever possible information is provided through the Contacts Magazine which is available in libraries, GP surgeries, dentists etc. Officers are looking for other opportunities to disseminate information to our elderly residents.



### **Income Generation**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a working group to explore how the authority could develop a stronger commercial and entrepreneurial culture, and consider how new service delivery models, could generate income or reduce costs. This review was different to other working group reviews, in that it was not scrutinising existing services but looking to the future, seeking to make recommendations that would raise awareness of the authorities need to develop a trading culture and explore new areas of business.

### **Recommendations included:**

**The Portfolio of one Cabinet Member is amended to include specific responsibilities and accountability for income generation. In addition there needs to be Member involvement in any initiatives that affect the way services are delivered.**



This was agreed and the Deputy Leader and Portfolio holder for Resources and Reputation will be given specific responsibilities for income generation. Also, as part of the 'Dynamic Council' programme, all activity associated with Commercialisation is being reported through the Corporate Programme Board which has the Leader, Deputy Leader, and opposition Leader as Board members.



**A comprehensive review of fees and charges across the authority is undertaken.**

The fees and charges are reviewed on an annual basis as part of the budget setting process. As part of the 'Dynamic Council' programme, a Fees and Charges Group has been established to review all existing fees and charges through benchmarking with our neighbours and competitors, and

to assess opportunities for new charges. As part of this review, a Corporate Charging Policy will be developed that considers both concessions and discounts.

### **The year ahead**

With the Committee's work for 2016/7 now concluded, it is now time to look forward to developing a programme for 2018/9. Key to developing this is ensuring that issues of importance to residents are the main focus for the year ahead. Scrutiny of Cabinet members will continue to play an important part of the Committee's work programme and will look to work with external organisations as it strives to find improvements on local issues.

