

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20



The Overview and Scrutiny Annual report highlights activity and the work of the committee and its working groups during the preceding year. Due to the curtailing of the work programme, because to the Coronavirus pandemic, the committee has not been able to complete its 2019/20 work programme. Any outstanding items will be included in the work programme for the upcoming year.

What does the Overview and Scrutiny Committee do?

All local authorities operating a cabinet system will have at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The overview and scrutiny role is carried out by non-cabinet members, Gedling has is one politically balanced committee of thirteen. The committee meets roughly every six weeks and like most council meetings it is open to the public.

The committee is not a decision making body but one which monitors and influences those that do it, is a mechanism for achieving open and democratic accountability.

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to ask questions, to assure itself that issues are being addressed and emerging risks are recognised and acted upon. Effective scrutiny utilises information and ideas from a wide range of sources and involves holding the Council and other organisations to account, providing 'critical friend' challenge to the council's executive and other service providers. In doing this Members seek to reflect the aspirations and concerns of local residents and communities.

Scrutiny is a flexible process and can be carried out in a variety of ways. Areas of enquiry can be drawn from:

- Performance reports
- The Corporate Risk Scorecard
- Compliments and Complaints data
- The results of the Gedling Conversation
- Matters of local interest raised by members of the committee
- Issues raised by the wider Council membership
- Public and community engagement.

At Gedling the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's role in performance monitoring enables members to scrutinise detailed performance information on a quarterly basis to help identify areas of performance that require improvement. The committee also considers the Council's Forward Plan. The Forward Plan is a document that contains details of key executive decisions the Cabinet, cabinet members and

officers are likely to take over a four month period, this enables the committee to monitor the executive decision making programme and undertake pre decision scrutiny if they consider there is an issue of concern.

What Overview and Scrutiny does not do.

Overview and Scrutiny is not a mechanism for the investigation of individual complaints, the Council has a separate process for this. It is also not able to look at individual planning or licensing decisions.

Work carried out during 2019/20



In addition there was a training event which included an introductory session on the principles, powers and value of scrutiny, it emphasised the value of developing an effective work programme and highlighted the skills required to conduct effective scrutiny.

Scrutiny Working Groups

Working groups do much of the work of the committee by providing members' with the opportunity to investigate issues in depth and recommend improvements through the gathering, and consideration, of evidence from a broad range of sources. This enables robust and effective challenge, as well as an increased likelihood of delivering outcomes. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reports its recommendations to the Cabinet which then decides whether the recommendations will be accepted and acted upon, and if not, why not.

The Executive /Scrutiny protocol working group

This review was established to enable the committee to comply with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities, issued in May 2019. It included a number of policies and practices that authorities should adopt when carrying out their overview and scrutiny function. The guidance advocated the development of an Executive-Scrutiny protocol which would help define the relationship between the Cabinet and the committee and alleviate any differences of opinion before they manifest themselves. Members' identified a range of behaviours and processes to develop the committee's relationship with cabinet members to improve effectiveness and proposed a set of guidelines to advance this ambition.

Economic Development – the opportunity to intervene for social and economic reasons working group.

This working group considered what additional economic and social benefits needed to be taken into account when property is purchased under Strand 3 of the Commercial Property Investment Strategy (CPIS). The primary motive of the recently adopted investment strategy was to generate additional income. Working group members concluded that whenever possible Strand 3 of the strategy should be used to increase social and economic benefits for the residents of Gedling, developing a range of criteria that needed to be taken into account to support the authority to deliver these benefits when purchasing land or property.

Members had also undertaken some preliminary information-gathering to enable them to participate in the authority's Housing Allocations Consultation, and were commencing a review relating to the recent floods in the borough. This will include examining local and national plans, strategies that underpin flooding responses and plans to mitigate future flooding risk. It is envisaged that this review will commence later this year.

Scrutiny Improvement

In order to comply with the recommendations in the 2019 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Statutory Guidance an action plan summarising current practice was developed and improvements to processes to comply with the guidance have been undertaken. Developments included not only establishing an Executive /Scrutiny protocol but also improvements to training, work programming, promotion of the role of scrutiny to the wider authority and providing the committee with information regarding the authority's risk.

Future Work Programme 2020/21

The committee will shortly agree a new work programme for the forthcoming municipal year. Key to developing the overview and scrutiny work programme is ensuring that the issues that really matter to local residents are reflected in the work for the year ahead. Scrutiny of cabinet members will remain central to the work of the committee and working with external organisations will play an important part of the committees work as it looks to find improvements to important local issues. The work programme will be considered at each committee to enable it to remain flexible and to respond to current issues. The committee will strive to continue to deliver an interesting, varied and challenging work programme.