

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22



The Overview & Scrutiny annual report highlights activity and the work of the committee and its working groups during the preceding year.

What does the Overview & Scrutiny Committee do?

All local authorities operating a cabinet system will have at least one Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The overview and scrutiny role is carried out by non-cabinet members, Gedling has one politically balanced committee of thirteen. The committee meets roughly every eight 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 & Scrutiny Committee is to ask questions, to assure themselves 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 councils' 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:

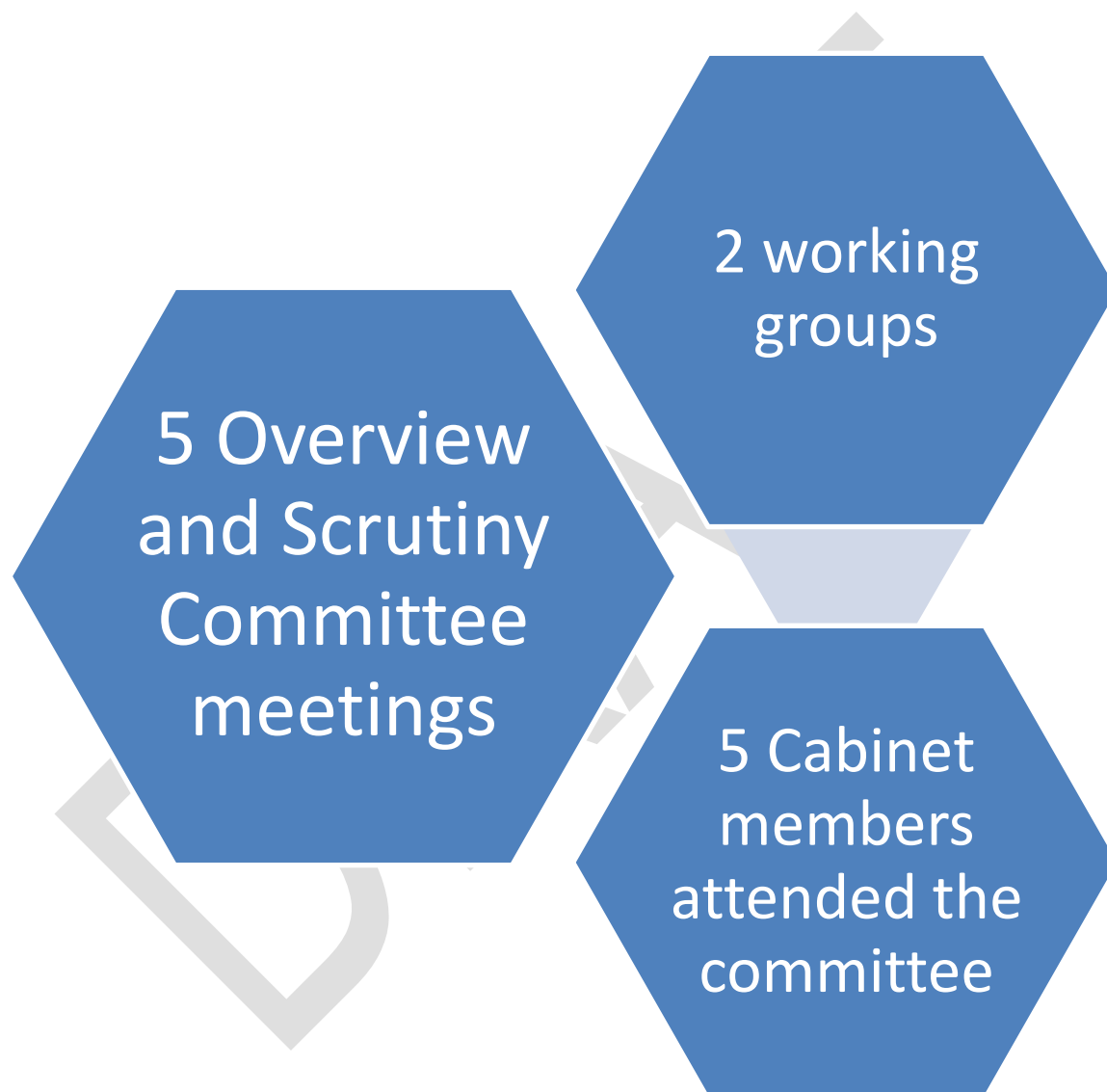
- Performance reports
- The Corporate Risk Scorecard
- Compliments and Complaints data
- The results of the Gedling Conversation
- Matters of local interest raised by members of the committee
- Issues raised by the wider Council membership
- Public and community engagement

At Gedling, the Overview & 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 six 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 & Scrutiny does not do?

The committee 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 2021/22



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.

Domestic abuse and accommodation review working group

This working group was established to examine the how the council contribute to fulfilling the duty to secure refuge places and emergency accommodation appropriate for the needs of individuals and their families, including those with physical disability and from the LGBTQ and BAME communities. The use of the Sanctuary Scheme to enable people to stay safely in their own homes was also explored.

The group met several times and heard from key organisations and sources such as borough council officer, county council officers and JUNO Women's Aid. The review ended in mid-June and a report detailing recommendations was sent to Cabinet on 5 August 2021. 7 recommendations were given, as follows;

- The Executive recognises the financial savings achieved and the benefits to clients of the Sanctuary Scheme and ensures that the service continues to receive funding at a level that fully meets the needs of families to enable them to live safely
- Work is undertaken to Increase awareness for both the public and staff members of domestic abuse and the services available to address this issue using the website, Contacts magazine and council owned buildings, leisure centres, community centres, Intranet etc.
- The Council pro-actively works with organisations such as JUNO so that they can be given access to council owned buildings to provide outreach/drop-in session
- Compulsory training on identifying and interacting with victims of domestic abuse is given to front line officers and elected members and that this is delivered at future member inductions.
- A section on safeguarding considerations including domestic abuse is included as a specific section in committee and decision reports.
- The Portfolio Holders with responsibility for Public Protection and Housing continue to monitor the need for refuge provision with a view to providing an adequate level of funding for delivering dispersed refuge and "move on" accessible accommodation in the Borough.
- Partnership working across the country for the provision of refuge spaces continues offering accommodation on a reciprocal basis. This should be based on need rather than geographical residence in Gedling.

A review of the implementation of these recommendations is scheduled for the January 2023 Overview & Scrutiny committee.

Sewerage review working group

This working group was established to examine the impact of sewerage discharge into the rivers and waterways in the area and to review options and make recommendations to better the situation.

The group has met 3 times and has heard from key organisations and sources such as the River Trust, Planning Officers and Climate Change Officers. Partners scheduled to come to the upcoming meetings are below:

- Environment Agency
- Severn Trent
- Wildlife Trust
- County Council officers
- Housing developers

The review is expected to end in October 2022, when a report detailing recommendations will be sent to Cabinet.

Future Work Programme 2022/23

The committee has recently agreed 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.