



# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members are invited to a **Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee** to be held in the Conference Room, Riverside, Lowestoft on **Thursday, 20 June 2024 at 6.30pm**

This meeting will be broadcast to the public via the East Suffolk YouTube Channel at [https://youtube.com/live/MhmF\\_6BeyJw?feature=share](https://youtube.com/live/MhmF_6BeyJw?feature=share)

## Members:

Councillor Mike Deacon (Chair), Councillor Dan Clery (Vice-Chair), Councillor Edward Back, Councillor Seamus Bennett, Councillor Amanda Folley, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor Stephen Molyneux, Councillor Mike Ninnmey, Councillor Sarah Plummer, Councillor Ed Thompson.

An Agenda is set out below.

## Part One – Open to the Public

Pages

- |          |  |                |
|----------|--|----------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Apologies for Absence and Substitutions</b>   |                |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Declarations of Interest</b><br>Members and Officers are invited to make any declarations of interests, and the nature of that interest, that they may have in relation to items on the Agenda and are also reminded to make any declarations at any stage during the Meeting if it becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered. |                |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Minutes</b><br>(a) The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 February 2024 (to follow).<br>(b) The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 March 2024 (to follow).<br><br><b>(c) The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 April 2024.</b>  | <b>1 - 9</b>   |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Matters Arising Update Sheet - 18 April 2024</b>  | <b>10 - 14</b> |

## Part One – Open to the Public

Pages

### 5 Cabinet Member Scrutiny Sessions

A. To receive an update from Councillor Whitelock, Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture, Leisure and Tourism in relation to the direction of travel for her portfolio. This session was postponed following the cancellation of the 16 May 2024 meeting.

B. To receive an update from Councillor Topping, Leader of the Council, in relation to:

(a) The Leader's assessment of how she thought the past year had gone from an Administration point of view as well as from the wider Council perspective.

(b) As Leader, how Councillor Topping felt the Council was making progress in delivering against the Our Direction 2028 Strategic Plan.

### 6 Appointment to Outside Bodies (Scrutiny Functions) 2024/25 ES/1998

15 - 19

Report of the Leader of the Council.

### 7 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2023/24 ES/1999

20 - 40

Report of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## Part Two – Exempt/Confidential

Pages

There are no Exempt or Confidential items for this Agenda.

Close



Chris Bally, Chief Executive

If you require this document in large print, audio or Braille or in a different language, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01502 523521 or email: [democraticservices@eastsoffolk.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@eastsoffolk.gov.uk)

### Filming, Videoing, Photography and Audio Recording at Council Meetings

The Council, members of the public and press may record / film / photograph or broadcast this meeting when the public and press are not lawfully excluded.

The Council cannot guarantee public seating areas will not be filmed or recorded. By entering the Conference Room and sitting in the public seating area, those present will be deemed to have consented to the possible use of filmed images and sound recordings. If you do not wish to be recorded, please speak to a member of the Democratic Services team at the earliest opportunity.



**The national Charter and Charter Plus Awards for Elected Member Development**

East Suffolk Council is committed to achieving excellence in elected member development

[www.local.gov.uk/Community-Leadership](http://www.local.gov.uk/Community-Leadership)

**Unconfirmed**



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in the Conference Room, Riverside, on **Thursday, 18 April 2024 at 6.30pm**

**Members of the Committee present:**

Councillor Edward Back, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor Stephen Molyneux, Councillor Mike Ninnmey, Councillor Sarah Plummer, Councillor Ed Thompson

**Other Members present:**

Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Janet Craig, Councillor Julia Ewart, Councillor Toby Hammond, Councillor Lee Reeves

**Officers present:** Sarah Davis (Democratic Services Officer), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Mags Lambert (Project Officer/Business Analyst), Agnes Ogundiran (Conservative Political Group Support Officer), Ann Parker (Interim Parking Manager) and Paul Wood (Head of Economic Development and Regeneration).

**Others present:** Simon Barnett (SCC), Councillor Dan Clery (Assistant Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Transport), Sharon Payne (Transport East).

---

**1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

The Democratic Services Officer explained that apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Deacon, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Councillor Clery, the Vice-Chair as he was attending the meeting in his capacity as the Assistant Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Transport, rather than as a member of the Committee. In light of these apologies, the Democratic Services Officer asked for nominations from the Committee for someone to Chair the meeting.

On the proposition of Councillor Lynch, seconded by Councillor Gooch it was:

**RESOLVED:**

That Councillor Mark Jepson be appointed as Chair for this meeting only.

The Chair stated that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Deacon, Clery, Folley and Bennett, and Councillors Craig, Reeves, Byatt and Ewart were attending as their respective substitutes.

It was also noted that there had been two Committee membership changes since the last meeting with Councillor Ninnmey replacing Councillor Grey and Councillor Noble no longer being eligible to sit on the Committee when she became the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment. A replacement for Councillor Noble on the Committee had not yet been appointed.

## **2 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Gooch declared an Other Registerable Interest on the grounds that she was one of the Council's representatives on the East Suffolk Travel Association but given the Association had no direct involvement with the matter being reviewed was, therefore, allowed to speak and vote.

## **3 Review of Rural Transport Services in East Suffolk**

The Committee received report ES/1927 from the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Transport's who explained that his Assistant, Councillor Clery, handled all transport aspects of the portfolio and would, therefore, be leading on this review.

Councillor Clery stated that rural transport was not in great shape which could be seen by the two maps in the report with one showing transport deserts where there were no scheduled services. He explained that profitable bus services provided by commercial organisations would run but, where they were not profitable, services could be supported by Suffolk County Council. Some 40 of 230 bus routes in Suffolk were operated under contract to the County Council, but almost every service was currently receiving some form of financial support. Covid had impacted on services, with some villages no longer having regular transport services. Another illustration of the problem was the number of big buses with only a handful of passengers daily which was because larger buses were used earlier in the day for the school runs. He explained that Community Transport organisations closed some of the gaps and were particularly useful for those with health or mobility issues but they had to be booked 24 hours beforehand so this stopped any spontaneous travelling.

The Assistant Cabinet Member stated that the Community Partnership Board had identified transport as an issue and two trials had started last year, namely Katch and Buzzabout. Katch was a fixed route and passengers could book the service and, when no one wanted it, it did not run; whereas Buzzabout ran two days per week and covered a specific area. The trials had not yet built up a big passenger base and did not make money but passenger numbers were growing slowly and Officers were promoting them to try to get them to be viable, although it was possible they would never make money. Buzzabout had been awarded £61K via the Bus Service Improvement Plan 2 (BSIP2), managed by the County Council, and would run for another two years. East Suffolk Council had provided £90K for the Katch service to operate for a further year.

Councillor Clery explained that a Working Group would decide what role the Council wanted to play in rural transport given it was not typical for districts to operate services, although some other Authorities were using East Suffolk as a model. He cautioned that, if the Council wanted to roll out the trials across the district, it was likely to cost a lot of money but that would be looked at by the Working Group.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Cabinet Member for his report and invited Members' questions and it was noted that:

- ESC had spent £90K on transport but it was difficult to gauge whether it would be cheaper to pay for taxis. There had been 2790 passengers using Katch of which 2312 were adults and 243 children. Some passengers were entitled to loyalty trips where they received a free trip. The Council paid a daily rate which covered insurance, the drivers' salary, bus running costs and when they broke even they returned fare income to the Council eg Katch had, for this year, given back £1,348.
- Vehicles were MOT tested to ensure they were safe and undoubtedly their emissions were tested, but were not known. Another bus would be pulled from one of their other services if the Katch bus broke down.
- The operator worked with passengers to try to ensure multi-occupancy on a journey to give best value and be as green a model as possible.
- These were trials so it was not possible to change a route mid stream as the model needed to be tested before it served other communities.
- The app was ceasing at the end of April because it was too expensive for a limited trial but passengers could still book online, by email or by phone. The Katch service was being advertised all over the district including on trains from London to try to encourage take up as we want the best possible result for the trial.
- Katch started as a County Council bid to the Government's "Rural Mobility Fund" in 2019 for a variety of demand responsive routes across the county. The bid was unsuccessful but the County Council were able to trial the route between Framlingham and Campsea Ashe station with their own funds, the route being partly determined to meet a need identified in a comprehensive report produced by Framlingham Town Council. Two electric minibuses were leased for the pilot, but despite being advertised with a range of 120-150 miles they only achieved between 50 and 80 miles between charges and were thus not suitable for continued use once the County funding ended.
- Rural poverty in East Suffolk was a fact and it was linked to social isolation, mental health issues and economic development eg getting people to work etc. Work done by Transport for the North about transport related social inclusion had looked at access to core services and mapped the whole country – it was 18% in England but for East Suffolk it was 37% with the biggest areas at risk being market towns and towns but they hoped to do more research on this.
- The Working Group would look at what the criteria for success was for the two services and the necessary conditions for moving forwards because it might be that it was too expensive for the Council to do and we would have to leave it to commercial companies but it was hoped this would not be the case as people were crying out for these services. Working with a community provider who welcomed the on-demand services and was an extension of their skills set was a good model. The next step was to understand what the market was for it and tweak the service if necessary to try to get as many people as possible using it. The Group would also look at how more people could be encouraged to use the bus at the same time through promotion, social media etc. Although bus services like this cost money it was not all about finance as there was a wider social value for providing these services. The original project had been for two years but it had been pared

back to one year and the aim now was to see how we could get the best value for money out of it and keep it going.

- The social value of providing the services needed to be analysed - all the Our Direction priorities were influenced by transport eg if villages did not have public transport services then should we be building estates in those rural areas?
- Restoring confidence that bus travel was safe and not prejudicial to passengers health was a wider societal issue and at the moment the elderly could not use their bus passes on the Buzzabout service. However, the BSIP2 grant that would allow the service to continue for a further two years, had a condition that concessions would be accepted on the service.
- Whilst it was acknowledged that people might wish to use the services at night, there was a reluctance to change the routes and timings during the trial as the bus drivers could only work limited hours. People could request to use community transport services to access night time activities as long as they booked in advance and in groups to make it financially viable. It was agreed, however, that there was a shortage of drivers for these services.

At the Chair's invitation, Simon Barnett from Suffolk County Council reported that he looked after bus, rail, estuarial ferries and anything else that did not fit in with the rest of his department. He stressed that there was no obligation on anybody to provide passenger transport except for children going from home to school. He clarified that operators tended to run only those services that made them money. Mr Barnett stated that his budget was under £1m for local bus services, but Suffolk County Council also received an annual grant of £600K from the Department of Transport. Jointly these two budgets paid for about 14% of the buses across Suffolk. The County Council had recently received an extra £1.8m from the Government because they had not been given any of the £77m additional funding allocated across the country a few years ago. He explained that the County also funded Connecting Communities services but these were reliant on volunteer drivers. Changes to driving licence rules in the 1990s meant that someone was not automatically able to drive a minibus, therefore, they needed training and it was difficult to attract those that could drive a minibus. In response to an earlier question, he stressed that it was difficult enough to find volunteers for the daytime and it was even harder for evenings and weekends. In a whole year of the original Katch trial, the number of requests for evening and weekends could be counted on two hands. Part of this was down to a national decline in bus use and he suggested some of that was within the Council's gift eg making it harder to park in Town Centres to encourage bus usage, not agreeing housing developments until a bus route was in place because when residents knew they were available from day one a route tended to stay viable. In relation to fares, he explained that the Government put money into rail not buses but First Eastern was trying to push people to use buses again. The number of bus passes had stayed the same but a lot of eligible people had not applied for them, possibly because they did not know about them but it was likely to be because a lot of older people were active and self sufficient for longer and continued driving longer. The point was made that people could have a rail pass when they were over 60 (at a cost of £30 per year to get 30% reduction in travel costs) but not a bus pass (ENCTS passes were issued at state pension age and provided free travel).

At the Chair's invitation, Sharon Payne from Transport East explained that they were the sub national transport body for the East of England and there were seven bodies

across England. As a smaller body they had limited capacity but were also unique because they worked with District Councils alongside County Councils, rail, local bus operators and they also looked at other matters such as decarbonisation and growing our global gateway eg airports and ports and our town centres and cities across the East. A Transport Strategy had been approved by the Secretary of State last year which meant he had to give due diligence to it. Transport East did not have any specific funding but worked on behalf of Local Authorities by providing capacity etc. She agreed that bus services had declined since 2010 by about 30% in rural areas but this was a national issue. She added that Local Authority supported services had been cut right across the country by about 80% and some urban areas had also been impacted. Every failure in transport services impacted on social inclusion. A parish access survey with about a 30% response rate had shown that most residents felt they had to go outside the parish for every day activities but better use could be made of halls/community centres etc. She explained that Transport East wanted to look at proving the social value of providing rural transport and to change how modelling was done so it had equal weighting when attracting funding. Suffolk had not been able to access £20m Government Rural Mobility Funding. There were lots of different models running across the country so it was possible to compare as they were subject to really robust monitoring and some did run in the evenings. She concluded that Transport East mapping had shown that such a strong proportion of the population were living in rural transport poverty and it was really positive that the Council were starting a Working Group to look at this matter.

The Chair thanked Mr Barnett and Ms Payne for their presentations and the following responses were given to Members' queries:

- The Cycling and Walking Strategy was an aspiration rather than describing where people could cycle now and it identified where in future better walking and cycling could be provided. A Working Group was currently working on it, including identifying routes, and it was hoped to have dedicated routes away from main highways and change some roads to 20mph limits to try to make them safer for non-motorised people.
- People stopped using the bus from Lowestoft to Ipswich which was going to be extended to Colchester partly because the train was always quicker than a bus. A major issue for bus companies were the changes to EU driver's hours which meant routes over 50km had to be split. First still had the same issue but they did operate routes people use. The County Council did not have much money so could only fill some of the gaps.
- There were other successful on demand services out there but it depended on how success was defined because few if any made a profit. It was possible to have demand led pricing but it would need to be recognised that some services would always need support. Under licensing conditions minibuses could only run with 16 people so even if they were paying the full fare it would not cover costs which was why the Council needed to assess the social value of operating the services.
- Post scheme monitoring evaluation was relatively poor because it cost extra money on top of the scheme costs. There had been a literature review of schemes working across England and there were different models across the world but Transport East wanted to focus on local schemes because they had similar issues/funding etc. Pilots in Essex and Norfolk were doing quite well but they were now looking at what would happen when the funding stopped. Transport for



Wales had funded an app for all Local Authorities eg licensing fees and back end admin so all their operators could use it. Transport for Cornwall had done something similar so regardless of who the operator was, buses all looked the same and tickets could be used with any operator etc.

- Last year across Suffolk, Connecting Communities had 97855 passengers which was down about 520 on the year before but a significant improvement on the year before that (2020/21) when passenger numbers totalled 80,001. Services were limited because, although the budget had increased this year, the County Council was getting less for it due to rising costs.
- A County wide app would help but consideration needed to be given as to whether to have a demand responsive service on a fixed route which would be easier to manage but might not take people exactly where they wanted, or have a totally demand led service.
- The ENCTS bus pass was a national scheme based on state pension or disability – the Government provided funding for certain times and the County Council received just under £7m per year. The County could extend times and lower the age requirement etc but last time this was looked into it was estimated to cost about £3m and the County Council did not have that money available at the moment.
- The park and ride system was originally set up to stop people driving into Ipswich and reduce congestion. An extension out the other way to Rendlesham was trialled but people did not use it. We need to encourage people to use the services we have and the benefit of P&R is that there are fewer stops.
- It cost a lot of money to run a bus and smaller vehicles did not cover the costs. One company was looking at incorporating parcel delivery with passengers but legislation did not currently permit that.
- There had been a small increase in passengers so the chances were that the withdrawal of the £2 cap might drop those numbers slightly – those using before would probably still use the service and pay the increased amount.
- About 10 years ago, Rendlesham used to have two buses an hour but people stopped using them and commercial operators do not put services on if they cannot guarantee use. The County Council was not able to extend the Katch service to Rendlesham because of the range on the electric vehicles they hired at the time.
- We had to rationalise our resources to where we knew there was an appetite for the service.

The Chair invited the Committee to debate and make any recommendations.

Clarification was sought on the Working Group's Terms of Reference, whether the vehicles used for the two Council on-demand services were meeting green standards where possible, the definition of social value for the two schemes which could be used to attract funding, how the two projects would be marketed/re-launched. Mr Barnett stated that the County Council had been looking into Social Value Toolkits for Transport. He added that petrol/diesel buses would not be able to be purchased from 2030, however, he was aware that Sizewell were looking to buy some buses which hopefully in time would trickle down into the market.

The point was also made that public transport for new developments only started to be required once they get to a certain point so perhaps Planning should be encouraging

developers to provide them sooner. It was also queried how the loss of public transport could impact on a community, including such things as air quality, population etc.

The Chair thanked everyone for participating in the review. It was clarified that there were no formal recommendations to be made to Cabinet, however, in light of the fact that Members had requested further information on several matters and made a number of suggestions, it was agreed that the resolutions would be drawn up outside the meeting then circulated to the Committee for approval.

**NOTE:**

**The following were approved by the Committee outside of the meeting:**

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Scrutiny Committee be provided with the following information:
  - The Terms of Reference for the Transport Working Group, including the aims and objectives of the Group and indicative timescales.
  - The social value of East Suffolk Council providing on-demand public transport eg Katch/Buzzabout.
  - How the on-demand services, including the app, would be marketed/relaunched.
  - How it was intended to attract more volunteer drivers for on-demand services.
  - The wider impact of the loss of public transport on a community such as car movements and air quality etc.
2. That the operators of East Suffolk's on-demand public transport projects Katch/Buzzabout be encouraged to use vehicles that were as green as they realistically could be given the cost limitations.
3. That Planning Officers be asked to encourage developers to include the provision of public transport at the earliest stage of new developments as possible.

**The meeting adjourned at 8.10pm and reconvened at 8.15pm.**

**4 Cabinet Member Scrutiny Session**

The Chair invited Councillor Hammond the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and Transport, to give details on the direction of travel for the services within his portfolio.

The Cabinet Member reiterated that he had split the portfolio with his Assistant Cabinet Member and he retained responsibility for Economic Development, Regeneration, Parking and EV Charging. He expressed his gratitude for the support his Officers had given him since taking up his position. He reported on each of the areas of his portfolio including:

- The amount of funding levered in from various sources and his desire to make town centres destinations.

- His priority to support his officer team to deliver projects and involve Councillors from other parties, as well as the community and stakeholders so it did not seem that it was being done to them.
- Sizewell C would have a major impact on businesses and projects as well as tourism in terms of skills displacement, however, a programme was underway to mitigate against that.
- Freeport East was controversial but there were also some real positives eg clean hydrogen.
- Economic development was not just about endless growth but about encouraging investment and keeping money within the district, eg the Council's procurement strategy would be changed so there was a circular economy.
- Supporting low carbon businesses including giving Local Discretionary Business Rate Relief.
- A Hydrogen Conference would take place in June. The Sizewell C development would use hydrogen powered park and ride buses during its construction and Conrad Energy were setting up a clean hydrogen electrolyser in Lowestoft to store offshore wind as energy.
- Civil Enforcement operation - a series of parking reviews would be undertaken over the next few years in areas across the district which would involve local stakeholders.
- The Annual Permit price had been reduced and it was hoped more would be purchased as a result.
- Encouraging private companies who already ran EV Charging Stations to lease our land/car parks.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for his presentation and he responded to the following questions from Committee Members:

- The Hydrogen Conference in June would be able to answer questions about how and where hydrogen could be used.
- More charging points were needed given East Suffolk was so rural, irrespective of the fact that private sales of electric vehicles had reduced.
- A briefing on Freeport East would be arranged for all Members.
- We want to encourage "green" building companies and they would be eligible for the Business Rate Relief.
- All Council car parks had coin operated machines available for those that did not want to use RingGo, although sometimes they were difficult to find so some were having new signage to direct people to them.
- It was great to see more buses running on hydrogen. The Council did not have a position on small modular reactors yet but these were incredibly expensive so it might be preferable to spend money on renewable energy.
- There was not yet a solution for the wind farm blades once decommissioned and the ports were not set up as construction ports so did not have lay down space for the blades.
- Air pollution and road design were beyond the scope of the parking reviews, however, the Council would be encouraging the County Council to look at these matters. Also, each area will have its own set of issues so each will be looked at individually.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers for a very informative briefing.

**5 Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme**

The Chair reminded the Committee that the Work Programme for 2024/25 would be determined by the new Committee, once appointed, at a Workshop on 6 June with the first formal Committee meeting taking place on 20 June 2024.

The meeting concluded at 9.14pm.

.....  
Chair

# MATTERS ARISING UPDATE SHEET

## FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING ON

### 18 APRIL 2024

<b>Updates</b>		
<b>Minute Item Number</b>	<b>Member Query Raised</b>	<b>Cabinet Member/Officer Response (generally no more than a paragraph or so is required)</b>
3 – Resolution 1	The Terms of Reference for the Transport Working Group, including the aims and objectives of the Group and indicative timescales.	<p>The ToRs for the Group are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Help market the Buzzabout and Katch pilots so that they are as successful as possible.</li> <li>ii) Monitor performance and understand the data flowing from the DRT pilots.</li> <li>iii) Explore assessment of social value of these services.</li> <li>iv) Develop the Council’s ambitions for rural transport moving forward, including the commissioning of an expert to produce some options.</li> <li>v) Report to Cabinet and make recommendations.</li> </ul> <p>The Group is Chaired by Cllr Clery and will be cross party. Meetings are scheduled every 2 months, supported by an officer working group. Monthly reports will be provided to Cabinet.</p>
	The social value of East Suffolk Council providing on-demand public transport e.g. Katch/Buzz About.	<p>Buzzabout and Katch are being used by residents to access i) connecting journeys (for example drop offs at Bus and rail stations), ii) various shopping areas (for example Buzzabout drop offs at North Quay retail park, M&amp;S, Aldi, Pets at home), iii) various health services (for example drop offs at dental practices, opticians and GP surgeries), iv) social/leisure activities (for example drop offs at hair salons, v) leisure centre, café’s and pubs/restaurants) and also vi) a care home.</p> <p>Both financial and non-financial benefits will be captured via the operator and user surveys to try to understand the true value that these services provide in reducing social isolation and loneliness and improving mental health and wellbeing to those who use them, as well as estimating the reduction in carbon emissions as compared to single occupancy car journeys.</p>

		<p>To this end ESC is working with Suffolk Office of Data Analysts (SODA) to measure the social value of the Katch service to residents. SODA have the capacity to conduct research with Katch passengers and compare the service to other existing services in the UK.</p> <p>Officers have begun investigating a number of existing social value tools to assess their usefulness for measuring the impact of the DRT pilots.</p>
	<p>How the on-demand services, including the app, will be marketed/relaunched.</p>	<p>A Katch marketing team is in place and the team have recently refreshed the marketing plan. An external marketing professional has been commissioned to support officers and the Coastal Accessible Transport Services (CATS) Manager to ensure that social media and other marketing/comms tools are fully exploited. This will include advice on social media messaging, articles and blogs as well as the content and look of the Katch website, particularly on mobile devices. A Communities officer is building relationships with the two High Schools in the Katch area to promote the availability of the service to young people.</p> <p>The existing Buzzabout marketing plan is scheduled to be reviewed next, to coincide with a refreshed marketing push following re-procurement of the service is at the end of August.</p> <p>We currently do not use an app, but should one become available then the Marketing team would of course ensure that it is widely advertised.</p>
	<p>How it is intended to attract more volunteer drivers for on-demand services.</p>	<p>This is not an issue for the Katch and Buzzabout services as they employ paid drivers.</p> <p>More widely ESC has been working with several key local VCFSE organisations that are seeking volunteers, including Citizens Advice and Homestart, and developed a short animation to encourage people to volunteer which can be used in a whole range of settings as part of a wider volunteering campaign. Similar campaigns could be undertaken with the on-demand services that do rely on volunteers across the district. In addition, through the Community Partnership Board, the Communities Team have worked with Community Action Suffolk to develop a programme of work encouraging volunteering, promoting the benefits of volunteering, supporting and upskilling the organisations that host and manage volunteers and maximising the volunteering</p>

		experience. Further funding has been allocated to continue this work for the rest of this financial year.
	The wider impact of the loss of public transport on a community such as car movements and air quality etc.	<p>Transport for the North has undertaken research to understand how issues with the transport system leads some people to be socially excluded (called transport related social exclusion or TRSE).</p> <p>Their online tool indicates that in East Suffolk, 93,269 (37.4%) residents live in neighbourhoods with a nationally high risk of TRSE, compared with 18% of residents across England. This area ranks 43 out of 296 Local Authority Districts for the overall level of TRSE risk. Underlying this, East Suffolk ranks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access challenges: 35 out of 296</li> <li>• Vulnerability challenges: 155 out of 296</li> </ul> <p>The risk level for East Suffolk varies between the different elements of TRSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment: 39 out of 296</li> <li>• Education: 44 out of 296</li> <li>• Health: 51 out of 296</li> <li>• Basic services: 130 out of 296</li> </ul> <p>The risk level also varies across different neighbourhoods in East Suffolk. This varies from 2% to 68% of the maximum risk level for any neighbourhood in England.</p> <p>If Katch did not operate, as there is no other transport to carry people between Framlingham and Snape, we would assume that the passengers travelling the 2,655 journeys made on Katch would find other transport means to get to their destination, whether that is by car or taxi. Alternatively, they would remain isolated in their town/village.</p> <p>Last year's Environmental Protection team's air quality report stated that generally, the air quality within East Suffolk is good. The main source of emissions within East Suffolk is road traffic, which means that the pollutants of concern are nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulate matter.</p>
Resolution 2	That the operators of East Suffolk's on-demand public transport projects Katch/Buzz About be encouraged to use vehicles that are as green	Suffolk County Council, who operated the Katch service for 18 months up until December 2022, used two electric buses on the route. They discovered that in the winter the maximum distance the buses could travel on electric power was 80 miles and therefore there was always a bus on charge. When East Suffolk Council took over the operation and appointed Coastal Accessible Transport Services (CATS) to run

	<p>as they realistically can be given the cost limitations.</p>	<p>the service, we knew that practically and financially their existing diesel minibus would be the best option. An electric bus costs double the price of a diesel bus. CATS ensure that their buses are regularly serviced and meet the required emission levels. If the Katch bus is off the road for any reason, we know that the replacement bus CATS use is of equivalent standard. If, after the Katch and Buzzabout trials end, there is a rollout to a wider service ESC could look then at whether electric or other alternative fuel vehicles are a viable option. If they prove not to be, we can continue to monitor improvements in technology and make the change when it makes sense.</p>
<p>Resolution 3</p>	<p>That Planning Officers be asked to encourage developers to include the provision of public transport at the earliest stage of new developments as possible.</p>	<p>Both Local Plans contain policies that expect new development to enable and support travel by public transport where this is feasible. In many cases, this is achieved through the location of major new development in locations where there is access to existing public transport networks, however it must also be acknowledged that as a rural district public transport services are very limited (or don't exist) in many parts of the district, however development in those locations would bring benefits such as supporting the vitality of existing communities. Public transport facility improvements are delivered as part of new development and may include improved access to existing bus stops, new bus stops and shelters, real time passenger information screens, improved raised kerbs and footway connections. New public transport provision, i.e. new / extended bus routes servicing a development, would usually only be feasible as part of the largest new developments, such as Brightwell Lakes (2000 homes). In such a site, early private bus provision can be made available in order to support early residents. At Brightwell Lakes an initial developer funded service is required between the development and Ipswich Train Station from 350 home occupations. Longer term public bus transport provision passing through major housing sites or even stopping at new bus stops beside development sites depends up on the bus companies identifying a business case for the additional route and extensions to timetables. Experience has shown there is bus company reluctance to impact existing routes prior to enough of a customer population living on the site. Early bus service provision can be subsidised through developer contributions on the largest housing and employment sites.</p>



		Local Plan policy requires a travel plan for developments of over 80 dwellings, which could include measures to encourage bus use such as discounts on bus tickets for new residents.
--	--	---



<b>Committee</b>	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date</b>	20/06/2024
<b>Subject</b>	Appointment to Outside Bodies (Scrutiny Functions) 2024/25
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Report by Councillor Caroline Topping, Leader of the Council
<b>Report Author(s)</b>	Sarah Davis Democratic Services Officer <a href="mailto:Sarah.davis@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">Sarah.davis@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>
<b>Head of Service</b>	Chris Bing Head of Legal and Democratic Services <a href="mailto:Chris.bing@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">Chris.bing@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>
<b>Director</b>	Kate Blakemore Strategic Director <a href="mailto:Kate.blakemore@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">Kate.blakemore@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>

Key Decision?	No
Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN

Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is <b>NOT</b> in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
---	----------------

## Purpose/Summary

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked annually to make an appointment to any relevant Outside Bodies (Scrutiny Functions).

For the 2024/25 Municipal Year, the only Outside Body this relates to is the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee which meets four times per year and is responsible for scrutinising wellbeing and health services across the County.

## Recommendation(s)

That Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Consider the nominations received and make an appointment to the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.
2. That a designated substitute also be appointed to attend the Suffolk County Health Scrutiny Committee for the 2024/25 Municipal Year in the event that the primary appointee is unavailable.
3. That the Leader of the Council fill any outstanding vacancies left unfilled by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
4. That the Leader of the Council make any necessary changes to the membership of the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2024/25 Municipal Year, in consultation with the other Group Leaders.

## Strategic plan

### How does this proposal support Our Direction 2028?

<b>Environmental Impact</b>	None
<b>Sustainable Housing</b>	None
<b>Tackling Inequalities</b>	Representation on the Suffolk County Council Health and Scrutiny Committee ensures that East Suffolk Council has a voice on health related matters affecting residents of East Suffolk
<b>Thriving Economy</b>	None
<b>Our Foundations / governance of the organisation</b>	Councillors appointed to Outside Bodies work to help address local issues and to achieve sustainable solutions. This will help to both deliver a strong and sustainable local economy and to improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in the District.

## Justification for recommendations

### 1. Background

- 1.1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked annually to consider nominations to Outside Bodies where the role relates specifically to a scrutiny function of the local authority.
- 1.2. Some appointments to Outside Bodies are made because of a statutory requirement to appoint one or more members to them. Most appointments to Outside Bodies are discretionary taking into consideration how representation on them adds value.
- 1.3. Appointment of members to Outside Bodies provides support to the organisation concerned and enables members to fulfil their community leadership roles and, in the case of scrutiny-specific bodies, their role as a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.4. Members appointed to Outside Bodies can work with, and alongside them, to help address local issues and deliver sustainable solutions.

### 2. Introduction

- 2.1. Previously, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made appointments to two such Outside Bodies. Firstly, an appointment was usually made to the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Panel, however, East Suffolk Council had recently been notified by Suffolk County Council that the Panel had been disbanded, therefore, an appointment was no longer required for this Outside Body.
- 2.2. The second appointment was made to the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee which was responsible for scrutinising wellbeing and health services across the county. It met usually four times per year.
- 2.3. In July 2023, the Committee had appointed Councillors Ed Thompson and Janet Craig as the primary appointee and nominated substitute on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.
- 2.4. In relation to the 2024/25 Municipal Year, a nomination has been received for Councillor Thompson to continue in the position of primary appointee. No nominations have been received for the nominated substitute position.

### 3. Proposal

- 3.1. Outside Bodies can gain several benefits from having a representative of the council on them, these include:
  - To represent the interests of the Council and to promote the strategic aims of its Strategic Plan;
  - To provide knowledge, skills and expertise which may not otherwise be available;

- To provide local accountability or democratic legitimacy through the appointment of an elected representative;
- To ensure that good relationships can be maintained with the body;
- To deliver a partnership project that requires the input of other organisations or community groups;
- To protect the Council's investments or assets i.e., if the Council has provided grant funding or provides funding for service delivery;
- To lever in external funding which is not available to the Council on its own.

3.2 Taking account of all the information provided within the report, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to appoint a primary and nominated substitute to the Suffolk County Health Scrutiny Committee.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1. Those Councillors formally appointed to external organisations as the Council's representative can claim travel expenses in accordance with the Members' Allowances Scheme. These costs can be met from existing resources.

#### **5. Legal Implications**

5.1. There are no legal implications for this appointment.

#### **6. Risk Implications**

6.1. Members must consider the implications and responsibilities of being involved with Outside Bodies as they must continue to comply with the District Council's Code of Conduct when acting as the appointed representative of the Council; comply with the Code of Conduct of the Outside Body they are appointed to, if one exists; and, declare a Non Registerable interest in any business of the District Council as necessary.

#### **7. Options**

7.1. The Council needs and wishes to engage and work with external organisations, including the Suffolk County Health Scrutiny Committee, to continue to deliver the priorities identified in East Suffolk's Strategic Plan, Our Direction 2028.

#### **8. Recommendations**

8.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the nominations received and make an appointment to the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

8.2 That a designated substitute also be appointed to attend the Suffolk County Health Scrutiny Committee for the 2024/25 Municipal Year in the event that the primary appointee is unavailable.

8.3 That the Leader of the Council fill any outstanding vacancies left unfilled by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8.4 That the Leader of the Council make any necessary changes to the membership of the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2024/25 Municipal Year, in consultation with the other Group Leaders.

**9. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 9.1. To ensure that Members are appointed to Outside Bodies (Scrutiny Functions) for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

**Areas of consideration comments**

**Section 151 Officer comments:**

The Section 151 Officer has no additional comments.

**Monitoring Officer comments:**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted on this report and has no additional comments.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion/EQIA:**

Not Applicable

**Safeguarding:**

Not applicable

**Crime and Disorder:**

Not applicable

**Corporate Services implications:**

*(i.e., Legal, Finance, Procurement, Human Resources, Digital, Customer Services, Asset Management)*

Appointments to Outside Bodies may be made under the general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011.

Details of the representation on Outside Bodies are included on the Council's website.

Members appointed to Outside Bodies will be asked to present a short, written report to Full Council, at least once per year, on the work of the Outside Body.

**Residents and Businesses consultation/consideration:**

Not applicable

**Appendices:**

<b>Appendix A</b>	None
-------------------	------

**Background reference papers:**

Date	Type	Available From
	None	

<b>Committee</b>	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date</b>	20/06/2024
<b>Subject</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2023/24
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Not applicable
<b>Report Author(s)</b>	<p>Councillor Mike Deacon Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee <a href="mailto:Michael.deacon@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">Michael.deacon@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Sarah Davis Democratic Services Officer <a href="mailto:Sarah.davis@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">Sarah.davis@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Head of Service</b>	<p>Chris Bing Head of Legal and Democratic Services <a href="mailto:Chris.bing@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">Chris.bing@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Director</b>	<p>Kate Blakemore Strategic Director <a href="mailto:Kate.Blakemore@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">Kate.Blakemore@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a></p>

Key Decision?	No
Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN

Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is <b>NOT</b> in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
---	----------------

## Purpose/Summary

This report provides a formal summary of the activities and achievements of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

## Recommendation(s)

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Receives and comments on the Annual Report by the Chair prior to it being taken to Full Council.

## Strategic plan

How does this proposal support Our Direction 2028?

<b>Environmental Impact</b>	Not applicable
<b>Sustainable Housing</b>	Not applicable
<b>Tackling Inequalities</b>	Not applicable
<b>Thriving Economy</b>	Not applicable
<b>Our Foundations / governance of the organisation</b>	The Committee is required to produce an Annual Report to Full Council as part of the Council's good governance arrangements.



## Justification for recommendations

### **1. Background**

- 1.1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to report to Full Council annually on its activities and achievements.

### **2. Proposal**

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to consider the Annual Report prior to it being considered by Full Council on 24 July 2024.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1. There are no financial implications.

### **4. Legal Implications**

- 4.1. There are no legal implications.

### **5. Risk Implications**

- 5.1. If the Committee did not provide an Annual Report this would not accord with the Council's Constitution and would not provide good governance.

### **6. Options**

- 6.1. There are no alternative options.

### **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive and comment on the Annual Report prior to it being considered by Full Council.

### **8. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 8.1. To ensure that Overview and Scrutiny Committee members have an opportunity to amend the Annual Report as necessary before it is considered by Full Council.

## Areas of consideration comments

### Section 151 Officer comments:

No further comments.

### Monitoring Officer comments:

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted on this report and has no additional comments.

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion/EQIA:

Not applicable

### Safeguarding:

Not applicable

### Crime and Disorder:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to sit at least once per year as this Council's Crime and Disorder Committee and the Annual Report includes a summary of the Committee's discussions.

### Corporate Services implications:

*(i.e., Legal, Finance, Procurement, Human Resources, Digital, Customer Services, Asset Management)*

Not applicable

### Residents and Businesses consultation/consideration:

Whilst there has not been any external consultation on the Annual Report itself, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee does consult residents and businesses, when necessary, as part of its reviews and details are contained within the Report.

## Appendices:

<b>Appendix A</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2023/24
-------------------	---

## Background reference papers:

Date	Type	Available From
	None	



# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24



## **Our Vision for Activities**

The Overview and Scrutiny function at East Suffolk Council aims to enhance the quality of life for all who live and work in the district by ensuring the provision of a safe, clean, attractive and prosperous environment for our communities.

Scrutiny aims to be objective, evidence-based, transparent and constructive and to reflect the interests and concerns of local communities.

## **CONTENTS**

<b>Foreword by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>The role of Overview and Scrutiny</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What we do</li><li>• The principles of good public scrutiny</li><li>• What we do not do</li></ul>	
<b>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Membership (2023/24 Municipal Year)</li><li>• Roles and responsibilities</li><li>• The Committee's Work Programme 2023/24</li><li>• Member Working Groups/Task and Finish Groups</li><li>• Membership of Outside Bodies</li><li>• Call-ins and Councillors' Calls for Action</li><li>• Training and Development</li><li>• Budget</li></ul>	
<b>Looking ahead</b>	<b>Page 17</b>



## Foreword by the Chair

**Councillor Mike Deacon,  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair 2023/24**

The elections in May 2023 brought several changes for East Suffolk Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The first was the decision to appoint an Opposition Chair of the Committee and I was delighted to accept the invitation having been a Scrutiny Committee member for many years. I have been joined by 12 fellow Councillors, including nine brand new members who have enthusiastically embraced Scrutiny. One of these new members is my Vice-Chair, Councillor Dan Clery, and I would like to express my sincere thanks to him for his invaluable support. The whole Committee works together, cross-party, to support and facilitate this extremely important statutory function.

Another change introduced was amending our name from Scrutiny Committee to Overview and Scrutiny Committee to reflect that, whilst our main function is to scrutinise, we also have an important role in keeping an overview or "watching brief" of the Council's activities.

As Chair, I am proud to be able to present my first Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report which gives a retrospective record of the work we have undertaken, our activities, and achievements in the 2023/24 Municipal Year, as well as looking forward to possible activities in 2024/25.

The Committee's main priorities each year are as follows:

1. To act as a counterbalance that complements the decision-making powers of Cabinet in terms of the strategic direction of the Council.
2. To examine various areas of the Council's work and, in some cases, the work of partner organisations that have significance for our local communities and residents.
3. To scrutinise as a "critical friend" individual Cabinet Members on their key deliverables for the year, thereby enabling the Committee to identify if they can add any value to the pre-decision stages and the ultimate outcomes for the Council.

To meet these priorities, the Committee is scrutinising each new Cabinet Member in turn on the direction of travel for their portfolio and has undertaken reviews on specific topics, including matters that affect internal Council services and those it felt were particularly important to communities and residents including:

- Planning Affordable Housing Requirements
- Provision of Social Housing in East Suffolk
- East Suffolk Council's Environmental Strategy
- Rural Transport Services in East Suffolk

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank everyone who has participated in this year's activities, particularly guest witnesses and partner representatives who have assisted us with our reviews.

Lastly, I hope this Report reflects what I feel has been a very productive year for the Committee and that you find it informative and interesting.

**Mike Deacon**

# THE ROLE OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## What we do

The Local Government Act 2000 introduced a new set of “political management arrangements” for the running of Councils, including the formalising of executive arrangements for local government to be balanced by a strong scrutiny function to ensure decision-makers were held to account.

***To carry out this scrutiny function, the arrangements included the power to do anything they consider likely to promote or improve the economic, social, or environmental well-being of the area.***

The role and purpose of the Committee is to add value to the delivery of public services through providing strong but measured challenge both to the Cabinet and to external organisations where there are issues of public concern. It acts as a 'critical friend' to decision makers by beneficially examining the Council's policies, key decisions, and service provision to ensure they are appropriate, efficient, transparent, accountable and in the best interests of residents. Since 2010, several pieces of legislation have further emphasised the value of scrutiny within modern and effective government, including reviewing issues which lie outside the Council's responsibilities. This is achieved by having co-operative relationships between scrutinised bodies and the Committee.

Scrutiny is led by local, elected Councillors working with other local bodies and local communities to help the constructive improvement of services. Scrutiny uses open and transparent processes and is an influencing, rather than a decision-making, body. It provides co-ordinated reviews of policy and service performance in line with strategic objectives and corporate priorities. Its challenges are constructive and purposeful. It is objective, focused, and realistic in its reviews. These are evidence-based so demonstrating that scrutiny is credible and useful at adding value.

***Scrutiny is a catalyst for positive change, promotes and acknowledges good practice and challenges under-performance.***

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is also the Council's designated **Crime and Disorder Committee** for the purposes of the Police and Social Justice Act 2006 (s19-22) and this requires the Committee to review community safety issues annually.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 (s190) gave Councils powers to scrutinise local NHS trusts, including Primary Care Trusts. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 gave more powers to local government to scrutinise other public organisations, including bodies such as, for example, the Environment Agency. In 2023/24, the Committee did not specifically review any aspects of health provision, but the power remains available to do so as considered necessary.

Meetings of East Suffolk Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are open to the public and mostly held in the evenings. The Committee has endeavoured to engage with the wider community and to involve stakeholders at its meetings, as appropriate.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee conducts its proceedings in accordance with its Terms of Reference (as set out in Part C, Appendix A of the Functions and Responsibilities section of the Constitution) and the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (as set out in Part A, Procedure Rules, of the [Constitution](#)).

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny promotes the value of scrutiny in modern and effective government and has identified the following four principles of good public scrutiny:

- ***To provide a critical friend “challenge” to executive policymakers and decision-makers***
  - ***To enable the voice and concerns of the public***
- ***To be carried out by “independent minded governors” who lead and own the scrutiny role; and***
  - ***To drive improvement in public services***

## **The Principles of Good Public Scrutiny - What we do not do**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a wide ranging remit, however, there are some activities that we do not deal with such as:

- quasi-judicial matters eg Planning or Licensing, except if there were to be a significant system or procedural issue.
- issues that are, or should be, resolved by the separate corporate complaints procedure or through internal systems within Service Teams.
- vexatious or discriminatory issues or matters that are not of wider community significance, the latter being more appropriately pursued through the relevant Service Team, Ward Councillor or Cabinet Member with responsibility for the area in question.

In addition, the Committee does not become involved where there would be duplication of existing work, if the review would be untimely, or it would not lead to effective outcomes.



# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## Membership 2023/24

The Committee comprises 13 Members and is politically balanced with 7 GLI, 3 Conservatives and 3 Labour Members. The Membership has slightly changed over the past year and I would like to thank Councillors Grey and Noble for their valued contribution to the Committee. The current membership is as follows:



Mike Deacon (Chair) (LAB)  
Chair since May 2023



Dan Clery (Vice-Chair) (GLI)  
Vice-Chairman since May 2023



Edward Back (CON)  
Member since May 2019



Seamus Bennett (GLI)  
Member since May 2023



Amanda Folley (LAB)  
Member since May 2023



Louise Gooch (LAB)  
Member from May 2019 to  
May 2022 & from December 2022



Mark Jepson (CON)  
Member since May 2023



Geoff Lynch (CON)  
Member since May 2023



Stephen Molyneux (GLI)  
Member since May 2023



Mike Ninnmey (GLI)  
Member since April 2024



Sarah Plummer (GLI)  
Member since May 2023



Ed Thompson (GLI)  
Member since May 2023

GLI Vacancy since April 2024

## Roles and Responsibilities

The Council's Constitution contains role descriptions outlining the purpose, duties, and responsibilities of the various members of Committees, as well as the qualities and skills required. They are designed to be used as a guide and a working document but are not intended to be prescriptive or exclusive. These can be found within Part C, Appendix C, of the Constitution on our website.

In addition, the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules states that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must be a member of the opposition.

The Chair provides leadership and ensures the Committee is Member-led and has ownership of its work programme. S/he aims to develop positive relationships and encourages contributions from Members. The Chair also ensures the Committee works inclusively and that the role of scrutiny is conducted in an enabling environment.

### Committee Members

Members of the Committee contribute actively at the meetings with fairness and impartiality. They will participate, as appropriate, in the collection and assessment of evidence to produce effective recommendations and follow up on any recommendations made. Committee members take an overview of all the activities the Council is involved in and can decide to scrutinise issues.

### Partner and public involvement

The views of local people are of importance to the primary aim of scrutiny – *improving the quality of life for the local community*. Partners and the public can contribute specific expertise to topics being examined from the perspective of either a service provider or a service user. Their involvement adds value and strengthens the links with stakeholders.

The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee also provides Members with additional opportunities to engage with groups within the community who may not readily get involved directly in the work of the Council. Therefore, it remains important for the Committee to be outward-looking and to consider how partners and the public might be involved in its work.

Such involvement may be through formal 'co-option' or invitations to representatives of groups to contribute expert knowledge or evidence, or to members of the public to contribute their views.

**Scrutiny welcomes and encourages our partners as well as members of the public who live or work in the district to get involved and suggestions for the work of our Committee will be considered for their suitability. Please email our Scrutiny Support Officer [Sarah.Davis@eastsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.Davis@eastsuffolk.gov.uk) in the first instance.**

## The Committee's Work Programme 2023/24

The Committee scheduled 10 meetings in its Work Programme and these were on the following dates:

20 July 2023  
21 September 2023  
19 October 2023  
16 November 2023  
21 December 2023 (this meeting was subsequently cancelled)  
18 January 2024  
22 February 2024  
21 March 2024  
18 April 2024  
16 May 2024 (this meeting was subsequently cancelled)

Each year, the Committee has a number of reviews it must carry out such as the Budget (18 January 2024) as well as a requirement to sit at least once a year in its statutory role as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee (20 July 2023).

For the remainder of its meetings in 2023/24, Members decided to focus primarily on reviewing matters that affected Council Services and those issues that were deemed to be of particular importance to the district's communities and residents. Below is a brief summary of the key highlights of the Committee's discussions - the related full formal Committee reports and resulting minutes may also be viewed on the Council's [website](#):

### **20 July 2023 – East Suffolk Crime & Disorder Committee: Review of the East Suffolk Community Safety Partnership**

**Supported by a representative from the Police, the following key points were discussed:**

- The key priorities of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Action Plan eg Hate Crime, Preventing Radicalisation, Modern Slavery, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Criminal Exploitation, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Volume Crime and Fraud.
- Projects supported by the CSP including a door chain project in Lowestoft, a Crimestoppers campaign at increasing reporting of domestic abuse and an "Ask for Angela" mystery shop.
- Funding for the CSP and the need for further funding.
- The Government's review of CSPs following their review of Police and Crime Commissioners.
- Comms for projects, including the use of social media.
- Community Safety Action Plan for Sizewell C to mitigate the potential impacts of an influx of construction workers.
- The high levels of crime and ASB on the Gunton Estate and in Fritton.
- Engagement levels of Responsible Authorities.
- Visibility of policing on the streets.
- The Police no longer dealing with people with mental health problems.
- Policing rural communities.

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
That the report of the Cabinet Member for Community Health be noted and Officers provide Committee Members with information on the Gunton Estate and Fritton Anti Social Behaviour project and contact details for reporting Modern Day Slavery and Domestic Abuse.

## **21 September 2023 – Review of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences**

**Evidence was heard from trade representatives and the Committee discussed the following key points:**

- Encouraging the trade to use electric vehicles.
- Customer abuse against drivers and fare dodging.
- The licence application fees and process, including timescales.
- The number and nature of enforcement issues dealt with by the Licensing Team.
- Engagement with the trade.
- The difficulty customers were experiencing in obtaining taxis at certain times.
- The training regime, including safeguarding.

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
1. That the Licensing Committee be recommended to approve an increase in the number of Enforcement Officers to ensure adequate provision across the whole district.
2. That the Licensing Committee consider the following matters raised during the Scrutiny Committee’s review into the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licence Regime: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing ways to attract more drivers to the industry, including streamlining processes.</li> <li>• Consider ways to alleviate the financial burden for drivers applying for a Licence which could include providing grants, loan pay back schemes or staggering payments etc.</li> <li>• Review, and consider lobbying the Government and LGA in relation to, the recommendations contained within the Task and Finish Group report entitled the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Steps towards a Safer and More Robust System.</li> </ul>

The Licensing Committee considered the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s report on 16 October 2023 and decided the following:

### **RESOLVED**

1. That a request for resources be made for an additional Licensing Enforcement Officer post.
2. That having considered the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, officers will not be directed to lobby the Government and Local Government Association (LGA) in relation to, the recommendations contained within the Task and Finish Group report entitled the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Steps towards a Safer and More Robust System.
3. That having considered the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, officers will not be directed to investigate the introduction of ways to attract more drivers to the industry, including streamlining processes.
4. That having considered the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, officers be directed to consider ways to alleviate the financial burden for drivers applying for a Licence which could include providing grants, loan pay back schemes or staggering payments.

## 19 October 2023 – Review of Affordable Housing Planning Requirements

Evidence was heard from several local developers and the Committee discussed the following key points:

- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment and timescales of when it would be reviewed.
- Definition of Affordable rent.
- Commuted sums and how they could be spent.
- The need for dedicated storage areas for all dwellings.
- The costs of building to Passivhaus standard.
- The different costs associated with developing sites and the impact this had on viability.
- The options for having 100% affordable housing schemes.
- The need to liaise with Registered Providers to encourage them to develop more in East Suffolk.

Resolution(s)
That the Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report and defer any recommendations until after the Review on Social Housing being held in November.

## 16 November 2023 – Review of the Provision of Social Housing in East Suffolk

Key points discussed:

- The policies within the Local Plans, including the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- The Government’s formula for setting rents for social housing.
- The process used when anyone did not comply with their tenancy agreement.
- The demand for temporary accommodation.
- The standard of build for new Council properties.
- The sale of Housing Association stock and whether the Council would purchase them.
- The location of Council stock and the need to build more in the south.
- The criteria for homelessness and support for those that were facing eviction or sleeping rough.
- The support being provided to re-house St Peter’s Court tenants.
- Encouraging communities to set up Community Land Trusts.
- The Gateway to Home Choice Scheme including the number of people on the Register.
- The need for more single person and flexible dwellings that allowed families to downsize.
- The differences between affordable housing and social housing in terms of rents.
- The requirements on developers to provide the same standard of build for the affordable housing.

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
<p>1. That Cabinet</p> <p>(a) explore innovative and creative ways to provide more affordable, efficient and environmentally friendly housing within East Suffolk.</p> <p>(b) review the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Local Plan documents in relation to affordable housing supply sooner rather than later and include environmental sustainability.</p> <p>(c) increase the target for providing Council housing stock from 50 to 100 units per annum.</p> <p>(d) lobby Government on changing the Right to Buy Scheme so that a higher percentage of the receipts can be made available to supply more housing stock.</p> <p>2. That Officers provide a response to the following queries raised by the Committee at this and the last meeting:</p> <p>(a) how many properties had been purchased by the Council since 2019 and how many remained empty?</p> <p>(b) the options, challenges and risks for providing 100% affordable housing developments in the district</p>

Cabinet considered the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s recommendations at their meeting on 5 March 2024 and decided the following:

**RESOLVED**

That Cabinet

1. Explore innovative and creative ways to provide more affordable, efficient and environmentally friendly housing within East Suffolk.
2. Review the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Local Plan documents in relation to affordable housing supply sooner rather than later and include environmental sustainability.
3. Increase the target for providing Council housing stock from 50 to 100 units per annum.
4. Lobby Government on changing the Right to Buy Scheme so that a higher percentage of the receipts can be made available to supply more housing stock

**21 December 2023 – Review of Approach to Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour in East Suffolk – Meeting cancelled due to weather conditions**

**18 January 2024 – The Council’s Budgets**

**Capital Programme 2023-24 to 2027-28**

**Key points discussed:**

- Whether it was possible to measure the effectiveness of the budget in delivering the new Strategic Plan given it was unclear in terms of strategy, direction and priorities.
- CCTV equipment and monitoring arrangements.
- Whether the solar panel project was value for money or the funding should be spent elsewhere.

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
No recommendations were made.

## Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Report 2024/25 to 2027/28

### Key points discussed:

- Rents, including the proposed increase.
- The costs of retrofitting
- Right to Buy sales.
- Rent arrears and the employment of Officers to support residents who were struggling with their rents as well as the new Safe Suffolk Renters Scheme.
- The need to continue the Empty Homes Officer post.
- More clarity was needed to ensure the Council was not overstretched financially if borrowing took place.
- The need for more temporary accommodation and support for those who were homeless.

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
That, having reviewed the Housing Revenue Account Budget, the Scrutiny Committee endorse borrowing to invest in housing as interest rates come down and the use of an arms length company, and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing investigate new ways to finance sustainable housing potentially using borrowing both new builds and retrofitting.

## Draft General Fund Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24

### Key points discussed:

- The Council reserves.
- The continuation of the New Homes Bonus for a further year.
- The need to generate income in the future to fund services.
- East Suffolk Services Limited.
- The annual pay award.

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
That the Scrutiny Committee endorse Cabinet's recommendations to Full Council as follows:  1. Approves the draft 2024/25 General Fund Revenue Budget as set out in this report and summarised in Appendix A5 and notes the budget forecast for 2025/26 and beyond. 2. Approves a proposed Band D Council Tax for East Suffolk Council of £186.57 for 2024/25, an increase of £5.40 or 2.98%.

## 22 February 2024 – Review of East Suffolk Council’s Environmental Strategy

### Key points discussed:

- How the Council was aiming to achieve net zero by 2030.
- The need to influence those who generated the other 99% of carbon emissions in the district.
- If the themes in the previous plan that were not in the new Strategic Plan would still be delivered such as “leading by example”

- The urgent need for an action plan and KPI's to show how the Strategy would be delivered.
- The need to create more allotment land across the district.
- The need for more EV chargers across the district.
- How the Council was working with partners to deliver the aims of the Strategic Plan.

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
<p>1. That, as agreed, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment create an Action Plan with details of how the objectives will be achieved, the proposed outcomes, costings and KPIs for her top three priorities within the Environmental Theme of the Strategic Plan, to be reviewed by this Committee in September 2024 and the other five to be reviewed at a later date.</p> <p>2. That the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment also provide information to the meeting in September 2024 on how the Council was working effectively with partner organisations, especially statutory ones, to deliver the Environmental theme of the Strategic Plan.</p>

## **21 March 2024 – Review of Partnership Working to Tackle Environmental Issues**

### **Key points discussed:**

- The diverse number of different partnerships the Council was involved in ranging from the Greenprint Forum to the Suffolk Waste Partnership etc
- The ambitions of East Suffolk's Amazing.
- The need for more joined up working to deal with flytipping quickly.
- The need to promote civic pride and encourage communities to get involved.
- The process for residents to register to undertake litter picks and obtain equipment.
- The resource challenges faced by ESSL to cover the whole district.

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
<p>That, as agreed at the last meeting, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment report back to the 19 September 2024 Committee on any barriers to working in partnership to tackle environmental issues.</p>

## **18 April 2024 – Review of Rural Transport Services in East Suffolk**

### **Evidence was heard from Transport East and Suffolk County Council representatives and the Committee discussed the following key points:**

- The funding available for rural transport services.
- How the on-demand services being trialled within East Suffolk eg Katch and Buzzabout worked and were funded and would be re-launched/promoted.
- How the on-demand services would be evaluated to understand if the trials had been successful.
- The need to analyse the social value of providing rural transport services
- The role the Council wanted to play given it was not a district function.
- How early Planning interventions for new developments in particular could influence the take up and use of transport services.



<b>Resolution(s)</b>
<p>1. That the Scrutiny Committee be provided with the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Terms of Reference for the Transport Working Group, including the aims and objectives of the Group and indicative timescales.</li> <li>• The social value of East Suffolk Council providing on-demand public transport eg Katch/Buzzabout.</li> <li>• How the on-demand services, including the app, would be marketed/relaunched.</li> <li>• How it was intended to attract more volunteer drivers for on-demand services.</li> <li>• The wider impact of the loss of public transport on a community such as car movements and air quality etc.</li> </ul> <p>2. That the operators of East Suffolk’s on-demand public transport projects Katch/Buzzabout be encouraged to use vehicles that were as green as they realistically could be given the cost limitations.</p> <p>3. That Planning Officers be asked to encourage developers to include the provision of public transport at the earliest stage of new developments as possible.</p>

## **Cabinet Member Scrutiny Sessions**

In addition to the above reviews, the Committee held scrutiny sessions with the new Cabinet Members regarding the direction of travel, aspirations and challenges they had with their portfolios as follows:

- 21 September 2023 – Councillor Caroline Topping – Leader of the Council
- 19 October 2023 – Councillor Kay Yule – Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management
- 16 November 2023 – Councillor David Beavan – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing
- 18 January 2024 – Councillor Vince Langdon-Morris – Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and Value for Money
- 22 February 2024 – Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte – Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment
- 21 March 2024 – Councillor Paul Ashton – Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Services, ICT and Commercial Partnerships
- 18 April 2023 – Councillor Toby Hammond – Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and Transport

Sessions with the following Cabinet Members were scheduled to take place in December 2023 and May 24 but were postponed following cancellation of those meetings. They will now be held in the 2024/25 Municipal Year:

Councillor Sarah Whitelock – Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Culture, Leisure and Tourism

Councillor Jan Candy – Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health

Councillor Tom Daly – Cabinet Member with responsibility for Energy & Climate Change

## Member Working Groups/Task and Finish Groups

A Review of the Approach to Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour in East Suffolk was scheduled to take place on 21 December 2023, however, the meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather. At their meeting on 22 February 2024, the Committee received the report of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health and decided to set up a Task and Finish Group to investigate and make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the working practices between the Council and Suffolk Constabulary for tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) related non-crime issues, to ensure they worked effectively for the benefit of residents.

To date, the Task and Finish Group, which comprises 4 Committee members as well as representatives from Suffolk Constabulary, has met several times and their report is likely to be considered at the July 2024 Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

## Membership of Outside Bodies

The Leader of the Council has requested that the Scrutiny Committee decide on the appointment of representatives to external forums with a scrutiny function. In July 2023, the Committee considered and appointed the following for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

- **Suffolk County Council Joint Health Scrutiny Committee** – Councillor Ed Thompson as the primary representative with Councillor Janet Craig as the nominated Substitute.
- **Suffolk County Council Joint Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Committee** – Councillor Jan Candy as the primary representative with Councillor Keith Patience as the nominated Substitute.

NOTE: This Outside Body was disbanded by Suffolk County Council in early 2024.

## Call-ins and Councillors' Calls for Action

There have been no Call-ins or Calls for Action in the period of this report.

## Training and Development

Given the very high number of Committee Members new to Scrutiny, it was decided to hold an inhouse session on 14 June 2023 to give Members a basic understanding of the principles of good Scrutiny which was supplemented by sessions with external trainers on 30 November 2023 - "Best Practice Scrutiny" and 11 January 2024 – Budget Scrutiny.

## Budget

The Scrutiny Committee has an annual budget of £6000 and £4016.60 was spent in the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

# LOOKING AHEAD

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to evolve by regularly reviewing its processes and procedures to identify any areas for development so we can focus on the 'big things' where a positive impact may be delivered for the Council and residents.

The main focus in 2023/24 was developing the skills and knowledge of the new Committee members so there was minimal change in procedures, however, it was agreed to make changes to the process for determining the 2024/25 Work Programme to make it more inclusive. Accordingly, a joint workshop was held in June 2024 with representatives of Cabinet and Senior Leadership Team. The Workshop used the following as a basis for identifying suitable topics and further work is underway to scope them for inclusion on the 2024/25 Work Programme.

## **Key features of an effective work programme**

**A Member led process, shortlisting and prioritising topics – with support from officers – that:**

- **reflects local needs and priorities – issues of community concern as well as Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy priorities**
  - **prioritises topics for scrutiny that have most impact or benefit**
    - **involves local stakeholders**
  - **is flexible enough to respond to new or urgent issues**