



# **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**



## **Our Vision for Scrutiny Activity**

Scrutiny 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.

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## **Foreword by the Chairman**

**Councillor Stuart Bird,  
Scrutiny Committee Chairman 2022/23**

As Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, I am delighted, once again, to be able to present the Annual Report of East Suffolk Council's Scrutiny Committee, the last for this term of office. This Report provides a retrospective record of the work undertaken by the Committee, its activities, and achievements in the 2022/23 Municipal Year as well as details of how the Committee will reflect on activities over the whole term with a view to suggesting possible improvements for the new Scrutiny Committee in the next term of office 2023-2027.

I continue to be supported by Councillor Mike Deacon, a very experienced and enthusiastic Vice-Chairman, as well as the other 11 dedicated Members of the Committee. We all work together, cross-party, to support and facilitate this extremely important statutory function.

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.

The Committee scrutinised all the Cabinet Members on their portfolios as well as reviewing specific topics, both those matters that affected internal Council services and also those it felt were particularly important to communities and residents such as:

- The Planning Enforcement Process
- The Council's Progress Following the Declaration of a Climate Emergency
- How the Council Engages with Housing Tenants
- Democratic Accountability within the Planning Process

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank everyone who has participated in this year's Scrutiny process.

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

**Stuart Bird**

# THE ROLE OF SCRUTINY

## 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 scrutiny 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 the District's 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.***

Meetings of the 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 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 2022/23, the Committee did not specifically review any aspects of health provision other than the impact the new Integrated Care System will have on our own Council Services, but the power remains available to do so as considered necessary.

The Scrutiny Committee conducts its proceedings in accordance with its Terms of Reference (as set out in Part 2, Section C, Functions and Responsibilities of the Constitution) and the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (as set out in Part 3, Procedure Rules, of the [Constitution](#)).

## The Principles of Good Public Scrutiny

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***

## What we do not do

The Scrutiny Committee does not deal with quasi-judicial matters such as Planning or Licensing, except if there were to be a significant system issue. It does not deal with issues that are, or should be, resolved by the separate corporate complaints procedure or through internal systems within Service Teams. The Committee does not deal with 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.

Scrutiny does not become involved where there would be duplication of existing work, or if its review would be untimely or would not lead to effective outcomes.

# SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## Membership 2022/23

The Committee comprises 13 Members and is politically balanced with 9 Conservatives, 2 Labour and 2 GLI Members. The Membership has slightly changed over the past year and I would like to thank Councillors Gandy and Gee for their valued contribution to the Committee. The current membership is as follows:



Stuart Bird (Chairman) (CON)  
Chairman since May 2019



Mike Deacon (Vice-Chairman) (LAB)  
Vice-Chairman since May 2019



Edward Back (CON)  
Member since May 2019



David Beavan (GLI)  
Member since May 201



Judy Cloke (CON)  
Member since May 2019



Linda Coulam (CON)  
Member since May 2019



Tony Goldson (CON)  
Member since May 2022



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



Tracey Green (CON)  
Member since May 2019



Colin Hedgley (CON)  
Member since May 2021



Geoff Lynch (CON)  
Member since May 2019



Keith Robinson (CON)  
Member since May 2019



Caroline Topping (GLI)  
Member since May 2019

## Roles and Responsibilities

The Council's Constitution contains detailed role descriptions outlining the purpose, duties, and responsibilities of the various members of the Committee, 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 2, Functions and Responsibilities](#), of the Constitution on our website, but a brief summary is also provided below.

### Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee

At East Suffolk, the Chairman is a member of the Administration Group of the Council; the Vice-Chairman is a member of an Opposition Group.

The Chairman 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 Chairman 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 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 Scrutiny 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 2022/23

The Committee decided to continue scheduling 11 meetings per year in its Work Programme as it enabled Members to focus on one topic per meeting and avoided the need to arrange ad-hoc meetings. Meetings were held on the following dates:

19 May 2022  
16 June 2022  
14 July 2022  
29 September 2022  
27 October 2022  
17 November 2022  
15 December 2022  
19 January 2023  
26 January 2023  
16 February 2023  
2 March 2023

Each year, the Committee has a number of reviews it must carry out such as the Budget (19 January 2023) as well as a requirement to sit at least once a year in its statutory role as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee (15 December 2022).

For the remainder of its meetings in 2022/23, 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](#):

### **19 May 2022 – The impact of flexible working on the workforce, Council resources and productivity**

#### **Key points discussed:**

- Whether the Council was meeting its statutory obligations
- The Agile Working Guide produced
- Savings brought about by flexible working in time and cost
- The ability to relocate staff to East Suffolk House and Riverside from other sites no longer fit for purpose, instead of considering new office space
- The initial adaption to working from home as a result of national lockdowns and the Council maintaining services following this change
- Support put in place by the IT department to successfully enable home working on a larger scale
- DSE self-assessment for officers working from home
- The role of managers in ensuring correct DSE practices when working from home
- Staff survey completed on flexible working arrangements and its results
- The long-term effects of working from home during national lockdowns on working practices and employee expectations
- The impact of working from home on absence rates
- The additional costs placed on employees when working from home
- The impact of flexible working on new starters and apprentices



- Line management of employees working from home
- The impact on employees whose roles did not allow them to work from home
- Health and safety risks working from home
- Minimising the risk of employees working excessive hours from home
- Access to health and wellbeing support
- Impact of working from home on employees with caring responsibilities
- The Council's responsibility and liability for accidents occurring when employees work from home
- Unison input and its own staff survey, with its results detailed

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
1. That Council Officers ensure that staff and Members were sent regular reminders on the best practice for WFH and agile working.
2. That a suggestion be made to the 2023 Scrutiny Committee that they might want to review the position in relation to agile working.

## **16 June 2022 – Review of the Planning Enforcement process**

### **Key points discussed:**

- The current quarterly reporting to the Strategic Planning Committee
- The current monthly reporting to the Planning Committees North and South
- Internal Audit's involvement in reviewing systems and processes for Planning Enforcement
- Changes to the management structure
- The Enforcement Action Plan to be presented to Strategic Planning Committee in September 2022, in response to the recommendations of Internal Audit
- The impact of COVID-19 on the work of the team
- The role of the Planning Enforcement Policy in how complaints are investigated
- Changes introduced in recent years to speed up processes
- Whether outsourcing Planning Enforcement had been considered
- The need for a seamless Planning Authority
- Enforcement of major planning breaches
- Whether the team had the appropriate resources
- Comparisons between the Council's Planning Enforcement service and similar Council Planning departments
- The process when enforcement cases are passed to the Council's legal team
- Whether legal action could be sped up
- The performance of the Council in relation to legal action on enforcement
- The possibility of introducing a Compliance Officer
- Time limits for legal proceedings

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
That the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management note that the Scrutiny Committee would support the principle of exploring opportunities for additional resource in the compliance and monitoring area to support and improve the Enforcement Service.

## **14 July 2022 – Review of the Council’s progress following the Declaration of a Climate Emergency**

### **Key points discussed:**

- Three main areas of focus – reduction of carbon footprint, communicating to the outside world, biodiversity
- Embedding the environment in the Council’s decision making
- Various guidance documents authored to support the Council’s environmental focus
- Running front-line services environmentally whilst ensuring value for money and meeting residents’ expectations
- Member/officer collaboration on environment and climate change
- The Environment as a core theme of the Council’s strategic plan
- The Environment theme delivery plan
- The Environment Task Group
- Key Performance Indicator dashboard tracking progress
- Solar panel installation on Council buildings
- Tetrapak recycling
- Rates of recycling against general waste per household
- Contamination of household recycling bins
- Campaigns on recycling
- Bin inspection process during collections, to avoid contamination
- Meeting the Council’s CO<sup>2</sup> emissions target by 2030
- The conversion of waste trucks to run on hydro-treated vegetable oil (HVO) and the impact of this on the Council’s carbon footprint
- Measuring the Council’s carbon emissions
- Encouraging manufacturers to reduce packaging
- How money raised by green charges/taxes is spent
- Low carbon energy
- Environmental protection within Planning – heating systems in new builds and sustainable construction
- Retrofitting the Council’s housing stock with energy efficient heating systems
- The impact of the cost of living crisis on fuel efficiency
- Engagement with town and parish councils in relation to flytipping and littering
- Availability of electric vehicle charging points in East Suffolk
- Recycling electric vehicle batteries
- Air quality

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
<p>That the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment and Officers provide the following information to the Scrutiny Committee to be reported to the next meeting on 29 September 2022:</p> <p>Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What happened to the batteries of scrapped electric vehicles?</li> <li>• What was the latest situation in relation to the problem with contaminated Blue Bins in previously identified streets in Lowestoft?</li> </ul> <p>Information Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were the practicalities and costings of providing more publicly accessible electric vehicle charging points on Council owned land?</li> <li>• What was the proposed plan for retrofitting the Council's Housing Stock including indicative timescales and costings, and would this be achieved in time to meet this Council's target to be carbon neutral by 2030?</li> </ul>

## **29 September 2022 – Review of the Sale and Disposal of Council Assets Procedure**

### **Key points discussed:**

- Process of all disposals going through Cabinet per the Constitution, with some exceptions
- The notification process to Members when assets disposed of in their Ward(s)
- Process of selling land for garden extensions
- Valuation process
- Internal and external checks
- Loss of asset value and future maintenance liability
- Mapping of assets on Uniform
- Asset transfers
- The Council's Asset Strategy and if should be reviewed
- HR resources for Asset Management
- Use of external valuers
- Surplus assets
- New properties built by the Council
- Subsidy Control
- The sale of the former Suffolk Coastal District Council Melton Hill offices
- Commercial tenants and rent arrears
- C2 category properties owned by the Council and their state of repair
- Protecting assets from negative equity
- The Right To Buy (RTB) process

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
<p>That the report be noted and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and Officers be asked to report back to Members on the following queries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any C2 category properties in such a poor state of repair that they need to be disposed of?</li> <li>• Would the Council lose a lot of money if the value of a Council House dropped and the tenants then put in an RTB?</li> <li>• What are the latest performance figures regarding the KPI – 5% surplus for more than 12 months?</li> <li>• What is the RTB process and how are valuations done, including how can we protect the Council and ensure any upgrade investments in individual properties were reflected in the valuation?</li> <li>• A link to the Uniform asset map and the name of team members Councillors could contact for assets within their Ward.</li> </ul>

## **17 November 2022 – Review of How the Council Engages with Housing Tenants**

### **Key points discussed:**

- Methods of collecting rents from tenants, utilising modern methods
- The ongoing production of a Tenancy Engagement Strategy, including the creation of a Residents Board and a Tenant Scrutiny function consisting of tenants and residents (leaseholders)
- Annual visits for gas and electrical maintenance testing
- Engagement being targeted and prioritised according to risk
- A programme of stock condition surveys coming forward through the new Asset Management Plan
- Design of the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR), future questions and sample size
- Options for elderly tenants to downsize
- The Council's role in promoting retired living schemes and offering support for wellbeing
- The risk of digital exclusion during the STAR survey
- The commissioning of the Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) report to provide a catalyst and framework for the Council to develop its Tenant Participation Strategy
- Safeguarding vulnerable tenants
- The out of hours service
- Tenant engagement
- The Annual Report to tenants
- The Officer Board, comprising officers from the Council's Communities and Housing Teams, to ensure alignment on community projects
- Resources

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
<p>That the report be noted and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing and Officers report back to Members on the following Matters Arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can the Ward Members be briefed on the outcome of Tenant Engagement workshops that take place in their Ward?</li> <li>• What information about tenants do the Out of Hours call responders hold? Particularly with regard to vulnerable tenants.</li> <li>• The Head of Housing to consider feedback from Councillors Deacon and Green about their recent interactions with the out of hours service.</li> </ul>

## **15 December 2022 – East Suffolk Crime & Disorder Committee: Review of the East Suffolk Community Safety Partnership**

### **Key points discussed:**

- The refreshing of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Action Plan between March and November 2022
- The CSP's primary topics – Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Anti-Social Behaviour and work with partner agencies to address these issues
- Funding for the CSP
- Funding for infrastructure improvements such as lighting, fencing and CCTV
- The "Ask for Angela" activity and its effectiveness
- Domestic Abuse champions
- The number of Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors available in Suffolk
- Work to change the behaviour of men regarding VAWG
- The Crucial Crew project
- Reporting anti-social behaviour
- Co-ordination of publicity on how to report anti-social behaviour
- The new Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan, including KPIs to enable monitoring the effectiveness of interventions
- The proposed Criminal Exploitation Hub, to be located in Lowestoft
- The Criminal Exploitation (previously County Lines) priority
- The Police and Crime Commissioner providing updates by Ward as part of reporting to outside bodies

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
<p>That the Scrutiny Committee note the current position of the CSP, including the CSP Action Plan and the priority areas Violence Against Women and Girls and Anti-Social Behaviour.</p>

## 19 January 2023 – The Council’s Budgets

### Capital Programme 2022-23 to 2026-27

#### Key points discussed:

- The decline in the number of public conveniences in Lowestoft Town Centre
- The value for money of the Southwold Enterprise Hub
- The number of housing completions achieved in 2022/23 and the reasons the budget for new builds had been reduced
- The Earmarked Reserves for capital projects
- The procurement of swimming pool covers to help reduce energy costs
- The variation of the Environment and Port Health expenditure line
- The expenditure to date for the refurbishment of St Peter’s Court in Lowestoft

Resolution(s)
That Cabinet be recommended that: 1. The General Fund capital programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27 including revisions as shown in Appendix B. 2. The Housing Revenue Account capital programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27 including revisions as shown in Appendix G.

### Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Report 2023/24 to 2026/27

#### Key points discussed

- The value for money of retrofitting the Council’s housing stock
- The size of the wall insulation budget
- The condition of the Council’s housing stock including works required to ensure all Council properties had at least an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C
- Council house rents including the level of rent arrears and refunds of overcharged rent

Resolution(s)
That Cabinet be recommended that: 1. The draft HRA budget for 2023/24, and the indicative figures for 2024/25 to 2026/27. 2. Movements in HRA Reserves and Balances 3. Proposed rent increase of up to 6%. 1% less than the Government 7% rent Cap for 2023/24 rent setting. 4. Service charges and associated fees for 2023/24 5. Rent and Service Charges to be charged over a 50-week period unless being used for Temporary Accommodation when a 52-week period will be applied. 6. A report be made to the Environment Task Group within 12 months setting out a detailed programme to deliver HRA Housing Stock retrofitting projects.  To note the following: 1. Revised outturn position for 2022/23. 2. Changes affecting public and private sector housing and welfare to be noted. 3. Effects of the cost-of-living crisis to the HRA to be noted.

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

### Key points discussed

- The Second Homes premium
- The disposal of Council assets
- The investment of land for economic development
- The achievability of the Council's ambition to be carbon neutral
- The levels of green waste and the increase in subscription charges
- The reduction in parking income
- The cost and use of agency staff at the Council

Resolution(s)
That Cabinet be recommended: 1. To approve the 2023/24 General Fund Revenue Budget as set out in the report and summarised in Appendix A5 and notes the budget forecast for 2024/25 and beyond; 2. To approve the reserves and balances movements as presented in Appendix A7; and 3. To approve a proposed Band D Council Tax for East Suffolk Council of £181.17 for 2023/24, an increase of £4.95 or 2.81%.

## 26 January 2023 – The Review of Governance Arrangements for the Council's Local Authority Trading Company (LATCO) Group Structure

### Key points discussed

- The overall Group structure
- The definition of a "Teckal" company and how activities would be monitored to ensure our companies met the criteria to be a Teckal company
- The nature of the Council's shareholding and opportunities to expand in the future
- Accountability and review mechanisms, including by the Scrutiny Committee
- Contract management including key performance indicators
- The access rights of Councillors to information about a LATCO and attendance at meetings
- How the change will affect existing Norse staff, including TUPE and pay negotiations, and staff training to ensure good customer service was provided

Resolution(s)
That the report and responses to the questions raised by Members, be noted.

## 16 February 2023 – The impact of the new Integrated Care Systems (ICS) on Council Services

### Key points discussed:

- The ICS structures varied between the north and the south of the district and the Suffolk and North East Essex System had been established earlier than the Norfolk and Waveney System
- Opportunities for ESC Officers to engage with and influence matters that related to ESC priorities
- Past imbalances in how Members had engaged in strategic health matters between the north and south of the district

- Alignment with Strategic Plan priorities and the priorities of the eight Community Partnerships, such as mental health support for young people
- The role of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the allocation of funding
- Having a 'seat at the table' enabled the Council to influence health matters strategically
- There were review and accountability mechanisms built-in to the governance arrangements of the ICSs through progress monitoring against their 5-year plans and through Board oversight
- Two new staff had been recruited to increase preventative health capacity using funding in part from the NW ICS
- The role of Financial Inclusion Officers in promoting exemptions and pre-payment certificates to those that needed support
- Social prescribing was delivered in partnership with the voluntary sector

<b>Resolution(s)</b>
1. That a table setting out the prevalence of smoking in each of the East Suffolk ICS areas alongside the preventative reduction target for that cohort, be reported as a Matter Arising to the next suitable meeting of the Committee.
2. That the report and the responses to the questions raised by Members, be noted.

## **2 March 2023 – Review of Democratic Accountability within the Planning Process**

### **Key points discussed:**

- The role of the Referral Panel in only determining the route of an application
- The composition of the Referral Panel and if a Member should have a casting vote if the four person Panel is tied 2-2 rather than an Officer deciding
- If Ward Councillors should be allowed to speak at the Referral Panel and receive the paperwork to enable them to confirm its accuracy
- The Government target for applications being dealt with under delegated powers, the consequences for not meeting the target and if having a target to delegate decisions could lead to some applications being delegated rather than being considered by a Committee
- The need to encourage Ward Councillors to attend Referral Panels to get an understanding of the process and to attend Planning training
- The need to highlight that Ward Councillors and objectors can speak to case officers and members of the Planning Committee, as well as submitting a formal written representation
- If 3 minutes was sufficient time for an objector to speak at Committee
- The need for more training for Town and Parish Councils
- The need for simpler guidance on the website, a YouTube video or QR code on the site notice of what constitutes a valid objection on planning grounds
- The weight given to Neighbourhood Plans when deciding applications
- The consultation period for Town and Parish Council's to respond
- The process other Local Authorities use
- The outcome of the SALC survey and the Council's response to it
- The impact of Covid on the planning process and in particular the temporary pausing of site visits
- If there should be a call-in procedure to enable some specific applications to be considered by a Committee rather than having to go through the Referral Panel process



Resolution(s)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Strategic Planning Committee in June 2023 be recommended to change the Planning Procedure Rules to allow an application to bypass the Referral Panel process and automatically be considered by the Planning Committee in the event of a “triple lock” style request being received by ALL of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Ward Councillor</li> <li>• The Town/Parish Council</li> <li>• A Member of the Planning Committee, unless they are also the same Ward Councillor in which case it would be two (Ward Councillor and Town/Parish Council).</li> </ul> </li>   <li>2. That, as agreed by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, the Strategic Planning Committee in June 2023 also consider amending the Planning Procedure Rules to allow the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a Member should have a casting vote if the four person Referral Panel is tied 2-2 rather than an Officer deciding.</li> <li>• If 3 minutes was sufficient time for an objector to speak at Committee.</li> </ul> </li>   <li>3. That the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management and Officers provide the Scrutiny Committee with a written response to the following two questions ASAP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If it is possible to have another QR code on site notices to take members of the public to a simple guide on what constitutes a relevant planning objection?</li> <li>• What was the outcome, and are there any further actions arising, from the recent meeting between Officers and SALC in relation to their survey?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

## Cabinet Member Scrutiny Sessions

In addition to the above reviews, the Committee held scrutiny sessions of the Cabinet Members regarding elements of their portfolios as follows:

- 16 June 2022 – Cllr David Ritchie – Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management – Development Management and Local Plan
- 14 July 2022 – Cllr James Mallinder – Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment – Waste Management and Environmental Protection
- 29 September 2022 – Cllr Craig Rivett – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development – Energy/Renewables and Economic Development
- 27 October 2022 – Cllr Norman Brooks – Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport – Civil Parking Enforcement and Transport & Infrastructure
- 27 October 2022 – Cllr Letitia Smith – Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism – Tourism/Grants
- 15 December 2022 – Cllr Stephen Burroughes – Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Experience, ICT and Commercial Partnerships – Leisure Commercial Partnership and Customer Services

## **Member Working Groups/Task and Finish Groups**

There were no Task and Finish Groups held during the period of this report.

## **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 2022, the Committee considered and appointed the following for the 2022/23 Municipal Year:

- **Suffolk County Council Joint Health Scrutiny Committee** – Cllr Ed Back as the named representative with Councillor Colin Hedgley as the nominated Substitute.
- **Suffolk County Council Joint Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Committee** – Cllr Judy Cloke as the named representative with Councillor Keith Robinson as the nominated Substitute.

## **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**

Whilst Scrutiny Committee Members feel that training developed specifically for them is vitally important to support the continued development of the Committee, they did not feel it was necessary to have any specific training in 2022/23, following the excellent session they had in 2021 entitled "Developing Scrutiny and Building the Team" and the Away Evening in February 2022.

## **Budget**

The Scrutiny Committee has an annual budget of £6000, however, none was spent in the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

# LOOKING AHEAD

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

Following the review of Committee procedures at the beginning of 2022, a number of changes were made and implemented in the 2022/23 Municipal Year, principally the abolishing of Scoping Forms, slightly changing the Cabinet Member Sessions to make them more targeted and effective, together with the provision of an Away Evening to develop the Annual Work Programme.

An Away Evening has been organised for April 2023 to review not only these changes but also the effectiveness of the Committee over the past four year term with a view to making some recommendations for the new Scrutiny Committee to consider in 2023/24. The review will involve previous Members of the Committee, together with regular Substitutes, as well as obtaining the views of Cabinet Members and Senior Officers involved in the Scrutiny process.

As membership of the Committee will possibly change following the elections in May 2023, an Away Evening will be held in June 2023 to enable the new Scrutiny Committee to formulate their 2023/24 Work Programme using the following as a basis:

## **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**