



**East Suffolk House, Riduna Park, Station  
Road, Melton, Woodbridge, IP12 1RT**

# Scrutiny Committee

## **Members:**

Councillor Stuart Bird (Chairman)  
Councillor Mike Deacon (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Edward Back  
Councillor David Beavan  
Councillor Judy Cloke  
Councillor Linda Coulam  
Councillor Andree Gee  
Councillor Louise Gooch  
Councillor Tracey Green  
Councillor Geoff Lynch  
Councillor Mark Newton  
Councillor Keith Robinson  
Councillor Caroline Topping

Members are invited to a **Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee**  
to be held on **Thursday 23 July 2020 at 6.30pm**

This meeting will be conducted remotely, pursuant to the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus)(Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

The meeting will be facilitated using the Zoom video conferencing system and broadcast via the East Suffolk Council YouTube channel  
at <https://youtu.be/VIRwbBJ1t8c>

An Agenda is set out below.

## Part One – Open to the Public

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| <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 Disclosable Pecuniary or Local Non-Pecuniary Interests 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>3a</b> | <b>Minutes - 28 May 2020</b><br>To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 May 2020   | <b>1 - 6</b>   |
| <b>3b</b> | <b>Minutes - 18 June 2020</b><br>To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 18 June 2020   | <b>7 - 16</b>  |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>Presentation on the processes and management associated with road closures ES/0444</b><br>Presentation by Councillor Andrew Reid of Suffolk County Council   |                |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Review of the Asset Management Strategy 2019/23 ES/0443</b><br>Report of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development   | <b>17 - 24</b> |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Cabinet Member's update</b><br>To receive an update on the Cabinet Member's portfolio and strategic priorities   |                |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee 2019/20 ES/0442</b><br>Report of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee  | <b>25 - 35</b> |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Scrutiny Committee's Forward Work Programme</b><br>To consider the Committee's Forward Work Programme  |                |

## Part Two – Exempt/Confidential

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There are no Exempt or Confidential items for this Agenda.

**Close**



Stephen Baker, Chief Executive

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Minutes of a Meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the Remote Meeting via Zoom , on **Thursday, 28 May 2020 at 6:30 pm**

**Members of the Committee present:**

Councillor Edward Back, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Stuart Bird, Councillor Judy Cloke, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Andree Gee, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Tracey Green, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor Mark Newton, Councillor Keith Robinson, Councillor Caroline Topping

**Other Members present:**

Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Maurice Cook, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor David Ritchie

**Officers present:**

Katherine Abbott (Democratic Services Officer), Stephen Baker (Chief Executive), Hilary Slater (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer), Agnes Ogundiran (Conservative Political Group Support Officer), Tim Willis (Deputy Electoral Services Manager), Nicola Wotton (Deputy Democratic Services Manager)

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**1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andree Gee.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest

**3 Minutes of meeting 23 January 2020**

**RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 January 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

**4 Review of Postal Voting and Count arrangements at the District and European Elections in East Suffolk in 2019**

The Scrutiny Committee received report **ES/0181** by the Chief Executive, as the Returning Officer, which reviewed two issues raised by the Scrutiny Committee following the District and European Elections in 2019 namely, concerns about the delivery of postal votes and the time taken to input data at the counts. Specifically, the report focused on the Elections held on 2 May 2020 (District) and 23 May 2020 (European). The Chief Executive summarised the written report. With regard to postal

votes, he stated that the whole process of issuing postal votes was strictly controlled by a pre-determined electoral timetable. Where a postal vote was not delivered, strict checks must be implemented before a replacement postal vote could be issued. There were various reasons why a postal vote might not be delivered, including voter error and a delivery error by the postal system. It was also acknowledged that sometimes an administrative error might occur and a postal vote might not be issued where it had been requested by a voter. Similarly, the process of data input has been reviewed by the management of the Electoral Services function. In view of the need to ensure the absolute accuracy of the count, and the result of the election, results were inputted into an Electoral Services system in order to reduce the scope for error to an absolute minimum. The review of the District election had acknowledged that the number of seats being counted, and therefore the number of results to be declared, had caused an inputting delay at the count. This would be resolved at future counts by adding extra input screens to the process.

A member of the Committee asked if delayed deliveries of postal votes, for example by Royal Mail, could be monitored in future. The Chief Executive said this might be possible and would be explored, however, sometimes circumstances were beyond everyone's control.

Another member of the Committee referred to the additional information which had been sought by Councillor Beavan and provided at paragraph 2.6 of the report. The member said that the information was not very descriptive and asked if, as a result of the review, any patterns with delayed or undelivered postal votes had been identified, for example clusters of roads etc. The Chief Executive said that an issue in Bungay had been noted, however, it was difficult to establish patterns. He added that some 68,000 postal votes were issued and 116 (District) and 68 (European) had to be re-issued for a variety of reasons including postal delay. The Deputy Elections Manager also advised that there had been six administrative errors by the Elections Team over the two Elections (68,000 postal votes issued for each). The Committee was advised that other reasons for the re-issue of postal votes including the voter having mislaid it inadvertently, or had moved house but not updated their details on the Register. In response to another question by the member, the Chief Executive said the Elections Team gathered anecdotal evidence as it was received and used this to inform improvements to the process-driven systems.

A further member of the Committee asked when a mapping exercise to review the methods around the issue of postal votes had last been undertaken. The Chief Executive replied that the process was laid down by the Electoral Commission and its election timetable and core process must be adhered to with little opportunity to deviate; the Council's own processes could be revised and improved, if necessary. The Deputy Elections Manager advised that there was a comprehensive debrief after every election in addition to careful monitoring while the election process was underway. He added that the Electoral Commission's set legislative process did allow a small slot in the timetable for the re-issue of postal votes to electors and that the Election Team did its very best to ensure the electorate of the District were able to vote.

Another member of the Committee asked what the arrangement was if an elector realised very late in the process that they would be out of the country on the day of the election and for an estimation of how long it would take to resolve this. The Deputy

Elections Manager advised that the relevant legislation stated that once the cut-off date had past it was not able to modify a postal vote; however, the Elections Team did all it could , within the legislation, to try and resolve such an issue, for example by the use of a proxy vote. He emphasised that the same processes and rules were applied to all electors and were in accordance with the required governance.

The Chairman of the Committee asked about the allocation of the count teams and if this could be improved. The Chief Executive stated that the delay at the count had been the inputting of the data but this was the element that generated the declaration so it was essential that it be accurate. This had been accepted and would be enhanced at future counts. He added that count teams which might appear to be unoccupied were either on a break or being held in reserve in case a re-count was required. The integrity and the accuracy of the count was the paramount aim, not necessarily speed. The Chairman also asked if the possibility of increased use of technology, generally, for elections was anticipated in the near future. The Chief Executive replied that the Cabinet Office had considered digital elections but this required reliable, secure technology which safeguarded against fraud. There were he said pros and cons for this approach but he would personally welcome it.

A member of the Committee said that although there had been acknowledged delays at the count, the whole process had been executed very well and the count had been conducted in positive atmosphere. The Vice Chairman wished to add his thanks to the Election Team for conducting such a lengthy count so successfully.

There being no further questions or matters raised for debate, the Chairman moved to the recommendation which was proposed by Councillor Deacon, seconded by Councillor Cloke and by unanimous vote

#### **RESOLVED**

That, having considered and commented upon the report of the Returning Officer and the issues identified during the review, the report be duly noted

*7.20pm The Meeting adjourned briefly and reconvened at 7.25pm*

## **5 Cabinet Member's update**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor David Ritchie, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, to the Meeting and invited him to provide his portfolio update.

Councillor Ritchie started by acknowledging the support he received in his role from Councillor Cooper, Assistant Cabinet Member, the Head of Planning & Coastal Management and his team, and those within the team at Coastal Partnership East. Councillor Ritchie provided a presentation as a strategic overview of the work of the Planning and Coastal Management Service at East Suffolk Council. The purpose of the Council's planning service being to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and the delivery of the spatial objectives of the Council's Strategic Plan, including advising on Council-led developments. The presentation stated that sustainable development was about positive growth – making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations and especially considering the challenges of Climate Change. For the Coastal Management part of his

portfolio, Councillor Ritchie said the Council acted as a Coast Protection Authority supporting coastal communities for a sustainable future. The presentation outlined the work of the Planning Policy and Delivery Team over the next year to 18 months, all supported by the Local Plan Working Group, as well as the work on Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. Councillor Ritchie outlined the delivery focus of the Team:

- Housing Land Supply Assessment (5 year)
- Housing Action Plan – to accelerate delivery
- Maintaining self-build and brownfield land registers to support delivery and regeneration, providing opportunities and choice
- Preparation of development briefs and master plans for site allocations – To provide guidance to developers
- Actions from the Housing Enabling Strategy
- Affordable Housing – Supplementary Planning Document
- Major Sites applications through to permission and delivery on the ground
- Infrastructure
- Supporting regeneration projects
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) collection and spend allocation

The presentation continued to outline the strategic aims of Development Management to assist the provision of high quality development delivering the aims and objectives of the NPPF and Local Plan. Also, of resisting inappropriate development robustly, again to uphold the aims of the Local Plan. The enforcement of building control and a specialist function including Design and Conservation, Landscape and Ecology which provide advice on development proposals and for the Council on its own projects. Lastly, Councillor Ritchie outlined the role and work of Coastal Partnership East:

- A team of 19 officers working across the coast of Norfolk and Suffolk
- 79km of the fastest eroding coast in Europe
- Management of 56km of sea defences and other structures to protect c300,000 homes at risk of flood and coastal erosion

In conclusion, Councillor Ritchie said he was proud of the truly excellent Officers working at all levels within the organisation.

The Chairman invited questions from the Committee.

The Vice Chairman thanked Councillor Ritchie for his presentation. He asked how Councillor Ritchie anticipated the planning service meeting the Council's objectives in respect of the climate emergency it had declared in July 2019. Councillor Ritchie replied that the planning service had well-developed strategic documents against which planning decisions were made, these included high environmental standards within government parameters, including energy efficient houses, both existing and new., but equally there was a wish not to inhibit the building of new homes by setting the standards beyond reach. Councillor Ritchie referred to work in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for the Environment in this regard and the ambition to encourage and persuade developers to employ environmental standards which were higher than the statutory required ones. Councillor Ritchie referred to the changes to the coastline as a result of climate change, rising sea levels, erosion etc. and the need to dynamically manage the hard defences, such as those at Lake Lothing, adaptations to the coastline,

such as those at Kessingland and, where positive change was not possible, to work with and help the local community to relocate. The Vice Chairman asked about the pressure on the planning system; Councillor Ritchie referred to the national requirement for set numbers of houses to be built each year and how this created pressures on the planning process.

Another member of the Committee referred to coastal erosion as a result of scouring tides and asked how well protected Sizewell was in this regard. Councillor Ritchie replied that there were a number of issues associated with the project and this was one. He referred to the consultation process and the work being done by the Council's Energy Team to fully analyse the information which had been provided by EDF. A further member of the Committee asked where the funding for the coastal protection would come from. Councillor Ritchie said that, previously, the Environment Agency had funded some coastal projects 100% and some had not received any funding. Now, it did not fully fund a project unless it protected a significant number of houses. He continued to state that generally more funding was available, through grants, the Local Enterprise Partnership and from local businesses.

A further member of the Committee asked what impact the Covid-19 pandemic had had on the direction of planning because of a major lifestyle shift, changes to working practices, the increased importance on gardens and outdoor spaces etc. Councillor Ritchie said that quick adjustments had been necessary. He added that people had been driving less, walking and cycling more and this had had a positive impact on the environment; he added that it would be important to explore sustainable transport options and opportunities.

Another member of the Committee asked if the registers of self builds and brown fill land were available publically. Councillor Ritchie said he would provide an answer on this outside of the meeting.

The Chairman of the Committee asked if the planning referral system was creating the appropriate number of applications to come before the two main Planning Committees or if the criteria needed to be adjusted. He asked if short Planning Committees with one or two applications was good use of members time, if the principles of governance and 'justice' were being seen to be done by having the consideration of a full committee's decision. Councillor Ritchie replied that the Planning Committees should, of course, meet when necessary. He added that the statistics on this matter would be presented to the Strategic Planning Committee very shortly when it would consider the Referral Panel. Councillor Ritchie said that Town and Parish Councils could attend the Referral Panel meetings and added that, perhaps, additional training for Town and Parish Councils might help them better understand how to include material considerations in objections. In addition, Councillor Ritchie said more input by Ward Members on applications would aid the Referral Panel to decide if the matter needed to be decided by the Planning Committees.

In response to a question by a member of the Committee on the number of appeals annually and how these were reviewed by the Council, Councillor Ritchie said a report on the outcome of any appeals was presented to each meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee and this included a 'lessons learnt' section.



There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked Councillor Ritchie for his full and thorough update on his portfolio.

## **6 Scrutiny Committee's Forward Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Committee received and reviewed its current forward work programme and also the Council's Forward Plan of Executive and Key Decisions (as at 4 May 2020). The Scrutiny Committee also received and agreed a remit for its review of the Council's Asset Management Strategy 2019-23 in July 2020.

There was a lengthy discussion of Councillor Beavan's suggested scoping form on "Covid emergency - Support arrangements". The timing of the review, the extent of its eventual remit, the current additional pressures on Officers as a direct result of the Covid 19 pandemic, the recent guidance issued by the Centre for Public Scrutiny for county and unitary councils, and the County Council's Scrutiny Committee's intention to commence a review in October 2020 were considered and discussed. It was agreed that an Extraordinary meeting of the Committee would be provisionally arranged for October 2020. Scoping forms for a possible Covid-19 related item would be received and considered at the meeting of the Committee in September 2020.

Under the list of suggested items, it was agreed that the proposed item on Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) be extended to include parking charges. It was also agreed that Councillor Lynch would submit a scoping form for this item.

The meeting concluded at 9:15 pm

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Chairman

Minutes of a Meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held remotely via Zoom , on **Thursday, 18 June 2020 at 6:30pm**

**Members of the Committee present:**

Councillor Edward Back, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Stuart Bird, Councillor Judy Cloke, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Andree Gee, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Tracey Green, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor Mark Newton, Councillor Keith Robinson, Councillor Caroline Topping

**Other Members present:**

Councillor Peter Byatt, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Mary Rudd, Councillor Letitia Smith

**Officers present:**

Katherine Abbott (Democratic Services Officer), Sarah Carter (Democratic Services Officer), Anita Humphrey (Communities Manager), Nick Khan (Strategic Director), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer), Nicole Rickard (Head of Communities)

**Others present:**

Superintendent Kerry Cutler (Suffolk Constabulary), Chief Inspector Sarsfield Donohue (Suffolk Constabulary)

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**1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

**3 Annual Report on Community Safety 2019/20**

The Chairman welcomed Superintendent Kerry Cutler (Southern Policing Command) and Chief Inspector Sarsfield Donohue (Eastern Policing Command) to the meeting. He invited both police Officers to provide a brief verbal update on their current policing priorities.

Superintendent Cutler referred to Operation Velocity, undertaken in east Suffolk, to address county lines issues and which remained in operation. During that time, in

excess of 200 arrests related to the supply of Class A drugs had been made. Superintendent Cutler said that the impact of county lines was relatively small in east Suffolk.

Superintendent Cutler also informed the Committee of on-going initiatives to engage positively with young people. This included working with schools to educate children and their parents on knife crime, and additional investment in school liaison officers since November 2019. The four key strands were county lines, knife crime, relationships and social media and the approach was to educate and guide young people to reduce exploitation and improve safety. Superintendent Cutler outlined the formation of the Youth Engagement Team involved in this work across the district. In particular, those aged 10- 17 years and vulnerable to poor life choices were being targeted by the police with positive results.

Chief Inspector Donohue advised that following successful two operations there were no active county lines operating in the district at the moment. He outlined the police activity which had taken place in certain locations to achieve this result. Chief Inspector Donohue provided the Committee with crime figures for the period June 2019 to May 2020; it was noted that these were all below the national average. The Committee was also advised that detection rates were consistently high at 30% over three years. The impact of Covid-19 on the delay of Crown Court hearings was also noted. Chief Inspector Donohue advised that hate crime had reduced with no 'hot spots' identified. Also, violent crime has also reduced, possibly because of the limited night time economy and no active county lines.

The Chairman invited questions of the two police officers.

A member of the Committee asked if county lines had been impacted upon by Covid-19 or if the trend had been identified before the pandemic. Chief Inspector Donohue said county lines in the district had been on the decline for some time before Covid-19. He stated that although county lines had tried to establish itself in certain locations, targeted action by the police had resulted in these being dismantled and arrests made within 24/36 hours. Superintendent Cutler added that the Constabulary monitored drug activity across the county on a daily basis and acted quickly and decisively to address this matter.

Another member of the Committee asked if a briefing note on the Constabulary's school engagement activities could be provided to the Committee. Superintendent Cutler said this would be provided. The member also referred to the increase in cases of domestic abuse and asked if more specific figures on the numbers of victims who have engaged with support could be provided. Superintendent Cutler said these were not to hand but would be forwarded after the meeting. Superintendent Cutler said incidents of domestic abuse were monitored closely, discussed and addressed in conjunction with partner organisations. The Committee noted that incidents of domestic abuse were under-reported, particularly now during the lock-down and that this was due in part because of the victim's fear of retribution and, therefore, the number of reported incidents was not indicative of the full picture. Another member of the Committee asked if there were increased numbers of child victims as a result of the lock-down which were undetected because of school closures. Superintendent Cutler replied that there were concerns that there were incidents of hidden harm and that,

when schools re-opened, it was anticipated that the reporting of safeguarding issues would increase. The police had placed posters in supermarkets and garages with helpline details to try and reach those who, under lock-down, were unable to move about easily to seek help.

The member of the Committee welcomed the reduced numbers of hate crimes and that no 'hot spots' had been identified in the district; the member asked for the definition of a 'hot spot' in this regard. Superintendent Cutler replied that reduced numbers of incidents were welcome but that this too was often a hidden and unreported crime. She explained that such crimes were closely monitored to identify potential clusters or patterns which were then proactively targeted.

Another member of the Committee asked how many operational officers within Superintendent Cutler's policing command were 'on the beat'. Superintendent Cutler said this was dependant on the shift but, as a maximum, 26 officers plus proactive teams operating from vehicles, armed officers, dog units and six officers under Operation Scorpion. In addition, during the response to Covid-19 5 special constables. The member of the Committee asked if this was an overall increase. Superintendent Cutler said the numbers had increased in late 2019 and that another five officers would be located at her response base in due course.

The Chairman referred to the Office of National Statistics ranking of public confidence in Suffolk Constabulary being at 52% and asked Superintendent Cutler to comment. Superintendent Cutler acknowledged that the figure was disappointing and that the Constabulary's senior officers were working to address and improve the reported loss of confidence and new and improved ways of engaging with communities. Another member of the Committee suggested that the reduction and loss of neighbourhood teams had been contributing factor in the loss of public confidence. Chief Inspector Donohue said that previous restructures for budgetary reasons had impacted on police visibility; he added that it would take time to rebuild public confidence but the Constabulary was taking the matter seriously and would work hard to address it.

Another member of the Committee referred to a spike in incidents of anti-social behaviour in Bungay which was addressed by a direct police response including increased visibility; she asked if this would remain or had been a limited response. Superintendent Cutler said that the same team and the same level of response, however, due to Covid-19, it was possible the officers had been slightly less visible.

There being no further questions, the Chairman, on behalf of all the Committee, thanked Superintendent Cutler and Chief Inspector Donohue for their informative briefing and full response to members' questions.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Assistant Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Safety introduced the annual report on Community Safety for 2019/21 **ES /0403** and invited the Head of Communities to summarise the item before the Committee. The Head of Communities summarised the report which referred to East Suffolk Council's statutory obligation to work in partnership with other agencies to reduce crime and disorder across the district. This work was progressed through the East Suffolk Community Safety Partnership and supported the delivery of the Police and Crime Commissioner's and Suffolk Constabulary's key priorities. The report also

provided an overview of the projects that had been delivered during the last twelve months, including those that had focused on early intervention and prevention, enhancing an individual's sense of personal safety within their own community, building community resilience and modelling pro-social behaviour and good citizenship, providing young people with positive role model experiences and widening their support networks and ability to make positive choices. The Head of Communities also summarised key initiatives which had been undertaken and as detailed in the report. In concluding the summary of the report, the Assistant Cabinet Member wished to pay tribute to the Communities team officers for all their hard work particularly during Covid-19.

The Chairman invited questions.

A member of the Committee asked if Covid-19 had impacted upon or halted the partnership work with other agencies. The Communities Manager referred to initial plans for summer activities for young people in Leiston and Saxmundham; she explained that whilst the bigger initiatives could not be offered it was hoped to be able to provide something suitable and safe.

Another member of the Committee asked about specific data for the community partnerships areas and localities. The Assistant Cabinet Member said that, unfortunately, the Constabulary's data system was unable to provide data by areas/localities. With reference to paragraph 8.3 of the report on hate crimes, the member asked if data for West Felixstowe was available. The Communities Manager said she would ask the county council for this information.

A further member of the Committee, with reference to the transformation funding received in 2018 for three years, asked if further funding for this purpose would be sought. Both the Assistant Cabinet Member and the Head of Communities confirmed that every effort to attract and secure funding would be explored.

Another member of the Committee asked about enhancing community resilience and the integration of campaigns, for example, including plastic action champions, the Suffolk Wildlife Trust etc. within Crucial Crew events. The member also referred to the potential summer education catch-up programme for school children and the addressing of current hidden safeguarding needs. The Head of Communities said the focus of the Crucial Crew agenda was predominantly safety and therefore the green agenda might not be appropriate; she added that plastic action was the focus of the Waveney Youth Council's Youth Take Over Day in late 2019 and that the Youth Voice project could also be explored. With regard to the Black Lives Matter campaign, the Head of Communities advised that the Council's prevent programme encouraged awareness, understanding and a reduced sense of difference.

A member of the Committee praised the work of the Communities team during the Covid-19 pandemic and, in particular, their efforts in support of the district's communities. The member referred to incidents of anti-social behaviour in Bungay and asked at what point some intervention work might be possible. The Communities Manager said that this had been discussed and that interventions, subject to the exit strategy for Covid-19, would commence as quickly as possible. The member also said that it would be helpful if the police could provide data broken down more specifically

so that responses could be better targeted; the Communities Manager shared that conversations were taking place with the Constabulary about how we can get this data

Another member asked about care leavers. The Assistant Cabinet Member referred to the work with partner agencies such as Suffolk Family Focus which is part of the Suffolk Troubled Families Programme; the Committee was advised of the probable future funding situation.

There being no further questions or matters raised for debate, the Chairman moved to the recommendation which was proposed by Councillor Robinson, seconded by Councillor Green and by unanimous vote

## **RESOLVED**

That the Scrutiny Committee, having received and commented upon the contents of the Annual Report on Community Safety 2019/20, duly noted the report.

*8.03pm - The meeting adjourned briefly and reconvened at 8.10pm*

## **4 Cabinet Member's update**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Rudd to the meeting and invited her to provide her portfolio update.

Councillor Rudd thanked the Committee for inviting her to update it on the current priorities, challenges and key deliverables for teams within her portfolio over the next six months. The update focused on two Licensing Services and the Food Safety team within Environmental Services.

Licensing Services was responsible for alcohol, entertainment, and taxi licensing in East Suffolk. The service licensed pubs, clubs, music festivals, betting shops, bingo halls, adult gaming centres, pleasure boats, private hire vehicles and hackney carriages - including two rickshaws, one in Woodbridge and one in Felixstowe. It did not licence tattooists, tanning studios, and anything to do with the selling or showing of animals. In recent months, the main challenge had been, and continued to be, the impact of Covid 19 on the licence trade and the night time economy. Pubs and restaurants had been required to be closed since 23 March 2020 and compliance by premises with this requirement had been consistently high across East Suffolk during lock down with only a very small number of isolated reports of non-compliance which were investigated and appropriate enforcement action taken. Latitude, one of the biggest music festivals in the country, which usually brings 40,000 thousand people to Henham Park near Southwold over four days in July, had been cancelled; and there has been little business for the taxi trade as schools had been closed, people have not been socialising outside their home and there has been limited shopping in stores.

The priority for the Licensing Service during lock down had been to support licensees to help them maintain, and where possible and practical, keep running their businesses in incredibly difficult circumstances. This included:

- Allowing licensees to defer paying their Premises Licence fee until 30 September 2020.
- Advising premises which wished to remain open as to how to lawfully provide takeaways and off sales
- Giving credits for the application fees for Temporary Event Notices for events which were unable to go ahead
- Allowing licensed drivers to spread the cost of their annual licence upon renewal by granting three month licences.
- Sourcing alternative garages for mechanical inspections, when garages closed because of Covid 19, to enable vehicles to remain licensed
- Agreeing to drivers installing protective screens in their vehicles to protect both drivers and the travelling public and give the public greater confidence to continue to use taxis during lock down.
- Signposting licensees to central government grants and hardship funds which they may be eligible to claim

The priority for the Licensing Service after lock down would be to help licensees recover and rebuild their businesses. It was anticipated that the government might allow pubs and restaurants to reopen from 4 July 2020. The Licensing Service would support licensees by working with them, responsible authorities and local residents to make appropriate use of outside space in East Suffolk's towns and villages (including beer gardens, pavements, highways and public open spaces) to facilitate licensed premises reopening and trading with sufficient public safety measures in place to accommodate social distancing requirements. The team would continue to provide businesses with advice on how to comply with the law in relation to public health measures and advice to support businesses seeking to make changes to their Premises Licences to operate in a safe and sustainable manner; where there was discretion over inspections undertaken by the Council, the team would review these with the aim of reducing the administrative burden on businesses whilst protecting public safety. The team would take action against those businesses which could not demonstrate that appropriate safety measures were in place to protect public safety and in so doing ensure fairness and a level playing field for those businesses which were compliant with social distancing requirements by, for example, limiting capacity and redesigning the layout of premises to protect staff and customers; and would be flexible as to the payment of annual licence fees by extending the period for payment.

The Licensing Service's key objectives would be to help the licensed trade and the night time economy to recover from the damaging impact of Covid-19. The licensing trade and hospitality sector made a significant contribution to the local economy, especially the night time economy in East Suffolk and were also an important part of the tourist offer. In January 2020, it was reported to the Licensing Committee that East Suffolk Council had issued 1071 Premises and Club Premises Licences. In this regard, East Suffolk was bucking the national trend of pub closures with a small but steady growth in the number of licensed premises. In the short term, as a result of the impact of Covid-19, it was likely, sadly, that those numbers would fall but the challenge for the Licensing Service, and the wider Council, was to try to use whatever leverage it had and support it could give to reduce the number of closures to the absolute minimum by supporting existing licensees, whilst encouraging those looking to start up new businesses in the licensed trade and hospitality sector.

The challenges faced by the licensing trade and hospitality sector to recover from Covid-19 will be significant and should not be underestimated. Councillor Rudd said she was confident the Council's Licensing Services working together with other service areas from across the Council, both inside and outside my portfolio, and in partnership with other responsible authorities, licensees and local residents, will address these challenges to rebuild and in time, return to growing, East Suffolk's licensed trade and hospitality sector.

Councillor Rudd said she was not aware of many premises intending to close permanently or taxi drivers who were planning on stopping (other than those who were considering retiring anyway). She added that the full impact of Covid-19 on the licence trade/hospitality sector would not be fully known until the end of the year and much would depend to what extent the public return to using pubs/restaurants/taxis post-lock down as to whether businesses in this sector could recover their losses and keep their businesses viable.

Councillor Rudd outlined arrangements for the recovery of the Port Health Service post-Covid-19. The Service had returned to a three shift working pattern, reintroduced weekend working and had recalled two retired members of staff to provide additional capacity to increase food sampling and bring the service back on track with statutory sampling frequencies. Following lock down, the Port Health Service was restructured into two completely separate teams to reduce contact, protect the staff and ensure the service could be maintained if members of one team were to contract the virus. This had an immediate impact and although essential elements of the service could still be delivered, the sampling rate for imported foods significantly reduced. As part of the recovery phase, the Service took advice from the Corporate Health & Safety Team about Covid-19 secure requirements for the Port Health office and these were implemented in early June.

In terms of future resilience, Councillor Rudd explained how, just prior to lock down, a new internet connection to the Port Health office had been installed to increase the bandwidth available and so improve remote access. This work was delayed when the pandemic hit but was completed in early June. There was a limit to how much Port Health work could be delivered through remote home working but some document checking and project work has been delivered remotely during lock down and processes and workflows might be adapted to enable homeworking within the limits of the service.

The infectious disease control element of the Port Health service had been particularly important during the pandemic. The Masters of all vessels arriving at Felixstowe had been required to submit a Maritime Declaration of Health to confirm that the crew are were well and there was no infection on-board.

The transition period for Brexit would end on 31 December 2020. The Government had announced that there would be no extension to the transition period although elements of the controls would be phased in over the first six months from January 2021. The Council was participating in regular meetings held by government departments to consider the consequences of a 'no deal'. The majority of the imports through Felixstowe were from outside the EU and the current checks would continue



as normal unless and until the UK government amended the legislation around imported food control. It was still unclear at the moment what level of checks would be required on goods being imported from the EU. Felixstowe had a ferry service bringing some trailers of food in from the EU and it was likely that some level of checks would be required at some point.

The Council had submitted another significant bid for funding from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to support Brexit planning, in particular support for the training of staff.

Cabinet had approved a project to redevelop the PHILIS system at its meeting in June. The system was now 10 years old and needed to be redesigned to ensure it incorporated all of the latest developments in computer software design and remained cutting-edge. This would require a significant investment from the Port Health Reserve and some external technical support. The project was expected to take 12-18 months to complete. As part of the project to redevelop PHILIS, it will be necessary to restructure the PHILIS team to ensure capacity and skills continue to improve and evolve this market leading software on an ongoing and continuous basis. The family of PHILIS users continued to grow driven partly by FSA funding for all Port Health Authorities to prepare for Brexit. The team are closely supporting the ports that have recently had the system installed including Dover, NE Lincolnshire, Belfast, Hull and Goole. The new PHILIS system would be modular in its design which might open up new marketing opportunities as some of the UK's smaller ports might not require the full PHILIS package.

Succession planning of staff was highlighted as a risk for the service. The recruitment of two vacant Port Health Officers had been unsuccessful and the introduction of a more extensive training programme to develop these skills in-house was being explored.

The Committee was informed that the service worked very closely with London Port Health Authority and have commissioned a project, with external funding, to look at how this partnership might develop in the future and what opportunities that might bring.

There was a lot of activity underway to support Test and Trace across the county. Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health, was leading this work and there are around eight work-streams supporting this from complex settings and communities to testing, data and governance. The Head of Environmental Services & Port Health was leading the work-stream on complex workplaces and enforcement with support from colleagues in Trading Standards and the district and borough councils.

The Suffolk Covid-19 Outbreak Control Plan was on its 10th iteration and would be signed off at the end of June. A Covid-19 Health Protection Board had been set up and had met to coordinate activity. A Test & Trace Operational Control Centre would coordinate all activity across Suffolk commencing 22 June, based at Endeavour House and operating 7 days a week to take enquiries, manage the flow of information and provide expert support for those local Officers investigating any outbreaks notified in the county. An officer from the team had been supporting a Suffolk-wide working

group on Covid related safety issues in public open spaces working closely with the police and other local authority representatives. This was now being supported by a working group at the Council, led by Paul Wood, which was managing funding to enable the safe opening of high streets.

The Corporate Health & Safety Team had been working hard to provide advice on infection control for Council staff and carrying out risk assessments and advising on adaptations to the Council offices to enable them to open safely.

The focus of the Food & Safety Team had been on dealing with the new regulations and government guidance on COVID-19, business closures and, more recently, the advice to businesses that can now open to ensure they do so safely. The team is getting 4-5 complaints a day about businesses that have opened but should still be closed or businesses that are not enforcing social distancing requirements or taking the other necessary precautions to control the spread of the infection. The proactive programme of inspections has been suspended while most food businesses remain closed and the FSA have advised that remote interventions with businesses in high risk situations be conducted, if necessary. As food businesses such as pubs, cafes and restaurants start to reopen in July the team will be very busy giving advice on Covid controls and will gradually return to business as usual.

The Cabinet Member said the team was trialling remote interventions with food businesses and the initial feedback had been very positive both from officers and the businesses. A large proportion of the time spent carrying out a food premises inspection was talking through the food safety management systems and this part of the visit could be done just as effectively remotely. Officers have been using Zoom calls with business operators to talk through their controls and then following that up with a much shorter site visit to verify what they have been told and to carry out a physical check for cleanliness etc. If the trial proves successful, this approach may continue in the future for certain types of food business.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for her comprehensive and thorough update. He invited questions.

A member of the Committee welcomed the Council's involvement in the test and track. He also welcomed the support being provided to licensees of pubs and hoped it might be possible to allow the use of public green spaces for patrons of pubs to sit on. Another Councillor echoed these comments and said that pubs needed as much footfall as possible in order to remain viable.

Another member of the Committee referred to a potential no-deal Brexit and what impact this might have on Port Health. The Cabinet Member said regular meetings were held to discuss these issues; however, the guidance of central government was awaited in this regard.

A further member of the Committee asked if hand-washing facilities in restaurants and pubs could be located outside of toilet areas for improved hygiene and if this could be suggested or discussed. The Cabinet Member said she would provide a response outside of the meeting.

In response to a question by the Chairman about the income generated from PHILIS, the Cabinet Member said this was ring-fenced for Port Health purposes and was not within the general fund. The Strategic Director said some 85% of ports in the UK now used PHILIS.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for her thorough and comprehensive update.

## **5 Scrutiny Committee's Forward Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Committee received and reviewed its current forward work programme. It was agreed that the item on rent arrears, which had been suggested by the former Shadow Scrutiny Committee, would be added to the list of suggested future topics and considered again at a later date. Following an enquiry by Councillor Topping, it was agreed that a scoping form on Littering would be provided to a future meeting for consideration; the form to be provided by Councillor Topping and Councillor Gooch.

The meeting concluded at 9:03 pm

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Chairman



## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 23 July 2020

### REVIEW OF THE ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2019/23

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. A year after implementation, the Committee are invited to review progress against the Asset Management Strategy 2019/23.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Craig Rivett – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development
<b>Supporting Officer:</b>	Kathryn Hurlock Asset and Investment Manager 01502 523351 <a href="mailto:kathryn.hurlock@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">kathryn.hurlock@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The recommendation to implement The Asset Management Strategy 2019-23 (“The Strategy”) was approved by Cabinet dated 8 July 2019.
- 1.2 This report sets out work undertaken by Asset Management in line with The Strategy for the purpose of review by The Shadow Authority Scrutiny Committee. This report provides an update on The Strategy and specifically addresses the following:
  - a) Policies for the purchase and construction of new assets
  - b) Investment in existing assets
  - c) Transferring assets to other organisations
  - d) Disposal of surplus assets

## **2 DELIVERY PLAN**

- 2.1 Following the implementation of the Asset Management Strategy in July 2019, work has been undertaken to follow the proposals within the document and to assess progress against the Key Performance Indicators. This delivery plan outlines each objective within The Strategy and sets an ‘owner’, percentage of completion and provides a timescale for delivery.
- 2.2 The targets set within The Strategy are reviewed at each Asset Management team meeting held on an eight-weekly basis and the KPIs are reviewed in accordance with the targets set. The agenda for the Asset Management team meeting follows the order of The Strategy to ensure objectives on a strategic level are aligned on a day to day basis.

## **3 ADMINISTRATIVE IMPROVEMENTS**

- 3.1 The strategy sets out various improvements to the administration of the portfolio and the team managing the assets.

### **Capacity**

- 3.2 As a continued commitment to staff training and recruitment, since the implementation of The Strategy, the department has recruited one additional RICS qualified surveyor to assist with the Estates Team’s day to day management work. The team now comprises five qualified general practice surveyors, three qualified building surveyors and four trainees. In addition to professional expertise we have invested in management training and in 2019/20 the Asset & Investment Manager, Building Services Manager and Estates Manager have all completed ESC “Setting the Standard” training.

### **Property Data & Management Information**

- 3.3 The Strategy outlined the work undertaken by Asset Management to collate asset data within Uniform, a programme utilised by several ESC departments to store, manage and sort data.
- 3.4 As at 9 July 2020 it is confirmed that 1438 assets are recorded within the Uniform system. The asset data has been correlated with the Asset Register, held by the Finance Department. A data validation process has been undertaken to ensure that the data held is a complete and accurate property register. Work is now being completed by Finance to issue the 2020 published Asset Register. In accordance with The Strategy’s Key

Performance Indicators the following data is held on Uniform for each asset within the General Fund Asset Register:

1. Address
2. Asset Number
3. Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN)
4. Tenant (if applicable)
5. Current Rent

3.5 Uniform provides a single corporate resource for managing assets as this system is utilised by Planning, Building Services and Coastal Protection.

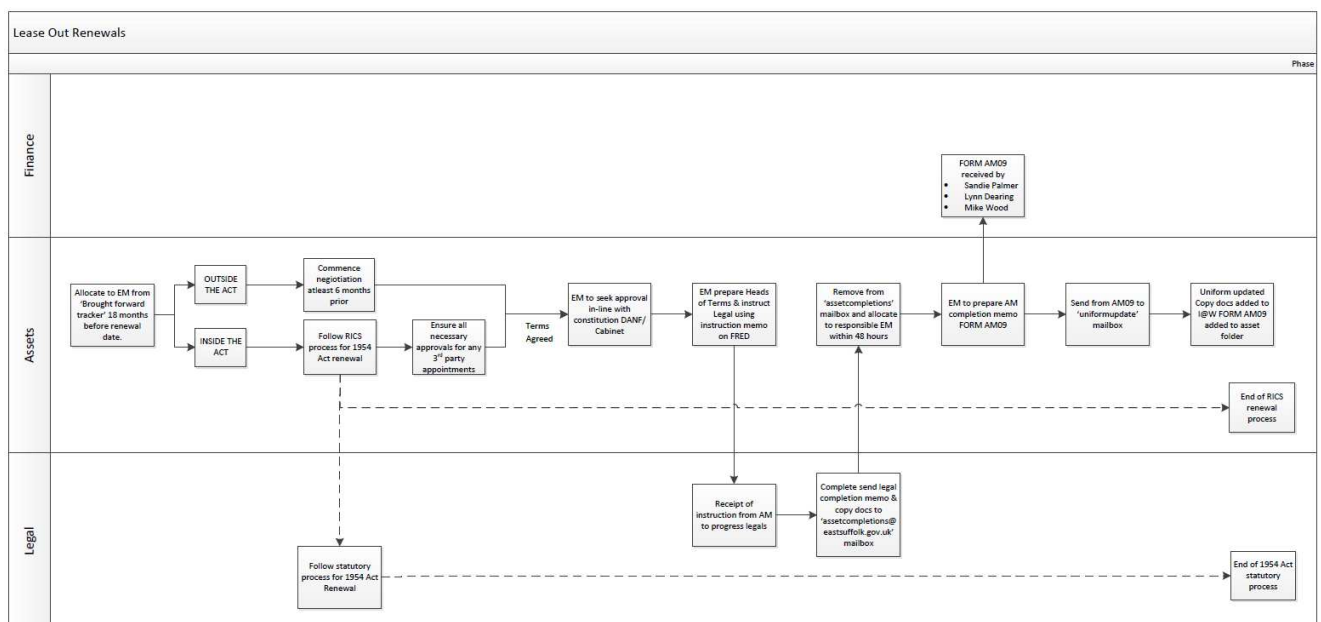
3.6 It is intended that Uniform will support the continuous management and maintenance of the property asset base using alerts and reminders for tasks such as rent reviews, break clauses etc. However, this level of configuration of the system has not yet been put in place. Project meetings between Asset Management and ICT are held monthly to ensure the configuration of the system continues to move forward. A project plan is being worked up to put timescales against project tasks to develop the system further.

3.7 The long-term aim of this system is to hold sufficient data to be able to run reports relating to the assets which will enable Officers and Members to make key decisions about asset performance.

3.8 Alongside the Estates module of the system, the Asset Management Team is working together with ICT to develop the Building Services module to record all compliance and statutory information within Uniform.

### Processes & Procedures

3.9 Following the implementation of The Strategy, work was carried out to “map” the existing processes and procedures carried out within the department. This included the processes for freehold disposals, lettings, lease renewals and terminations. An example of one of these process maps is shown below:



3.10 The next stage in line with The Strategy is to input these processes into Uniform so some functions can be automated. This should improve the consistency of reporting and

standardisation of wording within template documents sent to tenants, purchasers, vendors and members of the public.

- 3.11 The Strategy also addresses the process for receiving external enquiries and considers how this may be streamlined. In order that we decrease the number of telephone enquiries, we have added information about the department and the portfolio to the Asset Management external web page (<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/contact-us/asset-management/>). Work has been undertaken to highlight the most common enquiries to the department. These are:

- Land Ownership
- Metal detecting, particularly on beaches
- Flying drones on ESC land
- Reports of encroachment
- Seafront concessions
- Requests for skips or compounds on ESC land

Work is currently being undertaken to provide electronic processes to register these enquiries. E-forms will be used to register land or encroachment enquiries with some requests for permitted activities to use automated processes.

A link to GIS mapping of ESC's assets can be found on the external website. However, work is being undertaken to improve the accessibility of this link.

## **4 COMPLIANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY**

- 4.1 The strategy sets out improvements to the compliance and sustainability performance of the portfolio.

### **Health & Safety**

- 4.2 In order that the ESC general fund property portfolio is compliant with legislation, it is necessary that all assets have completed risk assessments. Following the implementation of The Strategy, a new inspection regime has been adopted.

The Building Services Team within Asset Management has commenced a full programme of risk assessments to be undertaken across the portfolio in line with The Strategy. This commenced in March 2020 and assets have been categorised into three risk categories. Category one contains 403 assets and are perceived to have high public footfall and therefore a higher risk; the assessment of Category one assets is aimed to be completed by March 2021. This work will form the inspection cycles for each asset and will significantly improve information held about assets, particularly where maintenance is required.

### **Third Party Management of Assets**

- 4.3 ESC's portfolio of assets includes sites that are directly managed by third parties. Since the implementation of The Strategy work has been undertaken to review the contracts. Regular meetings are in place with the relevant organisations to ensure financial and legal transparency.

### **EPCs**

- 4.4 The Strategy highlights a requirement for ESC to not only meet environmental legislation relating to the energy performance of assets, but to exceed the standard. Work has been undertaken to ensure all assets that require an EPC have been assessed. 100% of required properties in the former WDC district hold assessments within the portfolio.

Work is being undertaken in association with Norse to assess the EPCs for assets within the former SCDC district. Of the assessments undertaken on properties, only one property had an EPC below the standard set within The Strategy. As a result of this assessment and following a full property review, a proposal was taken to Cabinet for its redevelopment.

## **5 STRATEGIC APPROACH TO ASSETS**

5.1 As part of the population of asset data onto Uniform during 2019/20, significant work has been undertaken to classify assets into asset classes in line with the CIPFA coding system.

5.2 The purpose of classification is to eliminate uncertainty about the use, ensure adequate compliance with statutory obligations and determine its benefit to ESC from an operation, community, or investment perspective.

### **5.3 Operational Property**

5.4 The Strategy seeks to define operational assets in order that we continue to hold land and property for the correct purpose. Further work is required by Asset Management in order that we can analyse the performance of the operational section of the portfolio. Work is currently ongoing to review assets within this category as a direct result of Covid-19 and the potential to adapt to new ways of working. This is due to be complete by Q3 2020.

### **Community Benefit**

5.5 The Strategy seeks to define assets that perform a community function in order that we continue to hold assets for the correct purpose. Further work is required by Asset Management in order that we can analyse the performance of assets held for community benefit or for regeneration purposes.

5.6 In line with The Strategy, work has commenced by Asset Management to analyse properties that are put forward for development or purchase for regeneration purposes. A joint piece of work has been undertaken to set criteria against which properties are assessed for regeneration purposes. This is entirely separate to investment purchases.

### **Investment Property**

5.7 The Strategy seeks to define investment assets in order that we continue to hold assets for the correct purpose. Further work is required by Asset Management in order that we can analyse the performance of investments and offset the financial cost of holding operational or community assets.

5.8 The Strategy clearly sets out the types of commercial investment for purchase or retention and how these should be managed to optimise income and minimise holding costs. Data is being collated for input onto Uniform to enable us to analyse the properties we currently hold for investment purposes.

## **6 INVESTMENT IN ASSETS**

### **Required Maintenance**

6.1 Required maintenance is the process by which we optimise repairs to assets to ensure we protect its condition, value, and use. The Strategy outlines an aim to move to a cyclical maintenance programme and to ensure all assets have up to date condition surveys in order that repairs can be correctly programmed. In accordance with The Strategy we have a planned maintenance programme to ensure we continue to invest in the assets we already own.



## **Capital Projects**

- 6.2 As part of the continued investment into the assets already within the portfolio, the Asset Management Team have several “capital projects” being undertaken. These projects include redevelopment, significant upgrades or in some cases demolition and rebuilding. Investment into our assets through capital projects ensures the long-term use of properties in line with ESC’s objectives.

## **7 POLICIES FOR THE PURCHASE AND CONSTRUCTION OF NEW ASSETS**

### **Acquisitions**

- 7.1 The Strategy sets out a comprehensive process for the acquisition of assets at Appendix 4 of the main document. The process outlines the general principles for acquisition, the process including due diligence, appraisals and valuation, additional considerations such as the acquisition of assets using grant funding and finally a review of the process. The acquisition process includes a Land & Property Purchase Checklist which aims to ensure all information about a property is obtained and recorded correctly through acquisition.
- 7.2 Since the implementation of The Strategy we have acquired / received approval from Cabinet to acquire the following assets:
- NWES buildings at Leiston & Lowestoft
  - Deben International School, Felixstowe
- 7.3 The Strategy does not set out policies for the construction of new assets as these are assessed on a case by case basis and are brought to Cabinet for approval accordingly.

## **8 TRANSFERRING ASSETS TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

### **Community Asset Transfers**

- 8.1 The Strategy confirms that disposals of property to community groups (“community asset transfers”) are acceptable if there is, on balance, an advantage to the Council’s policy objectives in doing so and there is a genuine business case from the community group to do so. The procedure for Community Asset Transfers is detailed within the Disposal Policy appended to The Strategy document at Appendix 5. Since the implementation of The Strategy we have entered into discussions with two town councils to divest assets for community use. In addition we have completed the transfer of the following properties:
- Allenby Park, Felixstowe to Felixstowe Town Council
  - Ferry Road / Gosford Way Park to Felixstowe Town Council
  - Land at Dobbs Drift Play Area to Kesgrave Town Council
  - Land at Holly Road Play Area to Kesgrave Town Council

## **9 DISPOSAL OF SURPLUS ASSETS**

### **Disposals**

- 9.1 The Strategy sets out a comprehensive process for the disposal of assets as an appendix to the main document. This process outlines the general principles for disposal. It also lists the disposal process including the site identification, discussion at the Asset Management Group, internal notifications, due diligence, valuation, building surveys and the formation of a business case to Cabinet. The process addresses open space and community asset transfers. A checklist is provided to ensure it is undertaken correctly and in accordance with The Strategy. Since the implementation of The Strategy we have acquired / received approval from Cabinet to dispose of the following assets:

- Land at 28 Haughley Close, Rushmere St Andrew
- Land adjacent to 41 Wackerfield Road, Rendlesham
- 3 Squires Walk, Lowestoft

### **Surplus Properties**

- 9.2 The Strategy aims to define surplus assets to categorise properties which are not used for operational, investment or community purposes. Following the implementation of The Strategy, work is ongoing to determine on an asset by asset basis whether these should be let, sold, re-developed or divested. To date we have identified 12 surplus buildings to be sold and a further 134 areas of land considered to be surplus for disposal.

### **Vacant Property Strategy**

- 9.3 At any point in time the Council will own and manage several vacant properties, land, and buildings, which are not in operational use or leased out to third parties. Asset Management has a focused approach to managing these properties with a view to disposing, leasing, or reusing as many assets as possible and aiming to keep vacancy rates to a minimum. The most significant costs in holding vacant property are business rates or council tax, security and building maintenance.
- 9.4 A procedure is in place to manage vacant property and work is currently being undertaken by Asset Management to determine a strategy for each asset that is vacant.

## **10 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?**

- 10.1 The values set out within the East Suffolk Business Plan are clearly identified within the Asset Management Strategy through the division of the portfolio into aligned asset classes. The management of property assets throughout the plan period aim to hold land and property for the benefit of local communities – these being park, playgrounds and other areas of open space. In addition, the Strategy aims to improve commercial investments within the property portfolio to help address the deficit and work towards financial self-sufficiency.

## **11 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The Strategy recognises the need for the Council to balance its books in an increasingly challenging local government funding environment. The strategy acknowledges the need to find ever more innovative ways to achieve cost savings and increase revenue, in order to bridge the funding gap created by the reduction in the Central Government grant. It is anticipated however that it will be through a mixture of cost saving and revenue

generating initiatives and it is expected that the Asset Management Strategy will play a key role in achieving this objective.

## **12 CONCLUSION**

- 12.1 The Asset Management Strategy has provided a framework for the Asset Management Team to work against to assess, manage and improve ESC's property portfolio. The document is referenced through Asset Management team meetings on an eight-weekly basis with performance monitored against the KPI's set out within The Strategy.

## **13 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 13.1 We are recommending the Asset Strategy is reviewed in line with the progress already achieved since its implementation in July 2019.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That, a year after implementation and having reviewed progress against the Asset Management Strategy 2019/23, the Committee receives, comments upon and makes recommendation, if considered necessary

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Available From</b>
8 July 2019	Cabinet report ES/0061	<a href="http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk">www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk</a>



## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 23 July 2020

### ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2019/20

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a formal summary on the activities and achievements of the Scrutiny Committee during the Municipal Year 2019/20.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
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Wards Affected:	All
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Report on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee:	By the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Stuart Bird
Supporting Officer:	Katherine Abbott Democratic Services Officer <b>Katherine.abbott@eastsuffolk.gov.uk</b>

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 There is a requirement for the Scrutiny Committee to provide a formal report on an annual basis.
- 1.2 This report summarises the activities and achievements of the Committee during the Municipal Year 2019/20.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Scrutiny Committee receives the 2019/20 Annual Report by the Chairman of the Committee and is invited to comment

### **APPENDICES**

<b>Appendix A</b>	Annual Report 2019/20
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### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None
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## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**



July 2020

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### **Foreword by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee**

#### **The role of Scrutiny**

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- The principles of good public scrutiny
- What we do not do

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- Roles and responsibilities
- The Scrutiny Committee's work during 2019/20
- Member Working Groups/Task and Finish Groups
- Membership of Outside Bodies
- Call-ins and Councillors' Calls for Action
- Training
- Budget
- Dates of meetings in 2019/20

#### **Looking ahead**

- Forward Work Programme and how this is decided

## **FOREWORD BY COUNCILLOR STUART BIRD, CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

I am delighted to be able to present my foreword to the first Annual Report of the new Scrutiny Committee of the newly formed East Suffolk Council. This Report will provide a retrospective record of the work undertaken by the Committee, its activities, and achievements in the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

It was an honour to be elected as the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee in May 2019. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to my two predecessors – Alison Cackett who chaired Waveney District Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and Phillip Dunnett who chaired Suffolk Coastal District Council's Scrutiny Committee – for their commitment and past contributions to the effective delivery of scrutiny functions and aims. I am fortunate to be supported by an experienced and enthusiastic Vice Chairman, Councillor Mike Deacon, and I have very much valued his support as I have settled into the role of Chairman.

The new Committee has examined various areas of the Council's work and, in some cases, the work of partner organisations that have significance for our local communities. We have also introduced a regular item to receive an update by individual Cabinet Members. This is an opportunity for the Cabinet Member to outline their key deliverables in the next six months and to identify any value that Scrutiny might be able to add to the pre-decision stages and the ultimate outcomes for the Council. This might be just seeking the Committee's thoughts or, equally, there is the offer of a "critical friend" - checking and challenging but in a constructive and purposeful way. At these sessions, the Scrutiny Committee aims to act as an influencing body acting positively to contribute to the delivery of efficient and effective services.

Scrutiny will always seek to act as a counterbalance that complements the decision-making powers of the Cabinet as the new Committee changes its emphasis from the operational detail to the strategic overview and seeks to ensure better outcomes through constructive engagement with Cabinet, the Council's Officers, and its partners. I hope this Report reflects what I feel has been a very productive year in Scrutiny. I do hope that you find this Report informative and interesting.

Councillor Stuart Bird, Chairman, Scrutiny Committee





## 1. 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, in the majority, held in the evenings. The Committee has endeavoured to engage with the wider community and to involve stakeholders and the public 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 receives an annual report on community safety issues from the Council's Officers but also from senior members of Suffolk Constabulary.

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 2019/20, the Committee did not review any aspects of health provision, 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 Public Scrutiny, established in 2003, promotes the value of scrutiny in modern and effective government. The Centre has set out the four principles of good public scrutiny as:

- ***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.

## **2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

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 Democratic Services Officer [Katherine.abbott@eastsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Katherine.abbott@eastsuffolk.gov.uk) in the first instance.

## **3. THE COMMITTEE'S WORK DURING 2019/20**

Instead of a complete commentary of all that the Scrutiny Committee has achieved over the year, this Report provides a brief summary of the key highlights of the work the Committee has been engaged in during 2019/20. The related full formal Committee reports and resulting minutes may also be viewed on our [website](#).

In summary, during 2019/20, the Scrutiny Committee reviewed the following key areas:

July 2019:

- Appointments to Outside Bodies with a scrutiny function: To agree appointments from the Committee membership (*see Membership of Outside Bodies below*)
- Scrutiny Committee's Terms of Reference and Procedure Notes: To adopt
- Review of the Scrutiny Committee's forms and guides: To approve

September 2019:

- Community Energy Saving Programme: To review the procedures and processes for endorsing external companies (and their sub-contractors) and how standards or work are maintained
- Council Housing Development in Southwold: To review, comment upon and make recommendations as necessary

December 2019:

- Capital Programme 2020/21
- Capital Strategy 2020/21 – 2023/24
- Housing Revenue Account Budget 2020/21
- Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2020/21 and Treasury Management Investment Statement 2020/21
- Draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2023/24

*All the above reports were for review, comment and to make recommendation to Cabinet and Full Council*

January 2020:

- Draft General Fund Budget and Council Tax Report 2020/21: To review, comment upon and make recommendations to Cabinet and Full Council
- East Suffolk Strategic Plan: To review and make recommendations to Full Council
- Cabinet Member update (Leader of the Council)

May 2020:

- Review of Postal Voting and Count Arrangements at the District and European Elections in 2019: To review and make recommendations as necessary
- Cabinet Member update (Planning and Coastal Management)

### **Task and Finish Groups**

There have been no Task and Finish Groups established in the period of this report.

## **Membership of Outside Bodies**

The Leader of the Council has stated that the Scrutiny Committee be asked to decide on the appointment of a representative to external forums with scrutiny functions. In 2019/20, the Committee considered and appointed the following members to the Committees indicated below:

- Suffolk County Council Joint Health Scrutiny Committee – Cllr Judy Cloke (also a member of the East Suffolk Council's Scrutiny Committee).
- Suffolk County Council Joint Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Committee – Cllr Keith Patience (as volunteer member representative Cllr Patience not being a member of the East Suffolk Council's Scrutiny Committee).

## **Call-ins and Councillors' Calls for Action**

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

## **Training**

The following scrutiny-specific training for members of the Committee were held in the 2019/20 Municipal Year:

### 16 August 2019: Planning for effective scrutiny

The Seminar was facilitated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and led by national best practice and latest guidelines. The CfPS is an independent national body which promotes and supports excellence in governance and scrutiny. It provides independent and impartial advice across the public sector.

The Seminar covered the main areas of focus for the new authority and aimed to help the members of the Scrutiny Committee acquire and/or progress their skills and experience in leading an effective scrutiny role.

### 4 December 2019: Financial scrutiny

The training was also facilitated by the CfPS. The main areas of focus were the financial scrutiny of budgets, medium term financial plans, commercial ventures and their fit with Council plans and objectives. It aimed to give Scrutiny Councillors an understanding of the role scrutiny played in the development and delivery of the Council's medium-term financial plans and budget as well as an enhanced understanding of how the medium-term financial plan and budget support the Council's strategic objectives and priorities.

## **Budget**

The Scrutiny Committee has an annual budget of £6000. In the 2019/20 Municipal Year, the Committee spent £3306.48 on scrutiny-specific training (*as detailed above*).

### **Dates of meetings held in the 2019/20 Municipal Year:**

The Covid-19 pandemic and the Government's national instructions necessitated the cancellation of the March 2020 meeting. However, the Committee was able to re-commence its formal meetings in May 2020 pursuant to the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus)(Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings)(England and Wales) Regulations 2020 via the Zoom video conferencing system and to broadcast live on the Council's YouTube channel. An Extraordinary meeting was held in June 2020 to ensure the planned work programme remained on course.

- 25 July 2019
- 26 September 2019
- 16 December 2019
- 23 January 2020
- 26 March 2020 (cancelled)
- 28 May 2020

## **4. LOOKING AHEAD**

### **Forward Work Programme** and how its contents are determined

At the time of writing this Report, the Committee has, so far, decided to review the following matters in the coming Municipal Year, in addition to the key budgetary and strategic finance reports it is required to receive:

- The Council's Asset Management Strategy
- The Council's Housing Development Strategy
- The economic recovery and regeneration of the District post Covid-19

In addition, the Committee will, in the coming year, receive a formal Committee report by the Council's Monitoring Officer on the Government's recent statutory scrutiny guidance for consideration. This will provide an opportunity to further review of our current arrangements and identify any areas for development so that we continue to focus on the 'big things' where a positive impact may be delivered.