



# Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22

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# Foreword of the Scrutiny Chairs

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Throughout 2021/22, our Scrutiny Committees have continued to carry out their functions in accordance with the Council's Constitution. The time period this report covers also takes account of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on how the Council operated both on the frontline and maintained its governance structures and committee meetings.

At the Council AGM in May 2021, following a period of consultation with existing Chairs, Leadership and senior management, a revised Scrutiny Structure was approved. This resulted in revised terms of reference and names for the three thematic Committees and the merger of Audit Committee and Budget Scrutiny Committee to form the new Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

The new Committees chose to acknowledge outstanding work of the previous committees and have sought to accommodate outstanding reviews within their work programmes for the year.

Our focus over the next year needs to be on the challenges facing both the Authority and service provision by our partners. We aim to ensure that Scrutiny makes a valuable contribution through its work. We appreciate the continued support of colleagues on the Executive and senior officers and look forward to another year of collaborative working for the benefit of our communities.

***Councillor Rose Bowler***  
**Chair of the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee**

***Councillor Nick Clarke***  
**Chair of the Climate Change & Communities Scrutiny Committee**

***Councillor Jennifer Wilson***  
**Chair of the Local Growth Scrutiny Committee**

***Councillor Tom Munro***  
**Chair of the Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee**

# Summary of 2021/22

## Impact of Covid-19 on Scrutiny Meetings

As per the previous two years, the meeting schedule was impacted by the ability to meet in-person in a safe, socially distanced manner. Prior to the start of the 2021/22 municipal year the emergency legislation allowing remote meetings ended. However, as cases at a local level were still high a decision was taken to hold only those meetings required in person, socially distanced. This resulted in a number of early meetings taking place as hybrid or informal remote meetings, and amendments to the original timetable had to be made, including meeting cancellations. In particular due to the adjournment of Council and delay in appointment to Committees, all June meetings were cancelled. The following meetings took place:

Committee	No. of Meetings Scheduled	No. of Meetings taking place		No. Cancelled	No. of Hybrid Meetings
		Formal Public	Informal Remote		
Customer Services Scrutiny	7	6	0	1	0
Climate Change & Communities Scrutiny	7	6	0	1	1 (One formal public meeting ran as hybrid to accommodate officer attendees working at home due to Covid.)
Local Growth Scrutiny	8	5	0	3	1 (One formal public meeting ran as hybrid to accommodate officer attendees working at home due to Covid.)
Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny (new for 2021/22)	6	6	0	0	1 (One public meeting ran as hybrid to accommodate socially distanced attendance of additional Members, officers and presenters due to Covid.)

## Customer Services Scrutiny Committee

During 2021/22, Members received a range of reports to Committee. Some were routine update reports and others were linked to service transformation and development of new policies:

### Policy/Strategy/Programme Monitoring Reports:

- Housing Strategy – Monitoring Update

This report in particular involved a lengthy discussion with the relevant senior managers of the entire Housing Strategy action plan. A number of queries were raised as to the suitability of certain agreed actions following 12 months delivery resulting in some amends to actions/delivery. This will be an annual report for the duration of the current strategy.

### Policy Development

- North Derbyshire Rough Sleeper Strategy 2021-2023
- Consultation on Housing Policies – Rechargeable Repairs
- Consultation on Housing Policies – Tenant Alteration & Improvement Policy
- BDC Tenancy Agreement
- Business Rates Mandatory and Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
- Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy

### Performance Review Reports

- Customer Service Standards and Compliments, Comments and Complaints – Q3 & Q4 and Annual Report 2020/21
- LG&SCO and Housing Ombudsman Annual Report 2020/21
- Customer Service Standards and Compliments, Comments and Complaints Report 2019/20 – Q1 & Q2 2021/22

## **Review Work – Review of Council-Owned Adapted Properties**

The Customer Services Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a Review of Council-owned Adapted Accommodation, as part of the 2021-22 Work Programme.

The issue was initially raised via an Executive report in April 2021, highlighting the need to evaluate our supply of family-1sized adapted accommodation. It was noted that the Council had recently been approached by applicants seeking very specific accommodation as a result of having younger family members with disabilities. Although these applications are relatively rare, they had raised the issue of the supply of family-sized adapted accommodation.

The key findings arising from the review were:

- That a number of the Council's existing practices and procedures for allocation are satisfactory in addressing service delivery in this area.

- That the revised approach to officer meetings with DCC is working well to review applications and identify a clear course of action for the tenant.
- That the Council's approach to design of new stock via Bolsover Homes will ensure good quality housing and an increased supply of family-sized accommodation.
- That a revision is required to our existing policy which Members feel is met by the proposed draft which Scrutiny helped to develop.
- That the range of procedures identified during the course of the review are developed to support the effective implementation of the new Policy.
- That in order to aid officers to see stock availability at a glance, the data is mapped in both our GIS software and our data profiling tool, to aid future stock management and development.
- That the demographic profile will fill current knowledge gaps and aid future planning of additional stock.

Within the report completed, the Committee agreed nine recommendations which will hopefully assist the Council in improving our policy and procedures in relation to allocation and management of adapted accommodation. All recommendations were agreed by Executive for implementation.

This review is now within its monitoring phase with reports expected in December 2022 and May/June 2023.

## Climate Change & Communities Scrutiny Committee

During 2021/22, Members received a wide range of reports to Committee:

### Policy/Strategy/Programme Monitoring Reports:

- Health & Wellbeing Strategy – Annual Report/Monitoring Update
- Sustainable Community Strategy 2020-23 and current Partnership delivery – Monitoring Update

### Policy Development

- Taxi and Private Hire Policy Review

## Annual Review of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 requires every Local Authority to have a specified Committee (the “Crime and Disorder Committee”) with the power to:

- Review or scrutinise decisions made or other action taken in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions
- Make reports or recommendations to the local authority with respect to the discharge of those functions.

(Responsible authorities are effectively the statutory partners within a community safety partnership i.e. Police, Local Authorities (County and District), Fire and Rescue Authority, Probation Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups. This is determined by section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (c. 37)).

Following on from the success of last year’s review which was completed remotely, Members wished to focus on the ongoing impact of the pandemic on service demand and delivery, and current engagement by partners.

Key issues presented and areas of questioning included:

- Delivery of the current Partnership Plan 2020-2023
- Current crime trends
- Funding levels and allocation of resources
- The efficiency of the partnership and how we compare statistically at a national and regional level
- Work with the PCC’s office, their current priorities and grant support levels
- Partnership working with local Safer Neighbourhood Teams
- Partnership working with Derbyshire Police and the Partnership Sgt.
- The new Enforcement Team and the change from CAN Rangers to Community Enforcement Rangers
- The impact of Anti-Social Behaviour
- Current PSPOs (Public Space Protection Orders) and the potential to develop others
- Work delivered via the Senior Parenting Practitioner and customer feedback on the impact of the service

Officers were invited to attend from Bolsover District Council Community Safety Team and Enforcement Team, and a service user of the Parenting Service also attended.

## **Review Work – Review of Voluntary & Community Sector Grant Allocations**

The Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a Review of Voluntary & Community Sector Grant Allocations, as part of the 2021-22 Work Programme. The suggestion came direct from the Executive and Partnerships Team and Members agreed to consider this alongside other work carried over from the previous year.

The last review of the grant allocations programme took place in 2013/14. As such the service felt it was timely to review the whole process to ensure it is current; meets the needs of the sector; meets the ambitions of the Council; and if the allocation to any of these organisations needs to alter, given the current climate and anticipated needs emerging in our communities. It was noted that to-date, all organisations have provided an excellent service and incredible value for money based on the evaluation of investments.

Within the process of the review, the Committee took into account the potential impact of any changes to the scheme in terms of the impact on the sector. It was essential that the Council complied with its Best Value Duty when progressing any changes to current policies and procedures in terms of grant allocations to the sector.

The key findings arising from the review were:

- The review has proved both timely and invaluable in identifying potential duplication and assessing the advantages/disadvantages of different allocation processes.
- A refreshed approach to centralising grant allocations will ensure better communication between service areas and eliminate duplication.
- That the use of SROI as an evaluation tool gives the Council a clear indication of value for money on the investment made. While our existing mechanism of calculating this via the HACT model achieves this, it is clear that evaluation tools have significantly advanced and it is an appropriate juncture for the Council to look to use a more advanced evaluation tool.
- That existing reporting mechanisms are sufficient and will be further strengthened by the ability to create more detailed evaluation reports using the new software.

The Committee agreed twelve recommendations which will hopefully assist the Council in ensuring grant allocations to the voluntary and community sector are transparent; have clear outcomes and monitoring arrangements and meet the current needs of the Council and local residents. All recommendations were agreed by Executive for implementation.

This review is now within its monitoring phase with reports expected in January 2023 and June/July 2023.



## **Review Work – Review of Council’s Policy on Fireworks**

This review was originally agreed by the previous Healthy, Safe, Clean and Green Communities Scrutiny Committee as part of their 2020-21 work programme. Following the change in scrutiny structure for 2021-22, the Members of the new Committee agreed to carry this work forward with a view to clarifying the Council’s stance and addressing residents’ concerns previously identified.

The review was prompted by referrals from the Customer Standards & Complaints Officer and the Leader of the Council. Members chose to investigate further to establish what the Council could do to mitigate the impacts at a local level. The Council had also previously approved a motion at Council in relation to the use of fireworks which had included a number of actions for the Council to complete. Members reviewed progress following the motion.

The key findings arising from the review were:

- That there is limited additional impact we can have at a local level due to current legislation.
- To ensure service delivery remains efficient and effective across the board, Members advise that the Council adopts the recommendations in section 2 of the review report as this will allow officers in the joint Environmental Health Service to take a proportionate and appropriate approach to enforcement and advice/guidance.

Within the final report, Committee agreed four recommendations which will hopefully assist the Council in improving regulation of local firework displays and enforcement against misuse of fireworks. All recommendations were agreed by Executive for implementation.

This review is now within its monitoring phase with reports expected in September 2022 and April 2023.

## Local Growth Scrutiny Committee

During 2021/22, Members have received a range of reports to Committee, some allowing us to monitor delivery of core projects and others to develop new policies for the Authority.

### Policy/Strategy/Programme Monitoring Reports:

- Growth Strategy – Monitoring Update Q1 2021/22
- Growth Strategy – Monitoring Update Q2 2021/22
- Growth Strategy – Monitoring Update Q3 2021/22
- Growth Strategy – Monitoring Update Q4 2021/22
- Update on Garage Site Programme

### Policy Development:

- Integration of Social Value in BDC Policy and Delivery – Officer Briefing

### Performance Review Report:

- Impact of Covid-19 on local economy (verbal report)

## **Review Work – Review of Integration of Social Value to BDC Policy and Delivery**

The Local Growth Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a Review of Integration of Social Value to BDC Policy and Delivery, as part of the 2021/22 Work Programme. Members of the Committee were presented with the suggestion of reviewing our approach to Social Value and how we could further integrate this to the Council's policies and service delivery.

The suggestion came direct from the Development service. Development of our approach to Social Value and implementation of a Social Value Policy will support key objectives within the Business Growth Strategy. This review came at a time when the Council is under increasing pressure to not only ensure value for money from our investments, but also seek to secure additional benefits and impact from our programmes and developments.

Members have welcomed the opportunity to work with our fellow scrutiny Members in Climate Change & Communities Scrutiny Committee in reviewing our approach to how we evaluate our social value outcomes and we hope the new software tool will allow the council to evidence its outcomes more clearly to residents and partners.

The key findings arising from the review are:

- The council is well placed to move forward in this area, following initial integration of social value by the Partnerships team;
- The draft Policy produced is line with national guidance for such documents and mirrors those of best practice authorities;
- The procurement of a social value calculator tool has been robust with significant officer and Member input.

The Committee agreed six recommendations which will hopefully assist the Council in embedding social value in to the wider policy structures and operational delivery of the Council. All recommendations were agreed by Executive for implementation.

Due to the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, the Council must seek to bolster compliance and refresh the approach to securing social value outcomes. Development of our approach to Social Value and implementation of a Social Value Policy will support Corporate target ECO.01 - Deliver a Business Growth Strategy by March 2021 that will support enterprise, innovation, jobs and skills and makes the best use of our assets.

This review is now within its monitoring phase with reports expected in March 2023 and September/October 2023.

# **Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee**

## **Background**

This is the first year that the Committee has existed as a combination of the former Audit Committee and Budget Scrutiny Committee. For this reason it was felt that the new committee should use the guidance published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) 'Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police, 2018 Edition' to undertake a self-assessment against the good practice framework in the publication.

This self-assessment provided a high-level review that incorporated the key principles set out in CIPFA's Position Statement. Where an audit committee has a high degree of performance against the good practice principles, then it is an indicator that the committee is soundly based and has in place a knowledgeable membership. These are considered essential factors in developing an effective audit committee.

From the self-assessment an action plan was produced covering the 8 issues that were identified. The majority of the issues identified could be addressed by:

1. The production of an annual report to Council, detailing the work of the Committee and its achievements from the year.
2. The identification of any potential skill gaps the Committee may have, that could be addressed by training.

The production of this annual report will resolve 6 of the identified issues. The production of the action plan resulting from the self-assessment means a further issue is resolved as long as the action plan is reviewed by the Committee for progress throughout the year. For the final issue, Members have recently been asked to complete a skills gap questionnaire that will be analysed and fed back to the Committee for action during 2022/23. External training opportunities are also being flagged and brought to their attention.

## **The Role and Purpose of Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee**

Audit Committees are seen as a key component of an authority's governance framework. Their function is to provide an independent and high-level resource to support good governance and strong public financial management. The purpose of an audit committee is to provide those charged with governance, independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and governance processes. By overseeing both internal and external audit, it makes an important contribution to ensuring that effective assurance arrangements are in place.

At Bolsover, this committee is also responsible for receiving and scrutinising the Executive's Budget proposals in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution. More details of the responsibilities of the Committee are set out in the Council's Constitution (Part 3).

## **Audit and Corporate Overview Committee Business**

During 2021/22, Members received a range of reports to Committee. Some have been routine reports for monitoring, others have been linked to development of new policies and others have been to provide information and guidance to help Members of the Committee carry out their role effectively.

During the year the Committee received the following reports:

- Procurement Strategy 2020-2025
- Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23
- Capital Strategy 2022/23
- Corporate Investment Strategy 2022/23
- Corporate Ambitions Performance – quarterly monitoring reports
- Budget Monitoring Reports – quarterly (1, 2, 3 + outturn)
- Corporate Debt Monitoring Performance – annual report 2020/21
- Strategic Risk Register and Partnership Arrangements report
- Report of the Internal Auditor, Summary of progress on the Internal Audit plan – quarterly reports
- Implementation of Internal Audit recommendations – ½ yearly report
- Internal Audit Consortium – annual report 2020/21
- Report to those charged with Governance (audit completion report)
- Results of the external review of Internal Audit
- Assessment of Going Concern Status
- Review of the Internal Audit Charter
- Report of the External Auditor – Auditor's Annual Report 2020/21
- Report of the External Auditor – External Audit progress report
- Revised Budgets 2021/22
- Setting of Council Tax 2022/23
- Proposed Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021/22 – 2024/25
- External review of Internal Audit – action plan progress
- Report of the Internal Auditor, Internal Audit plan approved for 2021/22
- BDC Statement of Accounts 2020/21
- Annual Governance Statement and Local Code of Corporate Governance 2020/21
- Accounting Policies 2021/22
- Report of the Internal Auditor, Internal Audit plan approved for 2022/23
- Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee – Self-assessment for effectiveness and resulting action plan
- CIPFA Fraud and Corruption Tracker Survey 2021
- Treasury management briefing by BDC's advisors, Arlingclose

## **The Committee's Main Achievements/Outcomes**

The Committee aims to add value to the organisation through its activity and in particular has:

- Reviewed non-financial performance against the Council's Ambition targets on a quarterly basis and invited officers to attend the Committee meetings to help Members understand where performance was not on target.

- Scrutinised the Medium Term Financial Plan prior to recommending to Executive the budget proposals in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.
- Scrutinised the statement of accounts prior to approval thereby ensuring that they are an accurate reflection of the Council's finances.
- Reviewed the Code of Corporate Governance and approved the Annual Governance Statement to ensure it is a true and fair view of the Council's governance and risk management arrangements.
- Reviewed the strategic risk register to ensure that risks are being appropriately mitigated thus providing additional assurance that risk is being managed appropriately.

## **Conclusion and Feedback**

In conclusion, it is considered that the Committee has made a positive contribution to the Council's overall governance and control arrangements, including risk management. The Committee will carry out a self-assessment on an annual basis to consider its performance against the good practice framework.

# **The year ahead**

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## **Setting the Committee Work Programmes**

A call for suggested topics went out to all existing Members early in 2022 prior to the Council AGM. This generated a small number of topics for each Committee to discuss and prioritise review work from for 2022/23.

During 2022/23, Scrutiny Members will endeavour to ensure all potential areas of review identified in the current Council term 2019-23 have been completed prior to the local elections.

## **Member Training**

Following the Council AGM in May 2022 a range of training is planned for Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny following their self-assessment and Skills Audit. This should hopefully bolster core skills for Members for the remainder of the year and ensure the Committee continues to provide the required level of assurance.



**We speak  
your language**

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**Polish**

**Mówimy Twoim  
językiem**

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**Slovak**

**Rozprávame  
Vaším jazykom**

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**Chinese**

**我们会说你的语言**

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