



Overview & Scrutiny
Annual Report
2022/23

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Foreword of the Scrutiny Chairs

Throughout 2022/23, our Scrutiny Committees have continued to carry out their functions in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Following advice from Internal Audit and revised guidance at a national level, work took place to separate the Audit and Scrutiny functions. This was considered by Standards in February prior to the election and approved at Council AGM in May 2023.

The three thematic Committees continued to deliver in line with their terms of reference and monitoring delivery of recommendations from completed reviews.

Scrutiny Members' 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 (2022/23)

Councillor Nick Clarke

Chair of the Climate Change & Communities Scrutiny Committee (2022/23)

Councillor Jennifer Wilson

Chair of the Local Growth Scrutiny Committee (2022/23)

Councillor Tom Munro

Chair of the Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee (2022/23)

Summary of 2022/23

Constitution Updates

As noted in the Foreword, work took place during the year to create a revised scrutiny structure and associated terms of reference as a result of the national guidance from CIPFA on the separation of Audit and Scrutiny. This also allowed the opportunity to review the terms of reference for the three themed committees and make amendments where overlap had been found, and to reflect changes to internal structures.

Officers also completed a wider review of the constitution which included:

- Scrutiny Procedure Rules -full review including revision to Councillor Call for Action Guidance and Form.
- Call-In Procedure – review as a result of a Call-In during the year highlighting improvements that could be made.
- Budget & Policy Framework (as a result of changes to committee names).
- Creation of an Executive/Scrutiny Protocol (as per national guidance).
- Amendments to Members Roles and Responsibilities to reflect Scrutiny Member roles.
- Amendments to Access to Information Rules to reflect legislation changes.

This brings all sections related to scrutiny up to date with current legislation and the revised statutory guidance issued during 2019.

Member Training

Following completion of their self-assessment a range of training took place for the Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee. This included Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) training on local government finance; Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) training on local government finance; and advice on the Local Government Association (LGA) Performance Management Guide for Councillors.

Customer Services Scrutiny Committee

During 2022/23, 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:

- Transformation Programme Review
- Housing Strategy 2021-24 – Action Plan Monitoring Update
This report presented two years' worth of monitoring data and was the first report since ending the joint team with North East Derbyshire District Council. The previous amendments made had been accommodated and officers completed a further review following the transfer of the service back in-house.

Policy Development:

- Consultation on Derbyshire Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027
- Rent Arrears Policy
- Mobility Scooter Policy
- Communal Area Management 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
- LG&SCO and Housing Ombudsman Annual Report 2021/22
- Customer Service Standards and Compliments, Comments and Complaints Annual Report 2021/22
- Customer Service Standards and Compliments, Comments and Complaints – quarterly reports
- Operational Update on Waste Collection Services
- Operational Update on Customer Services

Review Work – Review of Members ICT & Support and ICT Service Delivery

This review initially commenced during the 2020/21 municipal year, as a result of operational issues raised by the pandemic.

The initial aim of the review was:

- To ascertain the impact of the pandemic on ICT Service delivery and review the effectiveness of Member ICT equipment and support provision.

Once the review was re-started in 2022/23 the aim refocussed on Member ICT equipment and support.

The initial review period took place from November 2020 to March 2021. Members identified the following issues for investigation:

- Impact of the pandemic on ICT service delivery
- Member Connectivity
- Remote support for Member iPads
- Member ICT Equipment
- Support for Virtual Meetings
- Chamber ICT equipment

Once the review was recommenced, Members prioritised the following issues:

- Remote support for Member iPads
- Member ICT Equipment
- Member ICT Support
- Creation of a Member ICT Working Group
- Chamber/Meeting Room ICT equipment

The key findings arising from the review were:

- That the ICT equipment within the Chamber and meeting rooms required an urgent review to ensure it remained fit for purpose for current and future delivery of meetings. This would need to include replacement microphones, voting facilities, provision of cameras to enable full use of online meeting software and recording/streaming of meetings where required. Due to ongoing lobbying for a change in legislation in relation to local government meetings, the Council must ensure it is able to deliver more accessible public meetings where required.
- That the ICT equipment provided to Members be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose in terms of operational delivery, compatibility of systems, ICT security and ease of use.
- That the full roll-out of Microsoft 365 will have significant benefits to the management of Member equipment and should improve Member contact with officers once Teams is made available.
- That WIFI provision within the Arc be reviewed and improved to ensure greater coverage within core public areas, Member office areas and in proximity to meeting rooms.
- That the profile of the Joint ICT service be raised through increased visibility in core performance monitoring reports.

The Committee put together 13 recommendations, as outlined at 2.1.6 and 2.2.2 in the final report, which will hopefully assist the Council in improving equipment provision and support to Members and the operation of meeting spaces within a modern post-Covid environment.

This review is now within its monitoring phase with reports expected in November 2023 and May 2024.

Climate Change & Communities Scrutiny Committee

During 2022/23, 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
- Carbon Reduction Plan – Monitoring Update

Policy Development:

- None for 2022/23

Performance Review Reports:

- Delivery of Leisure Services post Covid-19 – Impact on provision, budgets and sustainability of service
- Update on Community Woodlands Project

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 last year’s review Members wished to focus on the ongoing impact of the pandemic on trends in 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 and proposed objectives for the new refreshed Plan.
- 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.
- Community Enforcement Rangers and the ASB Team.
- The Domestic Abuse Service.
- Local case studies of partnership working across the different parts of the Housing and Community Safety teams.

Officers were invited to attend from Bolsover District Council Community Safety Team and Enforcement Team, and Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service. A future report is expected from the Deliberate Fires Group.

Review Work – Review of Council Policy on Sky Lanterns and Helium Balloons

During the 2020-21 municipal year, Members of the Healthy, Safe, Clean & Green Communities Scrutiny Committee were made aware of a number of resident concerns in relation to the impact of sky lantern and balloon use, both at specified celebrations such as birthdays/family and community events; Bonfire night and New Year's Eve.

Following 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.

While Members of Climate Change & Communities Scrutiny could not take this forward during 2021/22 due to workloads, there was a commitment to finish this piece of work and ensure the Council had adequate local policies in place.

The aim of the review was:

- To assess the local impact of Sky Lanterns and Helium Balloons and review local Council policy.

The key findings arising from the review are:

- That there is limited additional impact we can have at a local level due to current national legislation, however designating restrictions on use on council land will bring us in line with over 50% of English councils.
- To ensure service delivery remains efficient and effective across the board, Members advise that BDC aligns its approach with that of neighbouring authorities 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 Fire Service area.

The Committee have put together five recommendations which will hopefully assist the Council in limiting the impact of local use of sky lanterns and helium balloons.

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

Review Work – Review of Council's Approach to Carbon Reduction

Scrutiny has previously received updates on progress against the Carbon Reduction Plan 2019-30 (CRP) with reports presented to the Customer Service & Transformation and Healthy, Safe, Clean & Green Scrutiny Committees. The original CRP set out 8 thematic areas by which the authority aimed to reduce its carbon emissions.

Following structural changes in 2021/22 and a change in lead officers, the Assistant Director of Property Services & Housing Repairs reviewed the existing action plans and those in use with regional funders. In consultation with the Assistant Director of Development & Planning, a 10 point framework used by the Midlands Engine was identified which would allow the Council's existing themes to be transferred/captured, but would also allow the streamlining of bids for schemes to be aligned with regional and national funders.

The Climate Change & Communities Scrutiny Committee received a further update in May 2022, following the operational changes to the Council's approach during the Covid-19 pandemic. Committee Members agreed to complete further detailed work in relation to carbon reduction as part of the 2022/23 work programme in order to evaluate work completed within the current municipal cycle 2019-23, to guide incoming Members on potential future action.

The aim of the review was:

- To evaluate the Council's current approach to Carbon Reduction.

Following a briefing by the current lead officer on progress against the Council's three strands of activity, the objectives agreed were:

- Review of officer capacity and resource
- Review of software platform used to monitor progress against Carbon Reduction Plan
- Assessment of local knowledge of best practice in home energy efficiency
- Clarity over Corporate approach/objectives
- Progress update on current activity across the 3 themes

The key findings arising from the review were:

- There is insufficient officer resource to ensure the carbon reduction agenda is progressed effectively.
- There is a lack of clarity around the Council's current baseline and data quality/monitoring in relation to carbon emissions.
- At present there is limited communication of Council objectives and work being completed to meet our target.
- Widened membership of the Low Carbon Thematic Group would lead to improved cross-communication.
- A clear Member lead at Executive level would create a higher profile for the work required by the Council and provide an Executive level champion alongside the existing Scrutiny Chair champion.

The Committee put together nine recommendations, as outlined at 2.12 in the final report, which will hopefully enable the Council to clarify immediate priorities for action, as well as longer term plan to ensure the Council and District is net zero by 2050.

This review is now within its monitoring phase with reports expected in October 2023 and March 2024.

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:

- Business Growth Strategy – Monitoring Update (2x Interim Updates)
- Business Growth Strategy – Monitoring Update (2x Full Updates)
- Update on Town Centre Regeneration Frameworks
- Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Fund – Progress/Monitoring Updates
- Delivery of Dragonfly and Bolsover Homes Programmes

Policy Development:

- Business Engagement Strategy – policy consultation

Performance Review Report:

- Call-in of Executive Decision – Future Skills Hub

Review Work – Review of Town Centre Regeneration Frameworks

As part of the call for review suggestions for 2022/23 municipal year, Members of the Local Growth Scrutiny Committee were presented a range of possible review topics which included outstanding topics from previous years and a reminder of all core strategies and policies linked to the Committee's remit.

Following discussions with Development team officers, it was agreed it was timely to look at the previous Regeneration Frameworks given the length of time since their original publication, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and current programmes of work within the District.

Members agreed that a scorecard approach could be used taking each Framework in turn to assess them on actions completed; those in progress; those no longer viable; and new options for development. It was agreed that it was important to establish if the Frameworks reflected current priorities. While it was considered if it was pertinent to focus solely on Bolsover and Shirebrook, given the current work happening in those areas, Members concluded that all four Frameworks needed review due to the length of time since publication (2016). They also felt that there were lots of cross-cutting issues that could be further highlighted.

The aim of the review was:

- To review the impact of the Town Centre Regeneration Frameworks and agree potential options for future approaches to development post May 2023.

The key findings arising from the review were:

- The Regeneration Frameworks have not driven development and improvements across the four main service centres as originally intended. There was insufficient

detail and costings within the core projects identified to enable the Frameworks to be used in support of funding bids.

- Moving forward, improved engagement with Parish Members and District Ward Members is paramount to ensure buy-in to delivery. Relationships with Parish and Town Councils need to be much stronger.
- It was important that the Council was clear how it could support parishes and that there were clear mechanisms to signpost elsewhere when the Council could not assist. This would also enable the Council to prioritise future action more effectively.
- It was vital that any future plans were clear about the type of development that would be accepted within town centre areas, in place of any vacant retail units, where the retail offer could not be replaced.
- The Council has a clear suite of ideas developed for the Bolsover Town Centre area, which have been developed sufficiently to have costings and an evaluation of potential outcomes. This supersedes the previous Framework document.
- The Council has a clear suite of ideas developed for the Shirebrook Town Centre area, a number of which have been developed sufficiently to have costings and an evaluation of potential outcomes. The Committee have agreed additional recommendations which complement the existing work and will hopefully bring about further benefits to the area. This supersedes the previous Framework document.
- In relation to the Clowne Town Centre area, some elements have been completed, particularly within the villages and hamlets. This area now requires fresh conversations to take place, which will enable both the District Council and parish councils to formulate a new way forward for the Town Centre area. In the long-term this may result in the development of a number of smaller management/development strategies for each of the town/local centres.
- With reference to the South Normanton Framework area, this area had seen the least amount of development since the adoption of the Framework. As with the Clowne area, this part of the District would benefit from conversations at a local level with the Parish/Town Councils and local groups such as History or Civic Society's to establish potential local proposals for development. The aim would be to use South Normanton town as a pilot area and agree a very short list of projects for development. Once there were clear costed projects agreed that could be used to lever funding, a similar approach could be used across the remaining areas of Blackwell, Pinxton and Tibshelf in phased approach. In the long-term this may result in the development of a number of smaller management/development strategies for each of the town/local centres.

The Committee put together 13 recommendations which will hopefully assist the Council in identifying current priorities for development and regeneration of our core economic centres. Committee firmly believe this needs to involve a partnership approach with organisations at a local level, with greater engagement of Parish/Town Councils.

This review is pending final approval by Executive.

Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

Background

The Audit Committee and Budget Scrutiny Committee were combined by the Council for the start of the 2021/22 municipal year, to form the Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

The core functions of the Committee in relation to Audit were to provide oversight of a range of core governance and accountability arrangements, responses to the recommendations of assurance providers and helping to ensure robust arrangements were maintained.

The Scrutiny element of the Committee was responsible for receiving and scrutinising the Council's Treasury Management Strategies and associated policies, reviewing budget proposals in line with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution, and reviewing performance against the Council's Corporate Ambitions and associated performance indicators.

During 2022, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) updated its 2018 Position Statement. CIPFA's revised statement included new expectations in England following the Redmond Review. All authorities and police bodies are encouraged to use the publication to review and develop their arrangements in accordance with the Position Statement.

CIPFA recommended that Audit Committee should have no other functions, and explicitly no decision-making role. Where Audit and Scrutiny Committees have been joined, as at Bolsover, it is recommended by CIPFA that these should be separated. For this reason, the former Committee of Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny was separated at the end of the last municipal year into the Audit Committee and the Finance and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

An annual report based purely on the Audit-related elements was presented to the Audit Committee on the 26th of September 2023. This Scrutiny Annual Report includes all of the activities undertaken by the Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee during 2022/23.

Audit and Corporate Overview Committee Business

During 2022/23, 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:

- Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy
- Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24
- Capital Strategy 2023/24
- Corporate Investment Strategy 2023/24
- Corporate Ambitions Performance – quarterly monitoring reports

- Budget Monitoring Reports – quarterly (1, 2, 3 + outturn)
- Corporate Debt Monitoring Performance – annual report 2021/22
- 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 2021/22
- Mazars report to those charged with Governance (audit completion report)
- Results of the external review of Internal Audit
- Assessment of Going Concern Status
- Scrutiny Annual Report
- Review of the Internal Audit Charter
- Report of the External Auditor – Auditor’s Annual Report 2021/22
- Report of the External Auditor – External Audit progress report
- Revised Budgets 2022/23
- Setting of Council Tax 2023/24
- Proposed Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2023/24 – 2026/27
- External review of Internal Audit – action plan progress
- Report of the Internal Auditor, Internal Audit plan approved for 2022/23
- BDC Statement of Accounts 2021/22
- Annual Governance Statement and Local Code of Corporate Governance 2021/22
- Accounting Policies 2022/23
- Report of the Internal Auditor, Internal Audit plan approved for 2023/24
- Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee – Self-assessment for effectiveness and resulting action plan
- Briefing on CIPFA publication – Internal Audit Untapped Potential

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.
- Reviewed quarterly budget monitoring reports.
- Scrutinised the setting of Council Tax rates.
- 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

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. It is envisaged that this will continue to be the case for each Committee as they both undertake their separate duties from 2023/24.

Scrutiny Impact

During 2022/23, the three themed committees monitored implementation of review recommendations. Progress across the year was as follows:

Review	Recommendations						Status
	Achieved	Achieved (Behind target)	On track	Overdue	Extended	Alert	
Voluntary & Community Sector Grant Allocations	5	0	4	0	3	0	Next report due October 2023.
Council Policy on Fireworks	2	1	0	0	0	1	Review Complete. 1 recommendation explored but unable to fully implement.
Council Policy on Sky Lanterns and Helium Balloons	0	0	5	0	0	0	In progress first updates due in 2023/24.
Council Owned Adapted Accommodation	4	1	2	0	2	0	Further update due June/July 2023.
Integration of Social Value to BDC Policy and Delivery	2	0	0	0	4	0	Further update due October 2023.
Total No. of Recommendations Monitored	13	2	11	0	9	1	36

A number of the reviews are due to complete their monitoring within 2023/24, with recommendations expected to be implemented.

The year ahead

Revised Scrutiny Structure 2023/24

As noted earlier in the report, it was approved by Standards Committee in February 2023 to separate the Audit and Scrutiny Functions. As part of this process new terms of reference have been created for the replacement committees and a review of the existing terms of reference has taken place. For 2023/24 the committees will be:

- Finance & Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee
- Customer Services Scrutiny Committee
- Climate Change & communities Scrutiny Committee
- Local Growth Scrutiny Committee

Setting the Committee Work Programmes

A call for suggested topics went out to all existing Members early in 2023 prior to the local elections. This did not generate topic suggestions for 2023/24. A further request for ideas was circulated to senior leadership team following the election and then to all three thematic committees as part of their first meeting. As a result, all themed committees will be able to choose review topics and set a work programme for the year.

Member Training

Following the Council AGM in May 2023 a range of Induction training took place. More specifically for Finance & Corporate Overview Scrutiny this included previous training used 2021-23, and specific sessions on performance management and finance scrutiny.



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