



Scrutiny Panel

Item
15

18 July 2017

Report of	Assistant Director (Policy and Corporate)	Author	Jonathan Baker Tel. 282207
Title	Annual Scrutiny Report		
Wards affected	None		

This is a report setting out the work of the Scrutiny Panel during 2016/17

1. Action required

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to consider and comment on the draft Annual Scrutiny Report.
- 1.2 The Panel is asked to recommend this report to Council for approval on 26 July 2017.

2. Reason for Action(s)

- 2.1 The Constitution states the Scrutiny Panel shall report annually to the full Council on its work and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

3. Purpose and Content of the Annual Report

- 3.1 The purpose of the report is to inform the Council of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Panel, and for the Council to form an opinion of the effectiveness of the scrutiny function. The final report will be submitted to full Council for consideration and approval following endorsement by scrutiny panel members.
- 3.2 This Scrutiny Report is a descriptive record of the scrutiny reviews undertaken by the Scrutiny Panel 2016/17.

4. Standard and Strategic Plan References

- 4.1 Scrutiny and challenge is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan's vision themes of a vibrant, prosperous, thriving and welcoming Borough.
- 4.2 The Council recognises that effective local government relies on establishing and maintaining the public's confidence, and that setting high standards of self governance provides a clear and demonstrable lead. Effective governance underpins the implementation and application of all aspects of the Council's work.

Scrutiny Panel Annual Report 2016-17

This Annual Report demonstrates the contribution made by the Scrutiny Panel at Colchester Borough Council.

Scrutiny Panel Role

The role of the Scrutiny Panel is to examine the policies and strategies from a borough-wide perspective and ensure the actions of the Cabinet accord with the Council's policies and budget. The Panel also reviews corporate strategies that form the Council's Strategic Plan, Council partnerships and the Council's budgetary guidelines, and scrutinises Cabinet or Portfolio Holder decisions which have been called in.

The Scrutiny Panel in 2016/17

The function of the Scrutiny Panel is as important as ever, given the challenging future of providing services in difficult economic times with limited resources.

The success of Scrutiny Panel reviews depended on the involvement of Councillors, Council officers, expert witnesses and members of the public, and the Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel would like to thank everyone for their contribution to scrutiny in 2016/17.

The low level of call-ins and matters of urgency suggested Councillors continued to take a responsible approach to Governance.

Portfolio Holders have continued to regularly attend items on the Scrutiny Panel agenda that fall within their remit to take a lead on major reviews and to discuss policy, spending and performance.

During 2016/17, it was agreed by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel and the Governance and Audit Committee to move certain financial monitoring reports from the Scrutiny Panel work programme to the Governance and Audit Committee work programme. The aim of which was to provide greater balance between the two work programmes and provide further opportunities for the Scrutiny Panel to request items for review. The reports moved to the Governance and Audit Committee work programme included the third quarter Revenue and Capital Financial Monitors as well as the half year treasury management strategy statement. From the 2017/18 municipal year, the first quarter revenue and capital monitor reports will also be moved to the Governance and Audit Committee agenda.

Members are asked to consider whether the scrutiny and review process is a function that remains effective, ensuring the critical friend challenge to the executive policy and decision making that drives improvement in public services.

Prominent Reviews at Colchester Borough Council

The Scrutiny Panel held a number of reviews during 2016/17.

A review of Firstsite took place on 28 February 2017, this followed the previous appearance from Firstsite in August 2015 at which the Panel requested that Firstsite return to the Panel following the completion of the business plan and Arts Council funding meetings. The February 2017 review included detail of Firstsite milestones, National Portfolio Organisation Application and the funding agreement with the Borough Council. The Scrutiny Panel resolved that they were encouraged by the progress at Firstsite.

Following a suggestion by the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Licensing, a discussion paper on advertising boards in the town centre was submitted to the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 28 March 2017. As a result of this discussion, and contributions from both Councillors and members of the public a further report outlining the preferred options available for advertising boards is due during the 2017/18 municipal year.

Earlier in the municipal year the Scrutiny Panel requested information on bus operators in Colchester. This resulted in the Scrutiny Panel distributing a questionnaire to all bus operators in Colchester. Further reports considered by the Panel included the 2016 Staff Survey which came to the Panel on 23 August 2016, an update on the Digital Challenge progress on 31 January 2017 and a report on the new ICT Support Contract in March.

Pre Decision Scrutiny

Pre-scrutiny enables the Scrutiny Panel to examine an issue in depth, and make proposals to the Cabinet or portfolio holder in advance of that decision being taken.

The Scrutiny Panel each year undertakes pre decision scrutiny of the budget, which was put to the Scrutiny Panel on 31 January and the 6-monthly and year-end Performance Report and Strategic Plan Action Plan, which went to the Panel on 19 July and 13 December.

The main piece of pre-decision scrutiny from the Panel was reviewing the Colchester Waste Collection Strategy proposals. Reports on the new strategy came to the Panel on two occasions, the first on the 21 September and the second on 13 December. The first report to the Panel requested the views on the proposed changes with the second report request comment on the proposals made to Cabinet. On both occasions Councillors and members of the public attended to have their say about the proposals.

The Scrutiny Panel were also invited by the Cabinet to consider and comment on the Senior Management Restructure proposals. The meeting which took place on 28 March 2017 fell within the 30-day consultation period for the restructure and comments made by the Panel were provided for the Chief Executive for discussion with the Leader of the Council prior to a decision being implemented. The Panel expressed their confidence in the Chief Executives ability to drive the changes forward and requested that a further report on the Senior Management Structure including additional information on the governance arrangements be brought to a future meeting.

Partnership arrangements

A review of Colchester Borough Homes Performance 2015/16 took place at the meeting on 8 November 2016. This came to the Scrutiny Panel slightly later than usual due to the appointment of a new Colchester Borough Homes Chief

Executive. At the same meeting the Scrutiny Panel also reviewed the Homelessness Strategy Progress report, which looked at the progress made by Colchester Borough Council and its partner organisations, including Colchester Borough Homes, in delivering Colchester's Homelessness Strategy 2014-19.

As part of the Crime and Disorder Committee, the Safer Colchester Partnership was reviewed on 20 September 2016. The review included representatives from Colchester Borough Council, Colchester Borough Homes, the National Probation Service, The Essex Rehabilitation Company, North Essex Clinical Commissioning Group and Essex Police. The Panel thanked the representatives for attending the meeting and responding to members questions, and noted the contents of the report detailing the work of the Partnership.

Call-in

One valid Call-in was received during the 2016/17 municipal year.

The Call-in was regarding the decision taken by the Portfolio Holder for Business, Leisure and Opportunities relating to Gosbecks Archaeological Park Work Plan 2016-2019. Due to the time available following the receipt of the Call-in and the next Scrutiny Panel meeting it was not possible for the item to be discussed at a mediation meeting and therefore the Call-in was heard at the 21 June 2016 Panel meeting. Following a review of the decision, the Call-in was not successful and the decision was implemented immediately.

Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)

There were no CCfA issues brought to the attention of Scrutiny Panel during 2016/17.

Decisions taken as a matter of urgency

There were no decisions taken as a matter of urgency during 2016/17.

Task and Finish Group

There were no Task and Finish Groups commissioned by the Scrutiny Panel 2016/17.

Schedule of meetings and reviews

Scrutiny Panel 2016/17

Councillor Davies (Chairman), Councillor Arnold (Deputy Chairman), Councillor Coleman, Councillor Fox, Councillor Hogg, Councillor Scordis, Councillor Wood.

21 June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in of Executive Decision – Gosbecks Archaeological Park Work Plan 2016-19 • Financial Monitoring Report – End of Year 2015/16 • Capital Expenditure Monitor 2015/16
19 July 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year End 2015-16 Performance Report including progress on Strategic Plan Action Plan • Annual Scrutiny Report • 2017/18 Budget Strategy, Medium Term Financial Forecast and Budget Timetable • Treasury Management - Annual Report 2015/16
23 August 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Survey • Questions to Bus Companies in Colchester
20 September 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee)
21 September 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colchester Waste Collection Strategy
8 November 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Colchester Borough Homes Performance 2015/16 • Homelessness Strategy Progress report and Delivery Plan 2015-16 • Local Council Tax Support – Year 16/17 • 2016-17 Revenue Monitor period April – September • 2016-17 Capital Monitor, period April – September
12 December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colchester Waste Collection Strategy
13 December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2016-17 6-monthly Performance Report and Strategic Plan Action Plan • Review of the Council's funding and partnership delivery arrangements with Colchester Arts Centre and The Mercury Theatre
31 January 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Challenge

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasury Management Investment Strategy • 2017/18 General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Forecast, Housing Revenue Accounts Estimate and Housing Investment Programme
28 February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Council's funding and partnership delivery arrangements with Firstsite
28 March 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to ICT Support Contract • Senior Management Restructure • Use of Advertising Boards in the Town Centre Discussion paper