



Scrutiny Panel

17 July 2018

Item
12

Report of	Assistant Director of 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 2017/18

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the work of the Scrutiny Panel during 2017/18 and requests that the Panel recommend the report to Council for approval on 18 July 2018.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to consider and comment on the draft Annual Scrutiny Report.
- 2.2 The Panel is asked to recommend this report to Council for approval on 18 July 2018.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 This Scrutiny Report is a descriptive record of the scrutiny reviews undertaken by the Scrutiny Panel 2017/18.

4. Standard and Strategic Plan References

- 4.1 Scrutiny and challenge is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 priorities and direction for the Borough as set out under the four themes of growth, responsibility, opportunity and wellbeing. Scrutiny was also an integral part of delivering the 2015-2018 strategic plan 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 2017-18

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 2017/18

The function of the Scrutiny Panel continues to be important, given the challenge of providing services with limited resources. This requires the Council to innovate and look for different ways to deliver the same level of service.

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 the work of the Scrutiny Panel in 2017/18.

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 2017/18, a new Scrutiny Panel scoping form was devised. The intention behind the form was to ensure there is a process for reviews to be requested. The form required information from Councillors around the objective of a review, timescales and the information that would be required within a report. Forms received would then be reviewed by the Panel before inclusion on the work programme. The form led to the Panel undertaking two reviews towards the end of the municipal year, one of which is still in progress.

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 2017/18.

In September, an additional meeting of the Scrutiny Panel was arranged in order to receive a report providing an update on the Town Centre Public Space Protection Order and Advertising Boards. This followed an initial review that took place during the 2016/17 municipal year where the Panel requested further research into how the number of advertising boards in the town centre could be

reduced. At the September meeting, the Panel were invited to provide feedback to Cabinet members as part of the consultation process for a Town Centre PSPO. Discussions were had with regard to the area that the PSPO covered, the duration of the PSPO, the extent of the ban on advertising boards as well as comments on standardising forms of acceptable advertising for businesses.

The Panel also reviewed six month progress of the new in house ICT service in November 2017 and the current provision and future obstacles of refuse and recycling collections from flats on 27 March 2018. With regard to refuse collection and recycling in flats the Panel resolved that recycling collections provided to flats be increased, with the view to provide a similar service to that provided to other properties.

Two reviews during the year were requested using the new Scrutiny Panel scoping form. The first was a review of tourism marketing and the tourism experience. The report invited the Panel to review the work of the Council in marketing the Borough of Colchester to visitors, the current marketing campaign and the Council's wider role in delivering the tourism experience. The Panel were shown a number of videos of current marketing campaigns and informed about a new Sky TV advert that was due to be filmed.

The second review added to the Scrutiny Panel work programme following a request through the scoping form was to hold a review of bus services in the Borough. A formal scoping report was submitted to the Scrutiny Panel in September 2017, outlining the approach and objectives to the review. The original date for the review was scheduled for 27 February 2018, however due to severe weather this was rearranged for 16 April 2018. At the meeting, representatives of the main bus companies operating in Colchester attended as part of an information gathering session. The session was based around thematic questioning, covering issues around bus punctuality, increasing bus usage, communication with passengers, reducing emissions and services in the Borough of Colchester. This review is ongoing, and the next stages of the review will be determined during the next municipal year.

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 30 January 2018 and the 6-monthly and year-end Performance Report and Strategic Plan Action Plan, which went to the Panel on 18 July 2017 and 12 December 2018.

As the then Strategic Plan came to an end during 2018, the Panel also pre-scrutinised the new Strategic Plan 2018-2021. The Panel raised a number of queries in relation to the Plan as well as a series of suggestions for elements that could be included.

The Scrutiny Panel were also invited by the Cabinet to consider and comment on the Combined Service Review – Customer Futures 2 report at its meeting on 7 November.

Partnership arrangements

A review of Colchester Borough Homes Performance 2016/17 took place at the meeting on 18 July 2017. The Colchester Borough Homes Chief Executive and Chair were in attendance as well as the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for housing. The Panel received a presentation on the performance of Colchester Borough Homes as well as information on the Homelessness Reduction Act.

As part of the Crime and Disorder Committee, the Safer Colchester Partnership was reviewed on 12 September 2017. The review provided information on the work of the Safer Colchester Partnership during 2016-17, the work of the Community Safety Support Officer and heard from the new Chief Inspector from 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

No valid call-in's were received during the 2017/18 municipal year.

Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)

There were no CCfA issues brought to the attention of Scrutiny Panel during 2017/18.

Decisions taken as a matter of urgency

There were no decisions taken as a matter of urgency during 2017/18.

Task and Finish Group

There were no Task and Finish Groups commissioned by the Scrutiny Panel 2017/18.

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.

13 June 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Monitoring Report – End of Year 2016/17 • Capital Expenditure Monitor 2016/17 • Creation of New Commercial Companies and Colchester Housing Development Company
18 July 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year End 2016-17 Performance Report including progress on Strategic Plan Action Plan • Review of Colchester Borough Council Performance 2016/17 • 2018/19 Budget Strategy, Medium Term Financial Forecast and Budget Timetable • Treasury Management - Annual Report • Annual Scrutiny Report
15 August 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting Cancelled
12 September 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee)
27 September 2017 (Additional Meeting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Centre PSPO including A Board Update
7 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Council Tax Support – Year 17/18 • Combined Service Review – Customer Futures 2 • ICT Service Update • 2017-18 Revenue Monitor period April – September • 2017-18 Capital Monitor, period April – September
12 December 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Waste Collection Strategy • Half Year 2017-18 Performance Report including progress and Strategic Plan Action Plan
30 January 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018/19 General Fund Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Forecast, Housing Revenue Accounts Estimate and Housing Investment Programme • Treasury Management Investment Strategy • Strategic Plan 2018-21

27 February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bus Review – Meeting postponed due to severe weather
13 March 2018 (Additional Meeting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vineyard Gate Briefing (Confidential)
27 March 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tourism Marketing update and discussion• Review of Waste and Recycling Collections for Flats
16 April 2018 (Additional Meeting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bus Review