

# Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday 6 June 2022



**Horsham  
District  
Council**

By the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee

## INFORMATION REPORT

Not Exempt

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22
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### Executive Summary

This report provides a review of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the municipal year 2021/22.

### Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- i) Refer the report and the forward plan to Council for noting.

### Reasons for Recommendations

- i) The Constitution requires the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to tell the Council about its work at the end of each municipal year and about the work it plans for the new municipal year.

### Background Papers

Agendas, papers and minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee June 2021 to March 2022.

**Wards affected:** All

**Contact:** Dominic Bradley, Interim Director of Resources, 01403 215300

## **Background Information**

### **1 Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 The Local Government Act of 2000 introduced the Cabinet system to speed up Council decision-making. The Act required all councils operating cabinet governance arrangements to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a counterbalance to the Cabinet.
- 1.2 Overview and Scrutiny aims to contribute to the delivery of efficient and effective services that meet the needs and aspirations of local people. Members of Overview and Scrutiny are encouraged to have an independent mind set and it is important to safeguard the independence of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee has the right to receive reports and other information in a timely manner in order to be able to question decisions.
- 1.3 Overview and Scrutiny's role is to question the Cabinet, officers and representatives of other organisations and make recommendations to the Cabinet or Council. Overview and Scrutiny should improve the Council's decision-making process and make it clear and accessible.

### **2 Relevant Council policy**

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny contributes to all Council policies.

### **3 Details**

#### **3.1 Role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 3.1.1 The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is set out in article 6, paragraph 6.2 of the Horsham District Council Constitution:

- i) Assist in the strategic development of policy.
- ii) Review issues of local concern.
- iii) Review the policy of others within and outside the Council.
- iv) Call-in Cabinet decisions.
- v) Scrutinise the Council's decision-making processes.
- vi) Monitor the internal and external delivery of services.
- vii) Review specific services.
- viii) Monitor and scrutinise the activities of outside bodies.

#### **3.2 Membership in 2021/22**

- 3.2.1 At the start of the 2021/22 year the Committee members appointed by Council were: Matthew Allen, Tony Bevis, Martin Boffey, Jonathan Chowen, Brian Donnelly, Billy Greening, Frances Haigh, Nigel Jupp, Tim Lloyd, Bob Platt, Josh Potts, Jack

Saheid, Jim Sansom, Ian Stannard and James Wright. At its June meeting the Committee elected Tony Bevis Chairman and Brian Donnelly Vice-Chairman.

- 3.2.2 Between the meetings held on in November 2021 and January 2022, Cllrs Chowen and Haigh stood down from the committee and three new appointments were made, including the previously unfilled vacancy - Philip Circus, Paul Clarke and John Milne.
- 3.2.3 Following a period of meeting via videolink in line with pandemic restrictions, the Committee resumed physical meetings for the year.

### **3.3 Work completed by the Committee during 2021/22**

- 3.3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee received quarterly reports on the Council's corporate plan priorities, finance and performance for the financial year. They questioned the Director of Corporate Resources on points of detail in these reports and referred questions to other officers for written replies.
- 3.3.2 In June 2021 the Committee reviewed the work it carried out in 2020/21 and received a report on the Council's Finance and Performance for 2020/21
- 3.3.3 In July 2021 the Committee met twice. On the 13 July, the Committee was convened to meet with the Leader of the Council, Cllr Paul Clarke in respect of the Finance and Performance report received at the previous meeting. The Committee's concerns, particularly with regard to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and carbon neutrality aims were discussed.
- 3.3.4 On 19 July the Committee met for its normal business and established a Task & Finish Group to consider Urban Greening. Membership was agreed as Committee members Cllrs Allen, Bevis, Chowen, Greening and Platt, together with Cllrs Michael Croker and Ruth Fletcher. An inaugural meeting was planned but subsequently postponed in the light of continuing issues arising from water neutrality. This will be revisited once the wider issues and an appropriate brief are clearer.
- 3.3.5 The July meeting also received an update on progress towards the Drill Hall and Highwood Community Service.
- 3.3.6 In September 2021, the Committee received an update on the Council's Finance and Performance to date in 2021/22. The Committee also received a progress report from the Sustainable Travel Task & Finish Group set up in January.
- 3.3.7 Further updates on the Council's Finance and Performance to date in 2021/22 and the progress of the Sustainable Travel Task & Finish Group were received in November 2021. The Committee also took the opportunity to express commiserations for the untimely passing of a highly regarded officer.

- 3.3.8 In January 2022, the Committee received a presentation from Cllr van der Klugt on the South Downs National Park Authority, for which she is the Council's representative. The meeting also received a review of the 2022/23 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2025/26. Since detailed briefings had already been delivered to Councillors in other forums, the session concentrated more on specific questions and responses, some of which had been previously submitted and prepared.
- 3.3.9 Prior to the final meeting of the year, held in March 2022, the Committee had a private discussion with the Head of Property & Facilities regarding debts and the commercial portfolio.
- 3.3.10 The principal item for the March Committee meeting itself was receipt of the final report from the Sustainable Travel Task & Finish Group. It was agreed that the recommendations be forwarded to full Council for consideration. The recommendations contained in the report were:
- HDC to consider pursuing implementation of a highway matters screening method similar to that employed by Mid-Sussex DC for planning applications.
  - HDC to consider:
    - o the group's recommendations for specific changes to Policy 41 in the draft Horsham District Local Plan as laid out in Appendix 5
    - o A much stronger emphasis on sustainable transport, as required by NPPF para 112, incorporating themes expressed in Appendix 6, are reflected in the Local Plan and in supporting design and other planning policy guidance.
    - o focussing initial capital investment on a single LCWIP project meeting LTN1/20 standards and of sufficient scale to enable people to cycle more complete trips and to act as a flagship for further routes.
  - HDC to pursue and enable policy and measures to reduce the need to travel (especially by private car), including shifting trips from private car to active travel and public transport, reducing trip length and enabling the option of working from home.
  - HDC to develop and to support local groups to develop further LCWIPs, especially for larger villages across the District,
- 3.3.11 The Committee's Sustainable Travel Task & Finish Group was disbanded following presentation of its final report. The Group set up in June to look at Urban Greening has not been progressed and no other Task & Finish Groups were set up during the year.
- 3.3.12 The Committee had two principal items planned for the latter part of the year which were both deferred.

- A presentation on the Council's Zero Carbon Plan was postpone due to illness but is now included in the agenda for the current meeting (June 2022).
- The Committee was also keen to discuss water neutrality issues with Southern Water and Natural England but this remains on hold following Officers' advice until a more appropriate time to have the discussions.

### **3.4 Development of the Committee's skills**

- 3.4.1 Members have received general training on a number of issues but nothing specific to this committee has been commissioned or delivered in the year.

## **4 Joint Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements in West Sussex**

The Joint Scrutiny Steering Group set up by West Sussex local authorities in 2012 suspended activity during the pandemic but no invitations to attend were received in 2021/22. Initial enquiries regarding the current status of the group have been made, but it remains inactive and its future remains unclear.

### **Next Steps**

- 5 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will determine its work programme for the municipal year 2022/23 year at this meeting and will commission additional task and finish groups as needed and appropriate throughout the year. Any councillor or member of the public can request a task and finish review and Overview and Scrutiny ask all councillors to consider and advise on issues that would benefit from a review. The Horsham District Council website has a work programme suggestion form for this purpose.

### **Other Courses of Action Considered and Rejected**

- 6 None, reporting to Council annually is a requirement of the Council's constitution

### **Resource Consequences**

- 7 This report has no resource consequences and associated officer workload will be contained within the existing budget

### **Legal Considerations and Implications**

- 8 There are no specific Legal Implications from the Committee's activity, though legal considerations are a key consideration in the assessment and recommendations made.

## **Risk Assessment**

- 9      There are no risks arising from the report. The Overview and Scrutiny function is a key mitigation to the risks associated with operating the Council using a Cabinet system.

## **Procurement Implications**

- 10     There are no direct procurement implications.

## **Equalities and Human Rights Implications / Public Sector Equality Duty**

- 11     There are no direct Equalities or Human Rights implications

## **Environmental Implications**

- 12     There are no direct Environmental Implications

## **Other Considerations**

- 13     When scrutinising decisions, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has regard to Crime & Disorder; Human Rights; Equality & Diversity and Sustainability