



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL on Tuesday, 8th March, 2022 at 7.00 pm.

The Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are:-

Councillor Ovenden (Chairman)
Councillor Chilton (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Blanford, Brooks, Burgess, Farrell, Hayward, Howard-Smith, Krause, Ledger, Meaden, Mulholland.

Agenda

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1. Apologies/Substitutes	
To receive Notification of Substitutes in accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (c)	
2. Declarations of Interest	1 - 2
To declare any interests, which fall under the following categories, as explained on the attached document:	
a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) b) Other Significant Interests (OSI) c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests	
See Agenda Item 2 for further details	
3. Minutes of the last Meeting	3 - 8
To approve the Minutes of the last Meeting	
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Agenda Item 2

Declarations of Interest (see also “Advice to Members” below)

- (a) **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)** under the Localism Act 2011, relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares a DPI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting for that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted).

- (b) **Other Significant Interests (OSI)** under the Kent Code of Conduct relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares an OSI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting before the debate and vote on that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted).

However, prior to leaving, the Member may address the Committee in the same way that a member of the public may do so.

- (c) **Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests** not required to be disclosed under (a) and (b), i.e. announcements made for transparency alone, such as:

- Membership of amenity societies, Town/Community/Parish Councils, residents' groups or other outside bodies that have expressed views or made representations, but the Member was not involved in compiling or making those views/representations, or
- Where a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person, or
- Where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position.

[Note: Where an item would be likely to affect the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc.; OR where an item is an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc., there is likely to be an OSI or in some cases a DPI. ALSO, holding a committee position/office within an amenity society or other outside body, or having any involvement in compiling/making views/representations by such a body, may give rise to a perception of bias and require the Member to take no part in any motion or vote.]

Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:

- (a) Government Guidance on DPI is available in DCLG's Guide for Councillors, at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5962/2193362.pdf
- (b) The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council on 19 July 2012, and a copy can be found in the Constitution alongside the Council's Good Practice Protocol for Councillors dealing with Planning Matters. See <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/2098/z-word5-democratic-services-constitution-2019-constitution-of-abc-may-2019-part-5.pdf>
- (c) Where a Member declares a committee position or office within, or membership of, an outside body that has expressed views or made representations, this will be taken as a statement that the Member was not involved in compiling or making them and has retained an open mind on the item(s) in question. If this is not the case, the situation must be explained.

If any Member has any doubt about any interest which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, or from other Solicitors in Legal and Democracy as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Rooms 1 and 2, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **8th February 2022**.

Present:

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman);

Cllrs. Burgess, Chilton (Vice-Chairman), Farrell, Howard-Smith, Krause, Ledger, Meaden, Mulholland.

Apology:

Cllr. Blanford

Also Present:

Cllrs. Brooks, Feacey, Hayward, Harman, Shorter, Wright (remotely).

In attendance:

Chief Inspector Nick Sparkes, Detective Inspector Simon Johnson (remotely)

Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing, Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Compliance and Data Protection Manager, Governance & Data Protection Officer (remotely).

Policy and Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

267 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Chilton	Made a 'Voluntary Announcement' as he was related to a Kent Police Officer	270
Farrell	Made a 'Voluntary Announcement' as he was a self-employed contractor and worked at Cameo Nightclub	270

268 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 9th November 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

269 Corporate Performance Report (Quarter 2 & 3)

The Governance & Data Protection Officer introduced this item and explained that the Q2 report was originally due on the November agenda, but owing to time

constraints was not complete, and this was the first opportunity since November to bring the report to the Committee (after Budget Scrutiny). The Q2 data was included within the Q3 report for comparison. Members were reminded that the Corporate Plan 2022-24 was presented at November's Cabinet and those periodic reports would be altered to reflect the themes and performance measures outlined in the new Corporate Plan.

A Member referred to page 19 of the report and the ongoing problem with recruitment and retention of staff, particularly within the Planning Department. He wondered whether staff morale should be reviewed and if the O&S or Joint Consultative Committee should somehow become involved to try to solve the problems. The Committee agreed that the pandemic and lockdowns had undoubtedly contributed to low morale. The Chairman felt that the HR department would be abreast of the issues, and considered inviting the Head of HR to join a Committee Meeting to discuss this further. A Member raised a secondary concern in regards to limitations of staff pay grades and salary scales and considered this too could be a contributory factor to low staff morale. The Chairman agreed and went on to explain that the Planning Department was reviewed in detail as part of the Budget Scrutiny meetings and acknowledged the difficulties they faced. He assured the Committee that this would be kept on the radar for future review.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

270 Annual Report on the Community Safety Partnership

The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager introduced Chief Inspector Nick Sparkes and Detective Inspector Simon Johnson. She explained that the report provided the Committee with the Community Safety Annual Update. The report paid particular regard to the Council's statutory obligation to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder, work that was being progressed through the Ashford Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The report detailed key projects that the Partnership had led on including obtaining approximately £550,000 from the Home office for the Safer Streets fund, and the Charlton Athletic Community Trust Project.

The presentation was then opened up to the Committee and the following questions and points were raised: -

- A Member asked whether figures were available detailing the gender split from the educational talk at Charlton. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager did not have that data to hand, but was meeting with Charlton on 22nd February and would feed those figures back. She had been encouraged to hear that females were attending the sessions and engaging with the female staff at Charlton.
- A Member spoke about a programme called Operation Encompass, in which a child's school received notification if the police had been called to that child's home the previous day/night. Thereby enabling the school to understand why that pupil may be anxious or disruptive in the classroom, and

taking steps to assist that child.

- The knife bins around Ashford were commended and a Member suggested introducing one in each ward around the Borough.
- In response to a question about the decline in shoplifting, a Member asked whether this was owing to increased policing, better-behaved people or the fact that the shops had been closed owing to the pandemic. Chief Inspector Nick Sparkes explained that the figures were skewed owing to the closure of shops throughout the lockdown period, and consequently, the data was to be observed cautiously because of that influencing factor. A return to normality was expected with the lifting of restrictions. He added that many retailers were facing financial difficulties and consequently had to cut the number of staff and security guards that they employed. This inevitably would create an increase in opportunity for shoplifters.
- A Member highlighted the work that the Street Pastors undertook in the Town Centre and gave an example of how they had assisted a lone female that had been approached by two males in the early hours, and the Street Pastors intervened to ensure her wellbeing and safety. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager joined the Member in commending the outstanding work of the Street Pastors, and said that additional equipment for them had been sourced via the Safer Streets funding.
- The problem of poor maintenance, lighting, fencing etc. within public spaces was highlighted, one example being the zigzag path leading from the cinema at Eureka Park up to Kennington, which Cllr. Spain had been instrumental in improving. A Member suggested an audit on those types of pedestrian paths and routes be organised, to scrutinise the security of those areas. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager confirmed that as part of the survey work undertaken prior to the Safer Streets bid, many footpaths and alleyways had been identified as needing extra security measures. The funding had been utilised to increase CCTV in Town Centre areas and fitting plastic mirrors in alleyways to increase visibility prior to entering. It would now be interesting to see how those methods had worked and the impact they may be having on incidents of crime. She encouraged Councillors to continue to highlight those areas that required extra attention.
- The Active Bystander training was discussed and Detective Inspector Simon Johnson confirmed that there had been sufficient budget for the training, but all the funding had to be spent by the end of the financial year. The training had been well received and involved around 180 workers and professionals working within the Town Centre.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

271 Annual Safeguarding Report

As the designated safeguarding lead for the Authority, the Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager introduced the report, which outlined the work undertaken by the lead Officer group to safeguard the most vulnerable within the local community. It provided details on the work linked to Prevent and Modern Slavery whilst it also supported the delivery of the priorities set by the Kent Safeguarding Children's Multi-agency Partnership and the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

272 Report on the Budget Scrutiny Task Group

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer introduced the report that gave the final findings of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group. The Task Group had provided a number of recommendations to be made to Cabinet and then to Council. The Management Team had seen and supported the recommendations and a summary of their advice had been tabled within the report.

The Chairman explained that the Budget Scrutiny Task Group had met four times and had conducted an in depth review of the budget. As the Committee had already touched on earlier in the meeting, the difficulties in the Planning Department had been discussed at the Budget Scrutiny Meetings. It was anticipated that some of those difficulties would continue owing to the constraints around recruitment and retention, as well as the far-reaching issues about Stodmarsh. The Task Group had agreed that the new Head of Planning and his Officers should be given the opportunity to deliver the department's objectives within the budget, as he had implied they could. There was contingency budget in place if needed.

Resolved:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Cabinet that:

- I. The Council's draft budget for 2022/23 is sound and that mitigation plans are in place for any increases to borrowing interest rates during 2022/23.
- II. The Council's reserves position is sufficient to manage the economic risks to the 2022/23 budget.
- III. The Task Group support Cabinet's recent decision to have regular monitoring of delivery against Service savings targets, through the quarterly budget monitoring reports in 2022/23.

- IV. It be noted that the Task Group have concerns over the ability to deliver the savings target in the Planning and Development Service for the next budget year
- V. It be noted that delivery of the Henwood project needs to be timely in order to meet the savings targets in the next financial year
- VI. It be noted that the Task Group supports the invest-to-save approach regarding homelessness prevention proposals following the service review in 2021/22.

The Overview and Scrutiny Budget Task Group recommends to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that:

- VII. The Committee would review their position on the Senior Structure Proposal, once it had been submitted to Cabinet.

273 2022/23 O&S Work Programme & Tracker

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer spoke to the Committee about the forthcoming work programme and encouraged Members to suggest future topics for review. The Tracker detailed topics already identified and scheduled for the Committee to scrutinise, including long standing annual reports.

The Chairman referred again to the requirement to monitor the progress of the Planning Department and suggested placing that as an item on the Tracker and Members agreed.

A Member suggested the subject of inclusivity, particularly for those hard to reach groups, as a future topic for review by the O&S Committee.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

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Agenda Item 4

Agenda Item No: 4



Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

[Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Review 2022/23]

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked:

1. Agree the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme for 2022/23 municipal year.
 2. To raise any other issues or topics that would benefit from a scrutiny review.
-

Date of O&S meeting: 8th March 2022

Chair of O&S Committee: Cllr Ovenden

Relevant Portfolio(s): -

Summary: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews its work programme annually. Members have been asked to consider any topics for the scrutiny programme. Topics have been assessed using the Topic Selection Matrix and in consultation with the Chairman.

The report details the draft work programme for 2022/23, including any annual reports/updates expected to the Committee at various points in the year.

Exempt from Publication: NO

Background Papers: N/A

Contact: Abi Moffatt, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Abi.moffatt@ashford.gov.uk

Report Title: Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Review 2022/23

Introduction and Background

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee adopts a new work programme each year. Members have been asked to suggest topics that they think would benefit from scrutiny. Topics suggested so far have been assessed by the scrutiny team and the Chairman via the Topic Selection Matrix (Appendix A). Currently there five topics for consideration by the Committee for the Work Programme. There is one Task and Finish Group topic listed, however, this will take several months to carry out and complete outside of the Committee Meetings. The council's Management Team have also been consulted over the work programme and support the future work of the Committee.
2. Details of suggested topics and any annual reports expected this year are outlined in this report. Members are asked to consider any other topics for the main Committee's work programme that can be brought forward as a presentation or written report.

Overview of Topics

Planning Service Update

3. During Budget Scrutiny meetings looking at the 2022/23 budget, Members were concerned over the ability of the Planning Service to deliver the savings target for this year. It was anticipated that difficulties would continue from the previous year owing to the constraints around recruitment and retention, as well as the far-reaching issues about Stodmarsh. The Task Group had agreed that the new Head of Planning and his Officers should be given the opportunity to deliver the department's objectives within the budget.
4. Members agreed that it was important to closely monitor the progress of the Service and an update report on this in later 2022 would be requested by the Committee. It was noted that the Planning Service were also expected to bring forward an update on the Section 106 Task Group recommendations during 2022.

Section 106 Process Task Group – Recommendations Update

5. Following the review of the Section 106 Process in 2021, a number of recommendations were made to improve the process. An initial recommendation was made to undertake a process mapping exercise of the Section 106 process. Once this had been completed, the rest of the recommendations would be progressed.

6. The recommendations were approved by Cabinet in November 2021. It was agreed that an update would be presented to the Committee in six months' time, to understand the next steps.

Freedom Leisure

7. After a year of operations, it was suggested that the new leisure operator could be reviewed. Scrutiny of this topic would examine how the service has been running, the savings made to the council and the levels of customer satisfaction with the service.
8. It was felt that a report would be sufficient to provide the update, as well as invite a representative from the Leisure operator to attend a future meeting to answer Member queries.

Mayoralty Arrangements

9. A Member proposed that the council's mayoralty arrangements should be considered for the Committee's work programme. It was felt that there had been some difficulty with finding Members who were willing to be appointed as the Mayor. As a score under 20 on the matrix, this would not normally be recommended to the work programme. It has been suggested that Members could give their feedback as part of a Member survey.

Hybrid Working

10. Hybrid working provisions were in place throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic and have remained in place to date. Members were interested in exploring how well the hybrid arrangements were working and in particular would like the Committee to consider this in terms of performance, customer satisfaction, savings, human resources and recruitment.
11. Remote working was considered during the scrutiny review of digital transformation, however, this was prior to implementation of a functioning hybrid working set up and therefore additional scrutiny could be beneficial. Some work has already been done within services to monitor staff performance in relation to hybrid working.

Consultation and Engagement

12. Consultation and Engagement has been an area of interest to the Committee over the last year. Work on this was delayed due to the impact that Covid-19 had on Officer's capacity to assist with the review. The Committee are able to include this within the work programme for 2022/23.
13. A Member proposed that the Committee could review inclusivity as a topic for scrutiny. It has been suggested that this topic be included as part of the scope for the Consultation and Engagement review. Scrutiny of this topic could help understand how the council engages with hard to reach residents in the Borough and the effectiveness of our communications.

Senior Restructure

14. During scrutiny of the 2022/23 budget, the Task Group noted that a report on the Senior Restructure would be forthcoming. It was noted that Cabinet were due to look at initial proposals in February 2022 and the Committee would consider them at this stage.

Annual Reports – Overview and Scrutiny, Performance, Sickness, Safeguarding and the Community Safety Partnership, Budget Scrutiny

15. The Committee will expect to receive six annual reports in the coming year;
 - Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report – A summary of all the work carried out by the Committee during the last year, including any recommendations.
 - Corporate Performance Reports – These are quarterly reports detailing the council's performance and an annual report is also produced to give an overview of the council's performance and achievements during the last year.
 - Annual Sickness Report – A report providing the Committee with annual sickness information for the recent year.
 - Safeguarding – This report provides the Committee with the council's annual safeguarding update. The report pays particular regard to the council's obligation to work in partnership to protect children, young people and adults at risk from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development.
 - Community Safety Partnership (CSP) - This report provides the Committee with the community safety annual update. The report pays particular regard to the council's statutory obligation to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder, this work being progressed through the Ashford CSP.
 - Budget Scrutiny Task Group – The aim of the Task Group will be to review the draft budget for 2023/24 and consider financial risks. The Task Group will then produce final findings with recommendations to Cabinet prior to Full Council approval of the draft budget.

Conclusion

16. The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2022/23 so far looks to prioritise key topics with the aim of completing at least one task and finish group addition to the wider work programme. There are a number of annual reviews expected to the Committee at various points in the year regarding the

council's performance, levels of sickness, and also updates on safeguarding and community safety.

17. This report seeks approval of the work programme for 2022/23 and asks Members to recommend any further topics for consideration in the future. It should be noted that Members are able to make suggestions for scrutiny at any point throughout the year by raising the issue at a meeting or by contacting the Chairman or Policy and Scrutiny Officer.

Contact and Email

18. Abi Moffatt, Policy & Scrutiny Officer
Abi.Moffatt@ashford.gov.uk 01233 330(394)

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<u>Scrutiny Topic Selection Matrix</u>	1. Represents a key issue for local people.	2. The issue is strategic and significant.	3. The topic falls within a community or corporate priority area.	4. Scrutiny of the issue will lead to effective outcome.	5. Had the topic been covered elsewhere? (Yes = low score No = high score)	6. Represents an issue of concern to stakeholders and partners.	7. The issue is of community concern or there is a high level of dissatisfaction with one or more services.	8. The scrutiny activity is timely.	Score	Rank	Review Type
Consultation and Engagement	5	3	4	4	5	2	3	5	31	1	TG
Planning Service Update	5	4	5	3	1	5	5	1	29	2	R
Freedom Leisure	4	3	4	4	5	2	2	4	28	3	R
Hybrid Working	3	3	3	5	4	2	2	5	27	4	R
Mayoralty Arrangements	3	1	2	3	4	2	2	2	19	5	O

Each of the topics are scored for degree of 'fit', e.g. 1 (low) to 5 (high). The reviews with the best fit achieve the highest score.

1. Represents a key issue for local people.
2. The issue is strategic and significant.
3. The topic falls within a community or corporate priority area.
4. Scrutiny of the issue will lead to effective outcomes.
5. Has the topic been covered elsewhere in other services? (Yes = low score No = high score)

6. Represents an issue of concern to stakeholders and partners
7. The issue is of community concern or there is a high level dissatisfaction with one or more services.
8. The scrutiny activity is timely.

Review Type:

Each topic has an indicated review type: Task Group (TG), One-off report (R), Member Briefing (B), Other (O)

Score	What the score means
31 to 40	The issue/item has a high likelihood of entering the Scrutiny Work Programme but should be prioritised according to score
20 to 30	Item/issue has less chance of gaining a place on the Scrutiny Work Programme and should be held in abeyance
Under 20	Item/issue should not normally gain a place on the Scrutiny Work Programme

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report Tracker – March 2022

Current Work Programme			
Report Title	Date due to O&S	Reporting Service	Scope of what is to be scrutinised
Consultation and Engagement	Spring/Summer 2022	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	Set up of a Task and Finish group to examine the council's involvement and engagement of the public and look at the consultation process for corporate issues.
Section 106 Process Task Group – Recommendations Update	May 2022	Planning and Development	The Committee will receive an update on the progress of implementing recommendations, approved by Cabinet in November 2021.
Annual Performance Report	June 2022	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	A report to outline the council's performance and achievements during the last year.
Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report	June 2022	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlining work carried out by the Committee in during the last year.
Freedom Leisure	July 2022	Culture	A report to review the council's new leisure operator. Scrutiny of this topic would examine how the service has been running, the savings made to the council and the levels of customer satisfaction with the service.
Hybrid Working	July 2022	HR & Customer Services	A report for Members to explore how well the hybrid arrangements were working and in particular consider this in terms of performance, customer satisfaction, savings, human resources and recruitment.

Annual Sickness Report	July 2022	HR & Customer Services	A report providing the Committee with annual sickness information for the recent year.
Planning Service Progress Update	November 2022	Planning and Development	During scrutiny of the draft budget for 2022/23, Members agreed that it was important to closely monitor the progress of the Service and an update report on this in later 2022 would be requested by the Committee.
Budget Scrutiny Meetings	December to January 2022/23	Finance and IT	Scrutiny of the draft budget 2022/23 will take place over three or four meetings during December and a final report is expected