

Chichester District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Annual Report 2020-21

Introduction of the Chairman

The 2021-22 Council year has been a challenging year for the Council, and I thank everyone involved in the Committee for the hard work, patience and support.

It is with particular sadness that we have said goodbye to our Vice Chairman, Kevin Hughes, who has been a huge support over the year and I thank him for his efforts. Clare Apel has stepped in as Vice Chair on a number of occasions for which the Committee is very grateful.

All members of the Committee have worked very hard over the year especially as we have been looking in some detail at the challenges presented by Covid and how the Council has reacted to the challenging times.

The role of the Committee is to support the Council in policy development, scrutinise council functions and review the performance of relevant outside bodies. This we have done in many ways in the last year.

We are grateful that Cabinet members have come before the Committee to provide an oversight into their work and we will continue to invite them before the Committee. Covid provided a clear need to make changes to our planned program which had been reviewed in detail immediately prior to "lockdown". Certain agreed actions were not undertaken in light of the changed operations of the Council and the need to implement a Recovery Plan that supported our residents, staff and Council operations.

As part of our work during the year we have undertaken the normal activity but in addition four specific areas can be highlighted.

Call Ins

This year we had two. These are an important part of our role. They represent a good way for O&S to support our residents in challenging decisions made by Cabinet.

Recovery Plan

It has been important to robustly challenge the Recovery Plan and we are satisfied that this has progressed well and in the interest of our residents and Council.

Southern Gateway

This is a crucial regeneration project for our District. Covid has had a considerable effect on delivery as has the assembly of sites. The Committee will continue to monitor progress. We hope our continued support has been effective.

Water Capacity and Water Quality in harbour and rivers

This was brought to the Committee due to an increasing concern from Councillors. We are

grateful to Southern Water, Environment Agency and Natural England for attending a specially convened meeting. OFWAT were unavailable on this occasion.

A comprehensive set of questions were answered and followed up with written responses. The Committee hopes that their work has helped develop a framework of understanding between these organisations and the Council to ensure their work supports the development of the local plan and other work undertaken by the Council.

The Committee thanks all officers for their support with specific thanks to Katherine Davis who has provided outstanding members support during the year and is now handing over in 2021-22 to Sharon Hurr.

Adrian Moss Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny

Scrutiny at Chichester District Council

Scrutiny is the way in which non-executive members of the council hold the Cabinet to account. They do this by reviewing existing council policy or decisions and by inputting into the development of new policies before the Cabinet approves these. In some cases they may ask for a decision (made by the Cabinet) to be re-considered before it is implemented to make sure all possible outcomes are thought through. These are called call-ins.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) or its task and finish groups may require any member of the Cabinet, any chief officer, and/or any divisional manager to attend before it to explain in relation to matters within their remit. Other public sector or public service officials, external partners and/or residents and stakeholders may also be invited to address the Committee, discuss issues of local concern and-or answer questions.

Recommendations may be made to the Cabinet or directly to Council. In scrutinising an external partner or partnership, the recommendations may be made directly to that body. The views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may be reported to the Cabinet or the Council, and the chairman of the Committee shall be entitled to address the meeting on the Committee's views.

Setting the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2020-21

The 2020-21 OSC work programme was developed taking into account:

- the Corporate Plan projects agreed by Cabinet
- the Forward Plan of Cabinet key decisions over the next few months
- projects identified from individual Service Plans
- items proposed or raised by Members
- topics included in last year's work programme which had been delayed
- topics requiring members' involvement suggested by the Business Routeing Panel

A number of Task and Finish Groups were set up to carry out reviews in more depth and to report back to the main Committee. These task and finish group reviews are detailed later in the report. Space was left in the work programme for topical issues that often arise during the year.

The Committee continued to invite the Cabinet portfolio holders to address the Committee on their priorities and projects. Alan Sutton, Cabinet member for Housing, Communications, Licensing and Events, and Roy Briscoe, Cabinet member for Community Services and Culture, attended the Committee this year.

All Members of the Committee were consulted on the development of this work programme at an all member workshop.

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic had an effect on the topics addressed by the committee in 2020-21.

The impact and influence of scrutiny

OSC held 9 meetings during 2020-21. Two special meetings were held, one to discuss the Southern Gateway Regeneration project and the other inviting southern Water, Environment Agency, Natural England and Ofwat to discuss water capacity and quality in the District.

There were two call-ins this year concerning two decisions made by Cabinet. Both Call-ins were heard by the Committee on 17 November 2020:

Call-In: Review of Parking Charges:

The Call In request stated that the proposal to increase parking charges would cause significant harm to the local economy with detrimental effects on the local businesses leading to a further decline of the Chichester city centre and High streets in the District. The impact of these charges during the current Covid 19 pandemic and the long-term ability to recover long after the new charges were implemented was not fully considered by Cabinet in their debate.

The Cabinet having reconsidered the decision made at its meeting on 3 November 2020 maintained its resolution with the following amendments:

- That any individual proposed increase in Appendix 1 exceeding 30p should be reduced to 30p.
- That the increase in the Bosham season ticket monthly charge should be reduced to 50p.
- That some further minor amendments to the Parking Order to provide further clarification on details relating to the use of the Council's car parks as set out in 3.9 of this report be approved.
- That the Director of Growth and Place be authorised to give appropriate notice of any revised charges or changes as set out within this report pursuant to the Off-street Parking Places (Consolidation) Order 2019 and the Road Traffic Act 1984.

Call-In: Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

The Call-In request was for the following reasons:

- There is a national push to roll out use of electric vehicles.
- West Sussex County Council have provided the council with the opportunity
- To collaborate at an early stage to be involved in writing the contract.
- A single solution could be sought across the county.
- The Council could be leaders in a collaborative solution.

The Cabinet having reconsidered the decision made at its meeting on 3 November 2020 maintained its resolution with the following amendments:

- That the Cabinet gives delegated authority to the Director for Planning and the Environment in collaboration with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Chichester Contract Services to consider the content of the West Sussex County Council Electrical Vehicle Charging Infrastructure contract once it has been received and to decide whether it would be appropriate at that stage to bring a further report back to Cabinet.

A total of 10 recommendations were made by the Committee to the Cabinet or Leader during the year. All 10 recommendations were agreed by Cabinet.

Members' training and development

No OSC themed member training has taken place this year.

Main areas of work for OSC this year and outcomes-achievements

Areas of focus	Outcomes-achievements
<p>Covid-19 Recovery Plan and Future Services Framework</p> <p>Diane Shepherd</p>	<p>The Committee has received quarterly reports, and passed on any comments to Cabinet, on the Covid-19 Recovery Plan and Future Services Framework and the thematic work streams within (<i>Community & Housing Recovery; Economic Recovery; Planning, Health and Environmental Protection Recovery; Organisational Recovery; Future Services Framework; Governance</i>), which would determine the types and levels of services to be provided from 2022-23</p> <p>At the October meeting the Committee raised the following topics of interest and asked Cabinet to consider further:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental health – <i>Cabinet Response</i>: There is a Public Health Working Group with representation from the Councils wellbeing team who will be taking a broader view of the impact of the pandemic on mental health. With regard to the Council's staff there was a range of support in place including focus on support for staff including flexibility in working hours, wellbeing and equipment checklists, staff surveys, internal and external wellbeing programmes and support. - Support for the surface level Northgate, Chichester pedestrian crossing – <i>Cabinet Response</i>: This has already been raised by officers with West Sussex County Council who understand that their bid for funding should not be affected by the removal of the Covid cycle lane. The crossing, required by the terms of a Section Agreement relating to the Graylingwell development, is being pursued by WSCC and CDC officers; - To expedite the transfer of existing tenants of St James Industrial Estate, Chichester – <i>Cabinet Response</i>: It was understood that members of the Committee had been working with officers on the St James site. The process is complex as each tenants' circumstances are different but it continued to proceed well.

	<p>- Paper produced by Mr Johnson on the formation of a Towns and Villages Recovery Group – <i>Cabinet Response</i>: A similar motion has just been debated by Full Council and in line with section 19.1 of the Constitution no proposal to overturn a Council resolution shall be considered by the Council within six months of the resolution. It was noted as an action that Mr Dignum proposed that Cllr Donna Johnson and Cllr Tim Johnson be invited to observe the Economic Recovery Group where he would welcome their input.</p>
<p>Vision Review and The High Street Recovery and Transformation</p> <p>Jane Hotchkiss/ Tani Murphy</p>	<p>The Committee discussed the visions, that set out strategic aims and objectives which are considered to reflect the nature of those areas and an action plan which identifies lead partners and the key actions for delivery, for Chichester, Midhurst, Petworth, Selsey and East Wittering and Bracklesham. Mr Palmer was appointed to the Chichester High Street Group to assist in the delivery of the High Street recovery and transformation.</p> <p>The Committee recommended to Cabinet that the Vision work should continue to be supported. This was subsequently agreed by Cabinet.</p>
<p>Asset Transfer Policy</p> <p>Vicki McKay</p>	<p>This report was brought to the Committee following a request by members that a report on the development of an Asset Transfer Policy be included in the Committee work programme for 2018-19. Due to other work having to take precedence officers had not been able to bring a report to the Committee until now. The Committee noted the information on the Council's disposals policy and the supporting legislation, and was advised that work on an asset realisation project to provide a detailed analysis of the Council's current land ownership was currently on hold, but would be resumed once officers had been released from Covid 19 work.</p>
<p>Review of Planning Operations and setting up a Task and Finish Group</p> <p>Andrew Frost/Tony Whitty</p>	<p>This item was brought before the Committee because of concern expressed that the planning management function had too much focus on development control; the rigour in which planning contraventions were enforced; and the amount of time it took to complete the compulsory purchase of the Tangmere Strategic Development site. The Committee was pleased to see that a move to development facilitation had been taken on board by Mr Frost and the Development Management Team. It was suggested that the matter be kept under review and if members were happy with the change of focus towards facilitating development, as part of the Covid 19 Recovery Plan that would be a good outcome.</p> <p>At the meeting Mr Frost concurred that the suggestions put forward by members were reasonable. There were a number of measures in the Covid 19 Recovery Plan that he and Mr Whitty, planned to assess and improve on the effectiveness and efficiency of the way each Team in Development Management worked.</p> <p>The Committee asked that a further report be brought back to the Committee for consideration at its meeting on 15 September 2020. However, it has since been agreed that the report will now be taken as part of the Covid 19 Recovery Plan.</p>

<p>Local Plan Progress and Process</p> <p>Andrew Frost/Toby Ayling</p>	<p>This item was brought to the Committee at the request of the Chairman at the Council meeting on 21 July 2020, following a public question received from Mr Dicker at that meeting raising concerns about how the Local Plan was progressing.</p> <p>The Committee was advised of the complexity of the Plan process and the significant land use planning constraints faced by the Planning Authority, which was a substantial and significant task. The Council was taking a sensible and pragmatic approach having been advised by the Planning Advisory Service not to submit the Plan prematurely. Officers were currently working on a revised Plan programme and members would be kept informed of progress.</p>
<p>Housing Standards Financial Assistance and Enforcement Policy 2021-26</p> <p>Liz Reed</p>	<p>The committee's views were sought on the Housing Standards Financial Assistance and Enforcement Policy 2021-26 prior to consultation with stakeholders, which was noted.</p>
<p>Events Strategy and Events Policy</p> <p>Laurence Foord/Sarah Peyman</p>	<p>The Committee's views were sought on the draft Council's Events Strategy and Policy, which was recommended to Cabinet. This was subsequently agreed by Cabinet.</p>
<p>Review of Business Improvement District (BID)</p> <p>Tania Murphy</p>	<p>The Committee noted an update relating to Chichester Business Improvement District (BID)</p> <p>The Committee agreed that the potential outcomes and additional paragraph, "Officers and the Chichester BID are invited to look at best practice elsewhere in the country in developing the BID, and or alternative bodies, to enhance its work in Chichester" captured the Council's expectations of a Business Improvement District in the future.</p>
<p>Future Customer Services Delivery</p> <p>Kerry Standing</p>	<p>The Committee received details of proposals to modernise the Council's Customer Service Centre and achieve financial savings, which included moving away from the traditional face to face service to a modern service promoting digital channels and online payments. The Committee commended the report and invited Cabinet to ensure all screen views and printed documents are in plain English, ensure the telephone response times are an absolute priority, ensure the Council keeps the highest standard of services where people are visiting our offices and to ensure support for people with limited access to IT or limited IT skills. This was subsequently agreed by Cabinet.</p>
<p>Chichester Festival Theatre Monitoring Report</p> <p>Sarah Peyman</p>	<p>The Committee received the annual report from Chichester Festival Theatre. The lockdown period, caused by the Covid 19 pandemic had resulted in the Theatre having to cancel all of its summer season. However the Theatre had continued with its community work and had provided a digital theatre experience. The Committee noted its performance was in line with the agreed monitoring framework.</p>
<p>Pallant House Gallery</p>	<p>The Committee received the annual Pallant House Gallery report and</p>

<p>Monitoring Report</p> <p>Sarah Peyman</p>	<p>noted the closure of the Gallery for part of the year due to the lockdown period, caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. The Committee agreed that performance is in line with the monitoring framework and that in future a light touch report will be presented to the Committee with no PHG officer attendance required.</p>
<p>Visit Chichester Monitoring Report</p> <p>Sarah Peyman</p>	<p>The Committee received and noted the annual update from Visit Chichester, including the re-branding of the organisation to “The Great Sussex Way”. It was agreed that Visit Chichester is achieving performance in line with the Service Level Agreement</p>
<p>Leisure Services Performance Review</p> <p>Sarah Peyman</p>	<p>The Committee received an update on the progress of the Leisure Services Review and was satisfied that the contractor is achieving satisfactory levels of performance against the outcomes and the key performance indicators set out to be delivered in the period to the end of September 2020 following the reopening of leisure centres in July 2020. The Committee recommended the report to Cabinet and asked that a note of thanks to all staff involved in the running of the leisure services be passed onto Cabinet. This was subsequently agreed by Cabinet.</p>
<p>Future Services Framework - Efficiency Savings and Policy Options</p> <p>Andy Buckley</p>	<p>The Committee received a report and provided comments on the Future Services Framework. The provision of a more detailed breakdown of the Summary of Efficiency Savings and Policy Options to be provided to the Committee members was requested by the Committee.</p>
<p>Hyde Housing</p> <p>Louise Rudziak/Linda Grange</p>	<p>The Committee heard from representatives from Hyde Housing. The representatives had received a set of questions in advance of the meeting on the following themes: Housing Stock and Standards, Contracted Works, Service Charges, Communication and Engagement with tenants, Covid 19 and miscellaneous in advance of the meeting. The representatives also answered questions raised by members at the meeting.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked the Hyde representatives for their attendance. The work being undertaken by Hyde, especially during the Pandemic, was appreciated. Hyde undertook to provide members with details of Hyde’s reporting arrangements with a contacts list. Officers had regular meetings with Hyde and in future regular meetings would also take place with Mr Hunter, Director of Resident Services and Mr Sutton, Cabinet Portfolio holder for Housing. The Council was working with Hyde’s Development Team on their Hyde Asset review.</p>
<p>Asset Management</p> <p>Vicki McKay/ Kevin Gillett</p>	<p>The Committee considered and noted a report on the Council’s built and land assets and the work to date and ongoing mechanism in place for their management and review.</p>
<p>Social Prescribing Update</p> <p>Elaine Thomas</p>	<p>The Committee received an update following the end of the pilot scheme in July 2020 on progress and outcomes to date. Representatives from the Hyde Foundation and Tuppenny Barn attended the meeting as a partner of the Council’s Social Prescribing Service. The Committee service was launched in July 2018 as a two year pilot with funding from a range of partners. The pilot ended in</p>

	July 2020 and since then we have secured Funding has been secured until March 2024 the team expanded from 4FTE to 6.5FTE.
Universal Credit Update Marlene Rogers	The Committee received an update on the impacts of Universal Credit within the district including details of how the Council is working to mitigate any negative impacts on residents.
Draft Revised Air Quality Action Plan Simon Ballard	The Committee recommended the revised Air Quality Action Plan for public consultation. This was subsequently agreed by Cabinet.
The Novium Museum Task and Finish Group Sarah Peyman	The Committee noted the actions of the Novium Museum Task and Finish Group and expressed their support for the ongoing work of the Task and Finish Group.
Efficiency Programme Progress Andy Buckley	The Committee received an update on the Efficiency Review and Policy Options identified as part of the Future Services Framework and noted the current projected total annual revenue savings for the programme, of which 75% of the total figure is assumed in the Council's financial projections.
Southern Gateway Jane Hotchkiss	<p>The Committee noted the progress to date on the Southern Gateway Regeneration project and refer any recommendations to Cabinet to consider. The meeting was positive and reviewed the project in detail, which enabled work to continue in relation to Southern Gateway.</p> <p>The Committee recommended 1) That a Southern Gateway regeneration project is strongly supported and is seen as important to the long term prosperity of Chichester City and surrounding community and the Masterplan is retained; 2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports ongoing negotiations with Henry Boot Developments subject to the outcome of the LEP funding and a viable scheme; and 3) That a recommendation is brought to Full Council prior to signing the Development Agreement. This was subsequently agreed by Cabinet.</p>
Southern Water - Water Capacity and Quality in the District Andrew Frost/Toby Ayling/Tony Whitty	<p>The Committee heard from representatives from Southern Water, Environment Agency and Natural England (Ofwat sent their apologies) meeting to discuss the following and to respond to a set of questions from members submitted in advance of the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water capacity and headroom at treatment plants • Water capacity challenges for Local Plan • Responses to planning applications including delays in connectivity • Nitrates affecting watercourses and harbours • Chichester Harbour water quality • Discharge into harbour and water courses • Drain surcharging

	<p>Members gained considerable knowledge from the meeting but continue to remain very concerned about progress on the main topics discussed. They urged Southern Water, The Environment Agency, and Natural England to continue to work together in support of Chichester District Council in the matters raised at this and other meetings to ensure that the Local Plan can be delivered in a timely manner. Members felt they would like to have the opportunity to invite the organisations back to a future meeting of the committee on any remaining areas of concern.</p>
--	--

Task & Finish Groups

The work of the Task and Finish Groups is described below along with the outcomes achieved.

<p>Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group C Apel, K Hughes (Chairman), H Potter, S Sharp and N Graves</p>
<p>Areas of focus – The purpose of the Group is to examine the medium/long term viability of setting up a local housing company as an independent arm’s length organisation wholly owned by the council and operated on a not-for-profit basis. Outcomes – The findings/ recommendations of the Study will be reported back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee/ Cabinet and will feed into future housing policy and funding requirements. The TFG had been due to report its findings to the Committee on 26 January 2021. However, following an initial meeting the TFG was put on hold due to a lack of resources. Discussions are now underway with officers to recommence the TFG.</p>
<p>Budget Task and Finish Group Overview and Scrutiny Members: Mrs C Apel, Mr A Moss and Mr D Palmer Corporate Governance and Audit Committee Members: Miss H Barrie, Mr J Brown and Mr F Hobbs (Chairman)</p>
<p>Areas of focus – This group has representatives from both OSC (performance and policy remit) and Corporate Governance and Audit Committee (governance and risk remit). The group considered the projected revenue budget variations for 2020-21 and 2021-22. Outcomes – Member involvement with the budget spending plans, in terms of testing the changes in the budget from 2020-21 to the draft budget 2021-22, prior to presentation of the Budget to Cabinet in February 2021. Officers/SLT to consider the way forward for 2022-23 budget, potentially early briefings in the cycle for the parties to consider their own budget proposals.</p>
<p>Corporate Plan Task and Finish Group Mrs C Apel (Chairman), Mr A Moss, Mrs T Bangert and Mr D Palmer</p>
<p>Areas of focus – To consider mid-year progress on actions and targets in the Corporate Plan and to identify any further action that needs to be taken to challenge poor performance and to reduce any risk to an acceptable level. Outcomes – Overall the Group considered that there were satisfactory explanations for areas of the Corporate Plan where targets had not been met; many were unsurprisingly impacted by Covid, some were outside the council’s control, and others simply needed more time or resource in order to rectify. Intention is to initiate Member engagement with Group Leaders in June.</p>

Housing Register and Allocation Scheme Task and Finish Group

G Barrett, N Graves (Chairman), K Hughes and S Sharp (A Moss- substitute)

Areas of focus – Undertake a review of the Housing Register and Allocation Scheme with a view to making recommendations for changes where considered appropriate.

Outcomes – The proposals for change recommended by the TFG included the following areas: Eligibility for the Housing Register, Local Connection requirements, Priority Banding, Approach to Applicants with disabilities, Management of the application and bidding process and Special consideration for Members and ex-members of the Armed Services. Prior to making changes, it is envisaged that consultation will take place with Registered Provider partners and other stakeholders in the supported housing sector as well as West Sussex County Council. Beyond this, the next step would be to revise and republish the Housing Allocation Scheme following approval by Cabinet. Cabinet has now approved the Scheme and asked officers to undertake a further review of the Rural Parish Connection and bring forward proposals for further changes if considered necessary.

WSSC Select Committee liaison

Tracie Bangert was the council's representative on the West Sussex County Council Health and Adults Social Care Select Committee (HASC). The council can submit concerns regarding any health issue to the HASC for consideration via its Business Planning Group (BPG) which meets quarterly.

West Sussex Joint Scrutiny

The West Sussex Joint Scrutiny Steering Group, a group of scrutiny chairmen from the seven districts and boroughs of West Sussex who get together to suggest issues which are of common interest to two or more authorities for joint scrutiny review. The Group meets as and when the need arises and a Chairman for the Group is appointed at each meeting. No joint issues have been considered this year.