

Chichester District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2022-23

Introduction from the Chairman

I would first like to thank all members of the Overview and Scrutiny committee for the work and support given to me over the time I was chair. I would especially like to thank Tracie Bangert for being such a helpful vice chair. Thanks must also go to Louise Rudziak, Pam Bushby and Edward Baker-Moore, and all the officers who have carried out the work and produced reports for us as a scrutiny committee.

Over the year we have looked at many issues which are detailed later in this report, in addition we have also received reports from a number of task and finish groups; notably Affordable Housing, Budget, Corporate Plan and the Novium.

As the report indicates, it was a full and busy year, and I felt some items were more successful than others. Overview and Scrutiny is so important especially where we have a Cabinet system. I would recommend that anyone on this important committee should try and attend The Centre for Public Governance training held in London. It used to be called The Centre for Public Scrutiny. It is always so helpful to find out how other councils function when it comes to Scrutiny and Governance.

I offer all members of the new committee my best wishes during this new council, and I will be interested to see which issues are brought to the committee to be scrutinised.

Clare Apel, Outgoing Chair of Overview and Scrutiny

The Role of Scrutiny

The Local Government Association explains that the 'principal power of a scrutiny committee is to influence the policies and decisions made by the Council and other organisations involved in delivering public services.' In essence the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is vital as a voice of the community and must be responsive to the concerns of the public. Public confidence in politics and transparency is strengthened when people see Members scrutinising what matters to them.

Scrutiny, therefore, acts as a 'counterweight' to the powers of the executive, representing the way in which non-executive Members of the Council can hold Cabinet to account.

Whilst Scrutiny does not engage in policy formulation, it has an important role in reviewing existing Council policy and decisions. The Committee has the power to ask for a decision, taken by the Cabinet, to be reconsidered before it is implemented. This is called a 'call-in'.

The Committee has no 'formal' power to compel anyone to make changes. As such, it benefits from maintaining a positive relationship with the Cabinet, increasing its 'soft' power to influence decisions and encouraging the executive to implement recommendations.

The Committee may require any Member of the Cabinet, any Chief Officer, and /or any divisional manager to attend before it to explain a decision 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.

Members Training

Members of the new Committee, following May's local elections, will receive external training from Paul Cutler of the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny ahead of the meeting on 4 July 2023. Additional briefings will be given by Louise Rudziak, Director for Housing and Communities and Overview and Scrutiny Lead Officer.

Key Areas of Work and Outcomes/Achievements

Areas of focus	Outcomes-achievements
<p>Questions to Chief Inspector Nick Bowman</p> <p>21 June 2022</p>	<p>The Committee were pleased to welcome the new Chief Inspector of Sussex Police Nick Bowman.</p> <p>CI Bowman explained that he took over as District Commander a few months ago and his area of responsibility is for the Chichester District and Arun District as far as Littlehampton. In addition to this role, he is the lead Officer in charge of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) for the whole of Sussex and takes a lead role in the response to Domestic Abuse in West Sussex.</p> <p>CI Bowman responded in detail to questions from members and the public.</p> <p>The Committee were pleased to discuss a range of policing issues relating to the District and to obtain answers for residents. These included PCSO and Police Numbers and increased incidents of crime. (Full details of the questions and answers are available as part of the public minutes).</p>
<p>Statement from the Leader, Cllr Eileen Lintill</p> <p>21 June 2022</p>	<p>The Leader of the Council was invited to the Committee to provide an update on the Levelling Up Fund bid, and the Future Services Framework.</p> <p>The discussion was valuable in providing information in the public domain as to the preliminary work carried out and plans in place to mitigate against the expected challenges faced resulting from the cost-of-living crisis.</p>
<p>Leisure Services Performance Review</p> <p>20 September 2022</p> <p>Sarah Peyman</p>	<p>Sarah Peyman presented the report, which provided details of the leisure management contract from April 2021 to March 2022. She informed members due to the impact of Covid-19 a contract variation had been in place as the leisure market recovered and assured members that performance and the provision.</p> <p>The Committee also heard from Stuart Mills from Everyone Active, who presented their annual report.</p> <p>Mr Mills explained that this had been a transition year following the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. He was pleased to inform Members that there are now more people learning to swim than ever before, with 1300 children registered in the swim school and 15 schools using the site. He also commended to members the community projects run by Everyone Active including Community Moves, physical activity intervention for vulnerable adults and the Reboot scheme. He also noted that various organisations use the site as a hub in providing community services, such as UK Harvest and West Sussex Mind.</p>

	<p>The Committee were pleased with the level of success achieved, especially given the adverse circumstances experienced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>The Committee considered the report from Everyone Active and noted the performance for 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.</p>
<p>Pallant House Gallery Monitoring Report</p> <p>14 November 2022</p> <p>Sarah Peyman</p>	<p>Mrs Peyman advised that following review of Pallant House Gallery's (PHG) annual report, that it had achieved all the activities identified within the monitoring framework. She added no concerns had been raised following a Council review of the gallery's finances.</p> <p>The Committee then heard from Simon Martin of PHG, who thanked the Council for the continued funding and support provided, especially in light of the disappointing news that PHG would not receive further Arts Council funding. He further highlighted some of the ongoing difficulties faced by the gallery associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Mr Martin presented a slide show for the Committee detailing some of the exhibitions and work carried out in the past year. Giving particular mention to the valuable work done in collaboration with organisations including MIND and Stonepillow.</p> <p>The Committee were pleased to receive the update and congratulated Mr Martin and his team.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>The Committee noted that 2021/2022 annual report from Pallant House Gallery and its performance in line with the monitoring framework.</p>
<p>Chichester Festival Theatre Monitoring Report</p> <p>14 November 2022</p> <p>Sarah Peyman</p>	<p>Mrs Peyman introduced the report, noting that Chichester Festival Theatre (CFT) were working very hard to overcome the challenges presented by the pandemic, noting also that no concerns had been raised following a review of CFT's accounts.</p> <p>Kathy Bourne and Simon Evans, of CFT, highlighted to the Committee some key activities carried out in the past year.</p> <p>Particular attention was given to some of the community work carried out by CFT in particular the hiring of a new creative therapist for young people, aiming to help in alleviating mental health struggles.</p> <p>It was reported that the Youth Theatre now has 898 children registered.</p>

	<p>Referencing CFT's green agenda, the Committee was informed that CFT have planted 25 new trees in Oaklands Park to offset their carbon footprint. It was also highlighted during the meeting that a fleet of bicycles was made available when actors are staying locally to encourage greener modes of transport around the City.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>The Committee noted the 2021/22 annual report from Chichester Festival Theatre and its performance in line with the monitoring framework.</p>
<p>Chichester Business Improvement District Update</p> <p>14 November 2022</p> <p>Tania Murphy</p>	<p>Helen Marshall, from the Chichester BID, presented a report updating members on the activities of the BID.</p> <p>The key message was support of the high street, Ms Marshall identified mid-summer, Easter, and Christmas as key times of the year for local shops and businesses. She also explained to the committee a change in focus relating to the previously emphasised linear analysis of footfall. Chichester BID would focus on analysing visitor 'dwell time', visitor spend and visitor frequency to provide a more realistic and detailed analysis of the performance of the high street.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>The Committee noted the update relating to Chichester Business Improvement District.</p>
<p>Southern Water Questions to Dr Toby Willison</p> <p>17 January 2023</p>	<p>The Committee welcomed representatives from Southern Water, the Environment Agency and Natural England.</p> <p>This item generated a great deal of public interest, and a total of five public questions were put to Southern Water. We also heard a number of questions from CDC Councillors who do not sit on the OSC Committee.</p> <p>Detailed answers are available to read, as provided by Southern Water, in the minutes of the meeting.</p>
<p>The Great Sussex Way Annual Report</p> <p>Jane Hotchkiss/Sarah Peyman</p> <p>17 January 2023</p>	<p>Mrs Hotchkiss introduced the report and explained that The Great Sussex Way (TGSW) is the main destination management organisation for the district. The Council provide funding to TGSW, with the current agreement running to 2025</p> <p>The Committee also heard from Danielle Dunfield, CEO of TGSW. Mrs Dunfield was pleased to report that the targets set had been met, and explained that the report provides a summary of the main achievements and activities. She noted that the central goal of the organisation is to</p>

	<p>improve footfall to the district, and to increase dwell time when visitors to come – promoting spending in local businesses.</p> <p>Members were informed of three key themes to promote the district:</p> <p><i>Chichester as the wine destination city of England.</i></p> <p><i>Outstanding culture in outstanding countryside.</i></p> <p><i>The district as a green destination.</i></p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>The Committee received the Annual report from TGSW and assessed the performance in line with the Service Level Agreement.</p>
<p>Domestic Food Waste Collections</p> <p>John Ward/Kevin Carter</p> <p>18 January 2023</p>	<p>Mr Carter introduced the report and explained that it considers changes to food waste legislation; he noted however, that CDC, as other Local Authorities, are waiting for clarity from the government on new requirements and funding schemes.</p> <p>It was agreed that a further report would come to the Committee in January 2024, with Mr Carter agreeing to bring any updates before then to the Committee through the urgent items provision.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>The Committee noted that in the absence of any clarity regarding the Government's requirements and funding, that the Council should not yet commence the implementation of a separate domestic food waste collection service, but instead keep a watching brief and update members as and when the Government progresses matters.</p>

Area of Focus	Outcomes
<p>Novium Task and Finish Group</p> <p>Reported back to Committee June 2022</p>	<p>The report to the Committee was given by Cllr Roy Briscoe who had chaired the group.</p> <p>He highlighted the following work undertaken by the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening hours were reviewed to balance visitor numbers and staffing costs at weekends - Charged exhibitions have been introduced to generate income - Energy saving methods have been implemented - External banners have been placed in Tower Street advertising the museum and helping to guide tourists - Social media marketing has been successfully expanded. <p>He explained that at the latest meeting in April Members felt the outcomes had been achieved and the work within the remit of the Task and Finish Group was completed, with matters moving forward being directed through either the Economic or Housing and Communities Panels.</p> <p>Cllr Briscoe concluded highlighting that the Novium delivers many social and economic benefits to the District and noting that visitor numbers have increased significantly from 12,000 p/a in 2012 to 51,000 in 2019/20 which likely would have exceeded 60,000 were it not for the challenges presented by COVID-19.</p>
<p>Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group</p> <p>Reported back to Committee September 2022</p>	<p>The report to the Committee was given by Cllr Tracie Bangert.</p> <p>Cllr Bangert highlighted the technical and complex nature of the subject area, thanking members and officers for their support. Cllr Bangert also paid tribute to the late Cllr Kevin Hughes who had been very interested in the concept of a housing company and had asked for it to be investigated. The group had been able to focus on the detail and had come to an informed decision working within the framework of the terms of reference.</p> <p>There was considerable discussion amongst members about the importance of the provision of affordable homes within the district. Members also expressed the need for an increase in public understanding around the term itself and the difference between social housing and affordable homes. Mrs Rudziak informed members the report considered all elements of affordable housing.</p> <p>Further details of the discussion can be seen in the minutes of the meeting.</p> <p>The Committed noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The findings of the Task and Finish Group as set put in paragraph 4.11 of the report

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii) The further work to be undertaken by the Housing and Communities Panel regarding the Housing Register, the banding arrangements, and the Allocations Scheme iii) The ongoing work with Planning Policy to review the Council's Affordable Housing Policy as part of the Local Plan Review.
<p>Corporate Plan Task and Finish Group</p> <p>Reported back to Committee November 2022</p>	<p>The report to the Committee was given by Cllr Carol Purnell.</p> <p>Cllr Purnell highlighted the key outcomes from the group, and thanked officers for their work.</p> <p>There was some discussion regarding the Council's Climate targets.</p> <p>In a vote, with 2 abstentions, the Committee noted the report from the Corporate Plan Task and Finish Group and confirmed it is satisfied that the Council is achieving satisfactory levels of performance against the targets and activities in 2022/23 Corporate Plan mid-year report.</p>
<p>Budget Task and Finish Group</p> <p>Reported back to Committee January 2023</p>	<p>A verbal report was given to the Committee by Cllr Carol Purnell.</p> <p>Cllr Purnell informed the Committee that the group considered the Five-Year Financial Model and the Resources Statement as background context, which helped to inform the development of the Annual Budget to be debated by Council in February, ahead of the spending plans being agreed by Full Council in March.</p> <p>She informed members that senior officers had given an update on the high-level significant variances, moving from the approved 2022-23 Budget requirements of £15.015 million up to the £15.696 million currently proposed for the 2023-24 budget.</p>

Joint Scrutiny

There were no joint scrutiny meetings over the year.

The New Chair and Committee will be considering joint scrutiny opportunities in due course including, amongst others, any possibilities to work with West Sussex County Council.