

Aspire & Prosper

Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report

2015 – 2016

Committee Chair:

Cllr J. Goodall

Committee Members:

Cllr T. Clements (Vice-Chair)

Cllr M. Couchman

Cllr M. Greatorex

Cllr G. Hirons

Cllr R. Kingstone

Cllr S. Peaple

Cllr E. Rowe

Cllr P. Standen

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6	1	11 th June 2015	Appointment of Chair & Vice Chair Work Plan Proposed to initially scrutinise services around Teenage Pregnancy and Education (esp. GCSE grades)
7	2	23 rd June 2015	Mr Oliver & Cllr A. James addressed the committee Work Plan approved
8	3	21 st July 2015	Teenage Pregnancy scoping document submitted Education scoping document submitted Teenage Pregnancy update Education Scrutiny update
9	4	3 rd August 2015	Call-in of 'Service charges for Council owned stock' report considered at Cabinet on 9 th July
10	5	25 th August 2015	Education Skills Board update GCSE Results update Teenage Pregnancy update
11	6	20 th October 2015	Mr D. Poole & Mr T. Leese addressed the committee re Post-16 Education and Teen Pregnancy Inequality of life expectancy in Tamworth agreed as the next priority on the scrutiny agenda
12	7	24 th November 2015	Education update Inequality in Life expectancy scoping document submitted Inequality in life expectancy postponed until January meeting, due to absence of chair Scrutiny of future regeneration of high-rise flats proposed
13-14	8	19 th January 2016	Leader of the Council, Cllr D. Cook addressed the committee re future regeneration of high-rise flats in Tamworth. No scoping document has been received
13	9	8 th March 2016	Agenda issued Inequality of life expectancy in Tamworth scrutiny R. Barnes, S. Pointon & J. Topham to address committee
14	10	5 th April 2016	Inequality of life expectancy in Tamworth update Education scrutiny A. Goodwin or K. Adderley to address committee <i>Subject to change</i>

Introduction

Chair's Report

This year has seen my introduction as Chair of the Aspire & Prosper scrutiny committee, a position that has introduced both rewards and challenges. As Chair, my main objective has been to steer the committee towards looking at the bigger issues facing Tamworth, in order to try to determine the best way of moving forwards with these, whilst working within current financial constraints.

Looking through the Health and Key Service Performance Indicator reports, there were three issues I chose to propose to the committee as potential scrutiny items. These were:

- Teenage Pregnancy in Tamworth
- Inequality in Life Expectancy across Tamworth
- New Business Start-ups

Education scrutiny, especially around GCSE performance levels and post-16 opportunities, was also proposed by Cllr R. Kingstone, who had been looking at Educational issues for a number of years.

The figures reported in the most up-to date Health Report for Tamworth showed that Tamworth had the joint highest conception rate in England among 15-17 year olds, at an average of 44 per 1000 females. This is not only much higher than the national average for England: 24.3 per 1000, but also much higher than many other areas with similar or higher levels of deprivation and I wanted to understand not only why this was, but also how we were addressing the issue, both at Borough and County level.

Teenage Pregnancy and Educational attainment were two of the largest issues facing Tamworth at the start of the scrutiny year and as both are national indicators, it seemed appropriate to give them high priority on the agenda.

It was decided, by both committees, that Teenage Pregnancy would be a joint scrutiny with the Healthier & Safer scrutiny committee, chaired by Cllr. A. James.

Education would be tackled as a sub-committee, led by Cllr R. Kingstone, who was responsible for the scoping document.

The Health Report for Tamworth also showed a difference in life expectancy across the Borough of 7 years, between areas of highest and least deprivation. This seemed a significant figure to me and I decided to put it forward to the committee because I

think that although it could be considered a health issue, I wanted to determine if there were other relevant contributing factors; housing, isolation, finance etc and what we are doing to address these. It was also decided to make this a joint scrutiny topic, along with the Healthier & Safer scrutiny committee.

The Key Service Performance Indicators Report for Tamworth showed that new business growth in the Borough was sluggish, with only 4 first-time business start-ups having occurred within the previous year. Given Tamworth's strategic placement in terms of both location and involvement in Local Enterprise Partnerships, I felt that this would be worth scrutinising in order to ascertain how Tamworth can better take advantage of any business growth opportunities around these factors.

Other subjects proposed for scrutiny were:

- Local plan regeneration
- Britain in bloom
- Review of the petition scheme

It was agreed that the committee would review consideration of these topics, following completion of the other larger agenda items.

Teenage Pregnancy

Much work has already been undertaken this year around the issue of high teenage conception rates, including:

- A radio interview with Touch FM
- A visit to Cornerstone Housing Charity
- A presentation by Mr T. Leese
- Meetings with relevant officers
- Production of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment report

It has been difficult to engage other members of the committee with regard to Teenage Pregnancy, but I feel the profile of the issue has at least been elevated and awareness raised that the root causes and solutions are not entirely health based. Much of the initiative direction seems to be toward the use of Multiple Agency Centres in schools, which have been shown to be effective in other areas. A review of the MACs is currently being undertaken by Staffs County Council, with the report due in June, when scrutiny around the issue will be resumed. This will be an ongoing joint scrutiny with the Healthier and Safer scrutiny committee.

Education Sub-Committee Update – Cllr R. Kingstone

The scrutiny of education has, to some degree, been one of the main elements of work that the Aspire and Prosper scrutiny committee has undertaken for the past three to four years. This year it was decided to focus on several elements:

1. The scrutiny of GCSE performance by our five secondary schools
2. The post 16 'offer' provided to our young adults

As in previous years the level of frustration for members this work has provided has been quite high.

Members started by analysing the summer 2015 GCSE outcomes. For many years now Tamworth has been in the lower quartile with regard to both GCSE outcomes and progress. Members noted that there was a very slight improvement in our GCSE performance, but in most of our schools it was still very significantly lower than both the LEA and national averages.

It was decided to ask the Education Skills Board to attend a meeting to discuss what work it had been doing with regard to this. However, matching dates and finding someone from the board who could attend proved difficult.

As 2015 moved on it became apparent that our secondary schools felt that the work of the ESB was being repeated by the head teacher's forum. This resulted in poor engagement. So to avoid duplication the A & P committee was informed that an ESB rep would attend the head teacher's forum meets when appropriate.

Meanwhile the education subgroup continued looking at the post 16 offer. Disturbing news emerged that various courses were being cancelled at South Staffs College. After posing appropriate and challenging questions it became apparent that this line of enquiry was going nowhere.

So all things considered it was decided to put a hold on the work of the education subgroup pending a more detailed report from the ESB or what ever form it would exist in once the changes to its engagement with our secondary schools had taken place.

It should be noted that at recent full council meeting Cllr S Peple posed an excellent question to the leader of the council with regard to the vocational centre at Torc. It was agreed that the Chief Exec would write to all schools to ask why they were reducing the numbers of students being sent to Torc.

The education subgroup await the schools response with anticipation.

Meeting 1

11th June 2015

Appointment of Chair & Vice Chair

The ongoing scrutiny agenda was rescinded, except for scrutiny involving the Public Transport Consultation, which was continued until an update had been received, as a member of London Midland had previously been invited and was expected to attend

The 2015-2016 Work Plan was proposed, with initial scrutinies to look at services around the High conception rates amongst 15-17 year olds in Tamworth and Education, with particular emphasis on low GCSE results and post-16 education opportunities.

The figures reported in the most up-to date Health Report for Tamworth at that time showed that Tamworth had the joint highest conception rate in England, among 15-17 year olds, at an average of 44 per 1000 females, whilst the educational attainment levels at GCSE, although fluctuating, had shown no significant improvement for a number of years. It was decided that this would be a joint scrutiny with the Healthier & Safer scrutiny committee

These were two of the largest issues facing Tamworth at the start of the scrutiny year and as both are national indicators, it seemed appropriate to give them high priority on the agenda. It was decided that Education would be tackled as a sub-committee, led by Cllr R. Kingstone, who was responsible for the scoping document.

Other items for consideration were Inequality of life expectancy across Tamworth and New business growth, both to be looked at following the first two large scrutiny topics.

Other subjects proposed for scrutiny were:

- Local plan regeneration
- Britain in bloom
- Review of the petition scheme

It was agreed that the committee would consider these topics again following completion of the other items.

Meeting 2

23rd June

Mr Oliver from London Midland attended the meeting and addressed the committee with regard to the Public Transport Consultation. This was extended from the previous work plan in order to facilitate the visit, as the invitation had already been extended. Cllr A. James also attended via invitation, as he was the lead on the Transport Consultation scrutiny and was responsible for inviting Mr Oliver.

Mr Oliver gave a presentation and answered a number of questions, particularly with regard to Tamworth station and the West Coast Railway. The committee were informed:

- Off-peak ticket prices start at 9am, but once on the train, it is not possible to buy an off-peak ticket, so once on the train, even after 9am, full price must be paid
- Fares are set nationally, so charging structures are responsible for the determination of pricing, leading to discrepancy in the cost of fares at certain times
- A new member of staff has been employed in Tamworth Station
- A new ticket machine has been installed in Tamworth Station
- Work is scheduled to begin on the lifts in 2016
- Handrails / safety treads were to be updated during 2015
- New rail lines are required on West Coast railway
- The reason most trains only have 4 carriages, when 8 would be more appropriate, for example on trains to Euston, is that some stations are not able to accommodate longer trains, as their platforms are too short or because of level crossings at certain points

The following Work Plan was formally approved, with Subjects for Consideration to be for immediate scrutiny and Subjects Proposed to be reviewed at a later date:

Subjects for Consideration
High Conception Rates in Under 18s
Low GCSE Results
Inequality in Life Expectancy Across the Borough
New Business Growth
Subjects Proposed
Local Plan Regeneration
Britain in Bloom
Review of Petition scheme

Meeting 3

21st July 2015

A Teenage Pregnancy Scoping Document was submitted by Cllr J. Goodall:

‘Teenage Pregnancy Rates: A Scoping Document to Scrutinise the High Conception Rates in 15-17 Year Olds in the Borough of Tamworth’

An Education Scoping Document was submitted by Cllr R. Kingstone:

‘Education - A Scrutiny Proposal’

Scoping documents will be attached separately

Updates were given to the committee on both documents

The Work Plan was considered and the following approved:

Committee Date	Subjects for Consideration
25 th August 2015	Education Skills Board – Invite someone from the board to speak
25 th August 2015	Low GCSE Results
20 th October 2015	High Conception Rates in Under 18s
TBC	Inequality in Life Expectancy across the Borough
TBC	New Business Growth
TBC	Local Plan Regeneration
TBC	Britain in Bloom
TBC	Review of Petition Scheme

Meeting 4

3rd August 2015

This meeting was a call-in of 'Service charges for Council owned stock' report, which had been considered at Cabinet on 9th July 2015

The meeting was attended by Cabinet Members: Cllr D. Cook and Cllr M. Thurgood and the following officers:

T. Mustafa (Head of Landlord Services)
S. Philp (Housing Manager)
N. Missenden (Public Relations Officer)
J. Clift (Democratic and Elections Officer)

This was an extra-ordinary meeting of the Aspire & Prosper Scrutiny Committee, from which the public were excluded and because the report contains exempt information (as defined in Paragraph 3 in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972) it will not be included in this report.

A number of questions were asked of the officers and Cabinet members, followed by much discussion.

The outcome of the call-in was:

Resolved: That following discussion, this committee is satisfied with the decision taken in principle by Cabinet on 9th July 2015 about the proposed consultation on Service Charges.

Meeting 5

25th August 2015

An Education Skills Board update was given by Cllr J. Goodall, who had been unsuccessful in effecting a commitment to attend from anyone on the ESB, despite numerous attempts

Press and Public were excluded from the meeting and an update was given on GCSE Results across Tamworth, by Cllr R. Kingstone

Cllr J. Goodall gave an update on Teenage Pregnancy, following a visit to Cornerstone Housing Charity and a radio interview given in order to try to raise awareness of the issue. No feedback was received from Touch FM following the interview

The committee approved the following Work Plan:

Committee Date	Subjects for Consideration
20 th October 2015	Education Skills Board – Invite someone from the board to speak
24 th November 2015	High Conception Rates in Under 18s
TBC	Inequality in Life Expectancy across the Borough
TBC	New Business Growth
TBC	Local Plan Regeneration
TBC	Britain in Bloom
TBC	Review of Petition Scheme

Meeting 6

20th October 2015

Mr D. Poole addressed the committee re Post-16 Education. He covered:

- Apprenticeships and the Apprenticeship Ambassador Programme, which promotes Apprenticeships to businesses
- Appointment of a Project Manager to look at vocational opportunities in Tamworth, eg through the Local Enterprise Partnership and Young Enterprise Initiatives
- Funding Agency – working with Councils and private organisations to create apprenticeships
- Drop-out rate of approximately 30% for apprenticeships
- An overall target of 3 million apprenticeships by 2020
- 6th form education and quality of provision
- Get Set Programme – to engage young people who drop out of school at 16
- South Staffordshire College (who have been awarded capital funding to help develop a Technical Centre at the Tamworth campus)

Mr T. Leese addressed the committee re Teenage Pregnancy, covering areas of good practice and problems around the issue. A report has been produced: 'Focus On Teenage Pregnancy in Tamworth' which is a joint strategic needs assessment and can be found in Appendix 2.

Inequality of life expectancy in Tamworth was agreed as the next priority on the scrutiny agenda and the committee agreed the following work plan:

Committee Date	Subjects for Consideration
24 th November 2015	Inequality in Life Expectancy across the Borough
TBC	New Business Growth
TBC	Local Plan Regeneration
TBC	Britain in Bloom
TBC	Review of Petition Scheme

Meeting 7

24th November 2015

The meeting was chaired by Cllr T. Clements, due to the absence of the Chair, Cllr J. Goodall

An Education update was given by Cllr R. Kingstone, who proposed that due to the delay in engagement from various agencies, the item be postponed for discussion until May/June 2016

A scoping document to look at Inequality in Life Expectancy across Tamworth was submitted by Cllr J. Goodall:

'Inequality in Life expectancy: A Scoping Document to scrutinise the Inequality of life expectancy of residents living in different areas of Tamworth'

The document will be attached separately

The Inequality in life expectancy scrutiny was postponed until the January 19th meeting, due to the absence of the Chair

Scrutiny of Future Regeneration of the High-rise Flats was proposed by Cllr Dr S. People. This was not voted for, but was accepted upon the principle that members did not object and was added to the Work Plan, which was approved thus:

Committee Date	Subjects for Consideration
19 th January 2016	Inequality in Life Expectancy across the Borough
19 th January 2016	High Conception Rates in Under 18s
May/June	Education
TBC	Future Regeneration for the High Rise Flats
TBC	New Business Growth
TBC	Local Plan Regeneration
TBC	Britain in Bloom
TBC	Review of Petition Scheme

Meeting 8

19th January 2016

Leader of the Council, Cllr D. Cook, addressed the committee with regard to the scrutiny of 'Future Regeneration of the High-Rise Flats' representing the Director of Housing & Health and the Portfolio Holder, as neither was available to attend the meeting. Cllr Cook answered questions and provided information including the following:

- There are currently no plans to regenerate the high-rise flats
- The high-rise flats are still popular with the over 55s
- A stock condition survey was undertaken two years ago, which covered approximately 60% of all council properties
- The approximate cost of the survey was £40-45 per property
- The Council need to be financially aware over the next 30 year period, in order to ascertain what is viable, even though the budgets are set every 5 years, as, moving forward, it will be something that needs reviewing in the future
- The required remedial works to the balconies will be undertaken following the results of the structural survey, which is currently in process

No scoping document was received for this scrutiny. This was requested at the meeting, with the subject to be reviewed after the structural report is received

The results of the structural survey have been requested by the Scrutiny Officer: W. Johnson and the Chair

The scoping document 'Inequality in Life Expectancy: A scoping document to scrutinise the Inequality of life expectancy of residents living in different areas of Tamworth' was discussed and ideas raised with regard to the best way to begin the scrutiny of this subject.

A proposal was submitted by Cllr M. Greatorex that the Officers prepare a briefing note around the subject, in order to ascertain what services/initiatives are already in place, before deciding what the committee need to look at in relation to this topic.

A briefing note has been requested and at the time of writing this report, it has been confirmed that R. Barnes, S. Pointon and possibly J. Topham will be attending the meeting on 8th March, in order to address the committee on issues relating to the subject.

Meeting 8 (Continued)

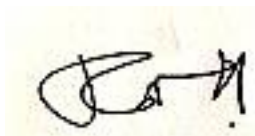
19th January 2016-03-05

Education scrutiny was discussed, with Cllr S. People requesting further information about post-16 provision in Tamworth.

Officers have been invited and at the time of writing either A. Goodwin or K. Adderley are expected to attend in April, to report on findings of a meeting of the ESB in February.

The following Work Plan was approved:

Committee Date	Subjects for Consideration
8 th March 2016	Inequality in Life Expectancy across the Borough
5 th April 2016	Education
TBC after structural report received	Future Regeneration for High Rise Flats
TBC after review of MACs	High Conception Rates in Under 18s
TBC	New Business Growth
TBC	Local Plan Regeneration
TBC	Britain in Bloom
TBC	Review of Petition Scheme



Councillor Joy Goodall

Chair of Aspire and Prosper Scrutiny Committee