

Council

Xxx 2021

Report of the Chair

Annual Report of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Exempt Information

None.

Purpose

To provide full Council with an overview of the work and activities undertaken by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee during the year 2020/21. The draft Annual Report was received by the Committee at its final meeting in the last municipal year and any updates agreed by the Chair following that meeting.

Executive Summary

This report covers the following:

- Chair's overview
- Working Groups
- Recommendations made in the year to Cabinet
- Committee Terms of Reference
- Membership and Attendance
- Training & Effectiveness
- Work Plan
- Resource implications

Recommendations

Council is requested to:

- Note the Annual Report of the Committee;

Chair's Overview

This year, as result of the COVID-19 pandemic, has seen all the Committee's meetings move to online (remote) meetings. To accommodate this, careful consideration has been given to agenda content for each meeting and to the scheduling of additional meetings where necessary.

The Committee met twelve times in the 2020/21 municipal year, four (28 July 2020, 18 January 2021, 28 January 2021 and 24 March 2021) of those meetings were additional meetings which were scheduled to consider urgent business and /or matters referred to it by full Council.

The work ethic and input from committee members has been excellent and that is reflected in the volume of items considered this year.

In terms of the work of the Committee during 2020/21 municipal year, this has included:

1. Policy Development and /or Review

This is where the Committee has contributed to the Council's policy development processes and / or where the Committee has considered the implementation of policies and feeding back scrutiny views to Cabinet.

The Committee has received:

- (a) A Capital Outturn Report which advised members of the final outturn of the Authority's Capital Programme for 2019/20. The Committee sought various clarifications and in particular requested that a review of property funds be undertaken, prior to further investments under existing delegation being made;
- (b) Member Training Update which had been due to be considered at the March 2020 Committee meeting which was cancelled as a result of the pandemic. This update was provided to the July 2020 meeting and provided an overview of the member training activities since March 2020 including the delivery of the systems and member support to move to remote meetings, as well as the provision of online training for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committee by an external trainer. Recommendations were made to Cabinet. Whilst a response is awaited from Cabinet on some of the recommendations, the majority are in progress as part of this year's member induction and training;
- (c) As a result of the pandemic, a report of the Initial Impact of the Pandemic on the Council's Business Aims prior to consideration of that item by Cabinet in the summer of 2020. This led to the Committee making recommendations to Cabinet;
- (d) The Cemeteries Policy for review following a referral from full Council to the Committee. The Committee was requested to expedite this review and held two additional meetings in January 2021 to undertake the review and make recommendations to both Cabinet and Council. In summary, following extensive debate and consideration of information provided by Officers, the Committee recommended that the Cemeteries policy be referred back to full Council with a recommendation to leave the policy unchanged. The Committee agreed to make two further recommendations to Cabinet which were that the Cemeteries regulations be reviewed on a regular basis, and that Cabinet consult with the wider public investigating an alternative scheme of memorialisation and to further look at whether it is feasible and maintainable.
- (e) Legal Services Review Implementation – the Committee welcomed the detailed report on the first 11 months of operation of the new shared legal service.

2. Monitoring (scrutiny)

This is where the Committee has undertaken monitoring of the Council's performance and progress. In particular the Terms of Reference for this Committee set out the specific areas for scrutiny which include scrutiny of the achievement of the Council's strategic priorities and scrutiny of the performance and functions of other public bodies, statutory undertakers or other such organisations who provide or facilitate the provision of public services within the Borough. To assist in the achievement of this the Committee's remit includes scrutinising matters related to:

- (a) Forward Plan
- (b) Quarterly performance reports
- (c) Corporate plan
- (d) Major Council led projects
- (e) Investment strategy
- (f) HRA function
- (g) Bi-annually review and scrutinise matters relating to the Local Authority Trading Company's activities and performance.

Over the year 2020/21, there has been regular review of the Forward Plan at most meetings to identify areas which would either require pre decision scrutiny and /or post implementation scrutiny.

During this year the revised format for the Committee's Work Plan was used to track progress on scrutiny of matters identified via the Forward Plan. Examples of areas which were identified for the Committee's scrutiny, as a result of regular Forward Plan consideration were:

- Assembly Rooms
- Review of Write Offs
- Update on Potential Legal Actions
- Review of Cabinet Key Decisions
- Customer Portal – post implementation review

The Committee has also during the year considered the Quarterly Performance Reports. The Committee has received the relevant quarter's draft report and the meeting has been attended by senior Officers and/or relevant Cabinet member, normally the Leader. This consideration has been prior to Cabinet's receipt of the report and has enabled the Committee's comments, where relevant, to be taken on board prior to Cabinet's consideration. Further details are given below.

The Committee reviewed Key Cabinet Decisions made in the previous (2019/20) municipal year and considered that there were no further items to bring forward to this Committee at that time. This exercise will be repeated at the start of the next (2021/22) municipal year in respect of Key Cabinet Decisions from this municipal year (2020/21).

In terms of major Council led projects, the Committee considered:

1. The Assembly Rooms
The Committee held an additional meeting in July to consider this project. Recommendations were made to Cabinet regarding the management process for future projects worth over £1million pounds and projects of importance to the reputation of the council as well as the creation of a minimum governance structure and project guidelines.
2. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme
The Committee had considered an interim report on the LCTR scheme in November 2019 and made recommendations to consider further scenarios. It was reported that due to the pandemic it was recommended that the review

be postponed to 2021 and that no change be recommended to the current scheme other than the usual alignment with housing benefit.

3. Solway (Tamworth) Limited

The Committee received an update report on this item in August 2020 and a second update at the March 2020 meeting.

4. Potential Legal Actions Update

The Committee received an update in October 2020 and March 2021. A recommendation was made to Cabinet to involve both the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holder in any decisions in respect of any legal proceedings.

5. Quarterly Performance Reports (QPRs)

The Committee has received, and scrutinised, each quarter's performance report prior to Cabinet review and approval. The recommendations from this Committee's working group during the previous municipal year to include an executive summary report for each quarter's report showing a summary dashboard of performance to track trends in performance was implemented. During consideration of the QPRs in November 2020 and February 2021 further recommendations were made by the Committee to Cabinet. Details of these are set out below.

6. Gungate Public Consultation Report.

3. Call-in

This is where a decision of the Executive has been called in to be considered by a scrutiny committee, after a Cabinet decision has been made but ahead of its implementation, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

No decisions have been called in to date.

Working Groups

No use was made of working groups this year. The Committee's business was addressed by full Committee meetings and this is reflected in the number of meetings held.

Recommendations made to and Responses received from Cabinet

Recommendations were made to Cabinet on the following Reports and Cabinet's response is highlighted:

| Scrutiny meeting item | Cabinet Response |
|--|--|
| Capital Outturn Report – a review of property funds be undertaken and be scrutinised by the Audit & Governance Committee - 15 July 2020 meeting | Cabinet referred the matter to the Audit & Governance Committee for their review and that the review be taken to Council in December 2020 – 30 July 2020 Cabinet meeting |

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| | <p>At the October 2020 Audit & Governance Committee meeting it was agreed that planned investments in property funds be deferred.</p> <p>At Council in December 2020 it was agreed that the planned investments in property funds be deferred, with a review during Spring 2021 when the situation should be clearer, to inform future investment plans.</p> |
| <p>Member Training Update – recommendations covering the attendance at training sessions, in particular at regulatory training sessions, including improving the visibility of member attendance at regulatory training sessions, as well as actions to improve new member induction -</p> <p>15 July 2020 meeting</p> | <p>Recommendations considered, and agreed that Cabinet and Officers would go through the recommendations in the report and feedback to the Committee at the first opportunity.</p> <p>30 July 2020 Cabinet meeting</p> |
| <p>Initial Impact of the Pandemic on the Council's Business Aims – Recommendation to look at the longer term finances of the heritage assets –</p> <p>28 July 2020</p> | <p>Cabinet agreed the recommendations from the Committee at its meeting on 10 September 2020.</p> |
| <p>Progress Report on Tamworth Assembly Rooms – Recommendations regarding the management process for future projects worth over £1million pounds and projects of importance to the reputation of the council as well as the creation of a minimum governance structure and project guidelines –</p> <p>28 July 2020 meeting</p> | <p>Cabinet agreed the Committee's recommendations at its 30 July 2020 meeting</p> |
| <p>Update on Potential Legal Actions – Recommended that the Leader of the Council be involved in any decisions in respect of any legal proceedings, in addition to the relevant Portfolio Holders –</p> <p>8th October 2020 meeting</p> | <p>Cabinet noted the Committee's recommendation at its 22 October 2020 meeting.</p> |
| <p>Quarterly Performance Report – Q2 recommendation – Recommendation that Officers are requested to ensure that the Scrutiny Chairs are advised of the timelines of their Corporate plan projects so there is an opportunity for scrutiny to participate in the process, as necessary.</p> | <p>Cabinet approved the recommendations from the Committee at its meeting on 3 December 2020.</p> |

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| Recommendation that council staff in the collections team be thanked for their work at this difficult time. - 19 November 2020 meeting | |
| Cemeteries Regulations – Recommendation that the Cemeteries Policy is referred back to full Council with a recommendation to leave the policy unchanged. Recommended to Cabinet that Cabinet consult with the wider public investigating an alternative scheme of memorialisation and to further look at whether it is feasible and maintainable. Recommended to Cabinet that the Cemeteries Regulations be reviewed on a regular basis, as to be agreed by Cabinet - 28 January 2021 meeting | Cabinet noted reference back to full Council to leave policy unchanged and accepted that the policy is correct, and agreed that the Cemeteries Regulations should be reviewed on a five yearly cycle and that the Portfolio Holder and Assistant Director would look to pull together realistic options that can be consulted on with the public on how memorialisation in the town can be achieved that is appropriate, at its meeting on 4 th February 2021. |
| Quarterly Performance Report – Q3 recommendation – That Cabinet be advised of the areas where additional information had been sought by the Committee, in the form of an additional page being added to the report following the meeting – £ February 2021 meeting | The QPR report Q3 was updated following the Corporate Scrutiny Committee meeting to include the additional information and Cabinet approved the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations at its meeting on 18 February 2021. |

Committee Terms of Reference

The Committee Terms of Reference are set out in Article 6 in the Constitution which can be accessed [here](#).

The Primary Scope, the General Role and the Specific functions detailed there have been largely achieved through the Committee's work this year.

Members and Members Attendance

The following sets out the membership and attendance of members at the 12 Committee meetings during 2020/21:

| Member | Number of meetings attended (out of 12) |
|------------------------|---|
| Thomas Jay (Chair) | x(12) |
| Ben Price (Vice-Chair) | x(12) |
| Robert Bilcliff | x(12) |
| Simon Goodall | x(12) |
| Michael Oates | x(12) |
| Simon People | x(12) |
| Patrick Standen | x(12) |
| Martin Summers | x(12) |
| Peter Thurgood | x(12) |

Training and Effectiveness

A Chairs and Vice-Chairs online training session was held in early June 2020. This training was provided by an external provider and focussed on chairing skills generally and, more particularly, chairing remote (online) meetings.

In early November 2020, a Successful Scrutiny online training session was held. This was led by a different external provider and the workshop was designed to bring together scrutiny councillors, cabinet members, other members and senior officers to consider how to ensure scrutiny is successful and effective in Tamworth. It provided an overview of key aspects of successful scrutiny, including clarifying purpose and roles, understanding critical processes such as developing a strategic direction, prioritising a work programme and ensuring impact.

Work Plan - Items identified for next municipal year

The existing Committee Work Plan is as available at Appendix 1.

Please note that it is expected that the activities of the Committee may continue to be impacted by the ongoing COVID19 pandemic.

Resource Implications

None to note.

Report Author

Councillor T Jay
Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Committee's Work Plan

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(to be inserted following final meeting of municipal year)

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