

The Annual Report of the Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Committee

Chair – Councillor Carol Dean

Vice-Chair – Councillor Ben Price



Membership

Members (2022/23)	Appointed for municipal year	2023/24	Retirement from Committee
Carol Dean (Chair)	May 2023		
Ben Price (Vice Chair)	May 2023		
Ben Clarke	May 2023		
Rosemary Claymore	May 2023		
Tina Clements	May 2023		January 2024
John Harper	January 2024		
Jason Jones	May 2023		
Jeremy Oates	May 2023		January 2024
Lewis Smith	November 2023		
Paul Turner	January 2024		
Lee Wood	May 2023		November 2024

Chair's Overview

Welcome to the annual report of the Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Committee who met 8 times in the 2023/2024 municipal year.

This year has seen some changes to the Committee's membership, including the appointment of myself, Councillor Carol Dean as Chair and Council Ben Price as Vice-Chair.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Committee who retired from this Committee during the year, Councillors Lee Clarke, Tina Clements and Jeremy Oates.

During the past year, the Committee has had a varied area of focus which has included regular updates of the Future High Street Fund Project, as well as regular reviews of the dual stream recycling service.

Cabinet Members and Officers were invited to attend meetings of the Committee to provide information and to answer questions on these areas as well as other local partners.

The Committee has used the Council's Forward Plan to focus its work and to help identify areas which would either require pre decision scrutiny and /or post implementation scrutiny.

I would like to thank all members of the Committee, Officers and other stakeholders who took part in these meetings for their valuable contributions during the year.

Councillor C Dean

Chair

Committee's remit and function (Terms of Reference)

The Constitution sets out the Committee's remit which can be summarised as to provide effective scrutiny of the achievement of the Council's strategic priorities and external providers in securing the primary outcome of creating a safe and sustaining thriving local economy and making Tamworth a more aspirational and competitive place to do business, with a focus on:-

- Infrastructure
- Education
- Employment/Inward Investment
- Town Centre
- Open Space and Play
- Public Space Protection Orders

The Committee acts as the Crime and Disorder Committee for the purposes of section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 and in this regard received the Tamworth Community Safety Partnership Plan and considered Public Safety Protection Orders.

Forward Plan Consideration: Over the year, there has been regular review of the Forward Plan at all meetings to identify areas which could either require pre decision scrutiny and /or post implementation scrutiny, and which were not otherwise included on the Committee's Work plan.

Future High Street Fund

In late 2018 Tamworth was awarded a share of the £830 million pound Future High Street Fund to transform the town centre into a busy, thriving heart of the community.

The Future High Street Fund is currently a quarterly item for the Committee to monitor the progress of the project.

The Committee received updates on the programme in June 23, October 23 and January 24. Two of the updates were heard in an exempt forum due to the nature of the report.

The Committee asked questions around the removal of street furniture, whether consideration had been given to local events, and the scope of works around Middle Entry, amongst other. The Committee asked for clarifications around communications with local businesses and received an update on how this was being conducted.

The Committee endorsed the reports and made three recommendations at the January 2024 meeting.

The item continues to be on the Committees work plan for the next municipal year.

Spotlight Item – Joint Waste Service

During the municipal year 2023/2024 the dual stream recycling service continued to be an area of focus for the Committee, following on from the Implementation of the service in May 2022, receiving updates in June 23, October 23, and January 24 and March 24 on this and the general Joint Waste Service operations.

The Committee received updates on operational performance, resident participation, tonnage performance, financial performance and upcoming Joint Waste Service projects which included details of a new recycling campaign, a round review, fleet renewals, reviews of the commercial waste service, the upcoming mandatory weekly collection of food waste and the long-term strategy for the service.

The Committee heard that the service had delivered well over the Christmas 2023 period; that the service has only had one rejected load since it went live. However, it was noted that dry recycling rates had dropped slightly.

The Committee questioned reasons for missed bin collections and what was being done to address this. This was attributed to several factors; however, it was highlighted that measures were being put in place to try to combat this including a dedicated Officer to manage the missed assisted collections process including holding conversations with crew members to understand why bins may have been missed.

The Committee were interested in the upcoming mandatory food waste collections and how this would be introduced and were updated that the food waste collections would be mandatory from 2026 and that the service had been awarded £1.7 million for the infrastructure. The Committee were advised that whilst extra staff and vehicles would be required that this would be a smaller simpler service and that contracts were already in place for disposal. It was noted that whilst tonnage would be important, the aim was to change behaviour around food waste.

The Committee asked whether the introduction of Electric Vehicles was an option for the upcoming fleet replacement and whether the fleet needed to be replaced all at once. It was confirmed that that contract hire for the entire fleet was due to expire so although there would be a significant cost, upgrading the entire fleet meant that they could benefit from economies of scale with the purchase. However, it was noted that EV vehicles would not be an option for the 2025 upgrade.

The Committee asked for clarification around the impact of the growth of the district and also the process for bringing the high-rise flats and Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's) under the service – at the update in January it was confirmed that these had now been brought under the management of the service and that work continued to be done within this area. The service has two recycling Officers in place and advised that resident buy-in was key to the success of the service in these areas.

The Committee also considered in further depth the following items:

1. Museum Accreditation – July 2023

The Committee received the report to seek endorsement for the adoption and implementation of documents relating to the 2023 Accreditation review (Arts Council England) in respect of Tamworth Castle Museum and Collections. It was acknowledged by the Committee that the report was extremely comprehensive. It was confirmed that the status was key to grant funding and that the team would be working with local history and heritage groups. The Committee endorsed the recommendations prior to the report being approved at Cabinet.

2. Extension of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) Dog Control and Alcohol restricted zones – September 2023

The Committee received the report to consider the recommendations to extend the PSPO (Tamworth Dog Control Order) and to cease the restriction of alcohol in a public place (Amington Alcohol Restricted Zone) but continuing to monitor the situation, as well as delegating power to the Portfolio Holder. Before endorsing the recommendations, the Committee considered how many fixed penalty notices had been issued and how easy it was to reinstate the PSPO for Amington if needed.

3. Staffordshire Sustainability Board Update – Adaptation Plan – September 2023

The Committee received the report to adopt the draft Staffordshire Adaptation Policy which had been developed with the Staffordshire sustainability Board. The Committee sought clarification over what steps the Council had taken since declaring a climate change emergency in 2019. It was acknowledged that the impact of climate change is complex and cannot be looked at in isolation. The Committee endorsed the recommendations with the report.

4. Local Plan – September 2023 and February 2024

The Committee received two reports for the local plan, in September the Local Plan Issue and Options Consultation responses came to committee prior to publication and approval at Cabinet for endorsement. The committee expressed concern that only one business had responded to the report and questioned whether this was a reflection on whether they felt that they would be listed to.

The next report was received in February 2024 to look at Local Plan Progression Options report for a revised approach of the delivery of a new local plan for Tamworth resulting from Government's proposed changes. The Committee sought clarification over what the omitted 'preferred options' stage looked like and over the resource within the team in place to meet the deadlines as well as the costs of consultants. The Committee endorsed the recommendation to be submitted to Cabinet to approve the approach recommended.

5. Nature Recovery Declaration – November 2023

The Committee received the report to declare that nature is in crisis and commit to the recovery of nature across the Borough and wider Staffordshire. During Scrutiny of this item the Committee welcomed the Declaration and questions were asked around how the progress would be reported and concerns were raised around how the strategy would be embedded in day to day operations before giving their support to the declaration before it was presented to Cabinet

6. Community Safety Plan including Crime Figures Update and Environmental Crime Policy – November 2023 and March 2024

The Committee received the first report in two sections, the environmental crime update and the Community Safety Plan.

The environmental crime update followed on from the Government introducing a new anti-social behaviour action plan, enabling Councils to review their policies.

The Committee asked questions around the new policy and the cameras that were now in place to support this. They expressed concern that the bureaucracy around the bulky waste service may make using other means of waste disposal more appealing. It was noted that only one fixed penalty notice had been issued for fly-tipping. The Committee highlighted that education was important. The Committee endorsed the recommendations with an additional recommendation seeking approval for fines to be awarded at a maximum level.

Following on from this Committee requested an item be added to the workplan to review the bulky waste service.

The Community Safety update was then presented which included an update from the Chief Inspector, Rob Neeson. The Committee asked whether the use of ring doorbell had helped with reducing crime.

The Committee agreed that they would like to continue to see a twice-yearly update and received a further update in March 2024 where the Committee were given an update on all of the priorities within the plan.

As well as acknowledging the work done by the Police the Committee asked for questions about the location of the police station and the police presence in the town centre as well as clarification on the Domestic Abuse figures, Pubwatch and how knife crime awareness was rolled out across schools.

7. Fire Safety Update – February 2024

The Committee received a written update from the Assistant Director Assets on the Council's approach to fire safety across its assets. The Committee endorsed the contents of the report

Exempt items

1. Off Street Car Parking Tariff and Structure Review – October 2023

A report was considered by the Committee in relation to the changes to tariffs and pricing structures across the Council's off-street carparking estate; the procurement of a new cashless, app-based system; no changes to the current permit structure and associated fees. The Committee endorsed the seven recommendations going to Cabinet and made a further recommendation.

2. EV Charging (Strategy Update) – November 2023

The Committee received the report to present a draft Public Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy for Tamworth. Following consideration of the report the Committee endorsed the update.

3. CCTV Update – March 2023

The Committee received an update on the council's 24 hour CCTV monitoring shared service with the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Committee endorsed the contents of the reports as well as moving a recommendation that the Chair write to the operatives thanking them for the work that they done on behalf of the Committee and Council.

Matters referred to Scrutiny from Cabinet or Council

1. Securing Dosthill Park

At the meeting in September a matter was referred to the Committee following a petition that was discussed at Full Council around 'Securing Dosthill Park' a site which travellers has recently set up an encampment. An written update was received from the Operations Manager and from Environmental Health as well as the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health who was in attendance at the meeting. The Committee agreed to continue the working titled 'Review of Policy/Engagement relating to migrant Travelling Community' and to include this matter.

2. Ending Plastic Pollution

At the meeting in September an item was added to the work plan following a referral from a motion at Full Council around ending plastic pollution. The Committee was provided with a written update from the Operation Manager of the Joint Waste Officer as well as an update from Tamworth Borough Council Officers. Following the discussion the Committee made a recommendation to Cabinet on this matter.

3. Improving the Water Quality within the rivers in Tamworth

At the meeting in March 2024 the Committee considered an item referred to them from a motion at Full Council. It was agreed that the item would be added to the work plan for the next municipal year and that they would try to invite someone from the Trent Rivers Trust in to discuss how the Council could help in this area.

Working Groups

During the year the Committee had the following items on its work plan –

To consider Facilities for HGV Drivers in Tamworth continued from the previous municipal year alongside a group to review policy / engagement relating to migrant travelling community (To include securing Dosthill park petition)

Forward Plan

Through reviewing the Forward Plan, the Committee identified the Councils updated Decant Policy as an area of scrutiny and it was agreed that a post implementation review would be carried out in the next municipal year.

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 recommendations	Cabinet Response
<p>10th October 2023: Off Street Car Parking Tariff and Structure review</p> <p>The Committee made a recommendation to Cabinet (Exempt item).</p>	<p>At the Cabinet meeting on November the 9th it was resolved that Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approved the recommendation from Infrastructure Safety & Growth Scrutiny Committee.
<p>21st November 2023: Environmental crime Policy Update 2023</p> <p>The Committee endorsed the Officers recommendation with an additional recommendation that:</p> <p>We set all of the fines at a maximum level.</p>	<p>At Cabinet on the 20th of November Cabinet approved the 5 recommendations which incorporated the recommendation made by the Committee.</p>
<p>18th January 2024: Future High Street Fund Quarterly Update</p> <p>The Committee made 3 recommendations to Cabinet (Exempt item).</p>	<p>At the Cabinet meeting on 25th January 2024, It was Resolved that Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agreed to provide a response IS&G Committee, including recommendation 3 where a full timeline of options will be considered at Council in February which will update on which options should be considered. 2. Agreed that the Chair of I S & G Committee will be invited to attend all Future High Street Fund Board meetings as a none voting member.

18th January 2024: Ending Plastic Pollution

It was resolved by the committee to make the following recommendation:

1.Look at the feasibility of a trial to strategically site some dual use bins around the town with ongoing communications to explain and encourage the correct use.

At the Cabinet meeting on 1st February 2024, it was resolved that Cabinet –

1.Approved the recommendation from Infrastructure Safety & Growth Scrutiny Committee.

Members Attendance

Member	Number of meetings attended
Carol Dean (Chair)	8 out of 8
Ben Price (Vice Chair)	4 out of 8
Ben Clarke	8 out of 8
Rosemary Claymore	5 out of 8
Tina Clements	3 out of 4
John Harper	2 out of 2
Jason Jones	3 out of 8
Jeremy Oates	1 out of 5
Lewis Smith	4 out of 4
Paul Turner	2 out of 2

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