

The Annual Report of the Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Committee

Chair – Councillor Marion Couchman

Vice-Chair – Councillor Lee Wood



Membership

Members (2022/23)	Appointed for 2024/2025 municipal year	Retirement from Committee
Marion Couchman (Chair)	May 2024	N/A
Lee Wood (Vice-Chair)	May 2024	N/A
Craig Adams	May 2024	N/A
Marie Bailey	May 2024	N/A
Lee Clarke	May 2024	N/A
Margaret Clarke	May 2024	N/A
Jeremy Oates	May 2024	N/A
Ben Price	May 2024	N/A
Natalie Statham	May 2024	N/A

Chair’s Overview – *to be completed following final edits by the Chair*

Welcome to the annual report of the Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Committee who met 10 times in the 2024/2025 municipal year.

Having returned to Tamworth Borough Council as Councillor it has been a privilege to serve as the Chair of the Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee has welcomed Cabinet Members, officers, and a number of partner organisations to contribute to the Committees work this year.

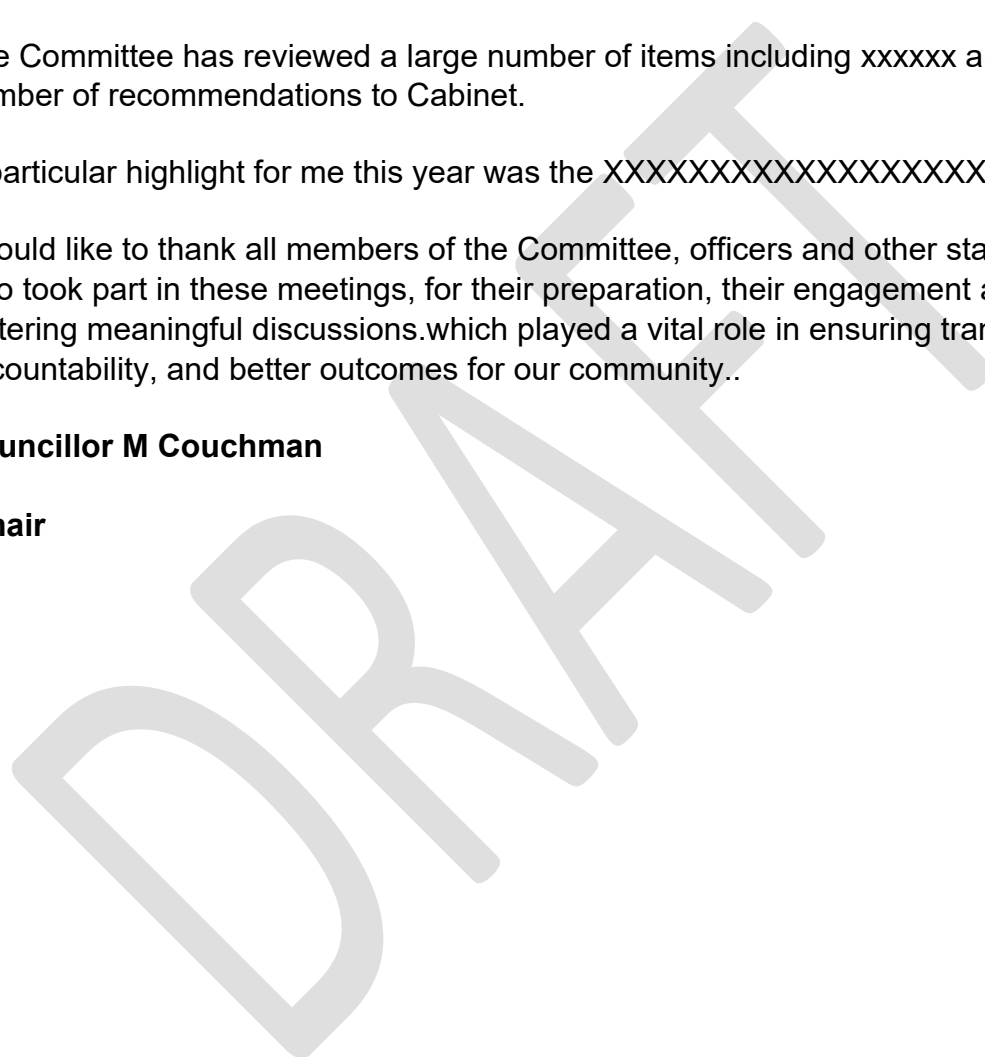
The Committee has reviewed a large number of items including xxxxxx and made a number of recommendations to Cabinet.

A particular highlight for me this year was the XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

I would like to thank all members of the Committee, officers and other stakeholders who took part in these meetings, for their preparation, their engagement and fostering meaningful discussions which played a vital role in ensuring transparency, accountability, and better outcomes for our community..

Councillor M Couchman

Chair



Committee's remit and function (Terms of Reference)

The council's 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 a 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.

The Committee receives a number of regular updates this has included:

Community Safety Partnership update

In November 2024, the Committee received its first community safety update for the municipal year. In addition to the Assistant Director Partnerships, the Chief Inspector also attended.

The Committee asked questions around what work was being done on community cohesions, in particular around faith groups. The committee were concerned around county lines and what was being done to combat drugs in the night-time economy, and clarification was sought around the spikes in residential burglaries. The Committee acknowledged the good policing involved.

(Update following March meeting)

Future High Street Fund

The Committee continued to receive quarterly updates following the award of £830 million pound of Future High Street Funding in 2018. The first update was an exempt report in July 2024, with a further report received in October 2024. The Committee asked questions around the appointment of new contractors, spend deadlines, communications, and whether delays were expected.

The Committee were due to receive a further update in January 2025 but following an update provided to Full Council during the month, this item was removed from the work plan.

Nature Recovery Declaration

Following Tamworth Borough Council's declaration that nature is in crisis and a commitment to the recovery of nature across the borough and wider Staffordshire in 2023 part of which stated that the Infrastructure Safety and Growth Scrutiny Committee be tasked with monitoring the Local Nature Recovery Action Plan the Committee subsequently received two further updates in this municipal year.

The Committee received an update in August which included the draft Bio-Diversity Consideration where they sought clarification over how the policy will ensure that the right trees were planted in the right place, around grass verges and how much greenspace the Council managed as well as highlighting the importance of ensuring that open spaces were managed correctly to ensure they do not become litter traps.

(March update to be included)

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Spotlight Item – Joint Waste Service

During the municipal year 2024/25 the Joint Waste Service (delivered by Lichfield District Council in partnership with Tamworth Borough Council) continued to be an item of interest for the Committee who considered a number of different areas –

Operations and Performance Update

The Committee continued to receive regular performance updates from the Joint Waste Service, looking at performance, tonnage data, resident participation, financial performance and other joint waste service projects. The Committee received updates in August and November 2024 as well as a written update in March 2025. In August the Committee sought clarification around budgets including the costing model, potential overspends and plans as to how spend could be reduced and/or maintained. There was a focus on the service employees including the proportion of employees to agency staff and the cost difference. The Committee were interested in whether Tamworth could have its own recycling centre, but this was confirmed to be a county function.

(Add in March update)

The Annual Garden Waste Subscription Charge

In August 2024, the Committee received the report to seek ISAG's consideration and support of the approval to Cabinet to increase the garden waste subscription fees for 2024/25. The Committee felt unable to endorse the recommendations as the report did not contain costs to justify the increase and the officers were unable to provide these at that time. The Committee asked for the report to return later in August with a full breakdown of requisite costs.

Following receipt of an updated report the Committee supported the recommendation to Cabinet to agree the annual garden waste subscription increase.

Joint Waste Service Update and Fleet Procurement

The Committee considered an exempt report to seek Scrutiny's support of recommendations made to award the contract for the renewal of the Joint Waste Service fleet to be presented to Cabinet on 8th August 2024. Following scrutiny, the committee supported all recommendations to be presented to Cabinet.

Food Waste Service

In November 2024, the Committee received an exempt report relating to the upcoming food waste service. The committee endorsed the recommendations to be presented to Cabinet.

Review of the Bulky Waste Service

In August 2024, following the Committee's request, a review was conducted of the bulky waste service where they were provided with a report explaining the level of service that is currently provided. The Committee asked questions around how cost levels were decided and whether there was scope to make an income from disposal, if links could be made with community groups to help with the removal of goods to reduce cost burden for people, and whether repairs shops could be prudent. The Committee sought clarification around the items that could be collected and whether a service that gave an opportunity for residents to dispose of bulky waste items in different areas periodically was a possibility. The Committee endorsed the update and resolved to set up a working group on this matter.

The Committee also considered in further depth the following items:

1. Tamworth Electric Vehicle Strategy

Following adoption of the Staffordshire County Council Electric Vehicle Strategy in 2023 the Committee received a report detailing the work undertaken in developing the Tamworth Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy and requested approval from Cabinet for the adoption and formal publication of the Strategy. The committee asked questions around the types and number of charges being considered, clarification on pricing, and whether any income would be received. In addition to endorsing the report the committee moved an additional recommendation for Cabinet.

2. Maintenance of Estates and Open Spaces

Following a request from the Committee, in October 2024 they received a presentation from the Assistant Director for Environment, Culture and Wellbeing around the maintenance of estates and open spaces within the borough. The Committee sought clarification around several areas including: trees and the departments timescales for responding to issues, the procedure for identifying responsibility for tree work, and the issues they had where trees belong to the County Council. The Committee asked about communication around maintenance works and highlighted the importance of making residents aware which works sat with the borough and which were a County Council responsibility. Clarification was sought on cyclical maintenance; and whether any areas were prioritised, issues with staffing, and the process for collecting grass cuttings. The Committee acknowledged the variety of important work conducted by street scene.

3. Heritage Engagement Coordinator

The Committee received a report with an update on the range of activities and outcomes achieved for Tamworth's residents by the Heritage Engagement Co-ordinator post which included a video of some of the activities. The Committee acknowledged the importance of bringing Tamworth's heritage to the Community, in particular the younger generation and reaching the vulnerable and isolated. The Committee supported the continuation of the post.

4. Updated Asset Management Strategy

The Committee received the report to present the Asset Management Strategy linked to the Council's built assets for approval. The Committee discussed driving forward growth in the town through heritage, and discussed a recommendation that asked Cabinet to investigate how we could maximise the usage of our historic buildings to increase visitors to the town through collaboration with partners. The Committee carried a recommendation that when disposal of assets is being

discussed all ward Councillors are to be consulted before a decision is made. The Officer included this into the draft disposal's policy.

5. Climate Change Update

The Committee received a report to update them on the authority's work around climate change. They agreed to adopt the proposed Climate Action Plan and Climate Adaptation Strategy and endorsed the Climate Change Communication Plan, and the Staffordshire County Council (SCC) net zero by 2050 planning policy. The Committee asked questions around double glazing in council housing, solar panels on council buildings, the possibility of more orchards/tree planting; as well as working with community groups in this area and looking at carbon dioxide use at Marmion House; and whether the use of hydrogen had been considered. In addition to endorsing the report the Committee moved a recommendation for Cabinet.

6. Revised Local Development Scheme

In January 2025, the Committee reviewed a report to seek endorsement of the recommendations being presented to Cabinet on the 20th of February 2025 in relation to the publication of the Revised Local Development Scheme. The Committee asked about the changes in the National Planning policy Framework as well as questions about the county's contribution to the plan, the development of infrastructure and the staffing required in this area. The Committee commented that a number of documents sit alongside the plan but that there was nothing relating to houses of multiple occupancy (HMO's) and a recommendation was moved in relation to this.

7. Improving Water Quality Within Tamworth's Rivers

To be update following the meeting on the 18th February.

8. Road Infrastructure Within Tamworth

(To be updated following March meeting)

The Committee were due to consider a review of the Decant policy but this has been delayed until the new municipal year.

Working Groups

The Committee has two working groups;

- Facilities for HGV Drivers in Tamworth.
- Bulky waste within the community.

Recommendations made and Responses received from Cabinet

Scrutiny meeting item recommendations	Cabinet Response
<p>10th July 2024: EV Charging Strategy</p> <p>The Committee made two recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the Strategy be reviewed in two years 2) That new developments contain EV charging points 	<p>Cabinet: 18th July 2024</p> <p>Resolved that Cabinet agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the Strategy would be reviewed in two years. The Committee proposed an amendment to second recommendation from Scrutiny and resolved that Cabinet agreed: 2) That new developments contain EV charging points, to be reviewed every two years, with the view to commit if electric vehicles are still a priority for housing developments.
<p>7th August 2024: Annual Garden Waste Subscription Charge</p> <p>The Committee resolved to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ask Cabinet to defer the increase until a full breakdown of costs has been provided and discussed at the next Infrastructure, Safety & Growth Committee at its 22nd August meeting; and 2) Agreed that each year, under delegated powers, the Cabinet member responsible for waste services will approve the price increase in consultation with the Executive Director Organisation and the Council's S151 Officer before being ratified by Cabinet. Furthermore, that the variations in pricing can be agreed through the same delegation to support promotions (for example to encourage take-up of direct debits), provided these can be funded from within the service without placing additional pressure on the MTFS. <p>22nd August 2024</p> <p>The Committee supported the following recommendation for Cabinet to agree: Approve the increase of the annual subscription fee to £41 effective 1st January 2025, with the sign-up window open in October.</p>	<p>Cabinet: 8th August 2024</p> <p>Resolved that Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) deferred the increase until a full breakdown of costs has been provided and discussed at the next Infrastructure, Safety & Growth Committee at its 22nd August meeting and then make a decision at the next Cabinet meeting; and 2) Agreed that each year, under delegated powers, the Cabinet member responsible for waste services will approve the price increase in consultation with the Executive Director Organisation and the Council's S151 Officer before being ratified by Cabinet. Furthermore, that the variations in pricing can be agreed through the same delegation to support promotions (for example to encourage take-up of direct debits), provided these can be funded from within the service without placing additional pressure on the MTFS. <p>29th August 2024</p> <p>Resolved that Cabinet</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Approved the increase of the annual subscription fee to £41 effective 1st January 2025, with the sign-up window open in October.
<p>2nd October 2024: Maintenance of Estates and Open Spaces</p> <p>The Committee made recommendations to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the Council investigates how it could provide an educational programme to inform residents of the services that Tamworth Borough Council are responsible for and what the County are responsible for. 2) Investigate the purchase of a bank cutting machine. 	<p>Cabinet: 31st October 2024</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.

12th November 2024: Asset Management Strategy 1) When disposal of assets was being discussed all ward Councillors are consulted before a decision is made.	Cabinet: 21st November 2024 2) Approved as part of the Asset Management Strategy.
11th December 2024: Climate Change Update 1) To ask cabinet to look at the feasibility of including solar panels on council properties.	Cabinet: 23rd January 2025 1) Agreed to look at the feasibility of including solar panels on council properties
29th January 2024: Revised Local Development Plan 1) To Develop a Policy for Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO's)	Cabinet: 20th February 2025 *Update following Cabinet*

Members Attendance

Member	Number of meetings attended
Marion Couchman (Chair)	XX out of 10 meetings
Lee Wood (Vice-Chair)	XX out of 10 meetings
Craig Adams	XX out of 10 meetings
Marie Bailey	XX out of 10 meetings
Lee Clarke	XX out of 10 meetings
Margaret Clarke	XX out of 10 meetings
Jeremy Oates	XX out of 10 meetings
Ben Price	XX out of 10 meetings
Natalie Statham	XX out of 10 meetings

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