

Corporate Overview Group

Chair's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Corporate Overview Group 2022/23 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. The Corporate Overview Group oversees the Council's other scrutiny group work programmes based on concerns highlighted by quarterly financial and performance monitoring reports, as well as items on the Cabinet Forward Plan and priorities within the Corporate Strategy.

The Corporate Overview Group have ensured that the executive be held to account by approving topics to be discussed at scrutiny groups. Additionally, the Group have scrutinised financial and performance management reports on a quarterly basis to ensure the smooth running of the Council.

Councillor Jonathan Wheeler Chair



What we are responsible for?

The Corporate Overview Group responsibilities include:

- Implementing identified improvements to scrutiny including training of scrutiny members, construction of new work programmes and reporting methods.
- Creating and receiving feedback on work programmes for the Growth and Development, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Groups based on the Cabinet Forward Plan, Corporate Strategy, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Investment Strategy and Transformation Plan.
- Scrutinising financial and performance management reports on a quarterly basis to ensure the smooth running of the Council and delegate any necessary investigations into concerning elements of these reports to the most appropriate scrutiny group via their work programme.
- Reviewing reports in respect of health and safety, diversity and customer feedback to ensure the Council is meeting its statutory duties.

Our work this year

During this year, the Group considered many service areas and issues within its scrutiny role, particularly:

- Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes at each meeting
- Finance and Performance Management at each meeting
- Health and Safety Annual Report
- Scrutiny Witness Guide
- Customer Feedback Annual Report
- Review of 2019-2023 Strategic Tasks.

Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes

In line with the Terms of Reference, at every meeting the Group's members considered topics for scrutiny that had been put forward by Councillors and Officers. Following discussion, the following items were added to the work programmes of scrutiny groups for the year 2022/23:

- Customer access strategy
- Protection of hedges and hedgerows (in response to a motion at Council)
- Fairham development update
- Rushcliffe oaks crematorium
- Empty homes policy including Council Tax implications
- Biodiversity net gain
- How the Borough works with partners to plan for the infrastructure required to support growth
- Sewerage infrastructure and discharge within Rushcliffe.

The Group accepted that a briefing note would be a more appropriate method of gaining a better understanding of 'policies relating to alternative energy sources'.

The development and improvement of scrutiny continues with those submitting a scrutiny matrix now being invited to attend the Corporate Overview Group meeting to present their proposed topic to the Group in person.

Quarterly Finance and Performance Management

A report focusing on the Council's finances and performance was delivered at each meeting by officers. Officers provided a summary of the key points in the meeting and the Group was able to discuss any concerns. Over the course of this year, the following issues have been discussed:

- increasing energy and fuel costs and how much were officers able to predict these increases on the Council's finances
- what tolerances are acceptable in terms of investment balances and underspends in the Capital Programme and prolonged negative variances
- the positive results in relation to the number of fly-tipping cases and dog fouling
- the delays on the Bingham Hub and Crematorium
- S106 and CIL funding from developer contributions and plans for spending this in the Council budget
- whether Bridgford Field could be used for football parking to provide an income stream
- the methods used to educate residents about how they can contact the Council
- the usage of sports pitches and the increased marketing
- staffing in the Planning Team and the use of agency staff to fill vacancies and meet specific project demands
- monies allocated to provide affordable housing or contribute S106 funding to create affordable housing stock.

Health and Safety Annual Report

The Strategic HR Manager delivered a presentation that summarised the Council's occupational health and safety performance during 2021/22. She provided data on staff training, a slight increase in the number of accidents to employees and the results of a Health and Safety audit by BDO the Council's internal auditors.

The Group asked specific questions relating to:

- the take up of fire safety e-learning and what HR officers had in place to improve staff uptake and achieve targets,
- the rationale of the Health and Safety Service Level Agreement with Bolsover District Council
- the audit recommendation for Health and Safety Risk Assessments to be kept in a central location.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Endorse the proposed health and safety objectives for 2022/23 as set out in the report.	Completed the review and update of the Violence at Work policy. Health and Safety Audit of Streetwise was completed prior to its return to the Council to ensure adequate compliance was in place. All health and safety e-learning, with the exception of the Display Screen Equipment module, have

	been moved onto the certifications which auto enrolls staff. All risk assessments are held in our performance management system and managers are reminded to review. Workplace Health Champions delivered a comprehensive programme of activities throughout the year.
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Scrutiny Witness Guide

The Service Manager – Corporate Services brought forward a draft Scrutiny Witness Guide for the group to consider. The Guide had been developed to draw attention to the provisions outlined in the Council’s Constitution in relation to expert witnesses and Councillors contributing to scrutiny. It also set out the standard for involving witnesses in scrutiny in terms of the information presented, and the balance between information provision and debate.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Approve the Scrutiny Witness Guide provided in Appendix One to the report.	The Scrutiny Witness Guide has been circulated to Lead Officers and is used to brief those asked to attend scrutiny in the capacity of an external witness whether they are internal officers or experts from other organisations.

Customer Feedback Annual Report

The Service Manager – Corporate Services summarised the customer feedback relating to both complaints and compliments made by residents during 2021/22. The Group were informed that the Council received 57 complaints at stage 1 of the complaints process, which was a slight increase compared to recent years and considered to be caused by additional pressures on Council services caused by the pandemic. The percentage of complaints escalated to stage 2 was 12 from the 57. The Group were advised that the Council received 127 compliments about its services in 2021/22.

A question was raised in respect of compensation payments and how would they be justified. The Service Manager – Corporate Services explained that compensation would be considered if it was felt that the claimant had been disadvantaged or were ‘out of pocket’. The Group were advised that the Council had not received any compensation claims during this year.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Accept the report as a true record of customer feedback in 2021/22.	No action was necessary as a result of this report.

Review of the 2019-2023 Strategic Tasks

The Service Manager – Corporate Services explained that the Corporate Strategy was due to expire in September 2023 and it was therefore timely to review what had been delivered over the last four years and to look at what the Council would wish to include in the Strategy going forward. The Group were provided with a comprehensive summary of what had been delivered against each task over the last four years including the recorded impact on the community. She noted that the Strategy had been delivered against a backdrop of the Covid-19 global pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the ongoing war in Ukraine.

The Group discussed the merits of more detailed, regular feedback on progress towards the delivery of strategic tasks. They also asked about the process and decision making for adding additional tasks to the Strategy and how criteria were applied, and resources allocated. The Group asked whether it would be possible to colour code where tasks were completed or ongoing.

In terms of potential projects moving forward into the next Corporate Strategy, the group discussed:

- the delivery the Borough’s housing requirement
- the importance of making sure that infrastructure was in place to provide the supporting community facilities on new developments
- the Council’s commitment to climate change and to be carbon neutral by 2030
- the need to review the impact of the Council’s Growth Boards.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Make suggestions about future actions that could be included in the 2023-2027 Corporate Strategy.	The development of the new Corporate Strategy is underway. Members of the Corporate Overview Group have been involved in shaping the direction of travel and assessing the individual Strategic Tasks proposed.

Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

Call-ins

The Group did not discuss any call-ins this year.

Looking forward to the year ahead

Following a busy year for the Council’s scrutiny functions, all members of Corporate Overview Group are looking forward to developing comprehensive work programmes for the scrutiny groups in 2023/24.