

Broadland Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019–20



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Committee Chairman Foreword

TO BE PROVIDED BY CHAIRMAN



Councillor Steve Riley
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman

Introduction

Broadland District Council adopts the Cabinet system to operate its decision making, therefore an Overview and Scrutiny Committee consisting of non-Cabinet members operates.

Overview and Scrutiny is central to the Council's decision making process and has two main roles.

- (1) The development and review of policies for a wide range of subjects and services.
- (2) The critical examination of the Council's performance and effectiveness of its decisions.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee looks into areas of local concern; it recommends improvements the Council can make to ensure quality of life is improved for all. The main tasks of the Committee are:

- **Performance Monitoring** - We have to meet corporate priorities set out in the Broadland Business Plan and report against those indicators. Scrutiny can examine any aspect of our performance, including services that we deliver through partnerships with other organisations.
- **Holding the Cabinet to Account** - Decisions made by the Cabinet but not yet put into practice can be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and challenged.
- **Policy review and development** - Overview and Scrutiny can propose new policies or review existing policies and recommend changes to the Cabinet.
- **External Scrutiny** - Any issue directly affecting Broadland residents can be scrutinised by the Committee, including services provided by another organisation

It is through demonstrating the value and impact that effective scrutiny can have in supporting councils and other organisations to deliver better, more cost-effective services, that scrutiny is a valued element of local democracy.

Overview and Scrutiny Reviews

An Overview and Scrutiny Committee has responsibility to both scrutinise and monitor on an ongoing basis. To that end, the Committee strives to develop a balanced Work Programme which is published on the Council's website for information.

Reviews conducted this year are as follows:

Ecocube

The Committee established a Panel to investigate events leading up to the disposal of the EcoCube.

Following three meetings and an in depth investigation the Panel made a number of recommendations that were agreed by Cabinet, including: the management and content of electronic files; ensuring Portfolio Holders have all the relevant information for signing-off decisions; introduction of a procedure for the disposal of assets and full and clear instructions seeking legal advice.

It was subsequently decided that a further investigation was required and the Panel was reconvened with a new membership. The former Portfolio Holder for Economic Development was invited to attend the meeting and answer the Panel's questions. It was concluded that the EcoCube project had been suboptimal and that this should be noted, but it should also be noted that lessons had been learned from this and the Council now had a robust mechanism in place going forward and the Panel had concluded its investigations.

Fees on DIY Waste

At its meeting in August 2019, the Committee received an update on the impact of the introduction of fees for the disposal of DIY waste at household waste recycling centres by Norfolk County Council on 1 April 2018.

It was noted that there had been no discernible trend identified in fly tipping on public land in the district since the introduction of the charges.

Council Tax Good Practice Protocol

The Protocol covered the collection and recovery of Council Tax arrears and the aim was to help councils establish good practice with Citizens Advice in dealing with Council Tax debt. The Committee recommended to Cabinet that the Protocol be brought forward for adoption by the Council (agreed November 2019).

Overviewing

In addition to the above stand-alone reviews, the Committee continually monitors certain Council activities. In the past year these have included:

- Broadland Economic Updates
- Resilience Updates
- Community Safety Updates and, Police and Crime Panel outcomes
- Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Board outcomes, Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee outcomes

Scrutiny of the Cabinet

Broadland District Council conducts a practice of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee appraising Cabinet reports one week before Cabinet meetings. This provides opportunity for Committee to ask officers questions and enables the Committee to be fully briefed before making recommendations to Cabinet. This practice is considered by the Committee to keep call-ins to a minimum and build a good working relationship between Cabinet and officers.

Furthermore, Committee members are able to attend Cabinet meetings when those reports are discussed to make any further comment through the Committee Chairman and to witness how the Cabinet arrives at its decisions.

Over the past year the Committee called in the following items:

PH1 decision - Member Grant Scheme

Members called-in the decision to establish the process for the Member Grant Scheme as they wanted the Portfolio Holder to consider increasing the allocation per Member from £500 to £1,000 in order to retain parity with Members at South Norfolk.

Members were also concerned that South Norfolk was retaining a £50,000 Community Action Fund alongside the Members Grant Scheme, whilst Broadland's Community Grants Scheme was being closed down. However, the Committee was advised that the Portfolio Holder decision was not related to the size of the allocation or the Community Grants Programme as a whole.

The Portfolio Holder was not minded to change the decision and increase the allocation at this stage, but it was confirmed that it would be considered as part of the budget setting process for the following financial year.

PH1 decision - Procurement of New Grounds Maintenance Contract with South Norfolk Depot

Members called-in the decision of the Portfolio Holder for further clarification about risk and the nature of the proposed service, in contrast with the new one, as well as staff considerations.

Members were advised that as the current contract with NORSE was due to expire in November 2019, it was an opportune time to explore collaborating with South Norfolk by using their in-house service. Furthermore, the proposal would enable savings to be made on the existing contract, with the standards of the new service being at least as good as the standard of the current service. Staff transferred as a result of the new contract would be given protection thorough a TUPE agreement.

This would be a relatively short term contract, as a review of the entire Waste Service across Broadland and South Norfolk was expected to be concluded by April 2022.

Accordingly, the Committee confirmed it was content with the procurement of the new grounds maintenance contract.

Legal Services Provision

Although the Chairman had agreed that this item be added to the agenda for the Cabinet meeting on 11 February 2020 as a matter of special urgency, he had subsequently called-in the decision on the basis that it had not been subject to appropriate scrutiny.

The Committee discussed and considered all of the options in the report and explored the decision made by Cabinet. It was agreed to support the decision by Cabinet and, in addition, to bring an alternative contract back to Cabinet for consideration, if the outstanding matter could not be resolved.

Meeting with Cabinet to discuss the budget

In December 2019, the Committee held a pre-budget workshop to discuss proposed questions for Cabinet on the budget for 2020/21. These were presented at the meeting on 28 January 2020 and Cabinet Members were in attendance to respond.

Committee Training

During the 2019/20 programme the Committee had the following training:

July 2019 - CfPS

To provide members with a clear understanding of their role in scrutinising the council executive and relevant partner organisations.

December 2019 – CfPS

Effective Scrutiny & Questioning Techniques - Members to increase their understanding and experience as effective and confident scrutiny practitioners with particular regard to finance and commercial scrutiny.

Finance and Commercial Scrutiny - to give councillors an understanding of the role scrutiny plays in the development and delivery of the Council's medium-term financial plans and budget.

Further training will also be provided for members of the committee during 2020/21.

Communicating Scrutiny

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognises that although the scrutiny function is councillor-led, the communities of Broadland can and should influence their Work Programme and involve themselves in scrutiny reviews. Town/Parish Councils and residents are encouraged to contact their district councillor(s) to put forward suggestions for future scrutiny via the Work Programme.

Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Mr A D Adams (Vice-Chairman)	Mr S C Beadle	Mr N J Brennan
Mr P E Bulman	Ms S J Catchpole	Ms N J Harpley
Ms S I Holland	Mr K S Kelly	Mr D King
Mr M L Murrell	Mr G K Nurden	Mrs S M Prutton
Mr S Riley (Chairman)	Mrs C E Ryman-Tubb	Mr N C Shaw

Substitutes:

Mrs B Cook	A D Crotch	Mr J F Fisher
Mr R R Foulger	Ms R Grattan	Mr D Harrison
Mrs C Karimi-Ghovanlou	Dr K E Lawrence	Mr K G Leggett
Mr I J Mackie	Mr G F Peck	Mr D Roper
Miss J L Thomas	Mrs K A Vincent	Mr J M Ward

Have your Say

Members of the public are welcome to attend any of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings. Public speaking is allowed on any matter on the agenda, excluding the Minutes of the previous meeting. Speakers must advise the Assistant Director of Governance & Business Support of their wish to speak two clear working days before the Committee. Members of the public can also make their views known to their local District Councillor or any member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members of the public may also write to the Assistant Director of Governance & Business Support to request that a relevant subject or issue be investigated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Contact information is as follows:

committee.services@broadland.gov.uk

Broadland District Council
Democratic Services
Thorpe Lodge
Yarmouth Road, Norwich
NR7 0DU

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee does not get involved with individual cases and cannot look at individual planning / licensing applications. These should be addressed through the appropriate service area or the local councillor. It also cannot deal with individual complaints; these should be raised through the Council's Complaints Procedure.

All suggestions will be considered by the Chairman and Vice Chairman. You will then be informed by the Assistant Director of Governance & Business Support of the outcome.