

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held by video link on **Tuesday 30 June 2020** at **10.00 am** when there were present:

Cllr S Riley – Chairman

Cllr A D Adams
Cllr S C Beadle
Cllr N J Brennan
Cllr P E Bulman

Cllr S J Catchpole
Cllr N J Harpley
Cllr S I Holland
Cllr K S Kelly

Cllr G K Nurden
Cllr S M Prutton
Cllr N C Shaw

Also in attendance were the Director Resources, Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer), Governance Manager, Senior Governance Officer, Democratic Services Officer (LA) and the Democratic Services Officer (JO).

137 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2020 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, save for the addition of the following Declarations of Interest:

Member	Minute No & Heading	Nature of Interest
Cllr Catchpole Cllr Riley	136 – Review of 2020/21 Budgets	Non pecuniary interest, Bure Valley Railway runs through Ward.

138 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

The Senior Governance Officer presented the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which set out the work it had undertaken over the last year and reported to Council its outcomes and achievements. In presenting the report, the Senior Governance Officer drew the Committee's attention to a number of amendments which had been made by the Chairman since the paper copy of the committee papers had been dispatched:

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. ~~and to develop confidence in developing effective questioning techniques.~~

The above clause was removed as the Committee had not received their

second training module on effective scrutiny questioning.

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.]

The report had been scheduled to be considered at the March meeting for presentation to Council at the AGM, however, due to the impact of Covid-19 this year's report had been delayed.

The Committee was asked to consider the draft Annual Report and suggest amendments where necessary, before it was presented to Council on 30 July 2020.

It was noted that the Chairman's Foreword was still to be finalised.

A number of minor typographical errors were identified, which would be amended for the final version.

It was suggested that the final paragraph in the introduction section was too focused on finance and did not reflect the other areas of local concern that the Committee looked into. It was, therefore, amended to the following:

~~In an age of austerity~~ It is ~~only~~ 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 ~~will endeavour to be~~ is a valued element of local democracy.

Under the Scrutiny of Cabinet section the paragraph under Meeting with Cabinet to discuss the budget was amended to the following:

In December 2019, the Committee held a pre-budget workshop ~~met informally~~ 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.

The Committee noted that the Annual Report also included a record of recommendations that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made between March 2019 and March 2020 when reviewing Cabinet papers. This was considered at Minute no: 140 below.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

To note the Annual Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for 2019-20 as attached at Appendix 1 to these Minutes.

139 TIME AND TASK LIMITED PANEL – ECOCUBE: FINAL REPORT

The Chairman of the Time and Task Limited Panel – EcoCube introduced the report, which presented the final findings of the Panel.

The Panel met on 10 March 2020, when the former Portfolio Holder (Cllr Clancy) was in attendance. Cllr Clancy had confirmed that he had been guided by officers in respect of the disposal of the EcoCube.

The Committee were asked to note that Cabinet had accepted the recommendations of the Panel in October 2019 and that processes and procedures were now in place to ensure that such losses would not be made again.

Therefore, the Time and Task Limited Panel had now completed its work and could be disbanded.

AGREED

To note that the Time and Task Limited Panel had concluded its investigations into the disposal of the EcoCube and no further action was necessary.

140 SCRUTINY OF CABINET

The Senior Governance Officer introduced the report, which had arisen from a request from the Chairman at the Committee meeting on 17 March 2020.

The report provided a summary that set out the number of recommendations made by the Committee that had been accepted by Cabinet over the last five years.

Analysis of the data showed that of the 269 decisions made by Cabinet over the past five years; only 1 of the 59 recommendations made by the Committee had been agreed by Cabinet.

For 2019/20, a total of 51 decisions were made by Cabinet with the Committee putting forward seven recommendations, one of which was agreed by Cabinet.

The Committee was invited to review the approach taken to the pre-scrutiny of the Cabinet Agenda; possibly by targeting the key decisions that Cabinet were making, rather than reviewing every report as this could be seen as a much more focused approach. The Committee could also conduct reviews after Cabinet decisions had been taken to monitor their effectiveness.

The Chairman noted that although the practice of Overview and Scrutiny varied across local authorities, he considered that the approach at Broadland was the right one and he would not be happy selecting items from the Cabinet Agenda to be considered and others to be disregarded. This was because he was convinced that robust scrutiny of even the most mundane reports could lead to significant findings.

The Vice-Chairman concurred with this view and drew Members' attention to Government guidance, which recommended the scrutiny of decisions that the Executive were going to take.

Following a suggestion that the Committee did not get enough feedback from Cabinet about why they rejected recommendations by the Committee the Chairman confirmed that he and the Vice-Chairman would explore this issue with the Assistant Director of Governance & Business Support.

Having reviewed the process of how the Committee carried out its role in terms of reviewing the Cabinet Agenda it was:

AGREED

That the Committee would continue with the current arrangements that it had in place for pre-scrutiny of the Cabinet Agenda.

141 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Governance Officer advised that, following discussion with both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the Work Programme had been updated to reflect the most up to date position.

Members were advised that the Economic Success Panel had invited the Programme Director of Better Broadband for Norfolk to their next meeting on 22 July 2020 to discuss improving rural Broadband. It was suggested that the Committee be invited to attend the meeting on 22 July to hear the discussion and then determine if this issue needed to be retained on the committee's work programme for further investigation.

The item on staff turnover was on track and would be presented to the 8 September 2020 meeting. The delivery of Affordable Housing item was scheduled for the 17 November 2020 meeting.

The Committee were advised that a briefing paper on Water Management was attached to the Work Programme, which might address some of the concerns that Members had expressed.

The Vice-Chairman informed the meeting that although the briefing paper identified water management problems being faced and the actions that would be taken to address them; there was no detail about how these actions would be achieved. He suggested that the paper left a lot of questions still to be answered.

A Member suggested that it might be informative to ask the Chief Executive of the Water Management Alliance, which was comprised of the six Drainage Boards in the Anglian region, to address the Committee.

The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) emphasised that when choosing a topic for the Work Programme Members should be very clear about their objectives and reasons for the review and what outcomes they would like to achieve.

In response, the Chairman suggested that scoping reviews at Committee meetings could take up a significant amount of time and he noted that when Time and Task Panels were convened their first task was to draft a Terms of Reference that set out the objectives of the investigation.

It was **AGREED** that the Chairman, together with the Vice-Chairman and Cllr Kelly, would undertake a scoping process to assess if a review of water management in the District should take place. Any other items on the Work Programme that required the same assessment could be considered for scoping at the next meeting.

A Member advised the meeting that a joint cross party working group was already looking at housing allocations and affordable housing provision and reports on these issues would be coming through the Committee cycle in due course.

The Chairman expressed concern that he was not aware of this Group and that it was carrying out work that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had put onto its Work Programme some time ago, as a joint investigation with South Norfolk Council.

The Committee adjourned at 11.40am and reconvened at 11.45am when all of the Members listed above were present.

The AD for G&BS confirmed that the working group was a non-decision making body set up at an informal meeting of the Wellbeing Panel on 20 February 2020. The Broadland Members of the Group were: Cllr Kelly, Cllr Lawn, Cllr D Thomas and Cllr Whymark. The Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) confirmed that she would forward more information on the working group to the Committee following the meeting.

Following consideration of the three housing related items on the Work Programme it was decided that the working group did not affect the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and it was **AGREED** that these three items would remain on the Committee's Work Programme.

The Committee noted the officer response regarding the Time and Task Panel Review of Apprenticeships which was due to commence and accepted that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it would be appropriate to defer the investigation into the effect of the Apprenticeships Levy.

The meeting closed at 12.19pm