

Broadland Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018–19



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Committee Chairman Foreword

The Committee's aims are to provide real benefits to the people of Broadland and through their work bring forward appropriate recommendations to Cabinet and Council.

The topics discussed over the last year have covered various areas of the Council's work and in some cases the work of partner organisations that have significance for our local communities. The reviews carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Panels have gleaned valuable in-sight into the issues facing our communities today, providing recommendations to improve services for residents.

It's worth remembering that the Overview and Scrutiny function of a local authority is not an end in itself. It should be focused on ensuring better outcomes for our communities through constructive engagement with officers, Cabinet, Council and our partners. We have spent considerable time evaluating actual and future collaboration with South Norfolk Council.

I enjoy my time as Chairman of this Committee. I would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to the Officers and Members who support the Committee, in particular James Overy and the Vice-Chairman Cllr Jonathan Emsell. We do hope to have a Scrutiny Research Officer in place in the near future.



Councillor David Harrison
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

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 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:

Neighbourhood Development Plans

The Committee undertook a review of the Neighbourhood Development Plan process and a report was presented that made a number of recommendations to improve and streamline procedures. These included:

- Reviewing Neighbourhood Plan Forum meetings to build in more workshop based sessions.
- Ensuring that Neighbourhood Plan Groups had a clearer understanding of the planning process as a whole and how Neighbourhood Plans fit within it.
- Targeting more parishes to see if they would like to get involved in Neighbourhood Planning or other community led planning initiatives.
- Explore relationship with neighbouring districts and share good practice amongst colleagues.
- Investigate creating our own bespoke guides/templates where a need is identified and if the opportunity presents itself share with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Ecocube

The Committee established a panel to investigate the disposal of the EcoCube at Rackheath and what lessons could be learned from the exercise. The Panel is expected to present its findings in 2018/19.

Overviewing

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

- Monitoring partnership working
- Monitoring a corporate policy register
- Broadland Economy 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
- Corporate Equalities Group 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, broaden their understanding of Council services and schemes and enables the Committee to make recommendations to Cabinet. This practice has kept call-ins to a minimum and built 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 item:

Extension of the Enforcement Agent Contract

Members called-in the Portfolio Holder decision to renew the Council's enforcement agent's contract. They requested a report showing that the contractor's behaviour and processes are reasonable, given the level of concern expressed nationally on the subject by Citizens Advice. They also requested that the Council sign up to a new Citizens Advice initiative on the use of enforcement agents by local authorities.

Upon consideration of the report the Committee resolved to uphold the Finance Portfolio Holder's decision to extend the current contract for a further two years. However, it was confirmed that a report outlining the options for the adoption of the Citizens Advice Protocol would be brought to the Committee later in the year.

Over the past year during the scrutiny of Cabinet reports, strong debates took place over the following reports:

Broadland and South Norfolk Feasibility Study

The Committee recommend to Cabinet that a no compulsory redundancy agreement be included in the proposals included in the Feasibility Study. The agreement to be limited to redundancies arising as a result of collaboration, but excluding those resulting from external factors beyond the control of the two autonomous councils.

Concerns were also expressed regarding the proposal for a joint officer team, which had not been in the original model for sharing services. It was also suggested that financial savings were in fact a key driver of collaboration and that there was a lack of information about what this would mean for the Medium Term Financial Plan of both authorities. It was also proposed that another staff survey should be held to allow further comment on the study. A number of Members suggested that it would be better to wait until the District Council elections had been held in May 2019 before proceeding with collaboration.

Joint meeting with Cabinet to discuss budget

Each year the Committee meets with the Cabinet to discuss the performance of the budget and question what plans are being made for the next budget. In 2018 the Committee set some challenging questions for the Cabinet. Committee took the opportunity during the joint meeting to seek clarifications and press some further points. Overall the Committee felt that Cabinet have managed the budget well and continues to achieve best value for Council services and residents.

Committee Training

During the 2018/19 programme the Committee's Overview and Scrutiny Research Officer ran a refresher workshop considering the promotion of scrutiny within the Members' role. It looked at public engagement, code of conduct, and promoting the Committee's work and their own within their community and networks.

A workshop session was also held to outline methods of research practices, accessing sources and techniques in presenting research.

Collaboration

Joint Scrutiny Committee

As part of the collaboration process with South Norfolk Council a Joint Scrutiny Committee was established that will meet on an *ad hoc* basis to consider the key stages of collaborative working between both Councils.

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.

The Committee have maintained their ambition to communicate with parish and town councils and residents in a transparent way; utilising the Council's social media accounts to promote scrutiny reviews and introducing a quarterly e-newsletter sent to subscribers.

You can get involved by joining us on Twitter via [@BDCDemServices](https://twitter.com/BDCDemServices)

Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr David Harrison (Chairman)	Cllr Jonathan Emsell (Vice-Chairman)	Mr V Ray-Mortlock
Mr A D Adams	Mr G Everett	Mr S Riley
Mrs C Bannock	Mr R Grady	Mr V Tapp
Mr D Buck	Mr G Nurden	Mrs K Vincent

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 Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer 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 Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer to request that a relevant subject or issue be investigated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Contact information is as follows:

scrutiny@broadland.gov.uk

Broadland District Council

Democratic Services

Thorpe Lodge

Yarmouth Road, Norwich

NR7 0DU

Alternatively you will find a suggestion form within the scrutiny section of the Council's website: www.broadland.gov.uk/scrutiny and can be emailed to scrutiny@broadland.gov.uk

All suggestions will be considered by the Chairman and Vice Chairman. You will then be informed by the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer of the outcome.