

## **STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Resources Overview & Scrutiny Panel**

**23 September 2020**

<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019-2020</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>Councillor Sybil Ralphs - Council Leader SMDC</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Sally Hampton - Member and Community Services Officer</b>
<b>WARDS INVOLVED:</b>	<b>Non Specific</b>

#### **Appendices Attached:**

#### **Appendix A -Terms of Reference and Membership of Overview and Scrutiny Panels**

- 1. Reason for the Report**
  - 1.1 To provide Councillors with a summary of the work undertaken by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels during 2019 – 2020.
- 2. Recommendation**
  - 2.1 That the report be noted.
- 3. Executive Summary**
  - 3.1 During 2019/20, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels continued to scrutinise performance internally/externally, hold the Cabinet to account and contribute to policy development. The range of work and issues considered by each Panel during 2019/20 are summarised in sections 6 - 9 of the report. Appendix A of the report contains the terms of reference of each Panel and its membership.
- 4. How this report links to Corporate Priorities**
  - 4.1 The successful delivery of all corporate priorities is dependent upon the effective scrutiny and development of Council policies and services.

Mark Trillo  
**Executive Director (People) and Monitoring Officer**

**Web Links and  
Background Papers**

[Overview & Scrutiny Panel agendas and reports](#)

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**5. Detail**

- 5.1 The Cabinet is responsible for making the day-to-day decisions concerning the implementation of policies of the Council. Overview and Scrutiny Panels ensure that the Cabinet is publicly held to account for their actions and seeks to promote open and transparent decision-making and democratic accountability. They also have a role in researching, scrutinising other bodies and ensuring that the Council's policy and budget framework is respected and realising the key aims of the Council's Corporate Plan. Overview and Scrutiny Panels may appoint Task and Finish Working Groups/Sub-Committees to examine any issue in more depth.
- 5.2 Effective participation has taken place with the involvement of partners, outside organisations and individuals at Panel and Working Group meetings. Cabinet Portfolio Holders also attend such meetings to provide updates or answer questions.
- 5.3 Each Overview and Scrutiny Panel is responsible for setting its own Work Programme. These are informed by the Council's Forward Plan containing Key Decisions to be made by the Council's Cabinet. The Work Programme is listed as a standing item for review and approval at each Panel meeting. Executive Directors work closely with the Chairs of each Panel to assist in the planning of agendas, provide briefings and ensure the Panel meets its objectives. Support is also provided by the Democratic and Community Services Team together with Officers from the Council's various service areas. Following the local election in May 2019, at the first meeting of each of the scrutiny Panels, the responsible Executive Director gave a briefing to outline the above to members.

**6. Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

- 6.1 To ensure that financial management is sound thorough consideration was given to regular financial, procurement and performance reports, which included performance against the budget and a review of fees and charges. Members were kept up to date with progress with regard to the Council's Efficiency Programme, revenue collection, treasury management, Capital Programme and customer feedback.

- 6.2 The findings from the Annual Report, the Draft Performance Framework and suggested approach and timescale for the development of the new 4-year Corporate Plan were presented to members and recommended for approval by Cabinet.
- 6.3 At a subsequent meeting, the new Corporate Plan 2019-2023 was considered by the Panel and members commented on the summary of the plan. It was essential for the Council to develop and agree a Corporate Plan. The plan would provide clear direction for the delivery of services to achieve the Council's vision, aims and objectives to deliver positive outcomes for citizens. To conclude, the Panel agreed with the recommendations and requested that Council approved the Council's vision, aims, objectives, influencing objectives and priorities. On 16<sup>th</sup> October 2019 the Corporate Plan was adopted by Full Council and in November 2019, the Panel was updated on the Communication and Engagement Plan.
- 6.4 Members were presented with the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan 2020/21 – 2023/24. The report set out the context for the preparation of the 2020/21 budget which was presented for approval by the Council in February 2020.
- 6.5 Andrew Stokes – Executive Director & Chief Finance Officer – presented the proposed Budget for 2020/21, the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan 2020/21 – 2023/24, the Capital Strategy 2020/21, the proposed Fees and Charges for 2020/21 and the Procurement Forward Plan 2020/21. Members had the opportunity to scrutinise the details for each item contained within the appendices to the main report.
- 6.6 Claire Hazeldene - Deputy Director, Finance, Income and Procurement attended various meetings of the Panel to introduce various reports such as:-
- Business Rate Reliefs granted by the Council in advance of a review of the policy later that year;
  - A schedule of applications for write-off of Council Tax, Business Rates and Sundry Debts;
  - The latest position on the AES phase 3 financial arrangements, and commissioning structure.
  - The review of the Business Rate Reliefs policy and the Council Tax Reductions and Levies Policy.
- 6.7 For the first time, the Health and Safety Annual Report was presented to the Panel as it had previously been presented to the Joint Consultative Committee.
- 6.8 Members had the opportunity to scrutinise the draft Performance Framework and associated targets for 2020/23 and the findings from the recent online consultation, which sought feedback from a range of stakeholders on the council's new corporate plan priorities for 2019/23 were shared.
- 6.9 From March 2020, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, face to face meetings of the Panel were unable to take place. To ensure the business of the Council continued and for members to have the opportunity to comment on reports

outside of formal committee meetings, information digests were distributed to all councillors. The Resources Panel received an information digest on the progress of the Council's Empty Property Strategy.

## **7. Service Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

- 7.1 The Panel scrutinised a range of subjects over the year focused on services provided by the authority. This included the annual report on the performance of Alliance Environmental Services Ltd (AES) and a presentation was delivered by Kevin Melling and Jane Thomason from AES. At the request of the Panel, a report on recycling and reuse services was provided and a visit to the Materials Recycling Facility at Shotton in Deeside took place on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019.
- 7.2 Consideration was given to a variety of regeneration items such as the Growth Strategy, Investment and Acquisition Strategy and Wharf Road and Tunstall Road masterplans which had been prepared to assist with the delivery of the emerging Local Plan. Members commented and gave feedback to the Head of Regeneration and Executive Director (Place).
- 7.3 The Executive Director (Place), also updated members on the progress of the Accelerated Housing Delivery Programme which was a package of measures to tackle the low level of development activity in the district.
- 7.4 The Panel scrutinised the annual performance update from Parkwood Leisure which was provided by the Regional Director - Alex Godfrey and was informed of the development work to help establish clear plans for future investment and management options for leisure centres, in line with the Physical Activity and Sport Strategy and ambitions for a reduced service subsidy.
- 7.5 Members received a report which provided an update following the first year of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, with information relating to implementation and homelessness applications made during 2018/19.
- 7.6 The Leader of the Council attended a meeting of the Panel at which the future of Leek Trestle Market was discussed. Members were also kept informed of the changes to Leek Market's rules and regulations to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the market operation.
- 7.7 Finally, at the request of a Panel member, David Smith – Principal Officer, Communities and Partnerships, outlined the publicity and communication carried out by the Council in relation to dog fouling.

## **8. Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel**

- 8.1 Members received annual updates from Biddulph, Cheadle and Leek Citizens Advice Bureaux and scrutinised the annual operational policing report provided by Chief Inspector Mark Thorley and his colleague Sergeant Rob

- Peacock. The Panel asked for statistics on the number of convictions to be included in the next annual update.
- 8.2 The Panel debated the withdrawal of free TV licences for over 75 year olds. Members were concerned that for some pensioners this could lead to issues around social isolation and a letter was sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with a copy of the letter sent to the BBC raising these concerns.
- 8.3 Members considered a briefing paper introduced by Sharon Wheeler – Property Manager, which provided a performance and development update on Your Housing Group business areas identified in the legacy agreement. The Panel would normally receive 6 monthly update twice a year, but due to Covid-19, the update scheduled to take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 was postponed. However, prior to this meeting, all Panel members were offered one to one appointments with the Property Manager to raise any specific concerns.
- 8.4 The outcome of an assessment of the air quality in Leek and Cellarhead had concluded that it was necessary to declare two Air Quality Management Areas, encompassing the roads and properties within these areas. Daniel McCrory – Senior Officer, Pollution Control, introduced a report which kept the Panel informed on this matter. Following the meeting, members liaised directly with the officer in regards to specific requests for the installation of monitoring equipment in other areas.
- 8.5 Further to children’s meals being debated at Full Council in October 2019, Councillor Ralphs attended a meeting of the Panel to inform members of the work she had undertaken on this important issue. Members had the opportunity to give feedback and make suggestions to the Leader.
- 8.6 In response to members concerns in relation to flyposting and banners seen in the area, Ben Haywood, Head of Development Services and David Smith, Principal Officer Communities and Partnerships, provided a presentation on the consent, control and enforcement of advertisements. It was agreed that the Enforcement Team would take a look at the advertisement banners and ‘A’ boards in Leek and Werrington and for the flyposting policy to be reviewed.
- 8.7 The Panel gave its consideration to a report which detailed proposed changes to the Dog Fouling Order, which was due to cease to have effect on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020. The Panel was in agreement with the recommendations but suggested to Cabinet that it did not allow the (Dogs on a Lead Order and Dog Exclusion Order) to expire.
- 8.8 Mark Forrester – Head of Democratic and Community Services, attended a meeting to keep members informed of the use of the Councillors’ Community Initiative Fund (CCIF) in 2018/19.
- 8.9 The minutes of the last Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel and reports from the Chairman were issued with each agenda to ensure the Panel is kept informed of the work undertaken by the Panel at the County Council.

## **Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

- 9.1 The Panel scrutinised a range of subjects over the year, focused on items relating to the health service at the request of the Panel via the Work Programme. Members received updates from each of the representatives below and had the opportunity to ask questions:-
- Jackie Owen - Healthwatch Staffordshire Manager and Maggie Matthews - Chair of Healthwatch Advisory Board, provided an annual update and an overview of the work carried out by the organisation.
  - David Pearson - Vice Chair of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Sustainability and Transformation Partnership gave a presentation to explain Together We're Better Health and Care.
  - Joanne Robinson - Senior Commissioning Manager, SCC and Suzanne Rhodes - Community Engagement Programme Manager, advised the Panel of the services provided by Everyone Health.
  - Neil Carr - Chief Executive, Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and Tracey Bullock – Chief Executive, Royal Stoke University Hospital, provided annual updates for their organisations.
- 9.2 On two occasions special meetings of the Panel took place. The first was to introduce the proposal for a Single Strategic Commissioning Organisation which was set out in the form of a presentation from Dr Alison Bradley and Anna Collins - Associate Director of Communication and Engagement. Subsequently, a formal response was sent to the CCG on behalf of the Panel. The second special meeting was arranged at the request of the Panel due to the Annual NHS England Assessment of the North Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Commissioning Group. The Accountable Officer – Marcus Warnes attended the meeting and explained the reasons for the assessment to be graded as inadequate and the actions which were in place. In relation to the same matter, a letter was also sent to Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to urge the department to place the CGG into special measures.
- 9.3 A member of the Panel provided feedback on the pilot scheme to move diabetic eye screening into dedicated NHS provision rather than patient's own opticians. The aim was to increase attendance and provide staff specifically trained in diabetic eye care. The aim of the project was to achieve over 80% access to eye clinics within the 6-month trial and as the trial was approaching completion, data showed that this had been achieved.
- 9.4 A representative from the West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) attended a meeting, to outline the decision to remove the Rapid Response Vehicles from the fleet. The WMAS officer recognised the concerns of the rural community and gave assurance that this model provided a robust response to patients and clinical outcomes were continually measured and monitored. Despite many concerns from members, the decision had been made and would not be reviewed.
- 9.5 The Dementia Care Working Group has continued to meet and has met with staff from two local GP surgeries and the Lead Advisor from the Dementia Connect Service.

Gwyneth Mangono from the Midlands Partnership NHS Trust (MPFT), has attended a meeting to advise members of the role of the Trust in relation to dementia, along with Kat Horner - Dementia Friendly Communities Officer, who explained the process involved to create a Dementia Friendly Community. The Group will report back its findings and final recommendations to the Panel in the near future.

- 9.6 The minutes of the last Staffordshire County Council Healthy Staffordshire Committee were issued with each agenda for the Panel to be kept informed of the work undertaken by the Committee.