

Council

**Agenda
Item:**

13

Meeting Date: 14th July 2020
 Portfolio: Cross-cutting
 Key Decision: No
 Policy and Budget Framework
 Public / Private Public

Title: Scrutiny Annual Report 2019-20
 Report of: Overview and Scrutiny Officer
 Report Number: OS.15/20

Purpose / Summary:

The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019-20 summarises the role of Scrutiny at Carlisle City Council, reports on the work of the Scrutiny Panels during 2019-20 and identifies plans for 2020-21.

Recommendations:

That the Council formally accept this report.

Tracking

Executive:	N/A
Scrutiny:	Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel 28/05/2020 Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel 04/06/2020 Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel 11/06/2020
Council:	14/07/2020

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Constitution: Article 6 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees, 6.03 Specific functions [c] states that:

***Annual report.** Overview and scrutiny committees must report annually to full Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate’.*

1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019-20 summarises the role of Scrutiny at Carlisle City Council, reports on the work of the Scrutiny Panels during 2019-20 and identifies plans for 2020-21.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Council formally accept the report.

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Appendices attached to report: Scrutiny Annual Report 2019-20

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL – None

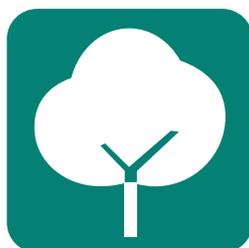
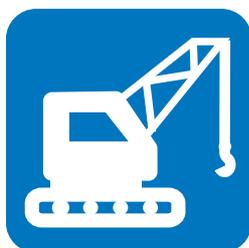
PROPERTY SERVICES - None

FINANCE – None

EQUALITY – None

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE – None

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20



Scrutiny in Summary

3 Panels



Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel (HWSP)



Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel (BTSP)



Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel (EGSP)



panel meetings



2 special meetings



1 site visit



43+
hours
of scrutiny



83
agenda items
scrutinised



Partners engaged with:

Tullie House, Environment Agency,
Kingmoor Park, GLL and Carlisle Partnership

Introduction

The Annual Report for the Civic Year 2019-20 marks the end of a year of scrutiny that was halted abruptly due to the unprecedented need to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. Because of this, the last Panel meetings of the year took place in February 2019 and each Panel has outstanding 2019-20 workplan items, which they may wish to include in their workplans 2020-21.

Local elections for May 2020 were cancelled and social distancing measures have meant that committee meetings, including Scrutiny Panels, have been moved from physical to virtual locations, for the start of the new civic year. Members will look carefully at their work programmes, working with council officers to ensure that their scrutiny activity is targeted at the most important issues and decisions that are facing the City Council as Carlisle looks to recover and move forward from the pandemic.

What is Scrutiny and why is it important?

Scrutiny is a process to ensure that decisions taken by the Council reflect the needs and priorities of communities in Carlisle. Scrutiny is carried out by councillors who understand and promote the concerns of the people who elected them, connecting decision makers to local communities.

Council decisions can be made by Council Officers, by the Council's 'Executive' (the political leadership) and by full Council (all Councillors).

Scrutiny Panels are made up of Non-Executive Councillors who work together, across political parties, to understand why decisions are made and how the Council is performing to deliver the best possible outcomes for Carlisle and its people. Scrutiny Panels do not have decision-making powers; their role is to challenge and make recommendations that influence decision makers.

Comment from Leader of the Council, Councillor John Mallinson

Scrutiny started in May of last year following an “all out Council election” when a reduction in numbers of councillors from 52 to 39 took place. This resulted in a new administration and a lot of newly elected councillors who had to hit the ground running including taking part in the scrutiny function. We end the civic year having to deal with the dreadful Covid-19 pandemic which we are still living through.



I would like to use this report to place on record my thanks and appreciation to Scrutiny members and officers who from a standing start with many new faces really stepped up to the mark. I am also really pleased to see that you have embraced virtual meetings and been able to continue your work on scrutiny through video conferencing so helping to add your input into various aspects of council work and policies.

As we move on from lockdown, I see an exciting future for Carlisle in which Scrutiny will play its part in helping formulate policies of this Council. I say this as National government is resolute that the plans and investments identified for Carlisle should go ahead at best speed and indeed be used as a way of stimulating the post Covid-19 era.

There are many projects to keep us busy including the Garden Village with its associated New Road, the very important Borderlands project which will deliver the Station hub as well as the rejuvenation of the Citadels and surrounding Area. We also have the Towns Deal and the Future High Streets Fund. We look forward to redeveloping the Central Plaza site and also to seeing the Hooper’s building redeveloped.

Carlisle City Council will be heavily involved and, in many cases, leading on these projects. The Executive look forward to the Scrutiny panels carrying out in-depth and forensic examinations as well as exploring all options and helping formulate policy, as well as keeping an eye on our day to day activities.

Once again, I would like to thank Scrutiny and the Officers on behalf of myself and my Executive Members for all the hard work you do and a particular thanks to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman who come along and report to our Executive Meetings on Scrutiny’s behalf.

Corporate Peer Review 2020 – implications for Scrutiny

The Carlisle Corporate Peer Challenge earlier this year was positive and highlighted a number of strengths for the Council. It also made some recommendations including some comments around the role of scrutiny. Scrutiny Panel Members have noted the content of this report and plan to consider the recommendations and implications for scrutiny around this report in more depth during 2020-21.

Changes to Scrutiny arrangements for 2020-21

The start times of Panel meetings have been considered by Panel Members during their first meetings of the new year, 2020-21. Following these discussions, the Panels have proposed the following start times for the coming year:

- Business and Transformation to remain at 4pm.
- Economic Growth to move to 4pm.
- Health and Wellbeing to remain at 10am.

Public engagement in Scrutiny

Scrutiny Panels are open to the public to attend at the Civic Centre, when Panels are meeting at a physical location. Panel meetings can be viewed online via the Council's website, whilst virtual meetings are taking place as part of Covid-19 social distancing measures.

Agendas, report and minutes from Scrutiny Panel meetings are available on the City Council website. Members of the public can also submit questions for meetings; these need to be submitted by 12noon 11 clear days before the Panel Meeting.

For more information on these meetings or on how to engage with the Scrutiny process, please contact: scrutiny@carlisle.gov.uk.

Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel (BTSP) Chair's Report, Councillor James Bainbridge



Perhaps more so than usual, the operation of BTSP this year has been framed both by historical undertakings and by circumstances outside of our usual control. A change in control of the Council naturally had an impact in the first couple of scrutiny cycles as people adapted. Also of impact has been the large capital expenditure of The Sands Centre redevelopment which, when added to re-mortgaging of historic loans, has left limited scope for additional projects within the BTSP remit this year.

There are still outstanding flood reinstatements to the Civic Centre, delayed from the start of the year until the March 2020 BTSP meeting, which was unable to take place due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The consequences of this has been that at times we have felt skewed towards Performance Monitoring, and budget out-turns rather than towards specific project led issues. Of course, the various national reviews into our current funding streams are high on our corporate radar also.

One thing that was clear from the various Out-turn Reports that we reviewed was the sound rationale to undertake a base budgeting review. Hopefully as this completes in the next civic year it will allow future Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panels to gain a new perspective.

Trialling later start times for BTSP has not resulted in overly long meetings into the evenings, which was feared. Whilst some Members like them, some have not. However, it has been a worthwhile decision to give Members the option of having a Panel which meets at a different time.

Currently BTSP are forming a small Task and Finish group to undertake work on the Council's Attendance Management Policy which is undergoing a review. Sickness levels, after an initial hopeful period before December, were an issue for the Council, even prior to the Covid-19 outbreak. But Officer engagement and an open explanation of the issues has been very informative to the Panel, and as the policy is reviewed, we felt we wished to have Member input.

We've remained (for 99.9% of the time) a friendly group who have used Scrutiny as a broadly non-political function, for that I am grateful to my fellow Panel members. This was particularly evident in our approach to the new Procurement Strategy, the first such document to be drafted after the Climate Change issue was taken onboard. Points were raised and issues considered, but without the grandstanding that you read about in other Authorities.

Moving forward, the recent Peer Review, which Members will have read from the Initial Feedback Report provided by the LGA, raises issues around the Scrutiny function. Points which echo somewhat the sentiment expressed by Members over this year. As the numbers of Councillors who can legally join a Scrutiny Panel has declined from 46 to 33 as a result of the reorganisation of wards, it is perhaps the opportunity to look at our functions and hopefully take onboard the best and most proactive practices from other Councils.

On a personal note I would like to thank Councillor Birks and Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officers for their support and input over the past year.

Comment from Councillor Gareth Ellis, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Resources

Overview and Scrutiny plays an important role in the functioning of the Council, and as a 'critical friend' to the Executive.

I would like to thank all those who participated in the scrutiny of the budget this year. The input of Business and Transformation and their suggestions assisted the Executive in making the budget proposition as widely accepted as possible in the Special Council meeting that followed.

The year ahead and the decisions we will have to make to cope with the immediate financial shock of Covid-19, and then the economic ripples to come will not be easy. I look forward to working with the panel in an open and constructive way.



Key items for Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel in 2020-21

The following items are topics that Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel have identified will be key their workplan for 2020/21:

- Sickness Absence Reports.
- Review of Attendance Management Policy - Task and Finish Group.
- Corporate Projects.
- Covid-19 response and recovery.
- Implication of Peer Review findings for Scrutiny.

Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel (EGSP) Chairs Report, Councillor Lisa Brown

It has been a privilege to Chair the EGSP this past year. My thanks go to Cllr Mellor as Vice Chair and all the Members and substitutes for their support and attendance, it's very clear that each member wants to see the very best for the City of Carlisle and its residents.

Our agendas have always been full, with several key projects on our work programme, such as Borderlands and St Cuthbert's Garden Village or Housing Strategies and other more day to day items such as Free after 3 car parking.

The reports brought to the scrutiny panel have provided us with a clear picture of the project and Members have been able to feedback ideas to officers and Portfolio Holders. Importantly, Members have also raised issues and concerns when they have seen potential issues arising, or perhaps felt things needed referred back to the Executive to look at again. There are important items that had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 crisis such as the Economic Strategy for the Carlisle which must be top of our agenda when Scrutiny returns. The recent Peer Review highlighted the need for an updated Carlisle Plan, so it is vital these are completed.

The Council had a clear vision for the City before March, but it will not have escaped anyone's attention how much this must change now that Covid-19 has caused such upheaval across the country. Economic growth is a powerful instrument for reducing poverty and improving quality of life, both of which have had the spotlight shone on them during recent months. Any projects we looked at before will need to be viewed in a new light and we must be sure that our growth is truly inclusive and not just for growths sake.



Comment from Councillor Paul Nedved, Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Housing

Scrutiny Panels play a significant role within the Council in aiding the development of policy and critically scrutinising Executive Decisions and holding the Executive to account.

As a former Chair of Scrutiny and now a Portfolio Holder I have learnt to respect Members level of expertise and interest in a wide area of Council responsibilities. Having attended regularly the Economic Growth Scrutiny and Health and Wellbeing Panels I have welcomed the robust questioning and discussions from Members which has been invaluable in contributing and shaping the decision-making process.

Economic Growth Panel have scrutinised a wide range of reports and updates notably the Borderlands Growth Deal Projects, ongoing plans to deliver St Cuthbert's Garden Village , Housing Needs and Strategy, Enterprise Zone, Business Support / High St Fund and Budget Setting and within Health and Well-being Panel reviewed reports on Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Empty Home Grants that fall within the Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio.

I would like to thank the Chairs and Panel Members for their contribution made to the Council and the commitment and hard work involved in the scrutiny process.

Equally can I thank officers and support staff also for their support, commitment and professionalism.



Potential items for Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel in 2020-21

The following items are topics that Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel are likely to find particularly helpful to include in their workplan for 2020/21:

- Economic Strategy.
- Environment (Climate Change) Strategy.
- Looking at the development of the housing offer for Carlisle.

Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel (HWSP) Chairs Report, Councillor Jack Paton



This has been the most traumatic year I can ever remember; my thoughts go out to all those people who have lost their lives to this horrific virus. I am sure that we are all united in this.

As can be appreciated, we did not get through all our meetings for 2019-20. We are going forward with scrutiny in 2020-21 using video link for meetings. On the 2019-20 meetings that we did fulfil, I will be as brief as possible.

Meeting of 6 June 2019 was mostly taken up with the re-development of The Sands Centre with the integration of the Pools, plus a modern fitness centre and an area dedicated to NHS physio. Work has started on this development; we look forward to seeing the completion and all the state-of-the-art equipment.

At 11 July 2019 HWSP, we were given a presentation on the Carlisle Partnership which was very detailed and laid out its plans for the future, including a Big Lunch and funding. The Partnership were looking into setting up a group on climate change, they would work closely with the Council and all parties on this.

It was noted that the County Council had not been present at the Carlisle Partnership meetings. On the request of the panel, I wrote as HWSP Chair to the Leader of the County Council. The reply that we received was courteous but did not resolve the Panel's concerns.

We received a report about air quality and the monitors that have been put in place to tell us the impact on human health. It was refreshing to hear that the air quality was improving. Due to recent restrictions on travel I would imagine that air quality has further dramatically improved.

On 21 November 2019, the budget was the first item on the agenda and the Council's financial forecast was set out for the next five years. It was pleasing to the panel that the Sexual Assault Referral Service was added to the budget on a recurring basis. A significant budget review will probably be required due to the coronavirus; I would imagine that everything will have to change after the lockdown has been lifted.

HWSP on 9 January 2020 was chaired by the Vice Chair, Cllr Finlayson, as I was on front line duty. However, I promised my family I would retire when I reached 70 (a recent milestone) so as promised, I have complied.

I would like to thank all the staff and officers for all their hard work and dedication in keeping all the services functioning. Also, my thanks go to HWSP Members and last but not least to Cllr Christine Finlayson, my Vice Chair, for stepping into the breach.

To all staff and Members, please stay safe and we will all meet up again when this is all over.

Comment from Councillor Elizabeth Mallinson, Portfolio Holder for Communities, Health and Wellbeing

Over the last year Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel has done some positive work in the area covered by my Portfolio. Just to mention a few areas they have been involved in that added value to decisions of the Executive include:

The Disabled Facilities Grants Action Plan:

This was a useful exercise in publicising the work done by the Housing and Pollution Group and Homelife in delivering housing support. HWSP reviewed the data in the Action Plan, supporting its progression. This support for the Action Plan has directly assisted the Council in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, as the Homelife Liaison Officer post is now working closely with the Hospital to ensure Disabled Facilities Grants are used to move people safely back to their homes, thereby releasing hospital facilities and reducing admissions.

Domestic Abuse and the Council's actions:

HWSP looked at the provision for tackling domestic abuse and the Impact of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. The Council works very closely with all key agencies and supports those in the wider community to keep people safely in their homes where possible. HWSP were very supportive in the work done by our Officers.

Review of Equality Objectives with a Task and Finish Group:

When the draft Council's Equalities Policy went to HWSP there were such positive outcomes that it was suggested that a Task and Finish Group was set up to look into the draft document. The recommendations of this T&F group helped to formulate the Council's Equalities Policy prior to it going to the Executive for adoption.

I would like to thank the committee for all the hard work that they do and that I fully support the role of scrutiny in adding value to the council work and to holding the Executive to account.



Potential items for Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel in 2020-21

The following items are topics that Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel are likely to find particularly helpful to include in their workplan for 2020/21:

- Emergency Planning and Community Resilience.
- Covid-19 related health issues for Carlisle communities.
- Healthy City Strategy.
- Local Environment (Climate Change) Strategy.

**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
BUSINESS AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD ON 28 MAY 2020**

BTSP.26/20 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the draft Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel section for the Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20. (OS.06/20)

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that the Constitution requires that overview and scrutiny committees report annually to full Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate. The Scrutiny Annual Report was prepared to meet this requirement.

The last meetings of the 2019/20 Scrutiny year were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to reduce face to face contact. Remote working practices were being established to allow Scrutiny Panels to operate in Carlisle City Council. Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 set out the guidance that allowed Councils to operate public meetings in virtual, rather than physical locations.

The Panel discussed the draft report and agreed that the Peer Challenge Review should be added to the report as it was an important document for Scrutiny.

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Annual Report (OS.06/20) be agreed subject to the inclusion of the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report as an important topic of scrutiny moving forward.

EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC GROWTH SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 4 JUNE 2020

EGSP.26/20 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the draft Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel section for the Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20. (OS.08/20)

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that the Constitution requires that overview and scrutiny committees report annually to full Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate. The Scrutiny Annual Report was prepared to meet this requirement.

The last meetings of the 2019/20 Scrutiny year were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to reduce face to face contact. Remote working practices were being established to allow Scrutiny Panels to operate in Carlisle City Council. Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 set out the guidance that allowed Councils to operate public meetings in virtual, rather than physical locations.

The Chair informed the Panel that the Scrutiny Chairs Group had met on 13 March 2020. Future timings of the Panels had been discussed and it was suggested that the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel trial a 6.00pm start time. The Chair explained that she had suggested a 6pm start time, which had been supported by the Vice Chair, to encourage those who had childcare and employment responsibilities throughout the day to become more involved and active in Scrutiny. She stressed the issues which she would have with childcare should the meetings continue throughout the day due to her husband working and no one being able to come to her house to look after the children due to Covid 19.

The Panel discussed the proposal in some detail, some Members agreed that a later start time would be beneficial however some Members felt that attendance at a 6.00pm meeting would not be achievable due to commitments to Parish Councils, especially in the rural wards. After listening to the debate, the Chair suggested that a 5.00pm start time may suit Members more than 6.00pm. It was proposed and seconded that a 5.00pm start time be introduced for the Panel. Voting took place and the proposal was not agreed.

The Panel felt that a compromise would be a 4.00pm start time, this was proposed and seconded, following voting it was agreed.

The Chair did not vote in support of the 4.00pm start time and was disappointed that the meeting could not be moved to a later time.

The change to the Panel's start time would be included in an amended Civic Calendar which would be considered by Council on 14 July.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Scrutiny Annual Report (OS.08/20) be agreed subject to the inclusion of the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report as an important topic of scrutiny moving forward.

2) That, subject to the agreement of Council in July, meetings of the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel would begin at 4.00pm.

EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 11 JUNE 2020

HWSP.27/20 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented the draft Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel section for the Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20. (OS.10/20)

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that the Constitution requires that overview and scrutiny committees report annually to full Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate. The Scrutiny Annual Report was prepared to meet this requirement.

The last meetings of the 2019/20 Scrutiny year were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to reduce face to face contact. Remote working practices were being established to allow Scrutiny Panels to operate in Carlisle City Council. Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 set out the guidance that allowed Councils to operate public meetings in virtual, rather than physical locations.

In discussing the potential items for the Panel in 2020-21 the Panel acknowledged that the Covid 19 pandemic should change their focus and agreed the following should be listed as the focus of their work for 2020-21:

- Emergency Planning and Resilience
- Impact of Covid 19 on health issues in Carlisle
- Local Environment (Climate Change) Strategy

The Panel also asked that the following item be added to their Work Programme:

- Impact of Covid 19 on
 - Disabled Facilities Grants
 - Homelessness
 - Domestic Abuse

RESOLVED – 1) That the Scrutiny Annual Report (OS.10/20) be agreed with the following matters listed under ‘Potential items for Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel in 2020-21’:

- Emergency Planning and Resilience
- Impact of Covid 19 on health issues in Carlisle
- Local Environment (Climate Change) Strategy

2) That the following items be added to the Panel’s Work Programme:

- Impact of Covid 19 on
 - Disabled Facilities Grants
 - Homelessness
 - Domestic Abuse