

Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Agenda
Item:
A.6**

Meeting Date: 31 March 2016
Portfolio: Cross Cutting
Key Decision: No
Within Policy and
Budget Framework
Public / Private Public

Title: OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME
Report of: Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Report Number: OS 07/16

Summary:

This report provides an overview of matters related to the CommunityO&SPanel's work. It also includes the latest version of the work programme.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to:

- Decide whether the items on the Notice of Key Executive Decisions should be included in the Panel's Work Programme for consideration.
- Comment on the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2015/16
- Note and/or amend the Panel's work programme.
- Note the update from Council's representative on Cumbria Police and Crime Panel.

Contact Officer: Sarah Mason

Ext: 7053

**Appendices attached
to report:**

1. Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2015/16
2. Community O&S Panel Work Programme 2015/16

1. Notice of Key Executive Decisions

The most recent Notice of Key Executive Decisions was published on 4 March 2016.

This was circulated to all Members.

The following items fall into the remit of this Panel:

KD.03/16 Homeless Hostel Service Structure – Release of Funding

The Executive will be asked to approve the release of funding in line with report recommendations, to support the implementation of a new staffing structure and refocused service following the end of the Supporting People Contract. The decision will be taken in private on 4 April.

KD.04/16 Homelife Carlisle funding options / Business Plan 2016/17

The Executive will be asked to release non-recurrent revenue funding of £73,000 to enable Homelife Carlisle to continue to deliver staying put services to older, disabled and / or vulnerable people living in the District. The decision will be taken in public and private on 4 April.

KD.05/16 Food Law Enforcement Service Plan 2016/17

The Executive will be asked to decide the Environmental Health Section's inspection and educational priorities for improving food safety in Carlisle during 2016/17. The decision will be considered on 6 June and a decision made on 4 July following a consultation period that includes Overview and Scrutiny.

2. References from the Executive

There are no references from the Executive's meeting on 7 March.

3. Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2015/16

The Scrutiny Annual Report has been drafted and is attached at **Appendix 1**. Panel Members are asked to comment on the draft which is being considered by all three O&S Panels. The report will then be formally approved by the Scrutiny Chairs Group prior to being presented at Council on 26 April 2015.

3. Work Programme

The Panel's current work programme is attached at **Appendix 2** for comment/amendment.

4. Representatives on Outside Bodies

A verbal update will be given by Cllr Steven Bowditch, the Council's representative on Cumbria Police and Crime Panel.

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

Appendix 1

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2015/16

Annual report to full Council on the workings of the O&S Panels with recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

April 2016



Cllr Reg Watson OBE
Lead Member, Scrutiny Chairs Group



I am pleased to present the 2015/16 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report to Carlisle City Council.

Even in times of austerity the Scrutiny panels continue to monitor and challenge the chief officers and Executive Members, trying to squeeze out the last drops of efficiency from a reducing budget.

This year all of the scrutiny panels have done well and I thank them for their efforts.

I would also like to thank the scrutiny support officer, chief officers and Members of the Executive for their help and openness throughout the year. I hope we can continue to add value during the following year.

Cllr Colin Glover, Leader of the Council (to follow)



Introduction

Scrutiny is considered to be the main check and balance to the power of the Executive and involves many of the Councillors who are not on the Executive. Individual Councillors are selected by their political parties to sit on the scrutiny panels.

The key roles of scrutiny are:

- ensuring the Executive is accountable. This means questioning members of the Executive and senior officers about decisions that have been made or are about to be made. It also involves looking at how well the Council is doing against its policy objectives and targets for achievement.
- reviewing and developing policies. In this role, scrutiny can help the Council to develop its policy and budgetary framework. This might involve research and consultation with the community and other agencies on policy issues, good practice and looking at alternative ways of doing things.
- ensuring the continuous improvement of Council services. Scrutiny can make suggestions to the Executive for service reviews. Members of scrutiny panels are often involved in individual reviews where a particular service or function of the Council is thoroughly examined.

In Carlisle, scrutiny operates through three panels - Community Overview and Scrutiny, Resources Overview and Scrutiny and Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny. The Scrutiny Chairs Group (Chairs and Vice Chairs of the three Scrutiny Panels) meets on an ad hoc basis to deal with any overarching scrutiny issues.

There are eight non-Executive members on each panel and each panel is politically balanced (ie the proportions of each political party on the panel are the same as on the Council as a whole).

This annual report provides an overview of the work of the scrutiny function during the 2015/16 civic year. The report provides brief details of the work of the individual panels and gives details of Task and Finish Group work.



Setting of Scrutiny work programmes

Scrutiny agenda planning

Consideration was given early in the civic year to decide the content of each Panel's work programme for the year ahead.

Consideration to forthcoming decisions and issues was given and where focus of scrutiny should lie in order to gain the maximum value. Panel Members, SMT officers and Portfolio Holders have been involved in developing each Panel's work programme for the year 2015/16. The following questions were asked when deciding what should be included in a work programme:

Will scrutiny activity add value to the Council's, and / or partners' overall performance?

Is the issue strategic and significant?

Is consideration of the item likely to lead to effective outcomes?

Will Scrutiny involvement be duplicating the work of another Committee?

Is the Scrutiny activity timely?

Regular meetings have continued throughout the year with SMT officers and Chairs of EEOSP and COSP to discuss forthcoming agendas in more details. This helps to ensure that access to appropriate information is available. Scrutiny Members need to be confident that the information provided is an accurate picture of the Council's (and it's partners) performance.



Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel



To quote Will Rogers, not to be confused with Roy, 'Last year we said 'Things can't go on like this' and true enough, they didn't, they got worse'. It is tempting to reflect that, at the end of another municipal year, things have got worse and in some ways they have, with more budget cuts, fewer staff delivering services, less room for optimism and growing disillusion in the community.

On the face of it, in the words of another old gunslinger, Cpl Fraser in Dad's Army 'We're doomed, we're doomed'

But actually, perhaps surprisingly given those circumstances, that's not strictly the case.

There is I believe a general sense of achievement in the Council at the end of this year and at COSP meetings, there have been many items which have been uplifting in some way, including:

- The presentation from the Carlisle Youth Council when some young people presented us with an encouraging view not only of some of their activities, but their enthusiasm and skill in presenting them. Clearly some of them had their minds set on filling some of the seats on the other side of the committee table in the not too distant future!
- Initial discussions about devolution and the Cumbria Deal (or no deal). If you thought the issues around membership of the EU were complicated....
- The exciting prospects emerging from the renewal of the Leisure Contract which hopefully will not only produce financial benefits, but will bring much needed upgrading to some tired old facilities.
- The development of the new Carlisle Plan which offers an intriguing vision of a vibrant, socially and economically viable city.

But of course there were also times when it seemed that things couldn't actually get any worse and the December floods were a reminder of how fickle life can be.

As usual in such circumstances, we saw extraordinary feats of human kindness, courage and resilience and COSP received reports detailing the Council's own exemplary response, which of course remains on going.

It sounds trite to say that we learn from our experiences, when there are so many personal tales of hardship and trauma which cannot be so easily dismissed, but it is a fact that we had learnt much from our previous response ten years ago, which made the initial and continuing recovery processes more timely, relevant and appropriate.



I have rarely found it greatly comforting when in the depths of despair, to know that someone is worse off than me, but there was a great sense of the whole Cumbrian community sharing the experience in December which was indeed comforting and positive.

It has been a great privilege to be Chair of this Panel again this year and I would like to thank fellow Panel Members for their forbearance and support.

We have not found too much to disagree about which is due in many ways, to the input from Officers who have presented the issues to us in a straightforward and open style which has encouraged positive exchanges.

The input from Portfolio Holders and representatives of other agencies has also been key in encouraging constructive debate.

But most of all, the efficiency and effectiveness of Scrutiny would almost certainly be diminished if it were not for the diligence and skills of the Scrutiny Support Officer and the Committee Clerks who perform possibly one of the most under-appreciated jobs on the Council, that of being able to read, write, listen and understand all at the same time (I hereby declare myself ineligible for any future vacancies), in order to produce minutes which are invariably accurate, informative and well written and are of inestimable value to the smooth running of the Council's democratic processes.

At the end of my second year, I have defied those naysayers who said I'd soon get fed up with being a Councillor, indeed my enthusiasm has grown.

Part of that has been due to my involvement with COSP and I hope I will be given the opportunity to continue to be a Member of the Panel in the new municipal year, which is sure to be 'full of things that have never been'!

Bring it on!

Cllr Jessica Riddle, Portfolio Holder for Communities, Health and Wellbeing (to follow)



Cllr Anne Quilter, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People



I fully appreciate the contribution of the Community O&S Panel to the decision making process of the Executive and Full Council. By attending the meetings as Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Young People I am able to appreciate the wider view of members thinking and thank all concerned for their valuable input.



Environment and Economy Overview & Scrutiny Panel

**Personal View from Cllr Paul Nedved, Chair of Environment and Economy O&S Panel
(to follow)**



Cllr Elsie Martlew, Portfolio Holder for Environment & Transport



Overview and Scrutiny is a vital piece in the democratic process.

As the council is run on a "cabinet" style basis it is essential that the Executive can be held to account. As Portfolio Holder I welcome this safeguard and I value the input from O & S members prior to major policy decisions being taken by the Executive.

I believe by utilising the experience and expertise of O & S members the council ultimately creates better policies for the city.



Business Support Task Group

The Economy & Environment Scrutiny Panel commissioned a Task Group to look at Business Support as they had concerns about the provision of business support in the District. Members required more of an understanding of what role Carlisle City Council has, as this has changed over time. The Task Group were asked to look at the roles of the difference agencies and how they work in partnership.

The group evidenced that there is a great deal of advice and support on offer, however this is not presented in a simple way in a single location. It is clear that there is no expectation from local businesses that the Council provides business support, but we could facilitate access to support with smarter signposting. There are examples, from across the North West, where authorities have created webpages or supported the creation of websites dedicated to business support and growth.

The Council role is not to have all the answers; it can help business people find the right answers as easily as possible. To play this role effectively will require further work on mapping out the existing sources and networks offering business support and an ongoing commitment to keeping this mapping current and accurate.

A number of recommendations were made to Executive in November 2015.

Executive gave assurance that the close relationship with providers of business support would continue, that the Council's new web-site would include signposting to help businesses, and the review of the Enterprise Centre would look at all aspects of the Centre's operation including renaming and rebranding.

Cllr Heather Bradley, Portfolio Holder for Economy & Enterprise



As a former member of scrutiny panels, I view their role in scrutinising decisions and helping to develop policy as essential. As a Portfolio Holder, I have found the comments and questions of the Environment & Economy and of the Community Scrutiny Panels helpful and sometimes challenging.

I appreciate the work of Task & Finish Groups and the way in which their efforts can assist in developing policy and in informing future Council decisions. I should like to thank the Chairs and members of the panels for the contribution they make to the Council.



Resources Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Personal View from Cllr Reg Watson, Chair of Resources O&S Panel



Scrutiny has an important role to play in times of austerity to ensure efficiency and thrift.

The Panel probed a number of areas including:

Asset Management Plan – we must keep a close eye on this as it is the main part of our future funding

Performance monitoring – ensuring value for money

Sickness management – doing well despite the cuts and the floods

I would like to thank our Scrutiny Support Officer and Chief Officers for their advice and support and a big thank you to fellow Panel Members for their support over the last 12 months. I hope we can continue to add value to Council deliberations.

Cllr Dr Les Tickner, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance & Resources (to follow)



Pre-decision scrutiny

Pre-decision scrutiny

Throughout the year a number of items have been scrutinised by panels prior to an Executive decision. 'Pre-decision scrutiny' is where Overview and Scrutiny Panels look at a planned decision shortly before it is made by the Executive. This is often seen as a contrast with post-decision scrutiny through the Council's call-in arrangements, whereby the implementation of decisions can be delayed.

According to the Centre for Public Scrutiny¹, looking at decisions before they are made provides an important means to influence those decisions, and to improve them. It gives scrutineers an opportunity to challenge assumptions that may have been made as the decision was developed; it also gives them the chance to consider how decision-makers have considered what risks might arise from the implementation of the decision, and how those risks might be mitigated. Scrutiny councillors bring a different perspective to the decision-making process than that provided by Cabinet members or officers, which can help decisions to be more robust. Looking at a decision before it is made can often be seen as a more effective means of scrutiny than looking at a decision after it is made

¹*Pre-decision scrutiny, Practice Guide 2—Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) June 2014*

Pre-decision scrutiny items in the past year include:

- Low cost home ownership
- Carlisle Plan 2015-16
- Sports and Leisure new contract
- Rethinking Waste Business Case and Vehicle procurement
- Tullie House Business Plan
- Revised Equality Policy
- Tullie House Business Plan
- Contaminated Land Strategy
- Clean Neighbourhood Enforcement Policy
- Draft Budget 2016/17 (to all three panels)
- Asset Review Business Plan
- Asset Management Plan 2015-2020
- Digital Vision and Technology 5 year Strategy



Call-in

Call-in provides a mechanism for Councillors to intervene when they feel that a decision being made by the Executive needs to be revisited (or possibly changed). It provides a key check and balance in the leader / cabinet system of governance.

In the 2015/16 Civic year one request for Call-in was received.

Decision Ref	Issue	Overview & Scrutiny Panel	Outcome of Call-in Meeting
OD 184/15	Appointment of Leisure Contract Retender Advisor	Community	That the decision not be referred back to the decision making body.

Scrutiny of the 2015 Flood

Scrutiny of the 2015 Flood

Following the Floods in December 2015, Members of Environment and Economy O&S Panel have suggested that a Task and Finish Group be set up to consider any future response to the flood, investigate any possible ways that the Council could influence flood prevention measures and also look at the Council's first response to the flood and take away any lessons learned. The Scrutiny Chairs group on 4 April agreed that a workshop be set up in the current civic year. This would provide an overview of the issues and plans for recovery and future resilience. Further consideration would then be given to the scope of Flood scrutiny including the best timing of review work.

It has also been agreed that regular flood update reports would be provided to each Panel, to receive updates on issues within the remit of that Panel.



Conclusion

Conclusion to follow

Appendix 2: COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

Issue Contact Officer	Type of Scrutiny						Comments/status	Meeting Dates							
	Performance Management	Key Decisions Item/Referred from Executive	Policy Review/Development	Scrutiny of Partnership/ External Agency	Monitoring	Budget		11 Jun 15	23 Jul 15	3 Sep 15	15 Oct 15	19 Nov 15	14 Jan 16	18 Feb 16	31 Mar 16
CURRENT MEETING 31 March 2016															
Youth Council Emma Dixon				✓			Role and programme of the Youth Council								✓
Customer Services Jill Gillespie	✓						Performance of the new web-site / coping with the flood / future of CRM and customer services (smarter services)								✓
Scrutiny Annual Report Sarah Mason			✓		✓		Draft report for comment before Chairs Group								✓
Housing Strategy 2012-16 Margaret Miller							Report to update the Panel on the achievements of 2012-16 Housing Strategy								✓
Flood Update Report Darren Crossley					✓		Update on flood recovery programme of the Council’s assets								✓
TASK AND FINISH GROUPS															
Health Issues in Carlisle							Possible topic for Task and Finish group.								

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FUTURE ITEMS															
CSP Strategic Assessment Gavin Capstick				✓			Presentation of the Strategic Assessment that informs that Partnership Plan. This will be April 2016.								
Community Safety Partnership Gavin Capstick		✓					Scrutiny of the Partnership Plan. This will be May / June 2016.		✓						
Completed Items															
Low Cost Home Ownership Policy		✓					Scrutiny of Executive Report	✓							
Leisure Facilities Development							Private report on options for future delivery	✓							
Carlisle Plan 2015-18		✓					Pre-decision consultation on the draft Carlisle Plan 2015-2018			✓					

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Private Rented Sector			✓				Presentation on the Private Rented Sector in Carlisle / relationship with Private Landlords			✓					
Arts Centre Gavin Capstick	✓						Performance of the Arts Centre (in the first months after opening)				✓				
Sports and Leisure new contract Gavin Capstick							Results of market engagement for new contract				✓				
Budget setting 2016/17-2020/21 Steven Tickner		✓	✓				Consideration of service implications					✓			
Greenwich Leisure Ltd Gavin Capstick				✓			Annual Performance Report					✓			
Tullie House Business Plan Gavin Capstick				✓			Annual scrutiny of Tullie House Business Plan					✓			

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Riverside Annual Report Jeremy Hewitson							Monitoring progress and developments of joint working. To include Impact and Two Castles Housing Associations.						✓		
Performance Monitoring Reports Gary Oliver	✓						Reporting of performance relevant to remit of Panel	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Equality Policy Becky Tibbs			✓				Consultation on revised Equality Policy. Deferred to 18 Feb.							✓	
Response to Welfare Reform Darren Crossley				✓			Overview of partnership working in response to the Welfare Reform agenda.							✓	
INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS															
Details								Date Circulated							
Food Law Enforcement Service Plan								1 st June 2015							

