

Scrutiny Committee Annual Report to Council - 2020/21

Remit of the Scrutiny Committee

1. As per Appendix C of the Council's constitution, "Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules":

1.1 The Council is required by Law to discharge certain overview and scrutiny functions. These functions are an essential component of local democracy. The Scrutiny Committee contribute to the Council's Performance and also hold the Cabinet to account for its decisions.

1.2 The Scrutiny Committee allows a wider involvement in Council business by involving non-councillors from the wider public section, voluntary groups and community groups to help them in their work. They may make reports and recommendations to the Cabinet and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery.

1.3 The Scrutiny Committee also monitors the decisions of the Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committee can "call-in" a decision of the Cabinet which has been made but not yet implemented. They may recommend that the Cabinet reconsider their decision. They may also be consulted by the Cabinet or the Council on forthcoming decisions.

1.4 Scrutiny should be carried out in a constructive way and should aim to contribute to the delivery of efficient and effective services that meet the needs and aspirations of local inhabitants. The Scrutiny Committee should not shy away from the need to challenge and question decisions and make constructive criticism.

"The Scrutiny Committee will comprise a permanent Chairman and Vice Chairman, and 9 other elected Members that follow the political proportionality of the Council. No Members of the Committee may be members of the Cabinet, their deputies or members of any of the Cabinet Advisory Committees."

Approach

2. Throughout the course of 2020/21, the Scrutiny Committee has drawn up and followed a work plan that has focussed on four key areas. These are:

- **Inviting Cabinet Portfolio Holders** to each meeting of the Scrutiny Committee where possible to discuss particular areas of focus/challenge and concerns members may have;
- **Inviting a number of external representatives** to attend Scrutiny Committee to discuss particular areas of concern and their activities within the district;
- **Setting up In-Depth Scrutiny working groups** as task and finish groups to investigate particular areas in detail, reporting back to the Committee so that recommendations can be agreed and reported to Cabinet.

- **Reviewing performance of services** in relation to agreed performance indicators, in particular focusing on red flag indicators. These are discussed at meetings, with explanations being provided by Officers. Matters of serious concern are referred to the Portfolio Holder/ Cabinet as appropriate.

This approach has ensured that the Committee has scrutinised both the work of SDC and other public bodies across the district, per the Committee’s above terms of reference.

Work Covered

3. Based on the above approach, the following is a summary of work carried out during 2020/21 by the Scrutiny Committee.

Portfolio Holders

4. Portfolio Holders were asked to provide an update on recent work and future challenges to the relevant meeting, and were subsequently asked a number of questions by Members of the Committee regarding specific challenges and their approach and views. Portfolio holders attended as follows:

Scrutiny Committee	Portfolio Holder	Area of Committee Focus
July 2020	Cllr Lesley Dyball People and Places Cllr Thornton Development and Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council’s response to the challenges of COVID-19 • Progress on the development of the new White Oak Leisure centre, including conversations with Orchards Academy • Further Government Funding for Sencio • Plans for supporting older people with wellbeing • Progress of the local plan •
November 2020	Cllr Matthew Dickins Finance and Investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Impact of Covid-19 • Government Support Schemes • Net Zero Fund • Capital Programme
January 2021	Cllr Peter Fleming Improvement & Innovations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid-19 - Council achievements and challenges • Customer Redesign programme • Town Centre Ambassadors • Car park revenue • Health Hubs
March 2021	Cllr Kevin Maskell Housing and Health	TBC

External Invitees

July 2020

KCC Cabinet Members for Children, Young People and Education

The KCC Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education, Richard Long, and the Area Educational Officer for North Kent, Ian Watts, were in attendance and gave a presentation about Education in the Sevenoaks District.

Members of the Committee then asked a number of questions relating to areas including:

- Admissions arrangements for schools in the District.
- Preferential placements given to teaching staff (2 year working requirement)
- Parent preferences
- Advice to schools relating to the pandemic including safety measures and mental health
- Travel arrangements for pupils
- Use of technology to support pupils
- Funding for Schools

In-Depth Scrutiny Working Group CCTV - Interim verbal update

The Chairman of the Working Group CCTV also gave an interim update on progress so far.

November 2021

Stag Theatre

Chief Executive of the Stag Theatre, Andrew Eyre, and Business Development & Marketing Manager, Lisa Whitbread, gave a presentation on the Stag Theatre including the financial impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Members of the Committee then asked a number of questions relating to areas including:

- Funding and grants available to the theatre, including an Arts Council Sustainability Grant of £444,395.
- Plans for the reopening of the theatre subject to COVID restrictions

Sencio Leisure Centre

Jane Parish, the Chief Executive of Sencio Leisure, was in attendance and gave a presentation outlining the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, safety measures taken during the period the leisure centres were open, and Sencio's current financial position.

Members discussed the presentation and asked questions of clarification of the Chief Executive of Sencio Leisure.

In-Depth Scrutiny Working Group CCTV

Cllr Pender updated the committee on the CCTV Working Group, advising that they held a further meeting and had continued data gathering. They had considered evidence and readings from experts in the field of CCTV. There were plans to meet with the police in December to discuss CCTV use.

January 2021

West Kent Police

Chief Inspector Mark Stubberfield, from West Kent Police, was in attendance to provide an overview of crime and disorder in the Sevenoaks District, which generally had declined significantly.

Members of the committee then asked a number of questions relating to areas including:

- The effect of the pandemic on crime types and figures
- Door-to-door salespeople
- The approach to lockdown measures
- The impact of the pandemic on policing resources

Other

The Chairman would like to thank his Vice Chairman, other committee Members and Officers for the work they have put in over the year.

Councillor Cameron Brown
Chairman - Scrutiny Committee
23 March 2021