

North Yorkshire County Council**Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee****20 July 2017****Overview and Scrutiny at North Yorkshire County Council and Work Programme****Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a summary of how overview and scrutiny is undertaken at the Council, the way in which subjects for scrutiny are identified, why it is important and what role committee Members have to play.

This report provides Members with details of some of the specific responsibilities and powers relating to this committee and also a copy of the committee work programme for review and comment.

Overview and Scrutiny

The Local Government Act 2000 first introduced the requirement for every local authority to include provision for at least one scrutiny committee. Under this Act and associated legislation, scrutiny can make recommendations to the executive and other local bodies. The committees also have the power to question Cabinet members, Council officers and representatives of other organisations, such as health and community safety agencies. The committees can also investigate any issue which affects the local area or its residents.

For more detail on the roles and responsibilities of the overview and scrutiny committees have, please refer to the North Yorkshire County Council Constitution – <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/24041/The-council-constitution>

Why it is important

Overview and scrutiny provides an important check and balance, helping to ensure that the decisions made by the executive reflect the needs of local people, are financially robust and are in keeping with the strategic priorities and responsive to the operational demands of the Council.

Where overview and scrutiny is not active, engaged and inquisitive, then there is a risk that some strategic and operational issues could be overlooked and opportunities for early intervention and action missed. Examples of where this has occurred in other local authorities, albeit at the extreme, include: child sexual exploitation in Rotherham MBC; poor care and high mortality rates at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust; and governance failings in Tower Hamlets LBC.

How it contributes to the Council's outcomes

In addition to being an important check and balance and providing early warning, scrutiny aims to contribute to the Council's corporate outcomes in many other ways, including:

- Enabling Councillors to become directly involved in the development of: policy and strategy; consultation and public engagement planning; and the performance management of the Council
- Keeping Councillors and the public informed of key issues, priorities and initiatives
- Enabling direct engagement with the people of North Yorkshire
- Acting as a critical friend and providing Cabinet Members and senior officers with a non-partisan forum in which to test out ideas, approaches and gain feedback and suggestions
- Providing a structure, through the call-in process, for scrutinising specific decisions of the Executive
- Scrutinising issues of public concern beyond the remit of the Council.

The overview and scrutiny committees

There are five thematic overview and scrutiny committees, each of which meet in public four times a year, as below:

- Transport, Economy and Environment – focussed upon transport and communications infrastructure, supporting business and helping people develop their skills, sustainable development, climate change, countryside management, waste management, environmental conservation and cultural issues
- Corporate and Partnerships - the Council's corporate organisation and structure, resource allocation, asset management, procurement policy, people strategy, equality and diversity, performance management, communications, partnership working, community development and engagement and community safety (as the designated Crime and Disorder Committee).
- Young People – focussed upon the interests of young people, including education, care and protection and family support
- Care and Independence – focussed upon the needs of vulnerable adults and older people and people whose independence needs to be supported by intervention from the public or voluntary sector
- Health - focussed upon the planning, provision and operation of health services in the County with the aim of acting as a lever to improve the health of local people and ensuring that the needs of the local people are considered as an integral part of the delivery and development of health services.

Overview and scrutiny functions are also supported through the following bodies:

- Scrutiny Board – this is made up of the Chairs of the five thematic overview and scrutiny committees and enables work to be co-ordinated, opportunities for joint scrutiny to be identified, and committee Chairs to act as critical friends.
- Police and Crime Panel - which scrutinises the Police and Crime Commissioner. There is also a Complaints Sub-Committee which meets on an ad hoc basis.
- Looked After Children’s Members Group – this is not a formal committee but acts as an informal advisory group to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Children's and Young Peoples Services. The group performs a role consistent with statutory guidance for local authorities to promote the health and well-being of looked-after children.

Mid Cycle Briefings

In addition to formal meetings of the committees, there is also a system of Mid Cycle Briefings. A Mid Cycle Briefing enables the Chair, Vice Chair and Spokespersons for each committee to meet in private four times a year to: discuss the work of the committee; identify areas for in-depth scrutiny; and have an early discussion with commissioners and providers about topics that may be confidential or under development.

Different approaches to overview and scrutiny

In addition to formal committee meetings and Mid Cycle Briefings, there are a number of approaches that overview and scrutiny can take, including:

- Task and finish groups – these are informal, time-limited bodies comprised of councillors that are established by the committee to undertake a discrete piece of scrutiny work and then report back their findings and recommendations.
- In-depth scrutiny review – this is when the committee undertakes a prolonged and detailed piece of work, which includes: desktop research; expert witnesses, typically commissioners and providers; service/site visits; and engagement with service users. This approach combines formal committee meetings and the use of a sub-group.
- Select Committee – where an overview and scrutiny committee works as a whole committee to address a particular issue. Typically, this would involve a one-off meeting lasting a day where a range of expert witnesses are invited to attend and give evidence. The committee members then analyse the evidence given and make recommendations for improvements.
- Call-in – this is when non-executive members of the Council can have decisions of the Executive considered by a scrutiny committee.
- Joint scrutiny – this is when there is an issue that is directly relevant to more than one overview and scrutiny committee and so a collaborative approach is taken.

This can be internal or external. External joint scrutiny is often undertaken by the Scrutiny of Health Committee.

Role of committee members

All the members of an overview and scrutiny committee have a key role to play in ensuring that Council and other public sector services are delivered effectively, efficiently and that they achieve good outcomes for local people. The things that committee members can do, include:

- Contributing to the development of the committee's work programme, providing constructive challenge and suggesting topics for inclusion
- Actively engaging with all stages of the scrutiny process, including any additional groups or meetings that are setup outside of the scheduled, formal meetings of the committee
- Developing constructive relationships with other members of the committee, the relevant portfolio holders and service leads
- Working apolitically as a committee, with a strong focus upon service improvement and outcomes
- Receiving the data, information and analysis that is presented in an impartial manner
- Assessing the data, information and analysis presented to the committee and testing the conclusions that are drawn
- Contributing to the development of recommendations, based on the committee's deliberations, which are specific, realistic and relevant.

Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee has some specific responsibilities and powers relating to its area of work, as summarised below:

- Transport and communications infrastructure of all kinds, however owned or provided, and how the transport needs of the community are met.
- Supporting business, helping people develop their skills, including lifelong learning.
- Sustainable development, climate change strategy, countryside management, waste management, environmental conservation and enhancement flooding and cultural issues.

Work programme

The topics for overview and scrutiny are identified by the committee Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Spokespersons and Members, advised by the relevant overview and scrutiny officer, using some of the following sources of information:

- Performance data, information and analysis, in particular when it has been benchmarked against similar local authorities
- Inspection reports

- National research findings
- National policy changes
- National and local consultations and public engagement events
- County Council Plan
- County Council budget and delivery against savings proposals and targets
- Agendas for Executive
- Local issues raised by elected members, members of the public or highlighted in the media
- Local networks and partnerships.

Where an initial area of interest or line of inquiry is identified, further information is gathered to ascertain whether this is a valid area for scrutiny that will add value and not duplicate work that is already underway.

On every agenda for formal meetings of the overview and scrutiny committees, there is an item on the committee work programme. This provides Members with an opportunity to reflect on the issues that have been identified and assure themselves that they are appropriate for the committee.

The work programme for this committee is in **Appendix 1**.

Further information

Further information on Overview and Scrutiny is available on the North Yorkshire County Council website - <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/23665/Scrutiny>

The officer supporting the work of this committee is:

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Committee papers are available from the North Yorkshire County Council website as follows - <http://democracy.northyorks.gov.uk/>

Recommendation

That Members review the Committee's work programme, taking into account issues highlighted in this report, the outcome of discussions on previous agenda items and any other developments taking place across the county.

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7 July 2017

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Work Programme Schedule

Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme Schedule 2017/18

Scope

‘Transport and communications infrastructure of all kinds, however owned or provided, and how the transport needs of the community are met.

Supporting business, helping people develop their skills, including lifelong learning.

Sustainable development, climate change strategy, countryside management, waste management, environmental conservation and enhancement flooding and cultural issues.’

Meeting dates

Scheduled Committee Meetings	20 July 2017 10am	31 Oct 2017 10am	23 Jan 2018 10am	10 April 2018 10am
Scheduled Mid Cycle Briefings Attended by Group Spokespersons only.	21 Sept 2017 10am	7 Dec 2017 10am	8 March 2018 10am	

Overview Reports

Meeting	Subject	Aims/Terms of Reference
Consultation, progress and performance monitoring reports		
Each meeting as available	Corporate Director and / or Executive Member update	Regular update report as available each meeting
	Work Programme	Regular report where the Committee reviews its work programme

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Meeting	Subject	Aims/Terms of Reference
20 July 2017	Highways Maintenance Contract	To receive the annual report on actions being put in place by the highways maintenance & highways improvement contractor (Ringway) to improve performance and communications
	Highways England	Regular annual update
	Road casualties	To advise Members of the road casualty figures in 2016 and the work of the 95Alive Partnership
	Street Works Permit	To provide an overview of the proposed Permit Scheme designed to improve the scheduling and management of works on the highway network.
31 October 2017	Rail developments	Update report on the rail franchise, Rail North and Transport for the North, and discussions on reinstatement of railway lines
	Airport Consultative Committees	Update report by the County Council's representatives on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leeds/Bradford International Airport • Durham and Tees Valley Airport • Robin Hood Airport
	Adult Learning Service	Overview of the Adult Learning Service including update from Ofsted inspection carried out in June 2017
23 January 2018	YNYER LEP	Annual update on the work of the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership
	Allerton Waste Recovery Park	To advise Members on the arrangements for the Allerton Waste Recovery Park becoming operational in early 2018, including commissioning and contract management arrangements
	Local Nature Partnership	Update on the work of the Local Nature Partnership
Items where dates have yet to be	Banks and post offices	The closure of banks and post offices in North Yorkshire and their impact

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confirmed	Vehicle Activated Signs	Update on the rollout of VAS to parishes in North Yorkshire	
	Promoting access to our heritage	To be provided with an overview of the heritage service and promote discussion	

Possible future overview reports and presentations from external partner organisations

Meeting	Subject	Aims/Terms of Reference	
	Tourism	To be provided with an overview of tourism figures from the past five years to now and projected trends	
	Electric charge points for hybrid vehicles	To be provided with an overview of the progress of installing electric charge points in the county for hybrid vehicles and to discuss strategies to lever in investment to increase the number of charge points and to promote the use of hybrid vehicles	

In-depth Scrutiny Projects/Reviews

Subject	Aims/Terms of Reference	Timescales	
The North Yorkshire economy post-Brexit	Steering group comprising of the Group Spokespersons set up to consider the measures required to support the local economy following the triggering of Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon by the UK government.	March 2017 onwards	

Please note that this is a working document, therefore topics and timeframes might need to be amended over the course of the year.