

## Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2019-2020

The Scrutiny Committee was formed in December 2012, following the decision by full Council to replace the Review and Development Committees with two strategic Committees alongside a Scrutiny Committee.

The purpose of the Committee is to:

- Innovate and challenge the way the Council operates
- Exercise the call in powers contained in the Constitution
- Add value to the Council through in-depth studies
- Add value to the Council through selective studies of external crosscutting issues
- Promote more informal smaller group working.
- Open up the local democratic process to greater public involvement.
- Add value to the Council through pre-decision scrutiny of Key Decisions through using the Forward Plan
- Be involved in performance management on a selective and strategic basis.
- Develop effective and positive channels of communication between itself and the Cabinet.
- Adopt a Select Committee style and approach wherever possible.
- Require effective and reliable officer support
- Be involved in the development of Policy
- Scrutinise areas of interest or concern and make recommendations to Cabinet and where appropriate full Council following the completion of such scrutiny

### *Membership of the Committee, substitutes, guests and attendance*

Eight meetings were held during the Municipal year, figures indicate how many of the meetings each Member attended.

Councillor Sandra Barnes (Chairman)	8	Councillor Dennis Loveland	6
Councillor Elaine Wiltshire (Vice-Chairman)	8	Councillor Charles Manners	8
Councillor Fiona Baker	5	Councillor Abigail Medina	6
Councillor John Budden	6	Councillor Ken Pritchard	8
Councillor Richard Dallyn	7	Councillor Adil Sadygov	3
Councillor Val Furniss	5	Councillor Lisa Samiotis	6
Councillor David Harries BEM	7	Councillor Allen Walker	6
Councillor Gregor Hopkins	5		

### *Substitutes*

Councillor Ann Addison	1	Councillor Mary-Anne Sergison-Brooke	1
Councillor Hywel Davies	1		

### *Guests*

Councillor Dermot Bambridge	1	Councillor Phil Bignell	1
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### *External Guests*

Harinder Birring, Shelter	Attended as part of the Homelessness Service Showcase in May 2019
Dr Rachel Duncan, Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse Service	Attended as part of the Community Safety Showcase in July 2019
Natrice Westwood, Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse Service	Attended as part of the Community Safety Showcase in July 2019

### *Items considered by the Committee*

The Committee has considered a number of subjects over the course of the year, by way of formal reports, service showcases, briefing notes and presentations.

### *Reports*

Performance, Risk and Finance Reports  
Draft Budget Investment Growth 2020/21  
NIC Strategic Rail  
Silverstone Experience  
Work Programme Planning

### *Service Showcases*

Homelessness Service  
Community Safety  
Environmental Services  
Environmental Health  
Sports and Leisure, including Leisure Contracts  
Council Tax and Business Rates Showcase

### *Briefing notes*

Universal Credit Update  
Update on Corporate Health and Safety  
Air Quality in Towcester  
Gypsy and Travellers Policy and Procedures  
Customer Service Improvement Project Progress Report  
Towcester Relief Road  
Affordable Housing  
Information Rights

### *Presentations*

Encouraging Environmentally Friendly Businesses to South Northamptonshire  
Local Planning Action and Housing Land Supply  
Climate Change Working Group

## *Scrutiny during 2019-2020: Some highlights*

### *Silverstone Experience*

Following the work carried out during the 2018-2019 Municipal Year, the Committee continued to receive updates regarding the Silverstone Heritage Experience.

The opening of the experience was delayed due to issues with contractors, however it opened in October 2019. A number of Councillors were hosted on a tour of the facility shortly before the official opening.

Representatives of Silverstone Heritage have been invited to attend the May 2020 meeting of the Committee, to give an update 6 months on from opening.

### *Climate Change*

At the full Council meeting held in July 2019, a motion was adopted which saw a Climate Change working group established, to assess the existing carbon footprint of the district area and to review potential actions and associated costs to limit the effects of climate change in South Northamptonshire.

10 Councillors were appointed to the working group, chaired by the Scrutiny Chairman Councillor Sandra Barnes, with two further scrutiny committee members, Vice-Chairman Elaine Wiltshire and Abigail Medina, also appointed to the group. A budget of £25,000 was made available to assist with research.

The working group initially reported to Scrutiny Committee in December 2019. Existing data had been gathered to try and calculate the current carbon footprint through both direct and indirect emissions. Collaboration was also taking place with colleagues from West Northamptonshire councils.

The work of the group is continuing, with a further update scheduled for full Council in May 2020, which will detail recommended actions following further evaluations and costing.

### *Encouraging Environmentally Friendly Businesses to South Northamptonshire*

In response to a query from the Committee in July 2019, the Economic Development Team gave a short presentation that explained the work undertaken by the team to encourage businesses into the district.

The officers explained that a number of approaches were used to attract investment into the district, and whilst environmentally friendly businesses were included in the work they were not targeted specifically. However, information provided by the team could easily be tailored to help existing businesses become more environmentally friendly.

During the course of the discussion the Executive Director – Operations advised that the Council's Business Strategy was due to be reviewed, and could be submitted to Scrutiny Committee for discussion at the relevant time.

### *Work Programme Planning*

Following the change in the approach to work planning during the previous Municipal year, the Committee continued to use the topic sheet to track subjects that were raised for further discussion, investigation or referral to other committees.

Annexe 1 to this report gives details of the subjects raised this year, with a summary of how they were addressed by the Committee.

As well as the topic sheet, the Committee continued with the programme of service showcases, with at least one showcase taking place at each meeting.

Six showcases have been received during the course of the year, and on each occasion members have asked numerous questions of officers and their guests, to gain a better understanding of the work being carried out in departments across the council.

### *Briefing Notes*

Following the success of the briefing note format introduced during the 2018-19 municipal year, it has continued to be used during this year.

The Committee has received short updates on eight subjects via briefing notes, with officers attending meetings to answer any questions the Committee may have had on the content.

### *Working Groups*

In January 2020 the Committee decided to set up two informal working groups, to carry out research in response to queries raised in relation to Section 106 Planning Agreements.

The first group would concentrate on the health aspects of agreements, and arrangements are being made for an officer from the Clinical Commissioning Group to speak to the group and provide some background on the process that is undertaken.

The second group is focussing on transport, and arrangements are being made for an appropriate officer from the transport authority to speak to the group.

These initial discussions will help both groups with the scoping process for potential reviews.

## Annexe 1

TOPIC	ACTION / OUTCOME/STATUS
<p><u>Recycling Contract</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Cllrs Wiltshire, Pritchard, Riley and Manners</p>	<p>The Committee queried what would happen with the recycling contract for South Northamptonshire Council when it came up for renewal in March 2020, due to Local Government Reform (LGR).</p> <p>As part of the Environmental Services Showcase in September 2019, the Waste and Cleansing Manager advised the Committee that the contract was likely to be extended, as following benchmarking against costs paid by other Councils it was felt the current contract offered good value for money. Discussions were taking place with Northampton Borough and Daventry District Councils regarding contract arrangements for the longer term following LGR.</p>
<p><u>Air Quality</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Cllrs Barnes, Furniss, Johns and Harries</p>	<p>During the 2018-19 Municipal year, the Committee received information on the Air Quality in Towcester for the period of time that the A5 was closed to traffic due to roadworks. The Committee requested a further update be provided to them during 2019-20.</p> <p>A briefing note was submitted to the October 2019 meeting, which detailed figures for the previous four full years, and the first half of 2019. The overall trend was a reduction in Nitrogen Dioxide levels.</p>
<p><u>Universal Credit</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Cllrs Dallyn, Sadygov and Manners</p>	<p>Following the introduction of Universal Credit in South Northamptonshire at the end of 2018, the Committee requested an update on the roll-out. The Operations Director of CSN Resources provided a briefing note to the Committee in September 2019, which detailed the challenges that had been encountered since South Northamptonshire residents changed to Universal Credit at the end of 2018.</p>
<p><u>Silverstone Experience</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Initially Cllrs Wiltshire, Pritchard, Riley and Manners, followed up by Cllrs Dallyn, Sadygov and Manners</p>	<p>As detailed in the main report, the Committee have continued to monitor the progress at the Silverstone Experience, and will be inviting the Chief Executive to attend a meeting during 2020.</p>

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<p><u>Towcester Bypass</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Cllrs Dallyn, Sadygov and Manners</p>	<p>Linked to the query regarding Air Quality in Towcester, the Committee requested an update on progress of the new road included in the new development to the south of Towcester.</p> <p>The briefing note submitted in October 2019 advised the Committee that a planning application for the road was due to be submitted. The application was considered at Planning Committee on 30 January 2020, and the road was approved.</p>
<p><u>Salcey Forest Treetop Walkway</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Cllrs Walker, Loveland and Budden</p>	<p>The Committee queried why the walkway had been closed, as it was a popular attraction for users of the forest.</p> <p>Democratic and Elections officers were able to advise that the walkway had been closed due to having 'major structural failings' that had been discovered during a detailed survey. Forestry England were giving consideration as to the best way to proceed.</p>
<p><u>Rental Garages in Deanshanger</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Cllrs Walker, Loveland and Budden</p>	<p>Residents of Deanshanger with rented garages received notification that the garages were to be decommissioned, and the Committee requested information as to why this was and what was planned for the site.</p> <p>Enquiries were made of Grand Union Housing but no response was received.</p>
<p><u>Travellers Policy and Unauthorised encampments</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Cllrs Walker, Loveland and Budden</p>	<p>The Committee requested information about the current policy for unauthorised encampments.</p> <p>A briefing note was submitted to the October 2019 meeting of the Committee, which gave an overview of the work of the County Travellers Unit, who dealt with queries and concerns relating to travellers across Northamptonshire, including incidents of unauthorised encampments.</p>
<p><u>Street Lighting Strategy</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Cllrs Walker, Loveland and Budden</p>	<p>Following an increase in the number of applications to the SNC Grants Scheme for street lighting, the Committee requested clarity on who incurs ongoing costs and day-to-day responsibility for lighting funded through an SNC grant award.</p>
<p><u>Superfast Northants Broadband</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Cllrs Harries and Hopkins</p>	<p>The Committee initially investigated the rollout of Broadband across the district in 2013, and requested an update.</p>

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	<p>Significant progress had been made since 2013, and the project was now a partnership between BT and Gigaclear. However, delays had occurred with the rollout and some communities hadn't been served as quickly as anticipated.</p> <p>The Committee requested that a feasibility study be undertaken to find out how much it would cost to provide Superfast broadband to the 2% of properties that had been identified as unable to be reached.</p>
<p><u>Mobile Phone Connectivity</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Cllrs Harries and Hopkins</p>	<p>Another returning subject was mobile phone signal, which was initially investigated in 2017.</p> <p>At the time, a group of MPs had formed the British Infrastructure Group who were looking to champion better infrastructure across the UK.</p> <p>Officers undertook research and advised the Committee that the Digital Economy Bill had become law in April 2019, which gave Ofcom additional powers regarding Mobile phone connectivity.</p>
<p><u>Local Government Reform</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Whole Committee</p>	<p>During the 2018-19 Municipal Year the Committee received a number of updates relating to Local Government Reform, its impact on services on South Northamptonshire and the process of separating from Cherwell District Council. The Committee requested that updates continue during 2019-20.</p>
<p><u>S106 Monitoring</u></p> <p>Suggested by: Initially by Cllrs Harries and Hopkins, followed by up Cllr Barnes.</p>	<p>A query was initially raised in May 2019 regarding the monitoring of Section 106 planning agreements. The Committee were advised that monitoring was carried out by the Budget and Financial Strategy Committee.</p> <p>The query was raised again towards the end of 2019, with particular emphasis on the health and transport aspects of the agreements. As detailed in the main report, two informal working groups have been set-up to further research the subject.</p>
<p><u>Housing Supply</u></p> <p>Suggested by Cllrs: Pritchard, Wiltshire and Baker</p>	<p>The Committee requested clarity on the total number of years housing supply for the district, as different figures had been quoted during the Local Plan Part 2 examination. The query was referred to the Planning Policy and Regeneration Strategy Committee, as the Committee with general responsibility for housing supply.</p>

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<p><u>Local Grants</u> Suggested by Cllrs: Pritchard, Wiltshire and Baker</p>	<p>The Committee requested information on how grants for local groups and communities were distributed and monitored. Details of the Community Grants Policy and Procedure were emailed to Committee members.</p>
<p><u>Local Plan Part II</u> <u>Suggested by: Cllrs Harries and Hopkins</u></p>	<p>A query was raised regarding the Local Plan for South Northamptonshire, in light of Local Government Reform, and how the plans for South Northamptonshire, Daventry District and Northampton Borough would come together. The Assistant Director – Planning and Economy agreed to provide a written update to the Committee as and when more information was known.</p>