

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMUNITY YEARLY REPORT 2021

LEAD MEMBER: Councillor John Kane, Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair

LEAD OFFICER: Sarah Pemberton, Director of Corporate Services and Community Strategy

REPORT AUTHOR: Rose Blaney, Scrutiny Officer

Why has this report come to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee? (e.g. Committee request, update report).

This report has come to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the work carried out by Overview and Scrutiny and their Task & Finish Groups for 2021.

SUMMARY:

This yearly report is to review the work that has been carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and their Task & Finish Groups for 2021. This report is different to the Annual Scrutiny Report, as this is to help the Committee themselves to review and analyse the work that has been done.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To agree with the recommendations within paragraph 5.4
2. Provide any comments and feedback on the contents of the report.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report has been brought to OSC to provide a summary of the work conducted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) in 2021 from June to November.

- 1.2 The report does not cover work done before the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in May 2021.
- 1.3 The aim of the report is to allow OSC to review the work that has been done and review how to improve.
- 1.4 This report is not the same as the Annual Scrutiny Report, the report which is sent to both the Executive and Full Council. This report is as an internal review of the work undertaken by OSC and possible improvements.
- 1.5 The recommendations from each OSC meeting since June 2021 have been recorded by the Scrutiny Officer, along with any response from those that were sent to the Executive, to enable OSC to review them.

2. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN 2021

- 2.1 During the time covered within this report, five OSC meetings took place. There were originally six scheduled OSC meetings but one being cancelled due to.
- 2.2 There were a total of 52 agenda items, over the five meetings, with 35 of those being standing items.
- 2.3 Those standing items consist of; Apologies for Absences, Declarations of Interest, Minutes of the Previous Meetings, Executive Forward Plan, Scrutiny Officer Update and Date and Time of the next meeting.
- 2.4 From those five meetings, there were a total of 26 recommendations made. 18 of those recommendations were to note the reports received, 10 of these noted reports were minutes of the previous meeting and the Executive Forward Plan.
- 2.5 The other six recommendations to note the reports related to:
 - Q4 Performance Plan 2020/21
 - Q4 Finance Report 2020/21
 - Footway Lighting Report

- Business Rates - Discretionary Rate Relief Policy Update
- Q1 Performance Plan 2021/22
- Q1 Finance Report 2021/22
- Surveillance Equipment Report
- Annual Feedback Summary

2.6 It should be noted that, of the above recommendations to note the report, the Footway Lighting Report also included a recommendation to provide the Executive with their concerns and possible solutions for the Executive to consider.

2.7 Two of the 26 recommendations related to Task and Finish Groups which will be covered in section three.

2.8 The final six recommendations related to the following reports:

- Outside Bodies Annual Report
- Annual Scrutiny Report
- DFG Discretionary Payments
- Engagement with Schools
- Fleet Renewal Update
- Social Inclusion Showcase – Law Centre

2.8.1 **Outside Bodies Annual Report:** it was recommended that the report be presented to Full Council and that the Scrutiny Officer review the report forms to promote accurate reporting.

2.8.2 **Annual Scrutiny Report:** it was recommended that the report be presented to Full Council.

2.8.3 **DFG Discretionary Payments:** it was recommended to support the initiative and recommend to the Executive that the piloted measure be included within the policy.

2.8.4 **Engagements with Schools:** it was recommended that reports relating to engagement with schools be provided to members by the Scrutiny Officer and that the Committee be kept up to date on the engagements being undertaken.

2.8.5 **Fleet Renewal Update:** It was recommended that thanks be given to not only the Portfolio Holder for providing the update but also to the Executive for working with OSC to provide them with the information that they requested.

2.8.6 Social Inclusion Showcase – Law Centre: it was recommended that the Executive agree to continue to provide the Cumbria Law Centre with funding as part of the Social Inclusion agenda. There was also a recommendation for the Executive to investigate the possibility of providing the Cumbria Law Centre with further funding to support their work, working with both the Head of Strategic Housing and Social Inclusion and the Scrutiny Officer.

2.9 The outcomes of the above recommendations which were sent to the Executive can be found in section four.

3. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS IN 2021

3.1 There were six Task & Finish Groups and two monitoring groups established in 2021.

3.2 These groups are as followed:

- Health & Wellbeing North Copeland
- Health & Wellbeing South Copeland
- Recycling
- Housing
- Social Media Review
- Effective Digital Engagement
- Budget Monitoring
- Budget Development Analysis

3.3 Following the first meeting of the Housing Task & Finish Group, it was agreed that the Group would be postponed until the Housing Team would be available to work with the group.

3.4 However, the group did agree that there should be some guidance created to help councillors deal with any housing complaints that they receive from residents.

3.5 The Housing Team worked with the Chair of the Housing Task & Finish Group to create a Housing Complaints Guidance document

- that was presented to OSC for agreement in July for agreement before it was recommended to be distributed to all councillors by email. This is one of the recommendations alluded to in paragraph 2.7.
- 3.6 The Recycling Task and Finish Group presented their final report to OSC in July 2021 for agreement of OSC before the recommendations being sent to the Executive. This is the second recommendation alluded to in paragraph 2.7.
 - 3.7 The recommendations from the Recycling Task & Finish Group to the Executive were to accept the recommendations made within the report (which can be found in Appendix A of this report) and to forward those recommendations to the Executive.
 - 3.8 Due to some misunderstandings of communication, the Executive agreed with all but one recommendation. This recommendation was taken back to the Executive at their meeting. More detail of this matter can be seen in paragraph 4.4.
 - 3.9 Both the Social Media and Effective Digital Engagement Task & Finish Groups reports will be going to the Executive on 14 December 2021 following their agreement at OSC on 2 December 2021.
 - 3.10 The remaining Task & Finish Groups (both Health & Wellbeing groups and the two Budget groups) have been postponed and are due to a review as to when they should begin to meet again.
 - 3.11 There are no new Task & Finish Group topics proposed for 2022.

4. EXECUTIVE RESPONSES

- 4.1 In 2021, there have been three official scrutiny reports which have been presented to the Executive, and one more which is due in December. The rest have been verbal updates, one of which is due to

the Executive agenda being published before the OSC meeting could take place, leaving a report impracticable.

- 4.2 At the July Executive, OSC recommended that agree the Recycling Task & Finish Groups recommendations (Appendix A). All but one recommendation was agreed. The recommendation was brought back to the Executive in September as a separate report. (Paragraph 4.4)
- 4.2 At the September Executive, OSC recommended that:
 - The Portfolio Holder for Commercial Services attend and provide information on the Fleet Renewal at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7th October 2021.
 - The Director of Financial Resources provide information on the Business Rates – Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for the 7th October 2021 meeting.
 - That OSCs concerns relating to the Footway Lighting Report be noted and the possible solutions relating to said report also be noted with feedback provided.
- 4.3 The Executive agreed for both the Portfolio Holder for Commercial Services to attend (paragraph 2.8.5) and the Business Rates – Discretionary Rate Relief Policy to be presented (paragraph 2.5) at the October OSC meeting. They also noted the concerns highlighted regarding the Footway Lighting Report and provided feedback on the possible solutions proposed, which included adding environmental improvements (such as LED lights) into the final decision.
- 4.4 Also presented to the Executive in September was a separate report relating to the Recycling Task & Finish Group recommendation which had not been agreed in July. The reason as to why the Executive did not agree with the recommendation was that the budget for the calendar printing had previously been removed and printing on request was already available.
 - 4.4.1 However, the Scrutiny Officer explained to the Executive that the recommendation had been misunderstood and that it aimed to

improve the communication, in order to reach those who are unable to use the existing contacts methods or access the calendar online. The Group understood why it would be an impossible task to supply every household within the borough with a pre-printed calendar. However, the fact that this was recognised as an issue meant that communication of how to access this service needed to be investigated and improved.

4.4.2 It was highlighted by the Scrutiny officer that by the Executive agreeing the recommendation, the work done to date by both the Community Services and Copeland Direct Teams to deal with the requests can be promoted further and it will show (as the group wanted) that recommendations received to help with accessibility (such as CDF's recommendations) will be taken into account.

4.4.3 The Executive agreed with the recommendation following the explanation.

4.5 At the November Executive, OSC recommended that:

- Their support for the Business Rates - Discretionary Rate Relief Policy Update be retroactively noted and that their comments be acknowledged and reiterated to the team. This is due to the policy being presented at the October Executive meeting, but OSC being unable to present a formal report to the Executive (due to the reasons given in 4.1).
- Their recommendations in paragraph 2.8.5 of this report be given to the Executive.
- That the Executive agree to continue to provide the Cumbria Law Centre with Funding as part of the Social Inclusion agenda. OSC also recommended that the Executive investigate the possibility of providing the Cumbria Law Centre with further funding to support their work, working with both the Head of Strategic Housing and Social Inclusion and the Scrutiny Officer.

4.6 The Executive agreed to note the support for the Business Rates - Discretionary Rate Relief Policy Update and acknowledge the comments presented. The comments made relating to the Fleet Renewal Update were also noted. The Executive also agreed to

continue to provide funding to the Cumbria Law Centre with Funding as part of the Social Inclusion agenda.

- 4.7 A discussion was had relating to the possibility to provide the Cumbria Law Centre with further funding, the Head of Strategic Housing and Social Inclusion commented that there was a possibility, with agreement from the Executive and the Section 151 Officer, that the funding to the Cumbria Law Centre can be increased by £5,000 for the next two years without any negative impact on any other service within the Social Inclusion agenda.
- 4.8 The Executive agreed to this proposal from the Head of Strategic Housing and Social Inclusion. Meaning that for the next two years, Copeland Borough Council will be providing the Cumbria Law Centre with £20,000 of funding rather than £15,000.
- 4.9 The next OSC report to the Executive will be in December 2021 and will cover the recommendations made at both the November OSC meeting and the December OSC meeting.

5. WAYS FORWARD

- 5.1 It should be noted that since the number of agenda items has decreased, such as from twelve in June to eight in November, there has been an increase in productivity and interaction. The decrease in standing items from nine to six has also helped with this.
- 5.2 More needs to be done in terms of the recommendations that OSC produce and provide to the Executive. The statistics in paragraph 2.4 show that more needs to be done, both in terms of what recommendations OSC can make but also in what reports OSC request to be presented at meetings.
- 5.3 Although it should be noted that some of these reports for noting do also ask for feedback to be provided. Only one report has had any

notable feedback (paragraph 2.6). OSC need to work on this aspect of their work.

- 5.4 Moving forward, OSC need to:
- a) Increase the number of meaningful recommendations produced to provide to the Executive
 - b) Review the topics and reports being considered to come to OSC and the impact and improvements that OSC can recommend
 - c) Improve the quality of feedback on reports that are for noting.
 - d) Follow up on all recommendations made to the Executive by OSC and their outcomes.
 - e) Review the recommendations made by Task & Finish groups ensure that they are being acted upon.
- 5.5 A discussion will also be needed by OSC relating to the informal meetings and how the Committee would like those to be conducted going forward to ensure that members received the most out of those meetings.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 OSC has had a good year considering the ongoing pandemic, returning to face-to-face meetings and the change in Scrutiny Officer.
- 6.2 Even with the positive aspects of the year, it is clear that more still needs to be done to promote effective contributions.
- 6.3 By agreeing with the recommendations in paragraph 5.4 and having further discussions outside of formal meetings as mentioned in paragraph 5.5, OSC can continue to improve.
- 6.4 Task & Finish Groups are a key part of OSC and council work as a whole, these need to be reviewed again in January 2022.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Recycling Task & Finish
Group Recommendations

Background Papers:

Reports from Overview and Scrutiny
(to the Executive) – July, September
and November