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30 June 2023

Dear Councillor,

**Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee**  
**6:00pm, Monday 10 July 2023**  
**Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock**

You are invited to attend this meeting for consideration of the matters itemised in the following Agenda.

Yours sincerely,

**T. Clegg**  
**Chief Executive**

To: Councillors:

Aston, J. (Chair)  
Johnson, J.P. (Vice-Chair)  
Bancroft, J.T.      Jones, P.G.C.  
Boulton, C.        Lyons, N.  
Boyer, M.          Mawle, D.  
Frew, C.L.         Sutherland, M.  
Hill, J.             Wilson, L.J.  
Johnson, P.

# Agenda

## Part 1

### 1. Apologies

### 2. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

(i) To declare any interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct and any possible contraventions under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(ii) To receive any Party Whip declarations.

### 3. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2023 (enclosed).

### 4. Introduction to the Role of the Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee

Presentation of the Head of Transformation & Assurance.

### 5. End of Year Performance 2022/23

To receive the end of year 2022/23 performance information for the Responsible Council Priority Delivery Plan (Item 5.1 - 5.13).

*The documents included are as considered by Cabinet on 15 June 2023.*

### 6. Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24

Report of the Head of Transformation & Assurance (Item 6.1 - 6.13).

**Cannock Chase Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of the**  
**Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee**  
**Held on Monday 20 March 2023 at 6:00pm**  
**In the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock**

**Part 1**

**Present:** Councillors

Frew, C.L. (Chair)  
Johnson, T.B. (Vice-Chair)

Arduino, L.	Muckley, A.M.
Hoare, M.W.A.	Prestwood, J.
Kraujalis, J.T.	Theodorou, P.C.
Lyons, N. (Substitute)	Wilson, L.J.
Molineux, G.N.	Woodhead, P.E.

**Invitees (for agenda item 4):**

- Councillor J.S. Elson (*Call-in Supporter - non-Committee member*)
- Councillor D. Foley (*Call-in Supporter - non-Committee member*)
- Councillor R.J. Hughes (*Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader*)
- D. Piper (*Head of Economic Prosperity*)
- A. Badman (*Corporate Assets Manager*)
- D. Mawle (*Hednesford Town Council*)
- D. Gaye (*Rugeley Town Council*)
- M. Walker (*Local Resident*)

**22. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillor P.G.C. Jones.

Councillor N. Lyons was in attendance as substitute for Councillor P.G.C. Jones.

**23. Declarations of Interest of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members and Party Whip Declarations**

No declarations of interests or party whip declarations were received.

**24. Minutes**

It was requested that in the response to question four under minute number 21, the reference to the Co-op car park be deleted as it was understood car parking charges would only apply to the Hednesford train station car park, if implemented.

## **Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2022 be approved, and the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2023 be approved subject to the above amendment being made.

## **25. Call-in Request: Boardwalk and Bridges**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 4.1 - 4.17).

Prior to commencing the call-in, the Chair referred to comments raised on social media over the weekend concerning the confidentiality of the 16 February 2023 'Boardwalk and Bridges' Cabinet report and asked that Officers clarify why this was the case. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that the report contained tender prices from potential suppliers for the proposed works for the footbridges in Anglesey Nature Reserve and Rawnsley Wood. The tenders were commercially sensitive and needed to be kept out of the public domain. Advice was taken in this regard. The financial information for the Rugeley boardwalk was not confidential due to being based on budget estimates provided by the Council's consultant for this work.

### ***Introductory Statements***

Councillor Muckley, as the Proposer of the call-in, talked through the background and reasons to the call-in as set out in report paragraphs 3.1 to 3.6, providing additional narrative as follows:

- Rawnsley Wood was an important asset as it helped provide a reminder of the past heritage of the area as a colliery site and a reminder of its future importance. It was lovely to have open and green spaces left behind that people should be able to enjoy. The affected area in Rawnsley Wood was becoming overgrown and impassable as people had no footbridge to use, thereby preventing residents from using a local natural amenity on their doorstep.
- The route provided safe access to Hazel Slade school and for dog walkers. Without this bridge (or another former bridge in the woods) in place, people were having to walk via Littleworth Road and Cannock Wood Street. The speed of vehicles travelling along that road was immense, often at 40+mph. The problem was further exacerbated by parts of the footpath along Cannock Wood Street being very narrow due to overgrown woodland that had not been maintained. This needed to be looked at so children could get safely from A to B.
- In terms of timeline, the bridge was removed in July 2020, with a notice being put up stating this was due to safety concerns but would be replaced. Officers advised at the time that tenders had gone out for the replacement works and would be completed by October 2020. A meeting was held on site with the Corporate Assets Manager to show where the bridge had been located and issues caused by its removal.
- As of February 2021, the bridge had still not been replaced, and the then Leader of the Council advised that £346,000 would be set aside to replace the boardwalk and bridges, which was confirmed at the 11 March 2021 full Council meeting. The then Leader also confirmed the works would take place that year.
- In August 2021 a Cabinet decision reduced the sum of funding available to circa £200,000 and meetings of the Scrutiny Committee at the time were advised that

the bridges would be reviewed followed by the Elmore Park toilets. Notes were made at the time that the relevant report was incomplete, but a report would be submitted to Cabinet by September 2021. No updates had been received despite the matter being raised at further scrutiny meetings.

- In March 2022 assurances were given by the Corporate Assets Manager that the works would be completed by June 2022. At a scrutiny meeting it was queried why the budget for the works had been further reduced. No additional information was provided other than that the original level of funding was not required, and the money could not be retained if it was not needed.
- All the way through Members had been advised that work to the bridges and boardwalk would come before the Elmore Park toilets, so it seemed strange that £110,000 had been allocated for the toilets but the bridges and boardwalks were not getting that money. It was noted however despite the budget reduction there was still sufficient funding available to complete the works to the bridges only.
- Overall, the situation was extremely disappointing as people in the ward and children's safety were being forgotten. All people wanted was to have a simple solution put in place so the affected villages could be reconnected again safely.

Councillor Muckley then proposed the Motion as set out in report paragraph 3.7, which was seconded by Councillor Woodhead.

The Supporters of the call-in then spoke in turn, outlining their reasons as to why the Motion should be supported:

- Councillor Woodhead thanked officers for the additional information provided to Members setting out the recent history of this issue. Separate research undertaken by Councillor Woodhead showed that when the Conservative Group were in opposition, they had submitted an Alternative Budget of £125,000 to replace the boardwalk. It was noted that not all three projects were linked and there may be funding available to complete some of the works, as well as looking at lower specification options.
- Councillor Foley raised that as a Rugeley based councillor his focus was on the boardwalk. Cabinet's decision was disappointing as it seemed to be kicking the issue down the road. In 2018, when the Conservative Group were in opposition, they had sent a letter to the former Leader about this matter. Whilst money had been provided in the 2022/23 budget for these works, nothing had happened since then, only dither and delay. The final paragraph of the letter had stated:  
*"The closure of the area is negatively impacting upon both the residents of Rugeley and any visitors to the town. We urge that a swift plan of action be devised, and repair work be undertaken as soon as possible. The residents of Rugeley have already been expected to wait far too long and your urgent attention would be greatly appreciated."*
- Councillor Molineux reiterated the points raised by colleagues, believing that projects should be dealt with in a priority manner, noting the boardwalk had been raised before the Elmore Park toilets. The delays and associated issues were disgusting, and items should be dealt with in order rather than trying to be pushed away.
- No comments were raised by Councillor Elson.

## **Debate**

The Chair then opened the matter up for debate by the Committee. The following comments / questions were raised by Members of the Committee:

1. It was pleasing to have the earlier clarification regarding the confidential report to know that matters were not trying to be sneaked through.
2. What options were considered by Cabinet and Officers about the different types and specifications of bridges that could be provided?

*The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised that it was clear from the outset there would be cost pressures due to the current external environment. Designs in the documents were not taken forward based on advice from the Environment Agency as they would have involved crossing a water course and interrupting it during construction. If there was a simpler and cheaper designed encouraged by the Environment Agency, then Officers would be happy to look at it.*

*The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that the aim of the bridges design specifications was for them to not be overly complicated and to provide safe and functional solutions that would also secure the lifespan of the structures. Previous timber structures were aesthetically pleasing but not long lasting, hence why high density recycled products were to be used. Written quotations for the works were provided by reputable suppliers. In respect of the boardwalk, it was previously of a timber structure exposed to the watercourse below and so had rotted away and collapsed. The recommendation therefore was to use composite materials that would last a long time. The recommendations from the Environment Agency meant it had to be different from the original design. Specialist consultants had been engaged for the design works and advice sought from structural engineers.*

3. The Cabinet report included information about highways standards for bridges but made no reference to advice from the Environment Agency so it would be useful to see that advice and understand why that was the Agency's position.
4. Part of this call-in was about trying to understand what was needed in terms of bridges and boardwalk provision by those people who would use them.

*M. Walker advised that in respect of Anglesey Nature Reserve, three bridges were installed when the site was first developed. When the affected bridge was removed stepping-stones were installed as the water was very shallow. It was noted this was not a disability friendly solution. Queries had been raised about whether a cheaper crossing point could be installed using pipework as the stream had a firm base, but the reply back was this could not be done. Some dog walkers in the area used wheelchairs, so they could only use the heritage trail route since the bridge had been removed. Separately to this, the access point across the railway line was closed off when the line was electrified, and the related area of open space had since become overgrown and not maintained. The bridge would not have needed to be taken out if proper maintenance had been undertaken in the first place. The existing bridge in the nature reserve had been re-covered in anti-slip plastic two weeks ago but was now losing screws and rotting away. It was requested that the bridge be replaced, or some form of crossing installed to help disabled people.*

*In response, the Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised that the Council would still be liable for the health and safety of bridge users, therefore any design had to be safe and secure. Issues in respect of asset maintenance did need to be addressed, a point made last year by a task & finish group of this Committee. Unfortunately, costs were presently high and previous comments about being guardians of the public purse had to be noted in this context, hence why these works would not be done until a cheaper solution could be found, or market costs reduced.*

5. Such matters were a question of priorities, and it was noted some bridges were in a more derelict state in the District than in Cannock. Some money was available, so why couldn't that be used to undertake one or two of the projects being discussed?

*The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised it was correct that some funding was available but the whole capital programme had to be considered in the round. Cost pressures would affect the whole programme; therefore, some funds were needed to absorb these pressures as and when they arrived. Doing things without a pot of money available if issues arose was not a strategic or analytical way of planning such works.*

6. How would putting concrete pipes into the streams mentioned affect the watercourse?

*The Corporate Assets Manager advised that the Environment Agency's advice was that bridges must span the watercourse and be at least 1.5 metres wide. The use of pillars was also a first thought for Officers, but the Agency's advice meant this could not be done.*

7. The present Administration made an issue of the Rugeley boardwalk back in the summer of 2019 when in opposition and then made the boardwalk and bridges a key part of their election campaign in 2021. They came into power in May 2021 with funds for these works being put into the budget by the previous Administration. Since then, there had been two years of dither and delay and works could have been progressed before costs went up and Government decisions affected the wider economic picture.

*The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised that in respect of the boardwalk, part of the complexity was a land ownership issue as the mid-section of the site went across third party land. Officers were not aware of this at the time, and it had not been discussed by the previous Administration. There had been a protracted period of legal discussions about this issue.*

*The Corporate Assets Manager advised that every time the Council undertook site surveys etc, it had to engage with the landowner and seek permission to do so.*

*The Head of Economic Prosperity further advised the original boardwalk was thought to have been installed in the late 1980s/early 1990s, although there was a lack of historical records in place to confirm this and issues about land ownership. It was understood that Staffordshire County Council had been involved, but there was no information available to confirm this.*

*The Corporate Assets Manager further advised it was understood the highways team was still based in Cannock Chase Council at that point before being*

*transferred to the County Council, so this Council no longer had such expertise available in house.*

8. A lot of the causes of the issues raised were because the boardwalk and bridges had to be removed in first place. Was there a budget in place at the time to maintain these sites?

*The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised that as part of the asset maintenance review undertaken by the task & finish group last year, the advice given was that no such budget existed other than the £346,000 referred to earlier, which was for the bridges, boardwalk, and other property maintenance.*

9. Residents would not be happy with the proposed costs for replacement of the boardwalk, but the frustrations of other Members were shared about the works not being done. The 'green agenda' was however making it more difficult to use the solution of installing culverts into the affected areas as they would result in disruption to the watercourses.

*The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader agreed with the views on the projected costs for the boardwalk, noting they did not represent good value for money.*

10. Could anything be done to step past the advice provided by the Environment Agency if the need of providing the bridges was greater than protection of the watercourse?

*The Corporate Assets Manager advised this was difficult to answer, noting the Agency may ask if a suitable crossing point could be installed in an alternative location.*

11. The Forestry Commission had recently installed a new wooden bridge within Cannock Chase, so it may be helpful for Officers to see if the Commission had received the same advice from the Environment Agency.

12. Coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic, construction costs had increased by 30% and before the war in Ukraine, so it was felt these factors had had a greater impact on costs than Government economic decisions.

13. If all were agreed that the circa £250,000 cost to replace the boardwalk was considered astronomical and unaffordable, then why not just do the bridges replacement works?

*The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised the costs of the bridges works had increased significantly higher than originally estimated, so based on value for money of the public purse, Cabinet considered these costs were too much. Current conditions meant materials were expensive, but the need for these assets was fully appreciated.*

14. Had the previous budgets not been massively reduced then it would have been possible to replace both the boardwalk and bridges. It was a shame nothing had been done for the past 2½ years and prices would not come back down in future. All through that period Members had been told that the bridges and boardwalk were a priority, with Elmore Park toilets to be looked at afterwards. The costs of replacing the toilets would have been cheaper years ago but had now been given the green light. Don't want this to be political, but the



perception was that money was not being spent in wards not represented by Conservative councillors.

*The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader noted there was a period before the current Administration took control of the Council when the bridge works could have commenced. It was acknowledged the toilets and the boardwalk were both in the current Leader's ward and campaign issues, but it appeared that doing the works for one was politicised, but not doing the works for the other was also politicised. As previously mentioned, the Council was waiting for market conditions to improve before revisiting these projects.*

15. The need for the toilets was incredibly important for hygiene reasons and desperately in need of replacement, so don't begrudge the money being found for this before the boardwalk and bridges.

*The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader noted that Elmore Park was the only 'destination park' in the District that did not have functioning toilets available.*

*(Councillor Arduino left the meeting at this point.)*

16. How much was the boardwalk missed and/or needed by people in Rugeley, was it a big priority or talking point?

*(Councillor Arduino returned to the meeting at this point.)*

*D. Gaye advised the boardwalk was well loved and used, and enhanced Rugeley town centre. The programme to replace it would help to boost the economy of the town and draw more people into the town centre. It was well missed so would like to see it replaced.*

17. The boardwalk was one decision and the bridges a separate issue, so there was a need to understand what was available for the boardwalk as cost and access issues were valid questions. As there was already a right of way in place why would the landowners have an issue with what was already there?

*The Head of Economic Prosperity advised it had been established there was no right of way secured between the County Council and the landowner, so this Council had no automatic right to replace the boardwalk. The last twelve months had been spent trying to understand what agreements were in place and those discussions were still ongoing.*

*The Corporate Assets Manager further advised that if a formalised right of way had been in place, then responsibility would have been with the County Council.*

18. In the August 2021 Cabinet report, it was noted a lot of potential investment was needed for bridges across the District. If the proposed works were not done now and a principle established for replacement and maintenance, then bridges would end up disappearing in all sorts of areas. It was accepted that prices had gone up, but not accepted that they would not come back down. Don't feel that the delay would reduce costs, so Cabinet needed to consider alternative options. A broader discussion was also needed with Cabinet about where the Council wanted to be with bridges provision and future costs / maintenance. Cabinet was encouraged to decouple the two issues and whilst there may be some political harm, the nature of what needed doing meant the

bridges could be delivered within existing budgets. It was better to deliver something with the funds available rather than do nothing at all.

*The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader agreed with the notion of decoupling the two matters. In respect of funding, the £346,000 allocation was problematic on how to spend as the Council was mandated to reduce risk exposure, with money needing to be used to maintain assets and reduce risks rather than being spent on new assets.*

19. What were people's views about the Anglesey Nature Reserve bridge, in particular access issues through the site?

*D. Mawle agreed with the views put forward by others that the bridge needed to be replaced. The previous Administration took its time on these issues and didn't sort things out, and the same thing was now happening with the current Administration who had decided to kick these issues into the long grass. They had promised things would be done and money assigned. Ultimately the £346,000 originally assigned now amounted to £0 funding and would probably be spent elsewhere. If the matter was referred back to Cabinet, then they needed to consider what this showed to the public for the area.*

*The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised that he appreciated the views raised but couldn't speak for the decisions of the previous Administration. In an ideal world the Council would be able to undertake the works, but prices had increased, and nobody was happy about that. There had been a very active capital programme this year and Cabinet had tried to push through as many projects as possible. A key issue though was a lack of staffing resource to deliver projects.*

20. If £110,000 was available and quotes received and ready to go, why couldn't the bridges works just go ahead?

*The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised if the issues could be decoupled then this could be investigated.*

21. The Cabinet member had talked about a protracted period and referenced the previous Administration, but the current Administration had been in place for nearly two years, and the available budget in that time had reduced from £346,000 to £200,000 to £110,000, so it was extremely disappointing nothing had been done so far.

22. Was the advice from the Environment Agency guidelines or the law?

*The Corporate Assets Manager advised the Council could receive a hefty fine if it went against the Agency's advice and installed something the Agency was not happy with. Research has been undertaken on this so the recommendation to Members was to follow that advice.*

23. Were Members able to see the quotes for the specifications?

*The Corporate Assets Manager advised these were commercially sensitive figures so could not be released at present. If the specifications were reviewed there would need to be an understanding as to whether the Committee could consider what was being proposed. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services further advised some advice would need to be taken as it was more*

*likely Members would be able to have sight of the specifications rather than the tenders information.*

24. Was the Council able to tender based on the Environment Agency's advice?

*The Corporate Assets Manager advised that the outline performance specifications were in line with that guidance.*

25. Were different specifications developed for both bridges?

*The Corporate Assets Manager advised this was not the case as both bridges had the same performance requirements.*

26. It was difficult to understand that the same specification had been used for different bridges that were to be in different places with different needs.

*The Corporate Assets Manager advised the tender exercise had been done based on the performance specifications and lowest costs submitted.*

27. It seemed obstacles were being put in the way but appreciate that the Council wanted the works to be done properly. Residents just wanted a usable passing place to be installed.

*The Head of Economic Prosperity advised it had been reported earlier in the meeting that a high specification design was not required and that the structures needed to be safe and functional. The quotes received for the replacement structures were to meet the requirements of standing the test of time and achieving lower maintenance costs in future.*

28. Regarding the tenders, were specific organisations targeted or a general advert put out?

*The Corporate Assets Manager advised that this depended on the value of the contract. For larger values an approach would be made to the County Council's procurement team, whereas for smaller values, approaches would be made to companies who could do the required works. In this instance five companies were approached that were all fairly local to the area.*

*(Councillor N. Lyons left the meeting at this point.)*

29. The advice from the Environment Agency appeared to relate to the installation of bridges across main rivers, which would not be the case for Anglesey Nature Reserve and Rawnsley Woods.

*The Corporate Assets Manager advised that a colleague had emailed the Environment Agency and the advice received back was as mentioned earlier in the meeting.*

30. When did the Council find out about the third-party access requirements for the boardwalk?

*The Head of Economic Prosperity believed it to be last year. The Corporate Assets Manager advised that the initial request to replace the boardwalk was outline only, therefore issues of land ownership were unknown at that time. The works could not be undertaken on someone else's land without their permission and no formal documentation or historical records could be found about the request or land agreements. As far as the Council was aware there had been*

*no objections from the landowners for the works to be done, but they would have to be consulted throughout the design and delivery process.*

*(Councillor N. Lyons returned to the meeting at this point.)*

31. Was it possible to identify which section of the land was not owned by the Council?

*The Corporate Assets Manager advised that if the exact location was reported then it would be possible to identify the landowner.*

32. Worried that if the two matters were decoupled then the boardwalk issue would not be resolved, so Cabinet was asked to look at alternative options for how it could be delivered.

*The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised the boardwalk would not be ditched and a suitable solution sought.*

33. Did the third-party landowner contribute anything toward the costs of the works?

*The Head of Economic Prosperity advised this was not the case, but negotiation would happen to acquire the necessary access rights for the land.*

34. Keep going back to fiscal responsibility and value for money. Whilst the passion and desire behind the proposed projects was understood, own opinion was that Cabinet had made the right decision to let market conditions settle down and gain value for money. Decoupling the projects was something the Cabinet could also consider. It would be foolish to ignore the Environment Agency's advice and thereby damage the Council's reputation with external agencies it worked with.

### ***Rights of Reply***

Councillor Hughes did not exercise his right of reply to the debate as the relevant Portfolio Leader, advising he was happy that his points previously raised covered what he wanted to say.

Councillor Muckley then exercised her right of reply to the debate as the Proposer of the Motion, raising the following points:

- Questions had been asked for the last 2½ years on this issue, so Cabinet were requested to look again at their decision and Officers asked to see if the works could be done at a lower cost.
- The quoted costs were eye watering amounts and of concern, but there was money available to be spent that was not being so. These areas were the heart of local communities, and a lot of contact received from residents.
- The areas meant a lot to local people and councillors representing them, so it would be remiss not to raise these important issues and ask questions on behalf of residents.
- It was pleasing to have had the opportunity to discuss these matters and it was hoped the works to replace the bridges could be sorted as they were very much needed.

### ***Vote on the Motion***

The Motion, which was moved by Councillor Muckley and seconded by Councillor Woodhead was then put to a vote.

### **Resolved**

That:

- (A) The initiative be referred back to Cabinet with a suggestion that quotes for simpler, cheaper, long-lasting specifications be invited as part of this review so that an informed decision on future costs can be made.
- (B) The review also investigates alternative sources of funding, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which could be used to offset some of the cost of these replacements.

*(All Invitees left the meeting at the end of this item, other than the Head of Economic Prosperity.)*

### **26. Responsible Council Priority Delivery Plan Q3 2022/23 Performance Update**

Consideration was given to the latest performance information for the Responsible Council Priority Delivery Plan 2022/23 (Item 5.1 - 5.11) *(presented by the Head of Governance and Corporate Services)*.

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that overall performance was positive, with 7 of the 12 projects included in the priority delivery plan either having been completed or work on target. 2 projects were behind schedule and the reasons for this were set out in the report. In respect of the key performance indicators, the picture was also positive overall. Only one indicator was behind target, and this was for reasons outside of the Council's control.

### **27. Work Programme Update**

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that in respect of the review of customer contact task & finish group, it had been difficult trying to find a suitable date for relevant officers to attend the next meeting. There was still a commitment to conclude that work so a date would be arranged as soon as possible.

The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that in respect of the new civic hub facilities task & finish group, a suitable date would be sought for the visit to the Newcastle-under-Lyme Council offices to allow Members a chance to compare with the visit to South Staffordshire Council last December. Following that second visit Members views would be sought on requirements going forward.

The meeting closed at 7:55 p.m.

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**Chair**

<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Head of Transformation and Assurance</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Adrian Marklew</b>
<b>Contact Number:</b>	<b>01543 464 598</b>
<b>Portfolio Leader:</b>	<b>Resources and Transformation</b>
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Report Track:</b>	<b>Cabinet: 15/06/23</b>

**Cabinet**  
**15 June 2023**  
**End of Year Performance Report 2022/23 -**  
**Priority Delivery Plans**

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To advise Members on the progress of the Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) and Council's performance as at the end of 2022-23.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 To note the progress and performance for 2022-23 relating to the delivery of the Council's priorities as detailed at Appendices 1a-1d and 2.

**3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations**

**Key Issues**

- 3.1 This report summarises the progress against the four key priorities contained in the Corporate Plan for 2022-26. Each priority has a Delivery Plan which sets out the key projects and actions for delivery in 2022/23.
- 3.2 Overall, 76% of the projects have been delivered or are on target. Progress in delivering the PDPs is summarised in section 5 of the report and set out in detail in Appendices 1a to 1d.
- 3.3 With regard to the operational performance of the key services of the Council, 47% of targets have been met or exceeded. Further details can be found at 5.7 and in Appendix 2.

## Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.4 The performance information allows Cabinet to monitor progress in delivery of the Council's corporate priorities and operational services.

### 4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities





- 4.1 The indicators and actions contribute individually to the Council's priorities and objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-26.

### 5 Report Detail

- 5.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2022-26 was approved by Council on 27 April 2022, setting out the priorities and strategic objectives. The supporting four-year delivery plans were approved on 16 November 2022.
- 5.2 The Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) set out in Appendices 1a to 1d to this report are the annual documents that set out how the Council will achieve progress against its strategic objectives; these plans establish the actions and timetable for delivery that are the basis of the Council's performance reporting framework.
- 5.3 In addition to the PDPs, performance is also reported against the delivery of key operational services; Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for these services are set out in Appendix 2.
- 5.4 Where applicable, we will also report on new or additional duties undertaken by the Council during the quarter, as part of this report.

## Priority Delivery Plans

- 5.5 A commentary on performance and a rating for each of the projects/actions set out in the PDPs is given in Appendices 1a-1d. A summary of progress, by rating, is given in the table below.

Delivery of Projects for Year End					
Corporate Plan Priority					Total Number of Projects
	Action completed	Project on Target	Work in progress but slightly behind schedule	Project more than 3 months behind schedule	
<b>Economic Prosperity</b>	5	8	2	1	16
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	11	11	3	0	25
<b>The Community</b>	12	2	6	1	21
<b>Responsible Council</b>	4	4	5	0	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>75</b>

5.6 At the end of 2022-23, of the 75 actions due for delivery:

- 43% of have been completed;
- 33% are on target to be completed;
- 24% have slipped slightly.

5.7 The key successes during 2022-23 for each of the 4 priorities are highlighted below:

<b>Economic Prosperity:</b>	
Development of Cannock town centre (Levelling Up Fund scheme)	Outline planning application submitted, land in process of being assembled, RIBA Stage 2 design report signed off, regular communication to residents and stakeholders on progress including managing expectations through surveys, FAQs on website and press updates.
McArthurGlen Designer Outlet	Planning application submitted for Phase 2 of this highly successful retail and leisure offer, which is attracting healthy numbers.
<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing:</b>	
Commonwealth Games	Successful mountain biking event staged and the passing of the Queen's Baton Relay through the district, helping to raise the profile of Cannock Chase and engage local communities. Legacy projects being pursued include improved Heritage Trail linking Cannock to Rugeley, and further development of the Cannock Chase Can activities.
Cannock Chase Can App	The health and wellbeing app has been recognised in the national LGC Awards 2023 and has made it to the finals for the Innovation Award to be held in June 2023.
<b>The Community:</b>	
Improvements to the local environment and awareness of its importance to health and wellbeing	The Council's 4-year play area improvement programme has been published, tree planting has taken place with volunteers from companies and local community involvement. The Council's environmental and recycling campaigns 'Binworld' and 'Small Change Big Difference' have reached significant audiences, particularly young people.
Encourage residents to live a sustainable lifestyle	Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund: in partnership with West Midlands Combined Authority, the Council has been successful in securing £750k (50% match funding) to help in our climate change goals of reducing carbon emissions from our housing portfolio for 112 properties in three locations around the district. The works will be not only be around reducing carbon emissions but will have a direct affect and provide savings to our residents' energy bills by providing additional insulation to properties.



Responsible Council:	
Shared Services	The business case for extending the sharing of services was completed and approved by both Councils. Work is underway to implement it; beginning with the creation of a joint Leadership Team which came into operation on 1 April 2023.

### Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

5.8 A dashboard of key performance indicators for the Council's operational services is set out in Appendix 2. In summary:

- 8 indicators show performance above target (42%);
- 1 indicator shows performance on target (5%); and
- 10 indicators show performance below target (53%)

The reasons for underperformance and the corrective action to be taken is set out in Appendix 2 where this applies by individual targets.

### New / Additional Duties

5.9 During 2022-23, the Council has undertaken the following new / additional duties:

- Supporting Ukrainian families; and
- Payment of Energy Rebates

## 6 Implications

### 6.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

The financial management of the PDPs is standard in accordance with Financial Regulations and any measure to address a performance shortfall as reflected in a PDP report will require compensatory savings to be identified.

### 6.2 Legal

None.

### 6.3 Human Resources

None.

### 6.4 Risk Management

The Council's Strategic Risk Register sets out the risks the Council faces in delivering its priorities.

**6.5 Equality & Diversity**

Equality and diversity matters are addressed in individual services areas and by undertaking equality impact assessments for projects and programmes of work where this is necessary and appropriate.

**6.6 Climate Change**

There are specific objectives within all of the priority areas which address the challenge of climate change, reflecting the corporate commitment made by the Council in February 2023 for the organisation to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

<b>7 Appendices to the Report</b>
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Appendix 1d: Responsible Council PDP

Appendix 2: Key Performance Indicators

**Previous Consideration**

None

**Background Papers**





Corporate Plan 2022-26 - Council 27 April 2022

4-Year Delivery Plans 2022-26 - Cabinet 15 September 2022

## Priority Delivery Plan for 2022-23

### PRIORITY 4 - RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL “To be a modern, forward thinking and responsible Council”

#### Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 4





				Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Work on Target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	
4	4	5		13





#### Summary of Successes as at Quarter 4






- Completion of the shared service business case was a significant piece of work. This has been approved by both Councils and work is in progress to implement the decision. The first key step has been the creation of a joint Leadership Team which came into operation on 1 April 2023.
- Delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy has necessitated the identification of significant savings over the next 2 years.

#### Summary of Slippages as at Quarter 4




- Work on the development of a workforce plan has been deferred to 2023-24 pending a discussion with the new joint Leadership Team on the future vision for the workforce, culture and values.
- Whilst the trial of the hybrid working model has commenced as scheduled, the review of the trial has slipped slightly and will be concluded in quarter 1 of 2023-24.

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>Improve our customers' access to services</b>							
Develop a new customer portal to deliver better access to services online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement of new system</li> </ul>		X			The procurement of a new customer portal has been completed and the contract awarded. Work has commenced with the supplier on planning for implementation of the new software.	
Communicate with residents and stakeholders using language that is clear and easy to understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective communication</li> </ul>				X	We adopt Plain English principles ensuring acronyms are always explained if used, try to avoid jargon and aim to use language that could be understood by a person of average reading age.	
<b>Enhance the use of technology and new ways of working</b>							
Update our digital technology strategy and plan future improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of digital strategy and development of action plan</li> </ul>				X	A draft strategy has been produced and will be discussed with Leadership Team in Quarter 1 of 2023-24.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future improvements to be prioritised once a decision has been made regarding the shared services business case</li> </ul>				X	Future improvements have been identified in the digital strategy and will be refined as the transformation work develops.	

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>Develop our workforce to ensure they are suitably skilled</b>							
Develop and deliver a workforce plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over-arching framework for workforce plan to be developed. Specific workstreams will be determined once a decision has been made regarding the shared services business case.</li> </ul>				X	Work on this has been deferred pending a discussion with the new joint Leadership Team on the future vision for the workforce, culture and values.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development and trial of hybrid working model</li> </ul>		X			The hybrid working trial is in progress. A survey has been issued to employees and the results are being analysed. A report will be considered by Leadership Team in Quarter 1 of 2023-24.	
<b>Be a responsible Council that lives within its means and is accountable for its actions</b>							
Set a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce a draft MTFS for 2023-26 for Cabinet Briefing by end of September that aims to eliminate the use of reserves over the period. Final MTFS to Cabinet in January.</li> </ul>		X			This has now been completed following a significant amount of work by the finance team and budget holders. While it was not possible to eliminate the use of reserves at CCDC, this was a result of a lower funding amount from central government rather than a lack of savings programmes.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of the second stage of the business case for shared services. Further actions will depend on the decision taken by Council in December.</li> </ul>			X		The business case has been completed. Both Councils have agreed to proceed with the wider sharing of services and the creation of a joint management team. Work is underway to plan for the implementation phase.	

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>Make the best use of our assets</b>							
Undertake a corporate wide review of our assets and develop a new Asset Strategy.	• Asset and Property Strategy to be approved by Cabinet	X				Asset Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2022.	
	• Undertake a strategic review of the Council's non-HRA land and property assets		X	X	X	An Asset Management Group has been set up and is now starting to undertake strategic asset reviews.	
	• Develop the business case to create a new Civic Hub in Cannock town centre as part of the Levelling Up Fund scheme		X	X	X	Outline requirements for a Civic Hub have been identified and are being further developed as part of the LUF project. A business case will be put forward during 2023-24.	
Identify opportunities for funding for green initiatives to improve energy efficiency of our buildings	• Develop an Energy Management Strategy			X	X	The AECOM baseline study is now complete (Q3) and an Energy management Strategy is now being developed, completion deferred to 2023-24	
	• Identify `green` funding opportunities to support asset requirements				X	Options for green funding have been identified and opportunities will be progressed as asset requirements are identified through the asset review process.	

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2022/23 - as at end of Quarter 4**

<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number of KPIs</b>
	Performance exceeds target	4
	Performance on target	-
	Performance below target	4

## KPIs for Priority 4 - Responsible Council “To be a modern, forward thinking and responsible Council”

Indicator	Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year	Symbol	Comments
<b>Local Taxation and Benefits</b>								
Days taken to process new HB/CT Claims	20 days	15.2	14.5	15.9	18	18.7	★	
Days taken to process new HB/CT change of circumstances	9 days	7.5	5.7	5.2	5.4	5.1	★	
% of Council Tax collected annually	98% by year end	27.8%	54.1%	80.5%	95.9%	95.9%	✘	<p>Arrears have accrued during the past 3 years and the Revenues Team’s ability to deal with them has been impacted by the work done to pay Covid relief grants as well as Council Tax Energy Rebate payments. The current increases in cost of living and energy costs will also affect people’s ability to pay.</p> <p>Collections had shown signs of improvements during the first 3 quarters, but this was not maintained to year end. Work has begun to improve this performance in the current year.</p> <p>Our Local Council Tax Reduction scheme has been temporarily enhanced and the Recovery Policy is being refreshed. Reversion to pre-pandemic performance is likely to take some time.</p>



Indicator	Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year	Symbol	Comments
% National non-domestic rates (NNDR) collected	98% by year end	24.0%	56.6%	81.0%	96.6%	96.6%	✘	As with Council Tax collections, arrears have accrued during the past 3 years and the Revenues Team's ability to deal with them has been impacted by the work done to pay Covid relief grants as well as Council Tax Energy Rebate payments. Collections had shown signs of improvements during the first 3 quarters, but this was not maintained to year end. Again, work is ongoing to improve performance with a view to reverting to pre-pandemic levels.
<b>Land Charges Searches</b>								
Turnaround time for land charges searches (excluding personal searches) – average no. of working days	10 working days	14.85	24.15	31.85	19.69	22.64	✘	Delays in receiving responses from the County Council continue to affect turnaround times for local searches. Staff sickness has reduced capacity by half for all of Q4.
<b>Calls, Complaints and FOI requests</b>								
% of calls answered	94%	88.7%	85.1%	97.7%	94%	91%	✘	During the 1 <sup>st</sup> half of the year, call answer rates for the contact centre were impacted by the speed with which calls could be transferred to relevant officers. Through work with relevant service areas, this has improved, and targets were achieved in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of the year.

Indicator	Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year	Symbol	Comments
Average call wait time	2 min	2.36min	3.08min	1.18min	1.22min	1.44min	★	
Complaints received and upheld:								
<b>Total stage 1 complaints</b>	N/A	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>N/A</b>	
<i>Upheld in full</i>		1	2	1	3	7		
<i>Upheld in part</i>		4	3	2	3	12		
<b>Total stage 2 complaints</b>	N/A	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>		
<i>Upheld in full</i>		0	1	0	1	2		
<i>Upheld in part</i>		1	2	0	0	3		
FOI requests within time i.e. 20 working days	85%	88%	91%	88%	85%	87.5%	★	
<b>Finance</b>								
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 Days								Due to ongoing issues with the Finance system, these figures are not currently available

<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Head of Transformation &amp; Assurance</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Judith Aupers</b>
<b>Contact Number:</b>	<b>01543 464 411</b>
<b>Portfolio Leaders:</b>	<b>Leader of the Council Resources and Transformation Community Wellbeing Environment and Climate Change Housing Regeneration &amp; High Streets</b>
<b>Report Track:</b>	<b>Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee: 10/07/23</b>

**Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee**

**10 July 2023**

**Work Programme for 2023-24**

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To set out the draft work programme for the Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee for 2023-24.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That the Committee review the draft work programme for 2023-24 and advise on what they wish to include for the forthcoming year (see Appendix 4).

**3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations**

**Key Issues**

- 3.1 The Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising the element of the Corporate Plan that relates to the priority for being a Responsible Council. An extract from the Corporate Plan for 2022-2026 setting out details of the priority and strategic objectives is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The services or functions of the Council falling with the remit of the Committee are set out at Appendix 2.

- 3.3 The Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee is encouraged to identify corporate issues and/or ones that are a priority for local people and communities. If a matter is a recurring issue for the people you, as Councillors, represent, the likelihood is that it is something that the Committee should consider.

The more relevant the issue is to local communities then the greater the likelihood of engaging those communities in the scrutiny process and of producing outcomes that will be visible to those communities you represent. Guidance on selecting reviews is included in Appendices 3A and 3B.

- 3.4 Members are invited to comment on the draft Work Programme attached at Appendix 4. Members are also encouraged to propose issues that could be included for consideration in the work programme. The work programme may be revised during the year as necessary.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.5 The scrutiny committee is responsible for ensuring effective accountability for the delivery against the Council's priorities and strategic objectives as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-26.

## **4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 This report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities as follows:

- (i) It provides for effective scrutiny of the Council's priority for being a "Responsible Council".

## **5 Report Detail**

### **Background**

- 5.1 A new Corporate Plan for 2022-26 was approved by Council on 27 April 2022. The Plan sets out 4 priorities and this Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising Priority 4 – Responsible Council.

- 5.2 The Responsible Council Priority has 5 objectives:

- (i) Improve our customers' access to services.  
(ii) Enhance the use of technology and new ways of working.  
(iii) Develop our workforce to ensure they are suitably skilled.  
(iv) Be a responsible Council that lives within its means and is accountable for its actions.  
(v) Make the best use of our assets.

An extract from the Corporate Plan setting out details of the priority, the strategic objectives and actions is attached at Appendix 1.

- 5.3 The Responsible Scrutiny Committee also has responsibility for scrutinising the corporate and support functions of the Council as set out in Appendix 2.

### **Developing the Work Programme**

- 5.4 To support Members in their Scrutiny role and in particular in developing a work programme a Scrutiny Toolkit has been produced; a copy of this has been circulated separately to Members. An extract from the toolkit relating to developing a work programme is attached at Appendix 3A and an extract from the LGA's guidance is attached at Appendix 3B.
- 5.5 In developing the work programme Members are encouraged to consider the following questions:
- Is the matter a concern to local people (you may wish to reflect on topics raised with you when canvassing)?
  - Is the issue an identified priority for the Council or partners?
  - Does the issue relate to an area of service with a trend in weak performance?
  - What difference could scrutiny make?
  - What would happen if you did not look at this issue?
- 5.6 The work programme can be revised during the year to reflect emerging priorities, but it is important to plan ahead and allow time for reports to be prepared and invitations to be sent to relevant parties.
- 5.7 Whilst it is for the Committee to determine what they want to include in the Work Programme, a draft work programme is attached at Appendix 4 to this report which includes some standing items (e.g., performance progress reports), an outstanding review from last year's work programme and some suggestions as to potential reviews.

### **Undertaking the Scrutiny reviews**

- 5.8 Once Members have identified the matters they wish to scrutinise, consideration should be given to scoping the subject in more detail including the timing and method of scrutiny to be used. Support in this process will be given by the Lead Officer for the Scrutiny Committee. A template to assist with scoping the review is also attached at Appendix 5.
- 5.9 Members may wish to:
- Allocate the work to a small working group of Members to investigate the issue over a period of 2-3 months (this may involve visits to see how services are working in practice).
  - Invite expert witnesses to give their views.
  - Seeking the views of service users and/or the general public.
- 5.10 Members should also consider what they can do to support the review e.g.:
- Undertaking research e.g., via the internet.
  - Seeking the views of ward members or specific interest groups.

## Reporting on Scrutiny Reviews

- 5.11 In addition to reporting to the Committee on the outcome of any reviews, the Committee may wish to make recommendations to Cabinet or another Committee.
- 5.12 At the year end, the Chair of the Committee will prepare a report for Council on the outcome of the Committee's work programme.

## 6 Implications

### 6.1 Financial

Any costs to be incurred in undertaking any review will need to be contained within existing budgets.

### 6.2 Legal

None

### 6.3 Human Resources

None

### 6.4 Risk Management

None

### 6.5 Equality & Diversity

The Council has a responsibility to undertake adequate Equality Impact Assessments to ensure services do not have a negative impact on any one section of the community and the scrutiny committees have a role in ensuring that this responsibility is fulfilled, particularly in regard to health impact. Scrutiny as a function must also comply with the relevant legislation. When considering work programme items, especially when undertaking reviews of policy, the scrutiny committees must always consider whether their recommendations may impact differently on various individuals/sections of the community.

### 6.6 Climate Change

None

## 7 Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1: Extract from the Corporate Plan – Priority 4 Responsible Council

Appendix 2: Overview of services falling with the Committee's remit

Appendix 3A: Extract from the Council's Scrutiny Toolkit

Appendix 3B: Extract from the LGA Guidance on Scrutiny Work Programming

Appendix 4: Draft Work Programme 2023/24

Appendix 5: Template for Scoping a Scrutiny Review

# Cannock Chase Council Corporate Plan 2022-26

## PRIORITY 4 - RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL

### **‘To be a modern, forward thinking, and responsible Council’**

We aim to:

- **Improve our customers’ access to services.**
- **Enhance the use of technology and new ways of working.**
- **Develop our workforce to ensure they are suitably skilled.**
- **Be a responsible Council that lives within its means and is accountable for its actions.**
- **Make the best use of our assets.**

We want to improve the ways in which customers can access our services and at a time that suits them through better use of technology; while continuing to provide contact via the telephone or face-to-face for those customers who need more personal support.

Building on the lessons we have learned during the pandemic; we will develop a hybrid working model that supports employees to continue to work flexibly and in a way that best suits their role. Alongside this we want to ensure that our staff are trained to deliver the services that our residents need. The Council faces a challenging financial future, so it is important that we live within our means and make the best use of the assets we have. We will communicate with our residents to provide updates on the progress we are making in delivering our priorities and key decisions that affect the future of services.

Over the next 4 years we will:

- Develop a new customer portal to deliver better access to services online.
- Update our digital technology strategy and plan future improvements.
- Develop and deliver a workforce plan.
- Set a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- Undertake a corporate wide review of our assets and develop a new Asset Strategy.
- Identify opportunities for funding for green initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings.
- Communicate with residents and stakeholders using language that is clear and easy to understand.
- Provide updates on our progress in delivering the priorities set out in this plan.

**Services / Function Falling Within the  
Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee's Remit**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Sub-Areas</b>
Corporate Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget Consultation (as appropriate)</li> <li>• Complaints (includes Ombudsman and MP enquiries)</li> <li>• Corporate / Cross Cutting Issues</li> </ul>
Deputy Chief Executive - Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Management</li> <li>• Treasury Management</li> <li>• Creditors and Debtors</li> <li>• Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates Collection</li> </ul>
Transformation & Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Resources</li> <li>• Technology (including Reprographics)</li> <li>• Internal Audit</li> <li>• Risk Management</li> <li>• Insurance</li> <li>• Health &amp; Safety</li> <li>• Procurement</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Performance</li> <li>• Equality &amp; Diversity</li> <li>• Consultation &amp; Engagement</li> <li>• Communications</li> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Customer Services</li> </ul>
Law & Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic and Corporate Support</li> <li>• Democratic Services</li> <li>• Electoral Services</li> <li>• Data Protection</li> <li>• Freedom of Information</li> <li>• Legal Services</li> </ul>
Housing & Corporate Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land and Property Holdings (excluding HRA Property) – Maintenance of Assets and Purchases / Disposals</li> <li>• Caretaking and Cleaning</li> </ul>
Regulatory Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Planning</li> <li>• Business Continuity</li> <li>• Land Charges</li> <li>• Street Naming and Numbering</li> </ul>



## Extract from the Council's Scrutiny Toolkit

### Developing the Work Programme

Members have a key role to play in developing the work programme for the Scrutiny Committees and it is important that manageable programmes are developed. The Scrutiny Committees will need to filter potential items of work; to be selective and to prioritise.

Given the limited resources available, in particular the constraints on member and officer time, it is unrealistic to select more than a few items for intensive review. Realistically, a single committee cannot undertake more than two in-depth reviews per year.

In developing the work programme Members are encouraged to consider the following questions:

**Public interest** – the concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen. Things to think about include:

- Any issues raised with you when canvassing.
- Have any surveys or research undertaken by the Council identified any concerns.
- Is the issue an identified priority for the Council or partners?

**Ability to change** - priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence. Think about what difference Scrutiny could make and what would happen if you did not look at this issue.

**Performance:** priority should be given to areas in which the Council and Partners are not performing well. You should consider, the scale of the underperformance, whether it is a one off or whether there is an ongoing issue. Has the service been flagged up in an external inspection report for poor performance?

**Extent:** priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or a large part of the District

**Replication:** work programme must take account of what else is happening to avoid duplication or wasted effort

Work programmes should be determined at the start of each municipal year and reviewed and revised regularly. Any reviews not started or completed by the year end can be referred for consideration as part of the following year's work programme. The best advice is to start small, learn what works well and what does not and then be more ambitious. It is far easier to add items to the workload than to remove them.

### Stage 1: Agree the Issue

The first step is for scrutiny members to be sure that the subject to be reviewed is significant. Undertaking in-depth reviews is resource-intensive – of member and officer resources. Investing such a high level of resources should only be undertaken for **high priority issues**. The following are criteria which could be used to 'check' a topic against,

to ensure that it would make a worthwhile review:

- Issue identified by members as key issue (through members' surgeries and other constituency activities).
- Performance issues within a service (e.g., significant under or overachievement of targets).
- Service considered to be important by the community (through market research, citizens' panels and so on).
- High level of user/general public dissatisfaction with service.
- Public interest issue highlighted in local media.
- High level of budgetary commitment to policy/service area.
- Persistent financial issues e.g., significant under or overspends.
- Council corporate priority area.
- Central government priority area.
- Issue raised in Inspection Reports.
- Issue referred by the Cabinet or the Audit & Governance Committee.
- New government guidance or legislation.

### **Stage 2: Determine the nature of member involvement**

The committee will need to decide how members will drive the review. There are three possible approaches to member involvement:

- The whole committee investigates the issue.
- A task and finish working group is established to drive the investigation.
- Individual or paired members drive the review.

Vital to the whole review activity is that members take full control of which policy problems and solutions are explored and how that exploration takes place. Members need to take responsibility for, and ownership of, the outputs and outcomes of reviews.

### **Stage 3: Scoping Exercise**

There are 4 key issues to consider when scoping the review:

- What are the core questions the review is seeking to answer? (**no more than 3**)
- What is the purpose of the Review? (**in one sentence**)
- What will **not** be included?
- What is the timescale?

## Extract from the LGA Guidance on Scrutiny Work Programming

The role of scrutiny is to achieve positive outcomes for local people by undertaking a thorough, targeted examination of the council's service provision and procedures. However, it is not possible to examine every service in detail, so it is important for the scrutiny committee to prioritise and plan its workload. Some councils do this at the beginning of each year and some do it on an ongoing basis.

### Planned scrutiny

Work programming is the process for determining which topics scrutiny will look at over the coming year, either at committee meetings or

in task and finish groups. This involves evaluating a number of factors to decide which topics are to be investigated and when. The process will typically involve long-listing and then short-listing topics before making a final decision.

### Responsive scrutiny

Whether planned scrutiny takes place at the beginning of the year or on an ongoing basis, the priorities for scrutiny need to be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. This makes sure scrutiny can be flexible and responsive to high-priority issues or policy changes that occur throughout the year.



## The scrutiny topic selection process

Each council has its own method for selecting topics for scrutiny; in some councils there may be a very structured selection process, whilst in others it may be more informal. Whatever level of detail is involved, the general process should include the following activities.

### 1. Identify issues

You can identify potential issues by:

- consulting with all members of scrutiny committees, senior officers, cabinet members and council officers
- looking at corporate priorities, business plans and the Forward Plan of the council (and the council's neighbours)
- considering events and decisions in the council's calendar that could require an input from scrutiny, such as setting budgets
- evaluating previous council performance and identifying any follow-up work required to previous scrutiny work
- carrying out work to engage with local people, for example through surgeries, local media, opinion surveys and online forums.

### 2. Prioritise topics

Identify and prioritise potential scrutiny topics, considering the resources they would require and the level of impact they could achieve.

### 3. Plan scrutiny work

Decide which scrutiny topics to review and include them in the work programme.

### 4. Review and evaluate

Review progress and evaluate outcomes to demonstrate the value added by scrutiny.



## Criteria for selecting scrutiny topics

The following criteria provide a useful guide for prioritising and selecting which topics are suitable for scrutiny to review.

Topics **are** suitable for scrutiny when:

- scrutiny could have an impact and add value
- the topic is of high local importance and reflects the concerns of local people
- the resources are available that would be required to conduct the review, in terms of manpower and budget
- it avoids work duplication elsewhere
- the issue is one that the committee can realistically influence
- the issue is related to an area where the council, or one of its partners, is not performing well
- the issue is relevant to all or large parts of the local area
- the review would be in the council's interests.

Topics **are not** suitable for scrutiny when:

- the issue is already being addressed elsewhere and change is imminent
- the topic would be better addressed elsewhere (and will be referred there)
- scrutiny involvement would have limited or no impact upon outcomes
- the topic may be sub-judice or prejudicial to the council's interest
- the topic is too broad to make a review realistic
- new legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected within the next year
- the topic area is currently subject to inspection or has recently undergone substantial change.

### Defining scrutiny topics

For every item on the work programme/new referral, it should be clear:

- What is the issue/activity/project under consideration?
- What is scrutiny being asked to do?
- What are the reasons for/expected benefits of involving scrutiny in the matter?
- Is there a specific deadline for the piece of work?



## Exercise 1 – prioritising topics

Consider the issues that are important to the people you represent in your ward. List the five issues you think are the most important, then put them in order of priority; make a note of your reasoning. Do you know all the information you need to handle complaints effectively? Consider these statements to identify any gaps. If you answer 'no' to any of them, take some time to find the answers from your council's website or your work colleagues.

1

2

3

4

5

Think about how you would translate these into strategic issues. Here is an example:

### **The issue**

A number of residents have been complaining that the trees in the local area are not being pruned regularly enough, becoming a hazard and presenting a potential danger to the public. Complaints include difficulty in walking on the pavement, damage to tall vehicles, trip hazards from tree roots and gardens being overshadowed by trees.

### **Strategic considerations**

The council needs to consider how it allocates its Environmental Services' resources so that it can be efficient whilst also meeting the needs of local residents. It can look at:

- how services are procured, commissioned and contracted
- which are the most hazardous streets and where the biggest improvements can be made
- prioritising and planning a programme of work for tree pruning.

**Proposed Work Programme for 2023-24 for the  
Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee**

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Item</b>
10 July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End of Year Performance Report for 2022-23 for the Responsible Council PDP</li> <li>• Determine Review Programme for 2023-24</li> </ul>
13 September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible Council PDP – Qtr 1 Progress Report April to June 2023</li> <li>• Scrutiny Review (to be determined)</li> </ul>
11 November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible Council PDP – Qtr 2 Progress Report July to September 2023</li> <li>• Scrutiny Review (to be determined)</li> </ul>
23 January 2024	This meeting is for consultation on the budget/financial strategy only
12 March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible Council PDP – Qtr 3 Progress Report October to December 2023</li> <li>• Outcome of Scrutiny Review(s)</li> </ul>

**Suggested Items for Reviews / Briefings:**

- Hybrid working (continuation from previous review)
- Presentation on Digital Strategy (Date TBC)
- Demonstration of New Customer Portal (Date TBC)
- Demonstration of New Website (Date TBC)



## Scrutiny Review Template

<b>Review Title</b>
<b>Scope of the Review / Terms of Reference</b>
<b>Reason for Scrutiny</b>
<b>Membership of the Review Group</b>
<b>Key Tasks / Review Plan</b>
<b>Sources of Evidence</b>
<b>Timescale</b>