

Committee: Full Council

Agenda Item

Date: 20 April 2010

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Title: Annual Report – Scrutiny Committee

Authors: Cllr Alan Dean, Chair of Scrutiny Committee, Simon Martin, Lead Officer for Scrutiny Committee

Item for information

Summary

1. The Council's constitution makes provision for the Scrutiny Committee to report annually to full Council. This report contains information on scrutiny activity carried out during 2009/10.

Recommendations

2. None.

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the authors in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from Simon Martin.

Scrutiny Committee agenda, reports and minutes from 2009/10.

Impact

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	None directly
Community Safety	None directly
Equalities	None directly
Finance	None directly
Health and Safety	None directly
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None directly
Sustainability	None directly
Ward-specific impacts	None directly
Workforce/Workplace	None directly

Situation

5. The Council has a Scrutiny Committee consisting of ten Members. Broadly speaking the committee monitors the decisions of the policy committees; reviews and scrutinises the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives; makes recommendations to appropriate policy committees arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process; reviews and scrutinises the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them.
6. The Scrutiny Committee met five times during 2009/10. A work-plan was agreed and scrutiny work has been carried out on:
 - *Fees and charges*; the Council's Change Manager and a Member Reference Group reviewed the Council's approach to determining miscellaneous fees and charges, and any associated concessions. This review helped inform the Chief Finance Officer's report to the Finance & Administration Committee on 25 March 2010. The report contained recommendations about policy principles and a public consultation process leading to potentially new arrangements with effect from April 2011.
 - *Day Centres*; a review is currently in progress with a view to further developing Council policy in this area. This is partly in response to changes in the prevailing customer base, a diminishing pool of volunteers to manage the facilities and a wish to ensure Day Centres are a thriving community resource in the future. The review is expected to finish by June 2010.
 - *Saffron Walden Tourist Information Centre*; the Town Clerk gave a presentation on developments at the Saffron Walden Information Centre. Several Members of the Scrutiny Committee have subsequently explored creating closer tourism related links between their wards and the Town Council. BAA has also expressed a willingness to promote local tourism.
 - *2012 Olympics*; the Council's Community Partnerships Manager gave a presentation regarding local planning for the Olympics. It was concluded that planning and Olympic preparedness was being led at a regional and county level, though preference was expressed for the Council to revive its own Olympics Working Group.
 - *Neighbourhood Watch (NHW)*; the Council's Community Safety Officer and the district NHW Coordinator reported on the role, coverage and contribution of NHW in the district. Information has subsequently been circulated to Members which shows where coverage could be improved and how Members might contribute to that process. This forms part of the Committee's statutory role to scrutinise the Crime and Disorder Partnership (see paragraph 7 below).
 - *Trading Standards*; at the time of writing this report, a representative from Trading Standards was due to attend the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 13 April 2010. Scrutiny Members will have an opportunity to ask about trading standard activity and enforcement in the district.

- CCTV; the Council’s Community Safety Officer is also due to report on the status of CCTV use within the district at the meeting on 13 April 2010.
7. Scrutiny Members were also advised during the year that the remit of Scrutiny Committees has widened to include the operation of the health service and crime and disorder in the local area. This potentially has resource implications for both Members and Officers, who are closely monitoring developments through county groups in order to avoid any duplication with other bodies. A county/district protocol on health scrutiny has also been developed.
 8. At the time of writing, no policy committee decisions have been called in under Rule 7 of the scrutiny procedure rules during the year. In addition, no public petitions were received.
 9. A scrutiny section has been developed and included on the Council’s website to help with community engagement. Members attended a scrutiny training event at the start of the municipal year and further training is anticipated later this year.
 10. Included in the Scrutiny Committee’s work-plan for 2010/11 is a review of Business Continuity and Emergency Planning, and Enforcement Priorities.

Risk Analysis

11.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Ineffective scrutiny	1 The scrutiny work-plan continues to evolve and the Council is self aware of the widening remit	2 Potential for poor governance and decision making	Article 7 of the constitution sets out terms of reference and specific functions A scrutiny handbook has been produced and will be used to guide the work of the Committee
Joint working arrangements are not developed and duplication occurs	2 Requires cross county cooperation	2 Potential for duplication and an absence of joint working	Discussions are continuing at a county level and a protocol has been developed

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.