

Committee: Scrutiny

Agenda Item

Date: 24 March 2015

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Title: Scrutiny Committee 2014/15 Review

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Summary

1. This report provides an overview of topics the Scrutiny Committee investigated 2014/15 and asks committee members to provide their thoughts on what has and has not worked well for the benefit of the new committee post-election.

Recommendations

2. That members draw on their experiences of the last four years to give advice to the new committee.

Financial Implications

3. None.

Background Papers

4. None

Impact

Communication/Consultation	This report requires members to consider what advice they wish to pass on to the new committee
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

5. During 2014/15 the committee scrutinised a number of internal services and service change proposals. These include:
 - a. Saffron Walden Museum and Castle
 - b. Day Centres
 - c. Housing Tenant Scrutiny Panel
 - d. Active Uttlesford Sports Facility Provision
 - e. Rural Broadband
 - f. Local Plan
 - g. 2015/16 Budget proposals: Reserves, Temporary Accommodation, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Programme, HRA and 5 year business strategy, General Fund and Council Tax.

6. The committee formed a task group to conduct a detailed review of the district's five day centres. The terms of reference included assessing how the centres operate and what services they provide, the use, the location, the building condition and any associated costs. Evidence was gathered through consultation with day centre visitors and each centre's management committees along with visits to the centres and meetings with council officers. The Health and Wellbeing Group was also consulted. Analysis of usage data supplied by the day centres and condition surveys were considered.

The task group made recommendations to the committee and the following recommendations were accepted and forwarded to Cabinet:

- A review of the management agreements to reflect changes in responsibility
- The provision of a fixed-term resource to support and assist the centres with the aim of them becoming self-sufficient.

Cabinet has now considered and approved these recommendations.

7. In addition to the day centre task group, the committee also established a task group to review an investigation into complaints:
 - i. To the Local Government Ombudsman about the council's response to reports of unauthorised development at Cranwellian, in Takeley Parish,
 - ii. To the Information Commissioner about the council's response to a request for relevant information.

The terms of reference included finding out what, if anything, went wrong. If something went wrong what, if anything, could be done to remedy it and what, if any, further procedures should be put in place.

The task group reviewed the paperwork and met with residents, ward representatives and officers. The committee resolved to agree with the conclusions set out in the report of the task group, and in addition to:

- Invite the Peter Kirton of the Environment Agency to a meeting with residents
 - Arrange water testing
 - Write to Essex County Council with regard to land drainage
8. Scoping reports were introduced during 2014/15, which are presented at the Scrutiny meeting in advance of the full report. The document outlines the areas to be covered and enables members to ensure the report that follows meets their expectations.
 9. This is the final meeting of the current Scrutiny Committee. It is likely that there will be a significant change in membership following the election due to several current members not standing for re-election.
 10. Officers have arranged training for the new committee on the date of the first meeting following the election. This training will be provided by Tim Young, who provided training for the current committee in 2012. Officers and Mr Young believe it would be of great benefit for the new committee to be able to draw on the experiences of the current committee.
 11. Committee members are therefore requested to consider in advance of the meeting what techniques and approaches they believe have worked well over the last four years and what, if anything, they have found to be less effective.
 12. A list will be compiled on the night of these "top tips" and incorporated into the training session post-election.

Risk analysis

There are no risks associated with this report.