

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

Contents

Chairman's foreword	2
Introduction.....	2
Year in Review: Overview and Scrutiny 2017/18	3
Looking ahead to 2018/19.....	4
Scrutiny Contact Details	4

Chairman's foreword

An important aspect of Overview & Scrutiny's role is to support, challenge and maximise the effectiveness of South Lakeland District Council and its working relationship with partners across the local and wider communities it serves.

2017/18 has been a year of growth and success in many areas as noted within this report, and although the role of Overview & Scrutiny has experienced some changes this year, I am pleased it continues its ambition to be proactive, adding value in its ability to make a positive contribution to work throughout the district.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Overview & Scrutiny members, officers and all South Lakeland District Council partners for their important commitment and contribution over the past year, ensuring our district continues its aim *"to make South Lakeland the best place to live, work and explore"*.

Councillor Dyan Jones, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Introduction

Welcome to the Scrutiny Annual Report for South Lakeland District Council (SLDC). The report sets out the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee between May 2017 and April 2018.

Scrutiny is a key tool for promoting the best interests and wellbeing of the area and seeks to ensure that local people receive high quality services that meet their needs. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee does this by acting as a 'critical friend' to the Cabinet, holding it to account and providing challenge where necessary. Scrutiny also plays a key role in the areas of policy review and development; by considering topics such as the Joint Older Persons' Housing Strategy and the updated Council Plan at an early stage in their development, scrutiny can add real value before a final decision is made by Cabinet.

Amongst the roles of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee set out within the Council's Constitution is an opportunity for scrutiny to "consider any matters which affects the Council's area or its communities". This theme has been constant throughout the work of scrutiny and inviting partners to attend reviews and meetings to provide a broader perspective, reflecting the Council's wider reach as leader in the district, has become increasingly valued.

This year was the first following the dissolution of the Performance Sub-Committee. The effects of this change continue to be monitored, with minor changes to reporting methods having been taken during the course of the year to ensure that the responsibilities transferred back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to be carried out as effectively as possible. The move has been a positive one, with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee taking full ownership of its returned monitoring responsibilities.

Last year's Scrutiny Annual Report made reference to a Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee inquiry into "Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government". Despite being temporarily halted by the General Election in June, the CLG Select Committee published its recommendations in December 2017, with a Government response following in March 2018. The revised Government guidance arising from this inquiry will no doubt be studied closely by scrutiny committees across the country in the year to come.

As the value of South Lakeland District Council's scrutiny function becomes increasingly well recognised both internally and externally, its ability to make a difference to the work of the Council and to residents becomes ever stronger. An effective, balanced and timely 2018/19 Work Programme will continue to further the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work to assist the Council in realising its ultimate aim *"to make South Lakeland the best place to live, work and explore."*

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Membership

Norman Bishop-Rowe

Andrew Butcher

Brian Cooper

Nick Cotton

Shirley Evans

Anne Hall

Dyan Jones (Chairman)

Eric Morrell

Vivienne Rees (Representative to the Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee)

Phil Walker (Vice-Chairman)

Mark Wilson

Mary Wilson

Year in Review: Overview and Scrutiny 2017/18

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met seven times between May 2017 and April 2018. In addition to the six scheduled meetings of the Committee, an additional meeting was called to consider the call-in of an executive decision relating to the common land at New Road, Kendal.

The Committee considered a wide variety of subjects over the course of those seven meetings, including the Council's draft budget, the draft Joint Older Persons' Strategy and an update from the South Lakeland Leisure Partnership.

The South Cumbria Community Safety Partnership (CSP) updated the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on its work at a meeting in February 2018. Superintendent Rob O'Connor (Cumbria Constabulary) was in attendance and was able to answer a wide variety of queries from Members. Recognising the value of the updates from CSP, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has asked that these now take place twice yearly. This is scheduled to begin from the new council year, with updates expected to take place at meetings in October 2018 and April 2019.

Older Persons' Housing Strategy Task and Finish Group (March to December 2017)

The Older Persons' Housing Strategy Task and Finish Group worked with officers in the development of a new Joint Older Persons' Housing Strategy for Eden and South Lakeland District Councils. The task and finish group met four times between March and December 2017, including a workshop-style event which saw attendees from both district councils, Cumbria County Council and registered housing providers share ideas about how to address the issue of housing for older people in both South Lakeland and Eden. At its final meeting in December 2017, the Older Persons' Housing Strategy Task and Finish Group agreed to endorse the refreshed strategy and recommend it to Cabinet. This was agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2018, with the Joint Older Persons' Housing Strategy being formally adopted by Cabinet on 21 March 2018.

Review of Active Travel Workshop (21 July 2017)

The Review of Active Travel offered Members an opportunity to share their views on the Council's current work regarding active travel (e.g. walking and cycling) and to provide ideas for future working in this area. The Environment Portfolio Holder, officers from the Active Travel Working Group and a representative of British Cycling were in attendance at the session. At the session, Members endorsed the existing Active Travel Position Statement and Action Plan and proposed a number of key points for Cabinet to consider, including further investigation into greater joined-up working, cross-boundary partnership work and an emphasis on developing a culture of active travel amongst young people.

Asset Management Strategy Workshop (12 April 2018)

The Asset Management Strategy Workshop has been commissioned by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to assist officers and the Council's property services contractors, LambertSmithHampton, in developing a strategic plan for the Council's assets. **The Workshop was held on 12 April 2018 and recommended *****

Effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be an effective committee that can contribute to the development of Council policies and also hold the Cabinet to account for its decisions. Overview and scrutiny should be carried out in a constructive way which contributes to the efficient and effective service delivery which meets the needs and aspirations of the people of South Lakeland. As such, an annual review is undertaken to ensure that the work of scrutiny continues to be effective. Since 2016/17, the annual Review of Effectiveness has mirrored the checklist methodology of the Audit Committee's own effectiveness review.

The review concluded that the Committee continues to operate effectively in its overview and scrutiny role, but that more precise timetabling of reviews would be beneficial in ensuring that the work programme can be adequately addressed.

Call-in and Urgency Provisions

The call-in process may be used to challenge Executive decisions. Call-ins are only to be used on an exceptional basis in line with paragraph 16 (a) to (i) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

One call-in has been received during 2017/18. This was in relation to Cabinet Executive Decisions CEX/38 (New Road – Common Land) and CEX/39 (New Road - Common Land - Vision for landscaping) made at the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, 30 August 2017. An additional meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was called on 15 September 2017 to consider the call-in. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to accept the original decisions made by Cabinet.

Looking Ahead to 2018/19

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed its work programme for 2018/19 at its meeting on Friday, 20 April 2018. The topics selected for review are:- ***

With Customer Connect progressing apace, the Council's new ward arrangements taking effect, and the release of the Government's revised scrutiny guidance, the 2018/19 council year will no doubt prove to be a year of change for scrutiny at South Lakeland. But this change should be seen as an opportunity for scrutiny to realign its focus and to emphasise its unique ability within local government to look strategically at topics which affect the area. Scrutiny will do this whilst continuing to utilise partnership working, building networks and relationships and maximising evidence gathering in a way few other committees could.

Scrutiny Contact Details

Jason Habbershon

Committee Services/Scrutiny Officer

01539 733333 scrutiny@southlakeland.gov.uk

More information on the scrutiny function, including agendas, minutes ongoing review work and councillor details can be found on the Council's website: www.southlakeland.gov.uk