

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

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Chairman's foreword

As a non-partisan committee, 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.

2018/19 has been a year of change in many areas as noted within this report but despite this, Overview & Scrutiny has continued to take a proactive approach to matters concerning the Council and its residents, 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 to work with its partners to make South Lakeland the best place to live, work and explore.

Councillor Vicky Hughes, 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 April 2018 and March 2019.

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 Asset Management 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 during 2018/19 and, building on the work of past Committees, inviting partners to attend reviews and meetings to provide a broader perspective, reflecting the Council's wider reach as leader in the district, has continued to prove valuable

In 2017/18, the Performance Sub-Committee was dissolved with those responsibilities being transferred back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. That change continues to have positive effects with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee taking full ownership of its returned monitoring responsibilities and each meeting having a more 'joined-up' approach being able to monitor performance whilst, at the same time, scrutinise and challenge decisions that might impact upon performance.

Last year's Scrutiny Annual Report made reference to the change in ward boundaries which were implemented in May 2018. The effect of these changes will continue to be monitored as time progresses particularly with a view to the proposed locality working arising out of the Customer Connect programme.

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 2019/20 Work Programme will continue to further the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work to assist the Council in realising its ultimate aim of "*working together to make South Lakeland the best place to live, work and explore.*"

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Membership

Pat Bell

Helen Chaffey

Brian Cooper

Anne Hall

Hazel Hodgson

Vicky Hughes (Chairman)

Anne Hutton

Janette Jenkinson

Ian Mitchell

Doug Rathbone (Vice-Chairman)

Vivienne Rees

Mark Wilson

Year in Review: Overview and Scrutiny 2018/19

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met six times between April 2018 and March 2019.

The Committee considered a wide variety of subjects over the course of those meetings, including the Council's draft budget, the draft Asset Management Strategy, the Cumbria Public Health Strategy and the operation of the Northern Rail service within South Lakeland.

Although it was agreed in 2017/18 that the South Cumbria Community Safety Partnership (CSP) updated the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on its work twice yearly at meetings in October and April, due to availability of key contributors to the CSP, it was not possible for an update to be given in October as planned. **An update was given at the meeting in April 2019 as expected and....**

No-deal Brexit Workshop (7 March 2019)

At the request of the Leader of the Council, an unplanned workshop was held on 7 March 2019 to consider the potential impacts of a 'no-deal' departure from the European Union. The purposes of the workshop was threefold; to enable Members to gain an understanding of how a 'no-deal' Brexit might impact upon the Council's business and delivery of services, to enable Members to gain an understanding of the mitigations in place to respond to such

an event and to enable Members to gain an understanding of the mitigations that could be put in place in the event of a no-deal Brexit. The workshop was attended by Members and officers from South Lakeland District Council. The outcomes of that meeting were that Members confirmed that they had assurances regarding the work that the Council had undertaken to prepare for a no-deal Brexit and to hold a further workshop approximately 6 months after the country's departure from the European Union to discuss any impacts arising out of that.

Customer Connect Locality Working Task & Finish Group (commenced March 2019)

The first meeting in respect of the Customer Connect Locality Working Task & Finish Group also took place on 7 March 2019. At this meeting, Members agreed the terms of reference for the Task & Finish Group and also identified those organisations and/or individuals that the group wished to hear from in order to inform its work. The purposes of the Task & Finish Group are threefold; to identify new ways for the Council's current functions to work together more efficiently and effectively through locality working, to identify possible ways of working within communities which can be developed as part of the Customer Connect project and to identify the role and development of Members in locality working.

Asset Management Strategy Workshop (12 April 2018)

The Asset Management Strategy Workshop was reported to Full Council in last year's annual Scrutiny report. In that report, it was confirmed that suggestions arising out of the Workshop would be considered by officers as part of the development of the draft Asset Management Strategy. The draft Strategy was subsequently considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 October 2018 and adopted by Cabinet, as the *Property and Land Management Strategy* on 28 November 2018.

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. No call-in requests were received during 2018/19.

The urgency provisions can be used to waive the requirements of the Council's Constitution with regards to decision-making when an urgent decision is needed and it is not possible for

the normal procedure to be followed to allow a decision to be made within a given timeframe. During 2018/19, the urgency provisions were used once. This was in relation to the decision as to whether or not the Council should express a desire to be part of a business rates pooling pilot along with the other Cumbria authorities. A decision in this respect was made by Cabinet in September 2018 CEX/33.

Looking Ahead to 2019/20

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed its work programme for 2019/20 at its meeting on Friday, 26 April 2019. The topics selected for review are:- ***

With the Customer Connect programme progressing apace, the Council's new ward arrangements becoming embedded and Brexit potentially taking place, the 2019/20 council year will no doubt prove to be a year of significant activity for scrutiny at South Lakeland. This should be seen as an opportunity for scrutiny to build upon 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

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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