

**South Lakeland District Council**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**Friday, 23 April 2021**  
**Review of Effectiveness and Scrutiny**  
**Recommendations Report**

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**Portfolio:** Cllr Vicky Hughes, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
**Report from:** Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources  
**Report Author:** Rachel Ireland – Trainee Solicitor  
Linda Fisher - Legal, Governance and Democracy Lead Specialist  
(Monitoring Officer)  
**Wards:** N/A  
**Forward Plan:** N/A

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1.0 Expected Outcome

1.1 **By monitoring both the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the progress made by Cabinet and officers in implementing the recommendations made by the Committee, Members are able to ensure that maximum value is added by scrutiny and retain sight of proposals and outcomes. The regular reviewing of recommendations made by Members will also ensure that the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is both maintained and monitored.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 **It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the following:-**  
**(1) the findings of the Review of Effectiveness, as attached at Appendix 1;**  
**and**  
**(2) the progress made by Cabinet in implementing the recommendations of the Committee.**

3.0 **Background and Proposals**

3.1 Each year, a review is undertaken of the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This review is undertaken utilising a similar checklist framework to that used by the Audit Committee. This effectiveness checklist is included as Appendix 1 to this report. Please note this review covers a period of 24 months, the municipal years 2019-21. This is due to the impact of COVID-19 and the cancellation of the 24 April 2020 meeting.

3.2 The review concludes that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has continued to be effective over the past 24 months notwithstanding the impact of COVID-19. However, notably, both as a direct and indirect result of the pandemic, four scheduled meetings of the Committee were cancelled in the last 12 months. Despite this, the Committee did meet three times formally over the past year. More timely submission of reports from task and finish groups and workshops postponed due to COVID-19 would have

been beneficial in ensuring that resources can be allocated to ensure that the work programme can be completed on time. There are no other recommendations arising from the review of effectiveness.

- 3.2 Despite the reduction of meetings due to COVID-19, the Chairman has been heavily involved in Emergency Executive and Non-Executive Decisions over the past 12 months. On 25 March 2020 Cabinet decided to delegate urgent decisions to the Chief Executive to protect the Council's interests in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. In accordance with Part 4 of the Constitution – Rules of Procedure – Access to Information Rules – Rule 16 (Special Urgency) the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can agree that a decision is urgent and cannot be reasonably deferred. See [the Council's Constitution](#).
- 3.3 During March 2020 to March 2021, the Chairman provided consultation in 19 decisions where the Urgency Provision was used. This process has been fundamental to the continuation of good governance and has provided the Council with the ability to act in an agile way to meet the needs of those within the locality.

### **Scrutiny Recommendations Progress**

- 3.5 Monitoring the progress of recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to decision-makers is an important part of effective governance. In addition to these reports, the Committee receive verbal updates at meetings throughout the year during consideration of the latest Work Programme.
- 3.6 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a number of other policy documents including, but not limited to, the Council Plan, the Medium Term Financial Plan, the Treasury Management Statement, the Procurement and Commissioning Strategy, the Tenancy Strategy and the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy.
- 3.7 As well as the formal recommendations made by the Committee, a number of comments and/or suggestions were raised throughout various items considered at committee meetings. In situations where these comments were raised against executive items, these comments were highlighted by Portfolio Holders during consideration by Cabinet. Throughout 2019-21, Portfolio Holders have shown a strong commitment to the scrutiny process and had consistent attendance at Committee meetings.
- 3.8 The Committee met six times in relation to the Development of Locality Working Through Customer Connect Task and Finish Group. During these sessions, one Sub-Group met to consider measuring success while another Sub-Group met with other responsible authorities including the Police and representatives from CALC and Cumbria County Council. At the 17 July 2020 meeting the Director of Customer and Commercial Services presented the final Locality Report whereby the Committee agreed that the recommendations should be forwarded to Cabinet for further consideration as part of the design of the locality working arrangements.
- 3.9 The Committee also scrutinised the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy at two formal meetings. After the Policy was first brought before the Committee on 17 June 2020, a small working group was created. The group, made up of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, and a number of other Committee Members, scrutinised the Policy. Comments from the working group were fed back to the Committee at its formal meeting on 17 July 2020. The Committee's comments were presented to Cabinet on 22 July 2020 with the Policy later being approved by Council on 28 July 2020.

- 3.10 The focus of the Committee's 2020-21 work programme was unsurprisingly centred on the Council's response and recovery from COVID-19. The Committee noted the Shaping the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Report from the Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources on 17 July 2020 and resolved to hold a one-day Workshop on 23 October 2020. The Committee later approved the draft recommendations produced following the workshop and recommended they be taken to Cabinet for address in the Council's strategies. The recommendations are due to be heard by Cabinet at the next appropriate meeting.
- 3.11 Finally, whilst not requiring any recommendations being made to Cabinet, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has paid attention to a number of issues of democratic mandate affecting the local community, including the effect of climate change, the effectiveness of the health offering within South Lakeland and the Council's recovery from COVID-19.

#### **4.0 Consultation**

- 4.1 This report has been prepared in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Council's Corporate Management Team.

#### **5.0 Alternative Options**

- 5.1 This report is to note. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee could choose not to undertake regular monitoring of its effectiveness or the recommendations that it has made. This is not recommended as the Committee will have no oversight of its recommendations after they have been made.
- 5.2 Should the Committee feel that its recommendations are not being progressed adequately it could request more regular updates from the relevant decision-maker. It also has the power, under the Council's Constitution, to request certain individuals to attend a committee meeting and answer any questions that it puts to them.

#### **6.0 Links to Council Priorities**

- 6.1 The Council's response and approach to recovery is guided by the priorities identified in the Council Plan. Analysis of impacts and resultant needs, including the considerations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will inform the annual review of the Council Plan.

#### **7.0 Implications**

##### **Financial, Resources and Procurement**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report.

##### **Human Resources**

- 7.2 There are no direct staffing implications arising out of this report.

##### **Legal**

- 7.3 There is a legal requirement for local authorities to operate an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The committee needs to be effective in its role. This report demonstrates that the committee has been effective during 2019-21.

##### **Health, Social, Economic and Environmental**

- 7.4 Have you completed a Health, Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Assessment? No

7.5 If you have not completed an Impact Assessment, please explain your reasons: This report is a review of work already undertaken.

### Equality and Diversity

7.7 Have you completed an Equality Impact Analysis? No

7.8 If you have not completed an Impact Assessment, please explain your reasons: This report is a review of work already undertaken.

### Risk

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
That the Council's scrutiny arrangements are ineffective or inefficient.	The scrutiny work undertaken by the committee does not add value in the manner that it ought to. Areas where scrutiny is required are missed.	An effective overview and scrutiny function, reviewed regularly, is in operation.

### Contact Officers

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### Appendices Attached to this Report

Appendix No.	Name of Appendix
1	Review of Effectiveness

### Background Documents Available

None

### Tracking Information

Signed off by	Date sent	Date Signed off
Legal Services	13/04/21	15/04/2021
Section 151 Officer	13/04/21	15/04/2021
Monitoring Officer	13/04/21	15/04/2021

Circulated to	Date sent
Lead Specialist	N/A
Human Resources Lead Specialist	N/A
Communications Team	N/A
Leader	N/A
Committee Chairman	13/04/21
Portfolio Holder	N/A
Ward Councillor(s)	N/A
Committee	23/04/21
Executive (Cabinet)	N/A
Council	N/A