



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group

Minutes of a meeting of the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group held at Council Chamber, Lodge Road, Daventry, NN11 4FP on Wednesday 21 July 2021 at 6.00 pm.

Present Councillor Dermot Bambridge
 Councillor Rosie Herring
 Councillor Danielle Stone

Apologies Councillor Karen Cooper
for
Absence: Councillor Jo Gilford
 Councillor Sam Rumens

Officers Diana Davies, Democratic Services Officer
 James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager
 Kathryn Holton, Committee Officer
 Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager
 Catherine Whitehead, Director of Legal and Democratic (Monitoring
 Officer)

9. Appointment of Chair

The Deputy Democratic Services Manager advised that in the absence of Cllr Gilford, the appointed Chair for the meeting, an alternative Chair needed to be agreed. Following the list agreed at the previous meeting, Cllr Cooper would be next to take the chair but since she had also sent apologies Cllr Herring was next on the list. It was proposed by Cllr Stone and seconded by Cllr Bambridge that Cllr Herring be appointed Chair for the meeting.

10. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Cooper, Gilford and Rumens.

11. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

12. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

13. Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements from the Chair.

14. **Work Programmes 2021/2022 for the three Scrutiny Committees: Corporate, People and Place**

The Chair asked whether dates had been set for the Work Programme planning workshops since this would affect the duration of the short-term work programmes for the three Committees. The Deputy Democratic Services Manager advised that the dates needed to be agreed by the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees together with other relevant parties.

In order to obtain suggestions of Scrutiny topics from the public it was agreed that a single survey should be used to gather ideas for all three Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Consideration needed to be given to methods of distributing the survey to ensure they did not favour one area over another. It was noted from previous experience in Northampton that survey results gave a good indication of the issues residents were concerned about and working with the public helped them to understand the process. It was agreed that the survey should be sent out as soon as possible (September) to allow adequate time for response.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlined the key issues and topics to inform the short-term work programme for 2021/22, together with the longer term reviews and topics to be considered at the work programming event in autumn 2021 (Appendix A to the report).

Cllr Stone noted that the Social Values Act had a requirement for all LA contracts to be able to demonstrate added social value, for which scrutiny would be helpful. The University's changemaker hub was seeking to promote a social values pledge from all local businesses within an ethical framework. WNC should seek to be part of this.

Briefings were planned for members on topics such as contract management and procurement, to enable effective scrutiny.

Cllr Herring noted that there was an item on the WNC Contracts Register of £8m to Shoosmiths for conveyancing and asked for more information. The Monitoring Officer advised that this related to legal services in respect of the buy-back of Council properties for Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) and agreed to look at the costs involved. The Monitoring Officer also outlined the current legal arrangements for WNC and advised that these were in the process of being rationalised.

It was noted that WNC had come into being partly in response to financial problems and residents needed to be clear about how money was spent.

Car parking charges were identified as a possible cross-cutting topic, since all Committees would be affected. Regeneration of the town centre was important and a balance needed to be struck between issues such as parking income, footfall and air quality.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlined the key issues and topics to inform the short-term work programme for 2021/22, together with the longer

term reviews and topics to be considered at the work programming event in autumn 2021 (Appendix B to the report).

Potential cross-cutting issues were detailed in Appendix B, but also included Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) – which had been raised at Council and potentially came within the remit of both Place and People Committees.

The Deputy Democratic Services Manager advised that cross-cutting issues were well-suited to a task and finish group. The group could contain members from all committees, but would need to report back to a single committee to be decided by the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group.

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlined the key issues and topics to inform the short-term work programme for 2021/22, together with the longer term reviews and topics to be considered at the work programming event in autumn 2021 (Appendix C to the report).

In addition it was noted that transitions from Children's Services to Adults had not been handled well in the past and this could be a potential topic for scrutiny.

Cllr Stone advised that she had extensive experience in the area of youth provision and requested to be called as a witness if the topic was to be scrutinised.

It was noted that Work Programmes of all three Committees needed to be carefully planned to ensure the workload was spread evenly throughout the year.

The Chair expressed concern that the approach taken by WNC to Overview and Scrutiny modelled that of the previous Northampton Borough Council (NBC), which could result in it becoming Northampton-centric. The Monitoring Officer pointed out that NBC's model had been complimented by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and that although the process was not dictated in the Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority (comprising members from all areas) had commended this approach and the Corporate Governance Task and Finish Group had also provided Member input into the suggested process.

It was agreed that dates for Work Programming events and survey details would be discussed remotely before the next meeting, with the chairs of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees having input on what was sent out in their names for the public consultation and agreeing the circulation list so that areas for Daventry and South Northants could be included.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____