



Scrutiny Committee Annual Report

2012/13



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1.0 Chairman's Foreword

I am delighted to be able to write the foreword to this Annual Report of South Kesteven District Council's Scrutiny Committee. It gives an overview of the Committee's achievements over the past year.

In 2012/13 the Committee took on several major pieces of work. Some of the issues we looked at were key topics for members of the public.

The year has seen the Committee's skills develop as Members have taken further responsibility for completing work outside formal meetings.

During the year, we have scrutinised a wide range of topics and we have taken evidence from witnesses within the authority and outside organisations.

In future years it will be especially important for the Scrutiny Committee to be clear on its aims and objectives and contribute to improving the Council's efficiency and effectiveness. We will need to continue looking at services we deliver ourselves, as well as those we deliver with partners. We will also continue to look at other organisations that work within the district and have an impact on the communities of South Kesteven.

We are very grateful to all the people who have taken the time to talk to us and answer our questions. I would also like to thank Members for their commitment and contribution to the work of the Committee.

*Councillor Reg Howard
Chairman, Scrutiny Committee*

2.0 Introduction

Overview and Scrutiny was introduced as part of the modernisation agenda for Local Government in the Local Government Act 2000. The Overview and Scrutiny process can influence decisions but it cannot make them.

2.1 About the Committee

The Scrutiny Committee is politically balanced, comprising 11 non-Executive members of the Council. Details of membership during 2012/13 are shown below:

Chairman:	Councillor Reg Howard
Vice-Chairman:	Councillor Mrs Judy Smith
Members:	Councillor Paul Cosham
	Councillor Alan Davidson
	Councillor Mrs Rosemary Kaberry-Brown
	Councillor Michael King
	Councillor David Nalson
	Councillor Helen Powell
	Councillor Bob Russell
	Councillor Bob Sampson
	Councillor Frank Turner

During 2012/13, the Committee met eight times. Full details of the agendas and action notes from those meetings are available on the Council's website.

The Committee has a responsibility to monitor the Council's performance, consider its decisions, question how those decisions were made and recommend improvements.

The Scrutiny Committee also undertakes external scrutiny to examine wider issues that affect the district. The Council is required to have a Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee; the Constitution allows the Scrutiny Committee to fill this role.

2.2 The role of scrutiny

The Scrutiny Committee has four key functions, which are listed below.

- To provide a "critical friend" challenge to the Executive as well as external authorities and agencies
 - Challenge by scrutiny should be constructive, robust and purposeful

- Scrutiny should work effectively with the Cabinet and senior management
- Scrutiny should provide an effective mechanism for the executive to demonstrate public accountability
- To reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
 - Scrutiny should take a community leadership role by focusing on issues of public concern
 - Scrutiny should have a constructive relationship with the press and media
 - Scrutiny should create the conditions for plural views and concerns to be taken into account
- Scrutiny members should take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public
 - Scrutiny should operate with political impartiality
 - Scrutiny should have ownership of its work programme
 - Scrutiny members should have a worthwhile and fulfilling role
- Scrutiny should make an impact on the delivery of public services
 - Scrutiny should have access to timely and accurate performance information
 - The scrutiny work-programme should be balanced, well co-ordinated and integrated into corporate processes
 - Scrutiny work should be carried out with strategic objectives in mind
 - Scrutiny should contribute to improving local public services

2.3 Work programming

During its first meeting and a subsequent workshop, the Committee considered a range of topics it wanted to scrutinise. Suggested topics included health services, planning policy, further work with Procurement Lincolnshire and CCTV. The Committee prioritised the suggestions and populated its work programme.

For the first time the Committee's work programme covers the remainder of the current Council's term. This has helped the Committee co-ordinate items so it can consider them at the most appropriate time. Sufficient space was left within the work programme for issues that arose mid-term.

3.0 Crime and Disorder - CCTV

The Community Safety and Licensing Service Manager gave a presentation on CCTV. He told the Committee about the equipment, the different types of camera monitored by the team and additional services which were provided including Shopwatch, Pubwatch and the Council's out of hours telephone service. Committee members identified the key beneficiaries of CCTV as the police and felt strongly that they should make a financial contribution to the running of the service. The Committee asked Councillor Wootten as its representative on the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Panel to raise the issue at a future meeting to gauge support from other districts and consider putting forward a collective request.

Councillor Wootten submitted a response at the Committee's next meeting. The response informed Members that he had raised the issue of funding for CCTV with the Police and Crime Commissioner. He was informed that Superintendent Vickers, who was attached to Lincolnshire County Council's Safer Communities Team was leading a CCTV related project. It was suggested that Superintendent Vickers should be invited to a future meeting to provide an update. Superintendent Vickers will attend the meeting on 20 August 2013.

4.0 Development Management & Planning Policy

4.1 Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Document

The Committee began to look at Development Management and Planning Policy related issues following a question from a member of the public. At the Committee's first meeting on 12 June 2013 a question was posed about the production of a Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Consultation on the SPD was underway and Councillors discussed the process that was being followed. Some members who also sat on parish councils reported that they had not received an invitation to participate in consultation.

The Committee recommended that the process to adopt the document should not proceed until all parish councils had been given the opportunity to respond to the consultation. After the meeting, consultation arrangements with parishes were investigated and evidence was identified which proved all parishes had been consulted.

The Committee was interested in the process to adopt the SPD and appointed a working group to monitor the procedures that were followed.

The SPD was adopted following wide-ranging consultation, both internally and externally, at the Cabinet meeting on 3 June 2013.

4.2 Pre-application planning advice

At one of its meetings, a member of the public asked the committee about pre-application planning advice. Several issues were raised including whether that advice was recorded and made publicly available and pre-application advice charging. The Committee was interested in the issue and agreed it should be added to the work programme for consideration in 2013/14. The Committee also agreed to invite the Chairman of the Development Control Committee and the Development Management Service Manager to a future meeting to assist with their considerations.

5.0 Grounds Maintenance

A number of parish councils had made complaints about grounds maintenance-related issues. Concerns had also been raised through the Resources Policy Development Group. Over the summer officers had also received reports that there were occasions when the contractor had not performed the cutting of verges within the contract specification.

The Team Leader for Operations from Property and Facilities and the Grounds Maintenance Supervisor outlined the current grounds maintenance contract, which was due to end in 2013. Officers were working on developing a new, more robust and enforceable contract.

Members were satisfied with the work that was underway to prevent further complaints in the future.

6.0 Health

While health scrutiny is a function of Lincolnshire County Council, several health-related issues arose that the Committee thought were so important for communities within South Kesteven, it wanted to scrutinise them.

6.1 Defibrillators

During its work programming, the Committee expressed a strong interest in defibrillators. It set up a working group to conduct a scrutiny review on whether the authority should invest in defibrillators. Before the working group began its investigation, the Committee wanted to be involved in

setting key lines of enquiry. To this end the Environmental Health Service Manager presented a report which contained background information on first aid legislation, LIVES and defibrillators.

Once the key lines of enquiry were agreed, the working group decided how it would find the information it needed to address the questions raised and to form the basis of any recommendations.

6.2 East Midlands Ambulance Service

The Committee considered a consultation document produced by East Midlands Ambulance Service entitled 'Being the Best'. At the end of the session, the Committee agreed a resolution:

"This committee believes that the principle of reorganisation advocated based on a system of dispersal is very sound, however there are a number of errors and problems with presentation, and presentation needs to be much clearer (including the feedback form and the maps) if the public is to understand it. The committee also felt that given the principle of dispersal and fast response more information on the number and types of ambulances and investment in them is required. The committee also stressed concern about catering for major emergencies, for example on the A1 road and east coast mainline railway or the impact of tourism along the east coast in the summer (making seasonal adjustments to arrangements). Additional consultation events should also be scheduled to allow members of the public who work during the day to be involved in the consultation."

A copy of the resolution was forwarded to East Midlands Ambulance Service and representatives were also invited to attend the Committee's next meeting.

Three representatives from EMAS attended the meeting on 27 November 2012, (Director of Finance, Service Delivery Manager and the Operational Support Manager for Lincolnshire) and outlined the proposed changes to the way in which EMAS operates. Councillors discussed the proposals and asked a number of questions of the representatives who attended.

Members were assured that the changes would not see decreased cover in the district and that the location of Community Ambulance Posts would be based on statistical analysis of possible strategic deployment points. Members were keen that representatives should take advantage of local knowledge.

6.3 Grantham Hospital

Following articles published in the Grantham Journal relating to Health Services in Grantham, the Committee called a special meeting on 11 July 2012 to consider the reports. The Committee invited a number of specialist witnesses to help them consider the issue.

Representatives from the South West Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Grantham Hospital gave a presentation on the Shaping Health Mid Kesteven Programme, which included information on services at Grantham hospital's accident and emergency department. They gave a further presentation on the provision of mental health services across Lincolnshire.

Questions covered possible reasons for public concerns, service delivery models, ambulance provision, paediatric services, staff recruitment and retention, governance, customer satisfaction, stroke care and consultation.

After the meeting, committee members produced a press release. It stated that they felt reassured by the evidence they had heard. An article in the Grantham Journal on 13 July 2012 referred to the release.

6.4 Stamford Hospital

Representatives from the Stamford and Rutland Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust asked if they could attend a meeting of the Committee to talk about their proposed clinical strategy. John Randall, the Trust's Medical Director gave a presentation which outlined the Trust's wish to redevelop Stamford hospital as a health campus that encompassed health and social care. The Committee was given a summary of the proposed clinical strategy and the next stages of developing a business case in support of proposals. Members were also given the opportunity to ask questions on the presentation.

7.0 Member training

The Service Manager for Human Resources and Organisational Development gave a summary of the feedback from the Councillor training programme that took place after the election in 2011. Councillors also received a summary of the wider Member training programme, which covered the full four-years of a Councillor's term.

8.0 Performance & Projects

Throughout the year the Committee received regular updates on the Council's performance and its progress on priority projects. Each meeting at which an update report was given concentrated on a different one of the Council's priorities.

- 12 June 2012 – 2011/12 year end performance report

Members noted in particular the indicators that related to long-term sickness absence, fly-tipping, ticket sales for live events, market occupancy in Grantham and the collection of non-domestic rates. Discussion also covered target-setting arrangements, performance monitoring and performance improvement.

- 28 August 2012 – quarter 1 performance report

The Committee scrutinised those areas where performance had not met target levels. The priority focus for this meeting was 'Grow the Economy', on which the Strategic Director for Development and Growth gave a presentation.

- 27 November 2012 – quarter 2 performance report

The priority focus for this session was 'Good Housing for All'. The Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods summarised the ongoing work that was supporting the delivery of this priority.

- 19 February 2013 – quarter 3 performance report

Two of the Council's priorities were the focus of this meeting: 'Keep SK Clean, Green and Healthy' and 'Promote Leisure, Arts and Culture'. Councillors asked about feedback from the Gravity Fields Festival and requested that the evaluation of the festival (covering short-term and long-term gains) be included on a future agenda. There was also discussion about the cleanliness of the street scene within town centres and the funding of work by monies collected through the green waste scheme.

As part of its performance reports, Committee members received regular updates on performance in the Development Management Team and its progress against the performance improvement plan that had been developed.

9.0 Policy Development Group Arrangements

The Committee was interested in the relationship between Policy Development Groups, Portfolio Holders and senior officers of the authority.

The Community Engagement and Policy Development Officer and the Principal Democracy Officer gave a presentation on the relationship between Portfolio Holders, officers and Policy Development Groups. This resulted in a recommendation that the Schedule of Decisions (which replaced the Forward Plan) should cover a 4-month period. The duration of the published plan would continue to cover 28 working days as prescribed by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, while an internal plan covered a longer period to assist with forward planning.

Councillors requested quarterly updates for a year. The final of these quarterly updates would be delivered at the meeting on 15 October 2013 (one year on) when progress would be reviewed. Officers were tasked with developing a feedback mechanism to deliver regular updates.

10.0 Procurement Lincolnshire

During 2011/12 the Committee carried out a scrutiny review of Procurement Lincolnshire that raised a number of recommendations. The Council's Strategic Director, Corporate Focus supplied a written response to the recommendations that were made; this report raised a number of additional questions. The Committee agreed to invite representatives from Procurement Lincolnshire's governing boards (the Procurement Advisory Board and the Strategy Procurement Board) to a future meeting where they could directly address the original recommendations and the new questions that had arisen.

Alan Thomas and Sharon Cuff (representing Procurement Lincolnshire) attended the meeting on 9 April 2013 and addressed the recommendations made within the Committee's Scrutiny Review.

A range of issues were discussed including:

- The structure and governance of Procurement Lincolnshire
- Scrutiny of Procurement Lincolnshire
- Collaborative procurement
- The methodology used to define and calculate savings
- Target-setting

As Procurement Lincolnshire had been in existence for 5-years, it was reviewing arrangements for calculating savings and setting targets.

Following the session, Procurement Lincolnshire's representatives agreed to submit a report to the Committee in September 2013. This would incorporate feedback from the reviews that were underway and respond directly to the recommendations made in the Committee's review.

The Committee had further questions about the governance arrangements for Procurement Lincolnshire and agreed to consider these further at its meeting on 11 June 2013.

Also during the year, the Committee was given a presentation by officers from Procurement Lincolnshire on its 2011/12 annual report.

11.0 Representatives on Outside Bodies

Representatives on outside bodies is a standing item on the Committee's agenda. Throughout the year it received updates from the Council's representatives on the Welland and Deeping Internal Drainage Board, Lincolnshire Health Scrutiny Committee and the Elsea Park Community Centre.

All the updates the Committee received were from its own members. Committee members wanted to find a way to broaden the number of reports that were made and to better understand the relationships between SKDC and the bodies to which it appointed representatives. It also wanted to find a way to make the reports more available to all Members.

A working group was set up to look at reporting arrangements. The working group looked to develop a process to capture information and designed a form on which Members could make reports.

The form was put forward to Council at its annual meeting on 18 April 2013, when it was approved. Completed copies of the form are kept in a file in the Members Lounge.

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