



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Governance and Audit Committee

28 September 2022

Councillor Linda Wootten, Cabinet
Member for Corporate Governance and
Licensing

Short Scrutiny Improvement Review – Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To provide the Governance and Audit Committee with an update on the content of the short scrutiny improvement review carried out by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, together with an action plan which addresses the recommendations included as part of the feedback letter.

Recommendations

That the Committee endorses the Scrutiny Improvement Review Action Plan.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	High performing Council
Which wards are impacted?	All

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no specific financial and procurement implications arising from this report.

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 There are no specific legal and governance implications not already referred to in the body of the report.

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 In 2021 the Council commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny to undertake an evaluation of its scrutiny function to check and test that scrutiny arrangements met the Council's high expectations of democratic accountability and that decision-making and overview and scrutiny was transparent, effective and impactful.
- 2.2 The review was conducted by Jacqui McKinlay (Chief Executive) and Ian Parry (Head of Consultancy) at the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and consisted of two days of evidence gathering on-site through conversations with Members and Officers on 19 and 20 July 2021, as well as consideration of key documents and the observation of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 As part of the evidence gathering process, the review panel met with Members and Officers including the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members, Group Leaders, Chairmen and Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, as well as members of the Council's Corporate Management Team, Senior Leadership Team and Democratic Services Team.
- 3.2 The opening summary of findings from the review highlighted conditions for successful scrutiny are present at South Kesteven District Council with a clear commitment to scrutiny and the value it can bring, the benefits of which are recognised by Cabinet. The dedication of Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, positive examples of cross-party working, making a positive impact and wanting to improve outcomes was also emphasised.
- 3.3 Reference was made to the significant changes at the Council following new political and managerial leadership, the political composition and a number of service area reviews taking place or having been recently completed, alongside the Council's response to the pandemic and its focus on recovery. It was recognised, therefore, at the time of the review, that the Council was clearly in a period of transition.
- 3.4 The outcomes of the review were reported under the following themes, some of which included recommendations for further consideration which the Panel feel will assist scrutiny in being more effective in how it works and the contribution it makes:
- Conditions for success
 - Organisation and Officer support
 - Clarity and scrutiny's role and responsibilities
 - Collaborative approach to scrutiny
 - Scrutiny's focus and work programme
 - Committee structure
 - Chairing and meeting preparation
 - Member development
 - External engagement
- 3.5 A copy of the review findings is attached to the report at Appendix A.
- 3.6 In considering the recommendations of the review, an action plan has been developed by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing. This is appended to the report at Appendix B.
- 3.7 The Governance and Audit Committee is invited to consider the content of the findings of the review, together with the action plan.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 The Governance and Audit Committee could recommend additions to, deletions from or amendments to the action plan.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The action plan seeks to address the recommendations of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny following its short scrutiny improvement review.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 All Members of the Council were provided with a copy of the feedback letter from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny upon its receipt.
- 6.2 No further consultation has been undertaken.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A – Centre for Governance and Scrutiny feedback letter
- 7.2 Appendix B – Scrutiny Review Action Plan