

Allerdale
borough council

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Overview and Scrutiny Annual Summary 2018 - 19

“Allerdale – a great place to live, work and visit”

Foreword

This year has continued the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its new form following the Local Government Association peer review undertaken in early 2017.

The co-chairing arrangement adopted by Council in May 2017, has continued to work well, enabling support for each other when timetables of life outside Council causes absences.

Each co-chair ran meetings for half the year.

As co-chairs we believe the Committee has again made good progress over the last twelve months, but as always there is more to do!

We would urge Members to look at the work plan and consider what contribution each individual can make to further strengthen the work of the Committee and the task and finish groups in particular.

Councillor Alan Pitcher

Councillor Janet Farebrother

Co-Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2018/19

Committee membership 2018-2019

The Committee consists of twelve members. During 2018-2019 the members were:

Councillor John Cook	Councillor Frank Johnston
Councillor Joe Cowell	Councillor Billy Miskelly
Councillor Janet Farebrother	Councillor Jim Osborn
Councillor Malcolm Grainger	Councillor Bill Pegram
Councillor Hilary Harrington	Councillor Alan Pitcher
Councillor Joe Holliday	Councillor Martin Wood

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met eleven times during 2018/19, of which nine were committee business and two were call in meetings. The Committee considered a wide variety of subjects over the course of those meetings, and this year included a presentation from the individual Portfolio Holders covering the main areas of their remit as well as the annual scrutiny of the West Cumbria Community Safety partnership.

At its meeting on 18 May, the Committee considered the Council's powers and procedures regarding enforcement.

At its meeting on 22 June, the Committee received a series of presentations from training providers working with people in the Allerdale area seeking employment. The providers included Lakes College, G4S, Groundwork North East and Cumbria, and Inspira.

At its meeting on 17 September, the Committee received and considered the report of the Community Services Business Model Task and Finish Group. This group followed the process of procurement for the three contracts currently under consideration:

- Lot 1: Waste and Recycling Collection Services;
- Lot 2: Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance Services; and
- Lot 3: Bulking, Hauling, Sorting and Reprocessing of Recyclables and Green Waste.

The report was presented to Executive in October.

On 5th October 2018, the Council received a petition with over 300 signatures objecting to the closure of the gates allowing vehicular access to the cemetery at Salterbeck.

In the Constitution, there are procedures setting out how petitions received by the Council are dealt with. Petitions signed by more than 1,000 verified persons on the Electoral Register are submitted to the next available Council meeting.

For petitions which are below the threshold number of signatures for Council, the Constitution sets out nine possible responses. Referring the petition to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is one of these options, and the selected approach in this instance.

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in this context is to examine the process followed towards the action taken.

Prior to April 2017 the service had received a number of complaints about the state of the paths in the cemetery, as well as people making complaints about the fact that vehicles were using the cemetery which made people feel unsafe and were causing damage.

The Committee considered whether the procedures followed which lead to locking the Salterbeck cemetery gates were appropriate; whether the actions taken were appropriate and whether the request in the submitted petition requires further review.

At its meeting held 24 January the Committee received a presentation by the Executive Member for Transformation focusing on customer services, the work of IT and the new programme and projects work, together with a presentation by the Executive Member for Governance and People Resources which included the annual review of the Community Safety Partnership which the Committee is responsible for scrutinising.

The Executive Member for Corporate Resources (Property and Finance) presented her portfolio to the Committee on 15 February and the Executive Member for Economic Growth presented on 22 March.

Committee members have found these presentations very informative in understanding the detail of individual portfolios.

Call-in meetings

There were two Call-in meetings during the municipal year 2018/19. The first, held 30 January 2019, related to Executive Minute no. 303 – Consideration of proposals for the development of a new community stadium for Workington, and Executive Minute no. 304 – Future plans for Borough Park and Derwent Park. The second meeting, held 11 April 2019, related to Executive Minute no. 429 – Consideration of Detailed Business Case for the Development of a New Community Stadium for Workington.

Task and Finish Group activity

The Committee have initiated a number of task and finish groups in 2018/19 to undertake more in depth review work. Whilst there will always be at least one person from the Committee as a member of and chairing each task and finish group, the aim is always to involve the wider membership and all members are encouraged to take part in task and finish groups according to their interest/knowledge.

The standing groups focusing on Performance and Budget setting, described in detail in the previous annual summary, have continued with their work during the year.

The groups which met during the year and related activities are summarised below:

Community Services Business Model Task and Finish Group

The Task and Finish Group was established to oversee the process of letting three contracts for the delivery of services in waste collection, recycling and grounds maintenance with the following terms of reference:

- consider and scrutinise the processes involved in awarding the new contracts;
- identify what is currently being done by the Council to ensure the needs of all residents are considered in the new contract arrangements;
- identify what is currently being done by the Council to ensure the new contracts will deliver the expected level of service and deliver the anticipated savings;
- make recommendations for improvements to the process.

The Group met in conjunction with the timetable for the process of letting the contract.

Supported by staff, the group looked at the detail of the documents against which bidders made their submissions to understand the requirements of the three contracts. Several aspects were debated in detail.

The group was offered the opportunity to visit the Hespian Wood site and received presentations from the operators and commissioners of the facilities, covering the different aspects of the recycling operations.

The Group consisted of: Cllr. Malcolm Grainger (chair); Cllr. Hilary Harrington; Cllr. Billy Miskelly; Cllr. Ron Munby; Cllr. Bill Pegram.

Consultation Task and Finish Group

Members raised some questions and concerns about the current householder perceptions' survey. The current household survey is based on a template from 2008, originally for the best value survey. The Council runs the survey every two years with the majority of questions remaining unchanged to produce time series data. Health and wellbeing questions were recently added with the expectation of building a time series for this aspect of the survey. Questions about feeling safe were reinstated for this year.

Members reported concerns about the questionnaire, including difficulties with the design being off-putting or daunting and its perceived wordiness. Among members' concerns were that some of the questions would appear to lead respondents towards certain routes or answers and that there was a perceived bias towards urban areas yet the majority of Allerdale residents live in the rural areas. Members considered that numbers of respondents often varies with the level of public engagement with and passion for the subject being consult on. Members looked at examples from other district councils who may use alternative methods, for example citizen panels, rather than a large scale survey.

The group consisted of: Cllr. Joe Holliday (chair), Cllr. Celia Tibble, Cllr. Marion Fitzgerald, Cllr. Bill Finlay.

Public Health Strategy Consultation Task and Finish Group

The Director of Public Health for Cumbria has prepared a Cumbria Joint Public Health Strategy. Public health action focuses not only on individuals, but on social, economic, environmental factors that have a direct and indirect impact on health and wellbeing. As such, this draft Cumbria Joint Public Health Strategy is focusses on the five 'capitals': human, social, natural environment, manufactured and financial. As it

is a joint public health strategy the intent was that it was developed jointly with District Councils.

The group met on 1 November with the Director of Public Health and responded to the presentation delivered to the meeting.

The session was chaired by Cllr. Joe Cowell.

Councillor Training Task and Finish Group

The Committee set up this group to consider the provision of support for new Councillors, including those joining the Council via by-elections, and support for all Councillors regarding community leadership and similar expectations.

The Group made a number of recommendations, considered by the Committee at its meeting on 6 December, with the agreed recommendations forwarded to the Member Development Working Group for progression and implementation.

The work of the group and recommendations consider the initial introduction to the Council and training of Councillors; training related to the Council's budget and finances; working with and engaging with the community, and providing community leadership among other topics.

The group consisted of Cllr. Malcolm Grainger (chair), Cllr. Janet Farebrother, Cllr. Marion Fitzgerald, Cllr. Hilary Harrington, Cllr. Joe Holliday, Cllr. Phil Tibble.

The coming year

The work plan is reviewed by the Committee at each of its meetings to ensure that it remains up to date and any changing circumstances or additional emerging topics are considered.

With the election taking place at the beginning of May 2019 in which all councillors retire and may stand for re-election, an Overview and Scrutiny Committee including a number of new members was established at the Annual General Meeting. This committee will establish its own work programme for the coming year.

There are aspects of the work begun by this Committee which it would be beneficial to pursue to a conclusion alongside the items the new Committee will wish to focus upon.

More information on the scrutiny function, including agendas, minutes, ongoing review work, and Councillor details can be found on the council's website: www.allerdale.gov.uk