

Harborough District Council



Report to Council Meeting of 24 July 2023

Title:	Update from the Scrutiny Commission
Status:	Public
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Lead Councillor:	Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission, Cllr Hallam
Appendices:	n/a

Summary

- i. This report summarises the activities of the Scrutiny Commission and its Overview and Scrutiny Panels since the last meeting of Council.

Recommendations

1. That Council note the report.

Reasons for Recommendations

- ii. The Council Procedure Rules contained within the Council's constitution provide that Council will, at an ordinary meeting of the Council, receive a report from each committee and receive questions and answers on that report.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report updates Council on the Overview and Scrutiny activities as delivered by the Scrutiny Commission, Communities Scrutiny Panel and Performance Scrutiny Panel since the last meeting of Council.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Council's constitution includes, at Part 4, Council Procedure Rules. These procedure rules apply to meetings of the full Council. They also largely apply to committee and sub-committee meetings, but do not apply to Overview and Scrutiny meetings, or to meetings of Cabinet, which bodies each have their own procedure rules, also contained in Part 4 of the Constitution.

- 2.2. Council Procedure Rule 2 sets out the order of business to be transacted at an ordinary meeting of Council, stating at 2.10 that it will “receive reports from the Council’s Committees and receive questions and answers on those reports”.

3. Details

- 3.1. Members will recall that Annual Council resolved to maintain existing Committees and the Leader announced that the opposition would be invited to nominate a Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission.
- 3.2. The Scrutiny Commission has met, appointed Cllr Hallam as the Chairman and has agreed that it is important, at the start of an administration, to review the Overview and Scrutiny arrangements.
- 3.3. Training is being arranged with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, who delivered the last review of the overview and scrutiny function, to ensure that the Scrutiny Commission is informed by best practice when reviewing the current work plan and the future structure of the function. All Members of the Council are encourage to attend this training when it is confirmed.
- 3.4. The Scrutiny Commission also agreed that, to maximise flexibility in progressing this review, it should convene a task and finish group to inform the review. This should enable the review of the overview and scrutiny function as a whole to be considered at the next Scrutiny Commission meeting. The Scrutiny Commission recognised that repurposing the early overview and scrutiny meetings of the administration would reduce the number of routine meetings convened initially, however it considered that the need to ensure the structure of the overview and scrutiny function was proportionate and correct at the start of the administration outweighed any such concerns. In the event that a particular issue required urgent attention, the call-in provisions can be invoked or additional meetings be scheduled.
- 3.5. If changes are proposed to the structure of the Overview and Scrutiny provision for the council, the Scrutiny Commission will recommend those changes to the Constitutional Review Committee for consideration.
- 3.6. The Scrutiny Commission considered the existing work plans but did not consider any item to require priority over a comprehensive review of the Overview and Scrutiny function. It therefore made no comment on existing work plans for the scrutiny panels until such time as it received further training, reviewed its terms of reference and formed a view as to the appropriate future structure of the overview and scrutiny function in the district. This work would include providing views to the Head of Paid Service on the provision of appropriate officer resource to support the Overview and Scrutiny function.

4. Implications of Decisions

Corporate Priorities

- 4.1. The Council is committed to delivering its corporate priorities as set out in its corporate plan. Providing the information contained within this report gives assurance that the Council continues to work to deliver these priorities.

Consultation

- 4.2. This report reflects the considerations of the committee, which all members were entitled to attend. No further consultation is required.

Financial

- 4.3. This report provides an update on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny function and has no financial consequences for the budget set by the Council.

Legal

- 4.4. This report provides an update on the work of the Scrutiny Commission and its panels and ensures the committee complies with its obligations to Council as set out in the Council Procedure Rules, recognising that proceedings of the Scrutiny Commission and its panels are governed by the Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

4.5. Environment Implications

- 4.6. This update report does not impact upon the Council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon.

Risk Management

- 4.7. The contents of this report do not pose any risk implications for the Council as it provides and update on the work of the Scrutiny Commission and its panels.

Equalities Impact

- 4.8. The Council has a statutory duty to consider and demonstrate equalities impact in all of its activities. However, the report does not directly impact upon the public sector equality duty given it reports the activities of a committee.

Data Protection

- 4.9. This report contains no private information.

5. Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1. There are no alternative options given this report is required to comply with the Council Procedure Rules.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1. Council is invited to note the activity of the Scrutiny Commission and its panels since the last meeting of Council.

7. Background papers

- 7.1. None

