



**Committee and Date**

Council  
30<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Item

Public



# Place Overview Committee Annual Report 2021/22

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<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):</b>	All		

## 1. Synopsis

Place Overview Committee looked at a range of key topics in 2021/22 which are summarised in this paper.

## 2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Shropshire Plan includes ‘Healthy Organisation’ as a priority outcome and the Strategic Objective that “We will ensure councillors are supported to advocate for their constituents but to also be ambassadors for the council”. This report shares the annual statement for 2021/22 for the Place Overview Committee.

2.3 The annual statements for each overview and scrutiny committee for 2022/23 will be reported to Council during 2023/24

## 3. Recommendations

3.1. Members are asked to consider and comment on the 2021/22 annual statement for Place Overview Committee.

## REPORT

### 4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. Effective Overview and Scrutiny is a feature of the Council's governance arrangements, particularly where the Council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range of factors that could result in risks to Council of not doing O&S effectively.
- Failure to challenge and hold decision makers to account.
  - Failure to link O&S work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management – failure to demonstrate added value
  - Failure to carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations.
  - Failure to engage partners and providers.
  - Failure to ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources.
  - Failure to ensure that O&S can operate as the voice of communities.
  - Failure to draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.
- 4.2. To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:
- Operating in an apolitical manner.
  - Clarity of vision and purpose
  - Overview and Scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
  - Effective engagement and commitment by Members and officers at all levels, including Cabinet, Opposition Leaders, Scrutiny Chairs and Senior Officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
  - Robust Work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
  - Access to and availability of robust data and intelligence
  - Good relationship with partners and providers
- 4.3. Overview and Scrutiny Committees have remits that cover the breadth of the work of the Council, as well as looking externally including Health Services and provision through Health Overview and Scrutiny requirements.
- 4.4. Topics for Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes are identified based on a number of different considerations including an understanding of risks to the Council, employees, people who use services, to service themselves, and to communities. These may be identified through reviewing performance information and comparing with others, changes to national and local policies, budget information, feedback from communities and customers/service users, feedback from partners/providers, and reports from regulators.

- 4.5. During overview and scrutiny work evidence will be gathered that builds on this understanding to inform the development of conclusions and evidence-based recommendations.
- 4.6. The use of external peer challenge such as that offered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny provides objective review and feedback about opportunities to develop the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny.

## 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications associated with the annual statements of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees set out in this report.
- 5.2. Effective overview and scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of "what works" at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of what the situation locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.

## 6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. All reports to Overview and Scrutiny committees, as with all council committees, include appraisals of the impact of the report content on climate change.
- 6.2. Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes directly link to the Shropshire Plan priorities, including Healthy Environment which is built around climate change and carbon reduction, and the natural and historic environment.
- 6.3. Climate change and carbon reduction related issues are directly identified in the remit and therefore focus of the Place Overview Committee i.e.
  - delivery of the agreed lower carbon footprint and emissions targets, including air quality, by the Council and its partners;
  - actions to protect, enhance and value Shropshire's our natural resources and respect the historic environment;
  - arrangements to safeguard and promote a clean and green environment;
  - the delivery of work to reduce landfill and waste;
  - management and development of the physical and digital infrastructure

## 7. Background

- 7.1. Overview and Scrutiny Committees report to Council annually as part of the organisation's governance arrangements. This includes the work that they have completed in the previous 12 months and the impact they have had through their evidence-based recommendations.
- 7.2. This report sets out the annual statements for 2021/22 for Place Overview Committee

## 8. Annual Scrutiny Statement

### 8.1 Place Overview Committee

- **Highways Improvement Plan**

The committee were broadly supportive of the plan but raised numerous concerns about its implementation. They expressed dissatisfaction with the MyShropshire portal for reporting highways repairs and repeated their earlier concerns about gully cleansing. Since the committee considered this topic Shropshire Council has adopted a new portal for repairs, (FixMyStreet) and has increased the amount of gully cleansing that it carries out.

- **Winter Maintenance**

The committee formed a working group to look in detail at the council's current winter maintenance service. The group made numerous recommendations, particularly around better communication with town and parish councils and empowering local communities to manage their own gritting outside of the council's strategic gritting routes. As a result of this work, the council has improved the availability and replenishment of gritting bins and has improved its communication with town and parish councils through the Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC).

- **Road Traffic Collisions**

At the request of the Head of Transport and Environment the committee scrutinised an analysis of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions. It recommended that the Public Health team be involved from the outset in developing the Local Transport Plan. Since then, Public Health have been pivotal in developing the health impact assessment informing development of the plan.

- **Fireworks**

The committee considered in depth the role the local authority could take in restricting the sale and discharge of fireworks. It instructed officers to write to Government to urge further restrictions on the sale of fireworks, and to reduce the maximum permitted noise level of fireworks intended for public displays.

- **Kier and WSP contracts**

The committee continued to monitor the council's contracts with Kier and WSP to provide highways professional and operational services. The committee was positive about the evolution of the contract with Kier, in particular the adoption of a hybrid contracted/in-house services. The committee believed that this would deliver a more responsive service while

reducing costs.

- **Highways diversions**

Following concerns from councillors, the committee scrutinised current arrangements for putting into place highways diversions. Following their concerns, Kier recruited a communications officer to work with local communities when a diversion needed to be put into place. The committee also supported a move to longer-term certainty of funding for highways, which would allow the service to plan work better and therefore have more time to support works with effective communications.

- **Signs and banners task and finish group**

On behalf of a previous task and finish group, the committee continued to press Cabinet for a response to some of the group's recommendations around on-street advertising. The committee also asked the council to review its charges for housing development signs.

- **Planning Committee Structures**

Council asked the committee to carry out a review of the impact of the reduction in number of planning committees from three to two. It carried out a survey of unitary and town and parish councils, as well as a desktop review of structures in other local authorities. The committee rejected the assertion that the reduction has degraded the quality of planning decisions, but made recommendations about ensuring regular training for Members about how to respond to planning applications.

- **Planning enforcement**

Members of the committee wished to scrutinise the impact of changes to the planning enforcement service. The committee made recommendations that it believed would improve communication of successful planning enforcement activity to the public and to elected members.

- **Local Transport Plan 4**

Scrutiny of the development of the plan resulted in members recommending that continued LTP development ensures that council decisions in February including the sustainable transport hierarchy principles, the involvement of public health and pathways to net zero including interim targets, are fully embedded.

- **Post Covid-19 Economic Renewal**

The committee focussed on the impact of the pandemic on retail centres in Shropshire, noting that Shrewsbury in particular had experienced a strong recovery in footfall and spending following the easing of pandemic regulations. Members agreed that future scrutiny of the Economic Growth Plan should focus on supporting those sectors that had been most severely impacted by the pandemic.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

Place Overview Committee agendas, papers and minutes for May 2021 to March 2022.

**Local Member:**

All

**Appendices**

None