



EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT COVER SHEET

Title of Report:	Chairman of the Scrutiny (Audit & Value for Money Council Services) Committee: Annual Report 2021/22	To be marked with an 'X' by Democratic Services after report has been presented
Meeting of:	Corporate Management Team: N/A	
	Leader and Deputy Leaders: N/A	
	Leader's / Leader of the Opposition's Advisory Group / Independent Alliance Advisory Group: N/A	
	Council: 21st March 2022	
	Scrutiny Audit and Value for Money Council Services Committee / Scrutiny Community Regeneration, Environment and Health and Well Being Committee: N/A	



Is this an Executive Decision:	NO	Is this a Key Decision:	NO
Is this in the Forward Plan:	NO	Is the Report Confidential:	NO
If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A LGA 1972:	N/A		

Essential Signatories:

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN THE NAME OF A HEAD OF SERVICE

Interim Monitoring Officer: **Chris Ebberley**

Date Signature

Chief Finance Officer: **Sal Khan**

Date Signature

EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Council

Date: 21st March 2022

REPORT TITLE:	Chairman of the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee: Annual Report 2021/22
PORTFOLIO:	Leader of the Council
HEAD OF SERVICE:	Chief Executive
CONTACT OFFICER:	James Abbott (Corporate and Commercial Manager) Ext. No. 1244
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Non-specific

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To provide a summary of the Scrutiny activities undertaken by the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee during 2021/22.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Council's Scrutiny Committees discharge the overview and scrutiny function under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 2.2. The Committees are tasked with:
- 2.2.1. Reviewing and/or scrutinising decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions;
 - 2.2.2. Reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Council;
 - 2.2.3. Serving as consultees in relation to executive decisions and key elements of service plans when required; and
 - 2.2.4. Producing progress reports and recommendations to the Executive arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process or refer to the Executive entire reports produced as a result of the scrutiny process. However it is

the decision of the Executive whether or not such a report is subsequently submitted to Full Council.

3. Contribution to Corporate Priorities

- 3.1. This report can contribute to all priorities to some degree (depending on the subject matter of the scrutiny review in question); however the remit of this particular Scrutiny Committee is to consider services within the corporate priority area of “Value for Money Council”.

4. Committee Activities

4.1. Scrutiny Work

4.1.1. Over the past year, the Committee has undertaken various scrutiny work, including keeping a watching brief on corporate items and working on a number of specific reviews covering a broad spectrum of subject matter:

4.1.1.1. **Regular / Ongoing Scrutiny:** There has been ongoing scrutiny from the Committee of the quarterly Corporate Plan Performance Reports as in previous years. The Committee also scrutinises the quarterly Leisure Services Contract Performance Report, looking specifically at the partnership arrangement with Everyone Active. The Committee has continued to scrutinise Executive Decision Records on an ongoing basis.

4.1.1.2. **Completed Review of Leisure Centre Charges:** A sub-group of Members on behalf of the Committee led a review into Leisure Centre Charges, to allow the Committee to gain an overview of the Leisure Centre pricing structure and charging strategy. The Committee’s report was presented to the Council’s Cabinet in May 2021. The Cabinet resolved that the recommendations contained in the report be noted as part of the tender renegotiation at that time. A summary of the scope of this review can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

4.1.1.3. **Completed Review of Waste Management Services:** A sub-group of Members on behalf of the Committee led a review into the Council’s Waste Management Services to review value for money in the delivery of the this function and associated strategic approaches to ensure effective waste collection, disposal and recycling. A summary of the scope of this review can be seen in **Appendix 1**. The Scrutiny (Community Regeneration, Environment, Health and Well-being) Committee have also completed a complementary review of the Council’s Waste Management function, and these reviews are being aligned accordingly to be presented to Cabinet as a joint report.

4.1.1.4. **Currently Reviewing Mayoralty Function:** A sub-group of Members on behalf of the Committee is currently reviewing the Council’s Mayoralty function to review the relevance and value for

money of this function and to investigate any other options open to the Council. The review is nearing completion with the final research being undertaken to inform any recommendations arising. A summary of the scope of this review can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

4.1.1.5. **Currently Reviewing Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs):** A sub-group of Members on behalf of the Committee is currently reviewing DFGs to identify areas of the service that may need improving. This review is a follow up on the previous review into DFGs presented to Cabinet in April 2020. The review is nearing completion with information being required from the key housing association partner to inform any recommendations arising. A summary of the scope of this review can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

4.1.1.6. **Currently Reviewing Council ICT Infrastructure:** A sub-group of Members on behalf of the Committee is currently reviewing the Council's ICT infrastructure, to review how effective, resilient, secure and futureproof the Council's internal ICT infrastructure, systems and hardware are. A summary of the scope of this review can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

4.1.1.7. **Towns Fund Programme:** A report on the Towns Fund Programme was submitted to Committee on 9th February 2022 for the Committee to review the programme and provide its observations ahead of meetings of the Cabinet and Council.

4.1.1.8. **Ongoing Programme of Reviews:** The Committee continues to maintain a programme of future reviews, with Members highlighting and prioritising potential topics on an ongoing basis. This approach ensures a full and productive programme of work for the Committee, with additional reviews commencing in the near future as existing work is completed.

4.2. Audit Work

4.2.1. The Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee is also delegated a number of statutory functions in relation to Governance, Treasury Management and the Annual Statement of Accounts. The following activities have been undertaken:

4.2.1.1. **Statement of Accounts:** The annual Statutory Statement of Accounts (via the Audit (Approval of Statement of Accounts) Committee) was approved, including agreeing the annual Letter of Representation on behalf of the authority.

4.2.1.2. **External Audit:** The Committee has received regular updates and scrutinised reports from our appointed external auditors (Grant Thornton).

4.2.1.3. **Internal Audit:** The Committee scrutinised the internal audit work plan and monitored progress against the plan during the course of the year. This included monitoring to ensure that agreed actions are implemented in a timely manner.

4.2.1.4. **Treasury Management:** The Committee scrutinised the Annual Treasury Management Strategy and Report, the mid-year update and the Annual Investment Strategy prior to their consideration and approval by full Council.

4.2.1.5. **Annual Governance Statement:** The Committee scrutinised and approved the statutory Annual Governance Statement, which is published alongside the Statement of Accounts.

4.2.1.6. **Financial Performance:** The Committee received and scrutinised the quarterly finance reports, covering the revenue budget, capital programme, treasury management and risk management.

5. **Financial Considerations**

This section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit: Lisa Turner

5.1. There are no financial issues arising from this Report.

6. **Risk Assessment and Management**

6.1. The main risks to this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are as follows:

6.1.1. **Positive** (Opportunities/Benefits):

6.1.1.1. None identified

6.1.2. **Negative** (Threats):

6.1.2.1. None identified

6.2. The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register. Any financial implications to mitigate against these risks are considered above.

7. **Legal Considerations**

This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team: Sherrie Grant

7.1. There are no significant legal issues arising from this Report.

8. Equalities and Health

8.1. **Equality Impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

8.2. **Health Impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question does not require a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

9. Human Rights

9.1. There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

10. Sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures)

10.1. Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) **N/A**

11. Recommendation(s)

11.1. To note the report

12. Background Papers

12.1. None

13. Appendices

13.1. Appendix 1: Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee Reviews 2021/22 (**below**).

Appendix 1: Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee Reviews 2021/22

Leisure Centre charges

Summary of Background and Scope

Background

The Committee agreed to conduct a review of the Leisure Centre Charges.

The purpose of this Review is to gain an overview of the Leisure Centre pricing structure and charging strategy.

Scope

The scope of the review included:

- What was the Council's capital investment?
- What are the Council's ongoing financial commitments for the duration of the contract?
- What is the Contractual fee / charges mechanism and protection?
- What is the charging policy for the duration of the contract?
- What is the comparative position before and after contract commencement?

Approved Recommendations

The Cabinet resolved that the recommendations contained in the report be noted as part of the tender renegotiation at that time.

Waste Management

Summary of Background and Scope

Background

The Committee agreed to undertake a review of Waste Management.

The purpose of this review is to scrutinise value for money in the delivery of the Council's Waste Management function and associated strategic approaches to ensure effective waste collection, disposal and recycling.

Scope

The scope of the review included:

- Value for money in delivery of services
- Future of how and where we dispose of waste
- The key challenges to recycling and strategy to address

Draft Recommendations

The recommendations agreed by the Committee to be presented to Cabinet are as follows:

- To analyse why other statistically similar authorities appear to have lower service delivery costs.
- To investigate alternative delivery mechanisms for the service and charging regimes for elements of the current provision such as charging for green waste.

These will be considered by the Cabinet in due course.

The Scrutiny (Community Regeneration, Environment and Health & Wellbeing) Committee undertook a similar review in collaboration with this Committee. The recommendations of that committee are as follows:

- The Council undertake a detailed review into charging for the collection of garden waste.
- Brown/Garden waste bin collection is suspended in December and/or January.
- Review methods of communication to residents with regard to recycling.

Mayoralty Function

Summary of Background and Scope

Background

The Committee agreed to undertake a review of the Council's Mayoralty Function. The purpose of this review is to review the relevance and value for money of the Council's Mayoralty function and to investigate any other options open to the Council.

Scope

The scope of the review includes:

1. To Review Budget, Expenses and Charitable Funding Generated.

- a. Establish details of ESBC mayoral budget and expenses incurred for the last five years.
- b. Establish how much charitable funding has been generated through the office of mayor for the last five years

2. To Review Mayoral Functions and Events

- a. Establish how many events the mayor has taken part in for the last five years.
 - How many take place in East Staffordshire vs externally
 - How many are community focused (e.g. visiting schools/community groups) vs formal (e.g. evening dinners & drinks) vs functional (e.g. attending funerals on behalf of ESBC)
 - How many are organised by the Mayor vs attended by the mayor
 - What is the social benefit / impact of these events?
- b. Establish how many of the events in point 2a that are duplicated from one year to the next.
- c. Establish how many of the events have been attending other mayor's functions.
- d. Establish attendance numbers for the ESBC mayor's dinner for the last five years.
- e. Undertake comparisons of each of the above to other districts in Staffordshire that have a mayor.
- f. Establish information around the Mayor's Chauffeur
 - Is there a pool of Chauffeurs, and if so how many?
 - Does the Chauffeur service cater for both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor?
 - What are the costs? Are there any additional costs, e.g. if the normal pool cannot operate?

3. To Review Alternative Models

- a. Investigate other potential operating models
- b. Identify examples of councils in our locality that operate a different model
- c. Review implications and costs associated with those alternative models

Recommendations

- To be confirmed

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

Summary of Background and Scope

Background

The Committee agreed to undertake a review of DFGs. This review is a follow up on the previous review into DFGs presented to Cabinet in April 2020. The purpose of this review is to identify areas of the DFG service that may need improving.

Scope

The scope of the review includes:

1. Performance of the DFG Service

- a. What is the end to end process, including all stages, of the DFG process?
 - Are there any outside influences that can potentially impact the delivery of the process? E.g. Do we work with any other organisations, and how much of the delivery time is reliant on the input of these other organisations? If there are more than one, is there a significant difference between partner's delivery timelines?
 - What are the eligibility criteria and funding thresholds? Have these changed?
 - Are Occupational Therapists in-house, contracted etc?
- b. What is the background to the in-sourcing of the service?
 - Are there any legacy or ongoing impacts on performance?
- c. Are there any barriers to performance / service delivery?
 - Are there issues around social and / or private landlords granting their permission for adaptations? How many permissions are granted or refused?
- d. How are resources utilised? Is there sufficient capacity?
 - How many FTE members of staff does the Council have working on DFGs, and how does this compare to other local authorities?
 - What is the budget?
 - Are there any resource pressures and / or opportunities that could be investigated?

2. Service Improvement

- a. Have there been or are there any planned improvements to the DFG process? What are the anticipated timescales?
- b. Has the total number of days from start to finish, for each application, reduced over the last five years?
 - How many applications have been received in each of these years?
 - What has been the impact of Covid-19 on the performance? Has this affected the number of applications?

c. Are there any other potential further service improvements that could be achieved?

3. Key Measures

a. How good is the service compared to the Council's agreed metrics?

- What are the key measures the Council is measuring for example relating to cost / quality / time / satisfaction, etc?
- What does success look like?

b. How does performance compare to other local authorities?

- Consider relative performance against statistical and geographical neighbours.
- Are there any networks in place that facilitate benchmarking, exchange of best practice etc?

c. Are there any additional key measures that could be agreed that would aid service performance and improvement?

- If so, what are these key measures?

Recommendations

- To be confirmed

ICT Infrastructure

Summary of Background and Scope

Background

The Committee agreed to undertake a review of the Council's ICT Infrastructure. The purpose of this review is to review how effective, resilient, secure and futureproof the Council's internal ICT infrastructure, systems and hardware are.

Scope

The scope of the review includes:

1. To Establish the Current ICT Infrastructure

- a. What is the current internal ICT infrastructure?
- b. What systems are in place now?
- c. Are these systems fit for purpose?

2. To Consider Future Plans and Potential Developments

- a. How does the Council plan to maintain or improve the infrastructure?
- b. Is there a plan for upgrade / replacement of systems, critical components etc?
- c. Are there any ICT processes that could be improved or further automated? (e.g. password reset automation)
- d. What are the challenges faced by the ICT department?
- e. What is Internal Audit's view of ICT? Are recommendations identified being progressed?

To Consider the ICT Infrastructure in Relation to the COVID-19 Situation

- a. How has the ICT infrastructure adapted to cope with COVID-19?
- b. What challenges or opportunities has this presented in relation to the ICT infrastructure?
- c. What technology was newly adopted as a result of the pandemic?
 - How was that software selected?
 - Is it still fit for purpose given the evolving COVID-19 situation?
- d. What challenges have staff and Members faced, or are facing, in relation to remote working during the COVID-19 situation?

Recommendations

- To be confirmed