

# **Melton Borough Council Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22**



# Contents

<b>Foreword from the Chairman of Scrutiny</b> .....	3
<b>Scrutiny in Melton - Overview</b> .....	4
<b>Scrutiny Committee (Summary of items considered)</b> .....	5
<b>Portfolio Holder Presentations/Questions</b> .....	7
<b>Chairman’s Review of Topics</b> .....	10
<b>Task and Finish Groups and Reviews</b> .....	11
Response and Recovery Task and Finish Group (Place) .....	11
Response and Recovery Task and Finish Group (People).....	12
Lake Terrace – Scrutiny Chairman’s Review.....	13
Melton Mowbray Business Improvement District .....	14
<b>Workshops</b> .....	16
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.....	16
Budget Scrutiny .....	16
Town Centre Masterplan .....	16
Asset Optimisation and Development Workshop.....	17
<b>Scrutiny Reports to Cabinet</b> .....	18
<b>Reporting</b> .....	18
<b>Scrutiny Work Programme</b> .....	19
<b>Training</b> .....	20
<b>Looking ahead</b> .....	20
<b>Further information</b> .....	21

## Foreword from the Chairman of Scrutiny

This report is to inform Council of the work of Scrutiny Committee during 2021/22.

Since the local elections in May 2019, we have had a new Council and a new system of Governance including a Scrutiny Committee of ten members.

The scrutiny function acts as a critical friend on behalf of the community, to improve services and decision-making inside and outside of the Cabinet. The Scrutiny function belongs to the whole Council but is different from other committees in that it is Member-led and evidence-based, with most of Scrutiny's Work plan being decided by Committee members, responding to concerns of elected members and the public.

Scrutiny calls for Members with investigative minds who are prepared to challenge, when they have 'done some homework' and are able to justify the challenge in accordance with the Constitution.

I have been honoured to serve as Chair since October 2021 and would like to thank all members of the Committee for their hard work and dedication.

This year, like last year, has been particularly challenging as we continue to get used to different ways of working as a result of the pandemic. In spite of the challenges created by the pandemic we have managed to keep focused on important areas of Scrutiny work.

I am also very grateful to the officers in Democratic Services who have supported the work of the Committee members, in particular the Council's Scrutiny Officer, Adam Green.

*Cllr Robert Child*

### **Members of the Committee 2021/22**

Councillor Robert Child (Chair) (October 2021 – Present)

Councillor Jacob Wilkinson (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Robert Bindloss (May 2021 – October 2021)

Councillor Pru Chandler

Councillor Pat Cumbers (May 2021 – October 2021)

Councillor Jeanne Douglas

Councillor Christopher Evans

Councillor Chris Fisher (May 2021 – October 2021)

Councillor Margaret Glancy (December 2021 – Present)

Councillor Elaine Holmes

Councillor John Illingworth

Councillor Pam Posnett (October 2021 – Present)

Councillor Mel Steadman

Councillor Rebecca Smith (October 2021 – December 2021)

## Scrutiny in Melton - Overview

In May 2019 Melton Borough Council formally adopted the Executive Model of Governance and established a Scrutiny Committee to carry out the functions as listed below. The Scrutiny Committee has held 8 meetings, 4 workshops, 2 reviews and completed 2 task and finish groups during the 2021/22 Municipal Year. The workshops, reviews and task and finish groups involved an additional 10 meetings. The reviews were in relation to the Council's sale of land at Lake Terrace and the Melton Mowbray Business Improvement District.

In summary the main functions of Scrutiny set out in [Chapter 2, Part 10](#) of the MBC Constitution are to:-

- review and scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any function.
- make reports or recommendations to Council or the Cabinet as appropriate with respect to the discharge of any function.
- recommend that a decision made but not yet implemented, be reconsidered by the Cabinet through the Call In Procedure.
- fulfil all the functions of the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee under the Police and Justice Act 2006.
- fulfil all the functions conferred on it by virtue of regulations under the National Health Service Act 2006 (local authority scrutiny of health matters).

In addition to the entry in the Constitution, another important reference point for the functions of Scrutiny and how the function interacts with the Cabinet is the Executive Scrutiny Protocol.

In May 2019 the Government published Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local Authorities which promoted a formal working agreement between the executive and the scrutiny function in the form of a protocol. The guidance suggested that an Executive Scrutiny Protocol can help to define the relationship and expectations between the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that the two can work together in a positive and productive way.

The Protocol was approved by the Scrutiny Committee on 3 November 2020 and Council approved the protocol on 17 December 2020, it is now included in the Constitution.

The Protocol provides a framework that deals with the practical expectations of Scrutiny Committee Members and the Executive, as well as the cultural dynamics of the Council. It also helps define the relationship between the two and mitigates any differences of opinion before they manifest themselves in unhelpful and unproductive ways. The benefit of this approach is that it provides a framework for disagreement and debate, and a way to manage it when it happens.

## Scrutiny Committee (Summary of items considered)

Topic	Date	Brief Details	Outcome
<b>REVIEW OF DRAFT SCRUTINY WORKPLAN 2021/22</b>	14 June 2021	The draft Scrutiny Workplan for 2021/22 was presented to the Committee	It was agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair would consider all the suggestions and that a final version of the Workplan would be presented at a future meeting.
<b>CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 4, 2020/21</b>	15 July 2021	Members were presented with the Corporate Performance and Progress Report Quarter 4, 2020/21. The report updated Members on the progress in relation to delivery of the Council's Corporate priorities, providing both a set of Corporate Performance Measures alongside key project updates.	Members were pleased that with the performance in the areas of affordable homes and major planning decisions. Concern was raised regarding the Council's performance on fly tipping and requests for information deadlines.
<b>REVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22</b>	2 September 2021	To approve the work programme following the Scrutiny Workshop held in June 2021 and deliberation (of what to include) by the Chair.	The work programme was approved. Members noted the name change from Work Plan to Work Programme.
<b>HOUSING VOIDS MANAGEMENT AND TEMPORARY ACCOMODATION UPDATE</b>	2 September 2021	The Committee received a report updating them on the actions taken since the Cabinet accepted the Committee's recommendations.	The Committee thanked the Director for Housing and Communities and asked that their thanks are passed on to the teams and contractors who had worked on this issue.
<b>MELTON COMMUNITY LOTTERY UPDATE</b>	5 October 2021	Members received a report updating them on the actions taken since Cabinet considered the Committee's recommendations on 18 March 2020.	Members made a few comments on the growth of the scheme, publicity and cost and those comments were presented to Cabinet on 23 November 2021.

<b>LEICESTERSHIRE WASTE STRATEGY</b>	5 October 2021	The report asked for Members to provide feedback on the draft Leicestershire Waste Strategy. The strategy set out the expected changes to legislation as part of the Environment Bill (2021) which was expected to have significant impact upon the Council's waste collection and disposal arrangements.	Members provided feedback on food waste proposals, the use of anaerobic digesters and how waste is disposed of. Concern was expressed about the impact the bill would have on the Council's budget. The comments were presented to Cabinet on 23 November 2021.
<b>ANNUAL EQUALITIES REPORT</b>	9 November 2021	Scrutiny was asked to provide feedback on the Annual Equalities Report.	Members welcomed the report and it was confirmed that the Council are undertaking equality impact assessments.
<b>GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2022/23 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023/24 TO 2025/26</b>	25 January 2022	The Committee was asked to provide feedback to Cabinet on the draft revenue budget and MTFs.  Note: All members were invited to contribute.	The Committee provided feedback in relation to special expenses areas and staff vacancy savings. Members questioned what activities would be funded by the Regeneration and Innovation Reserve and asked for the increase in Council Tax to be justified. The comments were presented to Cabinet on 9 February 2022.
<b>CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021-2026 – GENERAL FUND AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2022/23</b>	25 January 2022	The Capital Programme was presented to Members for comments and feedback.  Note: All members were invited to contribute.	Scrutiny provided feedback in relation to a new cemetery, Lifeline, assets and the Cattle Market. A request was made for a viability study into constructing a crematorium. Comments were presented to Cabinet on 9 February 2022.

<b>REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/23 – HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)</b>	25 January 2022	Members were asked to provide feedback to Cabinet on the HRA budget and rent proposals.  Note: All members were invited to contribute.	The Committee highlighted that there has been an underspend in each of the last six years in respect of capital spending. The comments were presented to Cabinet on 9 February 2022.
<b>UPDATE ON ALLOTMENTS</b>	22 February 2022	An update on the allotment service was presented to Members.	Members provided feedback in the form of a report to Cabinet on 9 March 2022. Comments consisted of maintenance costs, vandalism, raised beds, length of tenancies, the cost of the service to the council when overheads were taken into account and tenant debt.
<b>HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 30 YEAR BUSINESS PLAN</b>	5 April 2022	The Committee is to receive the Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan.	-
<b>HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</b>	5 April 2022	Members are to receive the Housing Development Strategy.	-
<b>SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT</b>	5 April 2022	To note the Scrutiny Annual Report and recommend for consideration and noting by Council.	-

## Portfolio Holder Presentations/Questions

During the municipal year, Scrutiny have received Portfolio Holder presentations from the following: the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources, Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity (Deputy Leader), Portfolio Holder for Council Homes and Landlord Services and the Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement. A further presentation will be received from the Portfolio Holder for People and Communities (Deputy Leader) at April's Committee meeting.

The **Leader of the Council** provided a presentation at the meeting held on 14 June 2021. The presentation updated Members on the progress of work, policies and strategies under the following themes:

- Review of 2020/21
- Helping People
- Shaping Places

- Great Council
- The coming year

The Leader also provided answers to questions provided by Members of the Committee in advance of the meeting, as well answering questions asked at the meeting.

The **Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources** provided a presentation at the meeting held on 15 July 2021. The presentation set out Corporate Strategy and Priority updates as well as general portfolio updates on the following areas:

- Human Resources
- Health and Safety
- Debt Management
- Procurement
- LGA Review
- Democratic Services
- Constitution Review Working Group
- Elections
- Legal Services
- GDPR/Information Governance
- Complaints
- Security and Counter Terrorism

The Portfolio Holder also provided answers to questions provided by Members of the Committee in advance of the meeting, as well answering questions asked at the meeting.

The **Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity (Deputy Leader)** provided a presentation at the meeting held on 2 September 2021. The presentation set out Corporate Strategy and Priority updates as well as general portfolio updates on the following areas:

- Economic Growth and Inward Investment
- Tourism, events and place promotion
- Town Centre Management and Car Parking
- Capital Regeneration Projects
- Infrastructure investment
- Development of the country park
- Culture and heritage
- Corporate Property Asset Management
- Housing Strategy
- Planning Policy
- Building Control and Land Charges

The Portfolio Holder also provided answers to questions provided by Members of the Committee in advance of the meeting, as well answering questions asked at the meeting.

The **Portfolio Holder for Council Homes and Landlord Services** provided a presentation at the meeting held on 5 October 2021. The presentation updated Members on the progress of work and covered the following areas:

- Achievements
- Challenges



- Planned Maintenance
- Responsive Repairs
- New Build Development
- Next Steps

The Portfolio Holder also provided answers to questions provided by Members of the Committee in advance of the meeting, as well answering questions asked at the meeting.

The **Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement** provided a presentation at the meeting held on 9 November 2021. The presentation set out Corporate Strategy and Priority updates as well as general portfolio updates on the following areas:

- Environment and Waste
- LGA Review
- AV System
- Constitutional Review Working Group
- Disabled Facilities Grants and Lightbulb Project
- Future Cemetery Provision
- Equalities
- Community Grants
- Community Lottery

The Portfolio Holder also provided answers to questions provided by Members of the Committee in advance of the meeting, as well answering questions asked at the meeting.

Scrutiny Committee have found these Portfolio Holder presentations useful and welcomed the opportunity to be provided with details regarding emerging issues and projects on the horizon as well as the opportunity to ask questions of the Portfolio Holder.

Scrutiny Committee have also been grateful for the attendance by Portfolio Holders at the Committee in order to present reports and receive feedback and questions from members on specific areas of the Council's business.

## Chairman's Review of Topics

Scrutiny Committee has considered a number of topics which are summarised above and has continued to deliver the Scrutiny agenda as set out in the Annual Work Programme at the start of the Municipal Year.

The Committee has provided comment and feedback, as consultees, to Cabinet and Senior Officers. Scrutiny has provided input on several areas of policy development including the Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan, Leicestershire Waste Strategy, Town Centre Masterplan and the Housing Development Strategy.

Scrutiny Members have also been extremely busy completing the Response and Recovery Task and Finish Groups, collating and evaluating evidence, the outcomes of which were presented to the Scrutiny Committee during the Municipal Year with recommendations referred to and accepted by Cabinet.

At the January 2022 meeting all members (not just Scrutiny Committee Members) were invited to take part in feedback on the Budget setting process. In February 2022, the Scrutiny Committee received a report on the allotment service, this gave Members the opportunity to scrutinise a Council service which is often overlooked, providing comments which were presented to Cabinet at their meeting in March 2022.

## Task and Finish Groups and Reviews

### Response and Recovery Task and Finish Group (Place)

The final report was presented to the Scrutiny Committee at the meeting held on 14 June 2021. The lead Member, Councillor Bindloss, outlined to Members the methodology used, the evidence received, conclusions made and recommendations proposed.

The following conclusions were made:

- There had been a decline in Melton's shopping lifestyle and leisure experience.
- More resources were required in order to focus on project development in order to support place recovery and growth.
- The Discover Melton website had a good framework but needed to be kept relevant and current.
- The town centre required new life blood in the form of smaller retail outlets that are reactive to the needs of shoppers
- The evening economy experience for families required development. Entertainment needs to be more than just bars and restaurants as these are not broad and diverse enough to engage the wider community.
- The national economy was already seeing a slowdown before Covid-19, reflecting Brexit uncertainty and world trade tensions and high street retail was already under pressure with changing consumer shopping habits reducing footfall in many town centres and increasing online trade. The impact of non-essential retail businesses being forced to close since 23 March 2020 has had a significant impact on vacancy rates and footfall in Melton Town Centre.

The task and finish group made the following recommendations:

- 1) To increase resources for project development.
- 2) To collaborate with key stakeholders to increase awareness of the town's waterways, which are currently under used and encouraging their use for leisure and fitness purposes by highlighting the range of potential and current activities that are available.
- 3) To include the following key priorities in the formation of the Melton Town Centre Vision:
  - Develop a greater range of activities for a diverse and captivating Melton town evening economy.
  - Focus on attracting smaller retail outlets that are reactive to the needs of the shoppers.
  - Improve and increase signage and information.
  - Development of online portal/improved website to promote and showcase Melton's food, drink and historical heritage.
- 4) Any review of fees paid by taxi operators or taxi fares should have a specific focus on the impact of Covid-19 to ensure that this sector is provided with support to recover from the impacts of the pandemic.
- 5) With any further tranches of funding, the Council should undertake additional forms of communication to promote the message and increase uptake e.g. drop in sessions, radio interviews or poster campaigns.

The Committee approved the final report and recommended that it is presented to Cabinet. The report was presented to the Cabinet at their meeting on 21 July 2021, where they accepted the recommendations of the task and finish group.

## Response and Recovery Task and Finish Group (People)

The final report was presented to the Scrutiny Committee at the meeting held on 5 October 2021. The lead Member, Councillor Pat Cumbers, summarised the methodology used, the evidence received, conclusions made and recommendations proposed.

The following conclusions were made:

- The pandemic had led to an increase in youth unemployment which has had knock on repercussions in respect to debt issues. As younger people are more likely than older people to have issues with debt.
- The pandemic has given people the chance to reflect on environment around them and how to be greener. The Prime Minister has often stated that the country needs to “build back greener”.
- Homelessness has been an issue for the Council for a considerable number of years, however the pandemic has exacerbated this issue. Homelessness has a devastating impact upon the individuals and families experiencing it and the Council suffers financially as well.
- The pandemic has seen a fall in formal volunteers. Whilst this has been coupled with a rise in informal volunteers, what this does mean is that fewer volunteers have had background checks.
- It is unclear how much digital exclusion exists in Melton Borough, however we know digital exclusion exists. This makes it difficult for those excluded digitally to access services, particularly if they are primarily online services.
- The survey suggests that members of the BAME community have experienced discrimination from the Council or one of its partners. In addition, evidence suggests that members of the BAME community have been disadvantaged as a result of the pandemic.
- The number of respondents to the survey was lower than anticipated, therefore the data is not as rich as it could be.
- Residents have benefited from the Helping People Partnership Board but it has, at times, acted like a ‘shadow Council’ with little oversight from non-Executive Members. There is also a lack of knowledge and understanding at what the partnership actually does.

The task and finish group made the following recommendations:

- 1) That assurance is given to Scrutiny that the Council is being proactive in identifying and putting measures in place to prevent people from becoming homeless, with a particular emphasis on encouraging people to seek housing advice and support prior to them becoming homeless.

This should take the following form:

- a) A proactive communications approach including a poster campaign (public facing communications that emphasises the need for people to contact the Council for advice and support as soon as possible and not when they have already become homeless).
- b) A proactive communications approach that encourages landlords to contact the Council before they serve a notice, to see if we can work together to address any issues and stabilise the tenancy.
- c) A proactive approach to engaging with landlords in the Borough (for example, through a landlords’ forum).
- d) Readily available information and guidance about how the Council can help and prevent homelessness from occurring to begin with (for example, negotiating with landlords,

addressing underlying issues that have led to the tenancy being at risk, implementation of support to stabilise the tenancy).

- e) An update report to the Scrutiny Committee in 12 months' time to demonstrate how successful the Council has been in preventing households from becoming homeless, and any lessons learned.
- 2) As soon as practicable, the Council and appropriate partners should host a Jobs Fair for people aged between 16 and 24. It is recommended that the jobs fair should include businesses, the DWP, Brooksby-Melton College, advice services and sign-posting.
- 3) Engagement with the lead officer for communications in respect to future Scrutiny studies where consultation and engagement may be required is crucial to ensure there is clarity on expectations, timescales and visibility/reach of consultation exercise.
- 4) We recommend that the Council host a Volunteer Fair to be held at Parkside with as much publicity as possible to encourage as many charitable companies, voluntary organisations and possible volunteers to attend.
- 5) The Council should review its existing processes to ensure that the digitally excluded have the same access to services as digitally savvy residents. In addition, the Council should work with partners (e.g. Age UK) to ensure that the digitally excluded have every opportunity to become digitally educated if they so choose. This could also be by increasing the help which the Council already provides in the computer suite at Phoenix House so that all residents, who wish, can obtain the necessary skills to access the internet. In addition, the Council should consider using the Government's Kick Start scheme, to employ a 16 to 24 year-old on Universal Credit or at risk of long-term unemployment, to help residents develop their digital knowledge (Age UK has a Digital Buddy training video which provides guidance).
- 6) The Council should review existing processes for monitoring its treatment of BAME residents and ensuring that BAME residents are treated fairly. This should include looking to make improvements where required.
- 7) A refresh of the Helping People Partnership:
  - a) To ensure that the Helping People Partnership Board is representative of relevant partners who can deliver an effective and collaborative approach to health and wellbeing in Melton.
  - b) To ensure that the Helping People Partnership Board incorporates Covid recovery/insights, needs and trends as a standing agenda item to enable collective understanding and action planning, relevant to the remit of the partnership.
  - c) To ensure that the outcomes of the partnership are made available to scrutiny members with an update report in six months.

The Committee approved the final report and recommended that it is presented to Cabinet. The report was presented to the Cabinet at their meeting on 13 October 2021, where they accepted the recommendations of the task and finish group.

### Lake Terrace – Scrutiny Chairman's Review

Councillor Pat Cumbers presented her report and findings to the Scrutiny Committee on 14 June 2021 and then to the Cabinet on 21 July 2021. The report was in relation to allegations made by Leicestershire County Council (LCC) in February 2021, who criticised the conduct and competence of Melton Borough Council (MBC) Senior Officers and Members in relation to land disposal at Lake Terrace.

The Scrutiny Chairman, Councillor Pat Cumbers, and Vice-Chair, Councillor Rob Bindloss, undertook a thorough review of the whole process, gathering information regarding land registry, land searches, planning, land ownership and any other matter related to this windfall site and reviewing the comments made at the LCC Cabinet meeting on 5 February 2021.

The detailed investigation confirmed that throughout the process, MBC had acted professionally, in accordance with the law, and with extreme care. No evidence could be found to support the allegations reported to the Scrutiny Committee on 11 February.

The review has shown that MBC officers have served the Council professionally, diligently and with the best interests of Melton and our Council at heart.

MBC considers itself a reliable and honest partner to many organisations including LCC, such effective partnership working is essential to achieve positive outcomes for our community that we are all here to serve and support.

When presented with the report at Cabinet the Leader of the Council, Councillor Joe Orson, stated:

*“This item relates to a review which the Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny undertook into the decision taken by Cabinet in January, regarding a proposed disposal of land. The summary of this review was discussed at the recent Scrutiny meeting and the notes of this discussion have been shared with Cabinet as part of the agenda. I am very grateful for the extensive work which the Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny have undertaken in relation to this issue and it is both pleasing and reassuring that the efforts and actions of officers and the Cabinet have been fully vindicated through the work that has been done. Thank you.”*

### Melton Mowbray Business Improvement District

On 22 December 2020 following feedback from BID levy payers and receivers of BID services, the Scrutiny Committee established a Task and Finish Group which would review the services provided by the BID, its current governance and accountability arrangements and plans for future delivery. It was agreed on 5 January 2021 that a review would be undertaken by the Chairman, Councillor Pat Cumbers, Councillor Browne and Councillor Child. When Councillor Browne was appointed to the Cabinet in May 2021, he was no longer part of the Scrutiny Committee or the review.

On 10 February 2021, the Task and Finish Group’s scoping document was finalised. With the purpose identified as follows: to identify the preferred standards of Governance for UK BID companies to enable the Council to formulate a response to the consultation on the Melton Mowbray BID Business Plan and make recommendations in relation to the BID renewal proposals before the renewal Ballot in 2021.

The task and finish group identified the following issues:

- Past relationship between the Council and the BID.
- Openness and transparency of information.
- Ability to fulfil ambitions for Melton Mowbray.

The following recommendations were made:

- 1) That the Council undertake greater collaboration with the BID to consider ways that both organisations could take some joint responsibility for shared priorities in relation to town centre businesses. This should include agreeing to an approach to identify realistic and positive expectations and aspirations for the relationship between the Council and the BID.
- 2) That consideration is given to enlarging the defined BID area and then actively seeking a wider representation from local businesses on the Board.
- 3) That the BID gives consideration to re-establishing a website.

At the meeting held on 15 July 2021, the Committee approved the final report and recommended that it is presented to Cabinet and that the recommendations are submitted to the BID, following consideration by Cabinet. The report was presented to the Cabinet at their meeting on 21 July 2021, where they endorsed the recommendations of the task and finish group. The final report was formally dispatched to the BID, by the Scrutiny Chairman, on 1 August 2021.

## Workshops

### Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

At the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9 November 2021, Members agreed that a workshop should be held on the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. The workshop took place on 7 December 2021 and the following Members participated: Councillors Child, Chandler, Douglas, Evans, Posnett and Wilkinson. The purpose of the workshop is to allow Scrutiny Members to identify and prioritise the key issues in relation to the Council's housing stock.

At the workshop Members participated in two interactive sessions. During the first session, Members identified three positive aspects of the housing stock and scored each issue in terms of importance. Members decided that investment in the housing stock to be the most important issue.

The second interactive session, had Members identify three negative aspects of the housing stock and service and rank them in terms of importance. Members decided that communications, investment, maintenance and stock pipeline were all equally important and issues that the Council had not quite got right. The workshop and interactive sessions gave Officers a steer in the development of the business plan.

A second workshop on this topic was held on 15 March 2022 and the following Members participated: Councillors Child, Chandler and Posnett.

### Budget Scrutiny

It was recognised by Scrutiny Members that Budget Scrutiny was an area of scrutiny which could be done more effectively. The Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer researched how budget scrutiny is carried out at other Local Authorities and what practices are recommended by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (formerly the Centre for Public Scrutiny) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. In reviewing the evidence, three options were identified and the workshop was chosen as the option that would potentially have greatest impact.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed at their meeting on 9 November 2021 that a workshop on budget scrutiny should take place on 14 December 2021, with the purpose of providing comments and feedback to be considered during the finalisation of the budget. The following Members participated Councillors Child, Chandler, Douglas, Evans, Holmes and Smith. Between 9 November 2021 and 14 December 2021, Councillor Smith agreed to accept the position of Cabinet Support Member and therefore decided to withdraw from participating prior to the workshop.

At the workshop Members raised comments in relation to the following topics: Growth Bids, savings options under consideration, assets, services, discounted savings and the capital programme. All comments were taken away and considered prior to the budget being presented to the Committee in January 2022.

### Town Centre Masterplan

The Scrutiny Chair received a request from the Director for Growth and Regeneration for Scrutiny to assist with the development of a Town Centre Masterplan. It was agreed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 22 February 2022 that a workshop on the topic would take place following the meeting. The following Members participated: Councillors Chandler, Douglas, Evans, Glancy, Holmes, Posnett and Wilkinson.



At the workshop, Members discussed the opportunities for the improvement of Melton Mowbray town centre and debated what options and ideas should be included within the masterplan. The discussion Members had at the workshop gave Officers direction on what ideas they should be focussing on and developing.

### [Asset Optimisation and Development Workshop](#)

The Scrutiny Committee agreed to add the topic to the work programme at the meeting in December 2020. A workshop was held on 23 March 2022 and the following Members participated, Councillors: Child, Chandler, Evans, Holmes and Posnett. A discussion about the Council's general assets took place with Members providing comments, feedback and directional steer. It was agreed that Officers would prepare a series of options for Members to consider at a future workshop.

## Scrutiny Reports to Cabinet

In accordance with the Scrutiny Procedures Rules, the Scrutiny Committee may report to Cabinet under Item 4 of the Cabinet Agenda – Matters Referred from Scrutiny Committee in Accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

The Chairman of Scrutiny has formally reported to Cabinet on behalf of the Committee on the following items:

- ✓ Lake Terrace – 21 July 2021
- ✓ Response and Recovery Task and Finish Group (Place) Final Report – 21 July 2021
- ✓ Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Review of the Melton Mowbray Business Improvement District (BID) Final Report – 21 July 2021
- ✓ Response and Recovery Task and Finish Group (People) Final Report – 13 October 2021
- ✓ Melton Community Lottery – 23 November 2021
- ✓ Leicestershire Waste Strategy – 23 November 2021
- ✓ Budget – 9 February 2022
- ✓ Allotment Service – 9 March 2022

## Reporting

The Committee are keen to ensure that the Scrutiny function at Melton Borough Council remains outcomes focused and that following implementation, the impact of its recommendations are monitored and reported back to the Committee and all Members.

Scrutiny have produced three Task and Finish Group reports with recommendations during 2021/22. Although Members did not specifically stipulate that there should be update reports, recommendations are closely monitored and the Scrutiny Committee can request progress reports as required. The Scrutiny Committee have also provided comments and feedback on a number of reports for Cabinet's consideration. Since December 2021, Scrutiny have adopted the workshop approach. Members appreciate this approach because it is an opportunity to assist in the development of policy.

Prior to the Budget Scrutiny meeting, Scrutiny held a workshop on the budget on 14 December 2021, this was an opportunity for Members to feed comments into the budget development process prior to receiving the final draft at the Budget Scrutiny meeting. At the 25 January 2022 Budget Scrutiny meeting, Committee members were joined by other Members to consider a number of reports, to question Portfolio Holders and Chief Officers and to provide feedback to Cabinet on the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy. Scrutiny formally provided their response to the Budget proposals to the Cabinet meeting held on 9 February 2022.

The Scrutiny Committee are committed to reviewing actions in relation to recommendations/feedback provided through meetings and reviews to ensure that the positive impact of the Scrutiny Function can be evidenced.

## Scrutiny Work Programme

Scrutiny Committee reflect on the work programme at each meeting and consider any new items to be added. The work programme is developed by the Chairman and Vice Chair in collaboration with the Committee.

The Scrutiny Committee must agree an Annual Work Programme in accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules and that Work Programme may contain:

- 1) Matters which inform the development of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.
- 2) Matters which inform the development of the Council's approach to matters not forming part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.
- 3) Holding enquiries and investigating the available options for future direction in policy development, matters of public concern and any other issues within their functions.
- 4) Call in of Key Decisions.
- 5) Requests by a member of the Scrutiny Committee.
- 6) Requests from the Council and if it considers appropriate, the Cabinet.

The Chairman has asked members to consider the following when proposing items to add to the work programme:

### **1) Scrutiny Committee Functions & Procedures Rules:**

- Which Corporate Priority the item links to (Priorities attached for ease of reference)
- If the item is of significant community concern
- If the issue is significant to Partners and/or Stakeholders
- What the added value is of doing the work
- What evidence there is to support the work
- If the Scrutiny work can be completed within a proportionate time to the task identified
- If the work is being done somewhere else
- What will be achieved
- If the Council has the resources to carry out the work effectively

### **2) Consider:**

- What?

Be prepared to provide the committee with some background information and scope of the proposed report/review.

- Why?

Be prepared to justify why the item should be considered by Scrutiny, what might be the intended outcome, why is it important in relation to the provision of services/value for money etc...?

- When?

Is the item time sensitive? What is the level of priority?

➤ Outcomes?

What value can Scrutiny add, what are likely to be the measurable outcomes, is the work already being done somewhere else?

It is hoped this guidance will ensure that Scrutiny at Melton Borough Council is outcomes focused and that the value of Scrutiny can be evidenced and results measured.

The Scrutiny Committee held a workshop on 10 June 2021 to discuss the Annual Work Plan (later renamed Work Programme), which was attended by all Officers from the Senior Leadership Team.

- Members were asked in advance of this workshop to provide ideas for inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Plan 2021/22 to the Scrutiny Chairman.
- The Senior Leadership Team also provided a presentation which provided detail of emerging priorities in relation to the Corporate Strategy.
- All ideas put forward were discussed in detail and a shortlist of items was agreed.
- The shortlisted items were plotted on the work plan in consultation with the Scrutiny Chairman and relevant Directors.
- The Work Plan was shared with Cabinet and formally approved by the Committee at their meeting in September 2021.

## Training

All new Members to the Scrutiny Committee receive induction training. Induction training was delivered in June 2021 and January 2022. This included an outline of scrutiny with a focus on key roles; powers and responsibilities; ways of working for effective scrutiny (e.g. work programme, project scopes, critical friend questioning and listening); discussion around challenges; and provision of examples from meeting observation at MBC and other councils.

The Chairman has agreed that more comprehensive training for Scrutiny Members should take place in the Summer of 2023.

## Looking ahead

- **Annual Work Programme 2022/23**

The work programme has been regularly reviewed and discussed throughout 2021/22. A Scrutiny Member Workshop will be arranged in advance of the first meeting of the 2022/23 Municipal Year to establish priorities for the Committee.

- **Increased Media and Consultation with the Public**

The 2021/22 year saw the launch of the Response and Recovery Task and Finish Group (People) Survey in July 2021 accompanied by a Press Release and statement from the Chairman of Scrutiny. Scrutiny engaged the public in the Scrutiny process by seeking views and feedback on current issues in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. The response to the

survey was positive with 159 responses being received. It is hoped that this aspect of Scrutiny will be further developed in 22/23 with the exploration of different media to involve the public to ensure the voice of the community is heard.

- **Scrutiny will engage with more people.**

Opportunities will be explored for other Members (except Members of the Cabinet) who have particular concerns or knowledge to be co-opted to help Scrutiny Members with Scrutiny reviews.

## Further information

If you would like further information about Scrutiny, please use the contact details below:

### **Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer**

Name: Adam Green

Tel: 01664 502319

Email: [agreen@melton.gov.uk](mailto:agreen@melton.gov.uk)

### **Scrutiny Committee Chairman**

Email: [rchild@melton.gov.uk](mailto:rchild@melton.gov.uk)