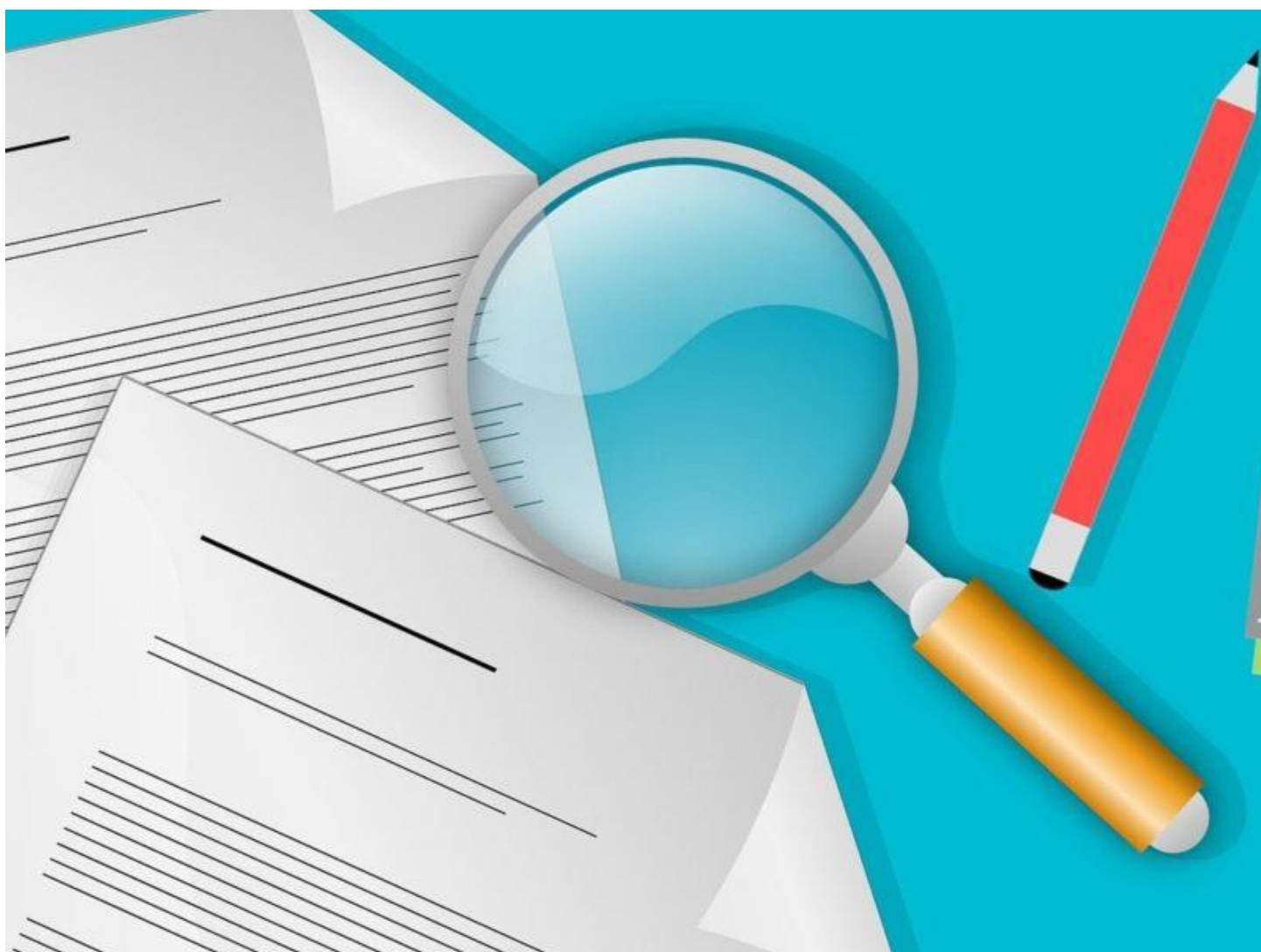


# **Melton Borough Council**

## **Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23**



## Contents

<b>The Chairman of Scrutiny's Review</b> .....	3
Members of the Committee 2022/23.....	3
<b>Scrutiny in Melton - Overview</b> .....	4
<b>Scrutiny Committee (Summary of items considered)</b> .....	5
<b>Portfolio Holder Presentations/Questions</b> .....	10
<b>Workshops</b> .....	12
Police and Crime Commissioner – 20 October 2022 .....	12
Asset Development Programme – 3 November 2022.....	12
Budget Scrutiny – 3 January 2023.....	13
Leisure Procurement Strategy – 5 January 2023 .....	13
Planning Service – 16 February 2023.....	13
Climate Change – 8 March 2023 .....	13
<b>Scrutiny Reports to Cabinet</b> .....	14
Draft Town Centre Vision – 16 June 2022 .....	14
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2022-2052 – 13 July 2022 .....	14
Affordable Housing Development Plan – 13 July 2022.....	15
Draft UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Investment Plan Development – 13 July 2022 .....	15
Consultancy and Agency Use – 12 October 2022 .....	16
Crime and Disorder – 12 October 2022 .....	16
Asset Management Plan (HRA) – 16 November 2022 .....	17
Tourism in the Melton Borough Area – 16 November 2022.....	18
Police and Crime Commissioner Meeting – 16 November 2022 .....	18
Strategic Partnership Business Case – 6 December 2022 .....	18
Damp and Mould – 25 January 2023.....	19
Debt Management Update – 25 January 2023 .....	19
Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy – 25 January 2023 .....	20
Budget Proposals – 8 February 2023 .....	20
Homelessness – 21 June 2023 .....	21
Income Collection and Debt Management, Progress Update – 21 June 2023 .....	22
<b>Scrutiny Work Programme</b> .....	23
<b>Training</b> .....	24
<b>Further information</b> .....	24

## The Chairman of Scrutiny's Review

This report is to inform Council of the work of Scrutiny Committee during 2022/23.

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.

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 equally as busy as the Scrutiny Committee has considered a number of topics which are summarised on pages 5 to 10. Members have also 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, including the budget in January. Scrutiny has also provided input in areas of policy development including the Asset Development Programme and the Leisure Procurement Strategy.

I am 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 2022/23

Councillor Robert Child (Chair)

Councillor Jacob Wilkinson (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Siggy Atherton

Councillor Steve Carter (From October 2022)

Councillor Pru Chandler

Councillor Jeanne Douglas (May 2022 – February 2023)

Councillor Christopher Evans

Councillor Margaret Glancy (May 2022 – October 2022)

Councillor Elaine Holmes

Councillor Simon Lumley (From February 2023)

Councillor Pam Posnett

Councillor Tim Webster

## 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 12 meetings and 6 workshops and provided comments for consideration by Cabinet on 14 occasions during the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

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.

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.

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, as well as scrutinise a number of topics and provide feedback on them, which wouldn't have been possible previously.

## Scrutiny Committee (Summary of items considered)

Topic	Date	Brief Details	Outcome
<b>SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT</b>	25 May 2022	To approve the Scrutiny Annual Report and recommend for consideration by Council.	Members approved the Annual Report and recommended that the report is considered by Council. Council considered the report at the meeting held on 28 July 2022.
<b>DRAFT TOWN CENTRE VISION</b>	6 June 2022	Members were asked to note the Town Centre Vision and provide comments for consideration by the Cabinet and the Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity.	The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 16 June 2022 ( <i>see page 14 for a summary of the comments made</i> ).
<b>HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUSINESS PLAN 2022-2052</b>	14 June 2022	The Committee was asked to review the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and provide comments to Cabinet.	The Chairman presented the Committee's comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 13 July 2022 ( <i>see page 14 for a summary of the comments made</i> ). Cabinet endorsed the Business Plan and recommended that Council approves it. Council approved the business plan at the meeting held on 28 July 2022.
<b>AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-26</b>	14 June 2022	The Affordable Housing Development Plan (AHDP) outlines the criteria for the way new council homes will be delivered and supports the adoption of the HRA Business Plan 2022-2052. Scrutiny were asked to provide comments on the plan.	The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 13 July 2022 ( <i>see page 15 for a summary of the comments made</i> ).

Topic	Date	Brief Details	Outcome
<b>DRAFT UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) INVESTMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT</b>	27 June 2022	The draft UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Investment Plan Development outlines how the Council intends to spend £1.19m of funding that will be released once the Government approves the investment plan. Members were asked to provide comments on the plan.	The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 13 July 2022 <i>(see page 15 for a summary of the comments made)</i> .
<b>CONSULTANCY AND AGENCY USE</b>	25 July 2022	Members requested information on the consultancy and agency use by the Council. The report provided an overview of the Council's approach to resource management including: recruitment; retention; vacancy management and the use of consultancy and agency spend in support of the Council's corporate objectives. The rationale for the use of consultant support or capacity was explained to the Committee.	The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 12 October 2022 <i>(see page 16 for a summary of the comments made)</i> .
<b>CRIME AND DISORDER</b>	27 September 2022	Leicestershire Police's Neighbourhood Police Commander for Melton and Rutland and relevant Council Officers were in attendance to discuss with the Scrutiny Committee the following as part of the Crime and Disorder item: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Policing</li> <li>• Safer Melton Partnership</li> <li>• Rural Policing</li> <li>• CCTV</li> <li>• Anti-social behaviour in housing services</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse</li> </ul>	The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 12 October 2022 <i>(see page 16 for a summary of the comments made)</i> .



Topic	Date	Brief Details	Outcome
<b>ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN – HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)</b>	18 October 2022	The HRA Asset Management Plan 2023-2028 was outlined to Members. It was explained that the purpose of the plan is to provide an action plan based on the recommendations from the HRA Business Plan and to set a five-year capital programme.	The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 16 November 2022 ( <i>see page 17 for a summary of the comments made</i> ).
<b>TOURISM IN THE MELTON BOROUGH AREA</b>	18 October 2022	After expressing concerns regarding the Tourism Service, a report was presented to Members which provided an overview of the Council's Tourism Service. In addition to this a presentation was delivered to the Committee.	The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 16 November 2022 ( <i>see page 18 for a summary of the comments made</i> ).
<b>STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS CASE</b>	22 November 2022	On 12 October 2022, Cabinet confirmed their interest in exploring the establishment of a strategic partnership with Harborough District Council (HDC). The business case setting out the design principles for the partnership, the intended benefits and the initial proposition was presented to the Committee.	The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 6 December 2022 ( <i>see page 18 for a summary of the comments made</i> ). The Cabinet recommended to Council that the business case is endorsed and that the Council is authorised to enter into a strategic partnership with HDC. Council never considered the business case as the Members of HDC rejected the business case and the strategic partnership at their meeting on 19 December 2022.

Topic	Date	Brief Details	Outcome
<b>DEBT MANAGEMENT UPDATE</b>	11 January 2023	<p>Members requested information on the Council's performance in relation to debt collection. The report included details on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance for each area of debt.</li> <li>• Confirmation of the approach to recovery of debt.</li> <li>• Action Plan in respect to Sundry Debtor collection.</li> <li>• Amount of debt written off for the last three years.</li> </ul>	<p>The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 25 January 2023 (<i>see page 19 for a summary of the comments made</i>). The Committee requested that a further report is presented to the Committee in April outlining the progress on sundry debts, housing rent arrears and garage rent arrears.</p>
<b>LEICESTERSHIRE RESOURCES AND WASTE STRATEGY</b>	11 January 2023	<p>The report sets out the final draft of the Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy (LRWS) 2022-2050. The strategy contains a range of pledges, although some of the pledges contained within the strategy can only be implemented if sufficient ongoing additional funding is provided by Government to cover the costs incurred by both the waste disposal and collection authorities respectively.</p>	<p>The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 25 January 2023 (<i>see page 20 for a summary of the comments made</i>). Cabinet considered the LRWS at the meeting held on 25 January 2023. Council considered the LRWS at the meeting held on 23 March 2023.</p>
<b>DAMP AND MOULD</b>	11 January 2023	<p>The details of the Council's approach and response to damp and mould across the rented sector, and as a local authority landlord was presented to the Committee. Also provided was the information and assurance provided to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Regulator of Social Housing.</p>	<p>The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 25 January 2023 (<i>see page 19 for a summary of the comments made</i>).</p>



Topic	Date	Brief Details	Outcome
<b>GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/25 TO 2026/27</b>	24 January 2023	Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the draft report and provide feedback to Cabinet. The draft budget for 2023/24 had been prepared based on the Council's approved Corporate Strategy 2020 to 2024. The budget allows for an increase in council tax of 2.99%.	The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 8 February 2023 ( <i>see page 20 for a summary of the comments made</i> ).
<b>CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022–2027 – GENERAL FUND AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2023/24</b>	24 January 2023	Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the draft report and provide feedback to Cabinet. The report provided information on the forecast outturn position for 2022/23 and sets out the proposed General Fund Programme for 2022-27.	The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 8 February 2023 ( <i>see page 20 for a summary of the comments made</i> ).
<b>REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2023/24 – HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)</b>	24 January 2023	Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the draft report and provide feedback to Cabinet. The report updated Members on the financial position of the HRA and proposed that rents of Council dwellings increased by 7.21%. The report also proposed that the working balance for 2023/24 is set at £1m.	The Committee noted the report and the Chairman presented Members' comments to Cabinet at the meeting held on 8 February 2023 ( <i>see page 20 for a summary of the comments made</i> ).
<b>HOMELESSNESS</b>	14 March 2023	Following a request from Members, a report on homelessness was presented. The report provides an update on this area of the Council's work.	The Committee noted the report and a feedback report containing Members' comments was presented to Cabinet at the meeting held on 21 June 2023. ( <i>see page 21 for a summary of the comments made</i> ).

Topic	Date	Brief Details	Outcome
<b>INCOME COLLECTION AND DEBT MANAGEMENT – PROGRESS UPDATE</b>	18 April 2023	The Committee is to receive a progress report on sundry debts, housing rent arrears and garage rent arrears.	The Committee noted the report and a feedback report containing Members' comments was presented to Cabinet at the meeting held on 21 June 2023. <i>(see page 22 for a summary of the comments made)</i> .
<b>SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT</b>	18 April 2023	To note the Scrutiny Annual Report and recommend for consideration and noting by Council.	The Committee noted the report and recommended that the report is presented to Council at the meeting scheduled for 27 July 2023.

## Portfolio Holder Presentations/Questions

Scrutiny received a Portfolio Holder presentation from the Portfolio Holder for People and Communities (Deputy Leader) on 25 May 2022 and will receive a presentation from the Leader of the Council at the meeting scheduled for 18 April 2023.

The **Portfolio Holder for People and Communities (Deputy Leader)** provided a presentation at the meeting held on 25 May 2022. The presentation set out Corporate Strategy and Priority updates as well as general portfolio updates on the following areas:

- Safer Communities: Community Safety, Community Cohesion and Priority Neighbourhoods
- Supporting Vulnerable People and Safeguarding: Integrated People Offer
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Inclusive Growth: Tackling Deprivation and Social Inequality
- Wellbeing, Physical Activity and Leisure Centre Contract Management

The Portfolio Holder also provided answers to questions asked at the meeting.

The **Leader of the Council** provided his annual update at the meeting held on 18 April 2023. The Leader outlined the following key points:

- The Council had been nominated as the most improved Council at the LGC Awards and is the only district council that has been nominated in that category.
- The Leader thanked the Officers and Leicestershire County Council for the smooth implementation of the Homes for Ukraine scheme.
- The Council were the first district in Leicestershire to introduce measures to alleviate the cost of living for residents.
- The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services has effectively used his expertise when assisting homelessness prevention.

- The Council had been involved in successful high profile prosecutions including Krispy Kreme and animal welfare.
- Eight houses in Old Dalby have been purchased for social housing provision. They are currently being built and six will be built with enhance environmental measures.
- It was recognised that the northern and eastern section of the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road (MMDR) is now proceeding and the Council has supported the construction of the southern section. The application for the southern section is expected in the autumn. The Leader noted that if the MMDR doesn't proceed then the local plan would have to be revisited as targets would not be met.
- The staff survey has shown that there is high positive satisfaction amongst staff which is positive as high satisfaction is important when wanting to retain staff.
- The Leader noted that with inflation running at 10%, this devalues the funding that has been received as a part of the Levelling Up Fund and the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund, therefore it is important that the funds are spent 'on time' in order to receive maximum value.
- The Leader thanked all Members and Officers of the Council for all their hard work and contributions over the past four years.

The Leader also provided answers to questions asked at the meeting.

After reviewing the volume and range of items on the Work Programme, the Scrutiny Committee decided that, in future, only the Leader will be invited to give an annual presentation. It was agreed that the Committee's efforts would be better focused on scrutinising specific topics in greater depth, as opposed to receive an overview of a Portfolio Holder's area.

Scrutiny Committee have been grateful for the past attendance by Portfolio Holders at the Committee for their annual presentations and will continue welcome Portfolio Holders to present reports and receive feedback and questions from members on specific areas of the Council's business.

## Workshops

### Police and Crime Commissioner – 20 October 2022

The Scrutiny Committee met with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on 20 October 2022. In attendance were Councillors Child, Atherton, Carter, Chandler, Douglas, Evans, Posnett and Wilkinson. The Portfolio Holder People and Communities (Deputy Leader) was invited to attend. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the PCC's work and to answer questions Members' had in relation to Leicestershire Police's coverage within the Borough. The following points were raised and subsequently outlined to the Cabinet in a feedback report:

- The initiative that Leicestershire Police would attend every property after a burglary had taken place was welcomed.
- It was noted that the PCC recognised the link between drugs and anti-social behaviour and Members welcomed efforts by the Police to restrict the supply of drugs.
- Members welcomed efforts to educate young people on the effects of drugs.
- Following a query regarding a particular drugs case, the PCC stated that he couldn't comment on individual cases but did state that as the Crown Prosecution Service evidence criteria is more stringent, then the Police would have to gather more evidence before action is taken.
- It was noted that some Police Officers are able to work from home by clocking on at home and heading straight to their beat, especially if the beat is closer to home than to headquarters. Also, Officers are allocated time to complete paperwork and office-based tasks and are allowed to do this from home.
- Concern was expressed in regard to Police Officers carrying warrant cards whilst off duty.
- Regarding a comment made about the Insulate Britain and Just Stop Oil activists, the PCC informed Members that Police Officers must act within the law and that is why removing such protests can take a while.
- The Police's Hate Crime Campaign was highlighted by Members, particularly the criticism the force received as a result of it.

### Asset Development Programme – 3 November 2022

A workshop on the Asset Development Programme was held on 3 November 2022. In attendance were Councillors Child, Chandler, Evans and Posnett. The Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity was invited to attend. The purpose of the workshop was to review the issues and opportunities for the Council in respect to the management and development of its assets.

Members discussed the options for the Council-owned section of the Cattle Market North, Phoenix House and Parkside. Members were concerned about the team's capacity to carry out the projects at the same time but welcomed the progress that had been made.

In relation to Parkside, Members were positive regarding the proposed hotel next to the railway station but reminded Officers to consider parking capacity and to keep all Members informed as the proposal is developed.

### Budget Scrutiny – 3 January 2023

The budget scrutiny workshop was held on 3 January 2023. In attendance were Councillors Child, Atherton, Chandler, Douglas, Evans, Holmes and Wilkinson. The purpose of the workshop was to scrutinise the draft budget and provide feedback.

Members were informed that the figures were unlikely to change between the workshop and the publication of the draft budget ahead of the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 24 January 2023.

After some robust challenge, Officers reassured Members that budget holders are challenged and required to justify spending at several stages to ensure the spending is necessary.

### Leisure Procurement Strategy – 5 January 2023

The workshop on the leisure procurement strategy was held on 5 January 2023. In attendance were Councillors Child, Atherton, Chandler, Douglas, Evans, Wilkinson and Webster. The Portfolio Holder of People and Communities (Deputy Leader) and the Portfolio for Growth and Prosperity were also invited to attend.

The purpose of the workshop was to run through the strategy and provide comments and feedback on the following: purpose of the service; core leisure facilities; affordability and shadow bid; contract length; utilities risk; maintenance risk; investment and variant bids; procurement process; quality/social value evaluation; profit or income share and pandemic clause.

### Planning Service – 16 February 2023

A workshop on the Planning Service was held on 16 February 2023. In attendance were Councillors Child, Atherton, Carter, Chandler, Douglas, Evans, Holmes and Posnett. The Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity was also invited to attend.

The purpose of the workshop is to review the Planning Service to ensure the service provided needs the needs of customers and stakeholders. Officers from the Planning Service were in attendance to outline the service, its purpose and its current performance. Members then had an opportunity to question Officers, provide comments and suggest improvements.

### Climate Change – 8 March 2023

The workshop on Climate Change was held on 8 March 2023. In attendance were Councillors Child, Atherton, Carter, Chandler, Evans, Holmes, Lumley, Posnett and Wilkinson. The Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement was also invited to attend.

The purpose of the workshop was to give Members an opportunity to provide feedback on the work carried out on the baseline study and the climate change strategy. Members welcomed the work that had been carried out and then questioned Officers, provided comments and made suggestions.

## 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:

### Draft Town Centre Vision – 16 June 2022

The Draft Town Centre Vision was presented to the Scrutiny Committee on 6 June 2022. The Chairman stated that Members were not initially aware that the vision was a background document until it was confirmed later in the meeting. Other points raised were as follows:

- Concerns were raised over the use of consultants.
- Questioned the funding source for the projects.
- Expressed disappointment that the Council had not successfully engaged with the landlords of the Bell Centre before adding the property into the vision.
- Mentioned that youth services should figure more prominently.
- Vision is good, however it needs to be more focused.
- Good to see Pera included.
- Concerned that car parking was mentioned as there isn't a strategy for car parking.
- Concern that there would be more investment for the cattle market and thereby directing resources away from the town centre.
- Even though Melton Mowbray is the rural capital of food, the food offer was limited.
- The language of the document was concerning, especially the reference to the economy being low wage. Was seen as 'talking down' the town and borough.
- The short timeframe was questioned.

In receiving the feedback, the Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity welcomed the points raised and added that they would add value to the final document. The Chairman commented that the reference to the economy being low wage was factual information when reviewing the statistics. The point was also made that the Bell Centre had been added to the vision prior to consultation as it formed part of the strategy. The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2022-2052 – 13 July 2022

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2022-2052 was presented to the Scrutiny Committee on 14 June 2022. This was after two workshops on the topic were held, with one workshop taking place on 7 December 2021 and the other taking place on 15 March 2022. The following points were outlined to the Cabinet by the Scrutiny Chairman:

- The question was raised as to why the Asset Management Plan wasn't completed prior to the business plan, as it was felt that a better business plan would have been produced if all the assets were known.
- The purpose of HouseMark was queried.
- Concern was raised in regard to registered providers allocating affordable homes to out of area residents.
- Concern was raised regarding an overreliance on consultants to support Council work.



- As 20% of the housing stock hadn't been surveyed, the Council does not know the condition of 20% of the housing stock.
- It noted that the capital programme was underspent by 50% in 2021/22.
- Consideration should be given to what replaces demolished garages.
- It was noted that the sensitivity analysis showed some wide ranging changes in the finances and questions were raised on how the Council would cope if, for example, the government changed its policy on rent increases.

In receiving the feedback, the Leader thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their work, particularly the two workshops they have held on the topic. The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### [Affordable Housing Development Plan – 13 July 2022](#)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the Affordable Housing Development Plan at the meeting held on 14 June 2022. The following points were outlined to the Cabinet by the Scrutiny Chairman:

- The query was raised on whether the borrowing for the Development Plan was affordable.
- The comment was made on how the Council is going to prevent the investment from being sold under the right to buy scheme.
- Concern was raised that the targets weren't ambitious and represented a net loss of 5 properties per year.
- Concern was raised that the Council are not replacing right to buy sales like for like.
- A comment was made that discussions on developing affordable housing had been continuing for a number of years, however little progress had been made.
- The cautious approach as advocated by the Portfolio Holder was welcomed, as the priority is to have enough resources to look after tenants.
- The comment was made that the Council should ensure that develops build the affordable housing they agreed to when their applications were granted.

In receiving the feedback, the Leader thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their work and commented that a shortage of affordable homes has been an issue in Melton for some time. The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### [Draft UK Shared Prosperity Fund \(UKSPF\) Investment Plan Development – 13 July 2022](#)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the Draft UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan Development at the meeting held on 27 June 2022. The following points were outlined to the Cabinet by the Scrutiny Chairman:

- Concerns were raised over the state of businesses in the Borough and how the UKSPF is going to assist.
- Members raised their concerns over the Bell Centre project being included without the Council knowing whether the current owner is a willing partner.
- The Committee was supportive of the inclusion of a programme of health checks for farmers based at the cattle market.
- It was noted that projects must be prioritised as the value of the projects exceeds the amount of funding the Council is expected to receive.
- Concern was raised that three of the four projects under the People and Skills theme are being led by Leicester City Council.

- The comment was made that the Council would have to carry out sufficient due diligence to ensure the suitability of the partner.
- Funding should be directed towards the rural economy and that bonds need building with the parish councils.
- Investment in existing projects that are working and sustainable should be undertaken in order to make them more successful.
- The Council should direct funding towards a smaller number of projects and work at making those successful.
- The Council should reflect on how other local authorities are informing their residents on what they are doing and learn lessons.
- A Member commented that the bid must include support for increased cost of living, tourism and the visitor economy and rural isolation/access to services/connectivity.

In receiving the feedback, the Leader acknowledged the work of the Scrutiny Committee on the UKSPF Investment Plan Development. The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### Consultancy and Agency Use – 12 October 2022

The Scrutiny Committee considered the Consultancy and Agency Use report at the meeting held on 25 July 2022. The following points were outlined to the Cabinet by the Scrutiny Chairman:

- A query was raised on whether the Council had hired a consultant/expertise to produce a report and/or recommendations in which the Council had not acted upon.
- In following the first point, the question was asked what happens to the information that isn't used.
- Concern was raised that the consultant who delivered the Health and Leisure Park presentation in January 2022 does not understand the needs or market of Melton.
- The spending figures presented was questioned and it subsequently transpired that the figures did not include spending incurred during this financial year.
- A comment was made whether the Council required additional in-house capacity as opposed to consultants.
- A query was raised as to whether the Council are receiving value for money in relation to consultancy fees spent on tourism.

In receiving the feedback, the Leader thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their hard work and diligence. In addressing the need for additional in-house support, the Leader commented that as Melton Borough Council is the 4th smallest council in the country and the Council's spending power since 2010 is 42% smaller, then this does make it difficult to employ experts and therefore consultants will continue to be used. The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### Crime and Disorder – 12 October 2022

The Scrutiny Committee considered the Crime and Disorder Annual Update at the meeting held on 27 September 2022. The following points were outlined to the Cabinet by the Scrutiny Chairman:

- A comment was made that most of the discussion was focussed on the town of Melton Mowbray and that it is important not to forget that half of the Borough's population lives in the villages.

- Concern was raised that the lack of youth services within the villages has led to an increase in petty vandalism.
- It was noted that sometimes petty thefts are unreported and this is why it may seem like there is an increase in petty crime when the statistics do not confirm it. It was reiterated that it is important that people do report when crimes are committed.
- Concern was raised over the coverage of the police in rural areas particularly in response to crime.
- Gratitude for the work of the Police was expressed.
- The comment was made that early intervention is important when addressing crime and disorder issues with young people.
- Reassurance was sought that sufficient support is provided to people suffering from anti-social behaviour.
- A comment was made that the presence of the police at the hunt was excessive.
- It was thought that the Action for Melton Youth should be engaging with other youth groups.
- Concern was raised on how the Council would practically support prison leavers.
- Concern was raised that some victims are not receiving timely updates on what is happening with their cases and this has left them feeling that no one cares.

In receiving the feedback, the Portfolio Holder for People and Communities (Deputy Leader) thanked Members for the positive meeting and highlighted the importance of reporting any form of anti-social behaviour. It was noted that the Scrutiny Committee would meet with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Leader stated that he is looking forward to receiving the feedback from that meeting. The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### [Asset Management Plan \(HRA\) – 16 November 2022](#)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the Asset Management Plan (HRA) report at the meeting held on 16 November 2022. After considering the report, the Committee decided to make the following recommendation to Cabinet:

- The Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that the Council:
  - 1) Works within the remit presented;
  - 2) Prioritises reducing tenants' bills through the installation of energy saving measures;
  - 3) Removes all remaining storage heaters from Council-owned properties as soon as possible, and;
  - 4) Continues to prioritise the insulation of properties.

The following points were outlined to the Cabinet by the feedback report:

- Concern was expressed that the stock condition survey has shown that 20% of the Council's housing stock is not up to the decent homes standard.
- The comment was made that tenants who look after their property could be penalised as improvements could not be considered necessary when due.
- Concern was expressed at the number of properties with storage heaters, especially because they are known to be inefficient and expensive to run.
- A comment was made that the Council should ensure that they have sufficient number of properties required for the expected and significant increase in the elderly population.
- The plan is good and well written but more prioritisation is required.
- It noted that the Council intends to replace all aluminium windows as soon as possible.

- Members were supportive of the Council's plan to install solar panels or an alternative technology which best supports the tenant, where funding permits.
- Whilst Members support the zero-carbon agenda, they agreed that the current priority should be to support initiatives that helps keep tenants' bills as low as possible.

With regards to the recommendation, the Cabinet resolved to accept the recommendation from Scrutiny. In addition, the Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### Tourism in the Melton Borough Area – 16 November 2022

The Scrutiny Committee considered the Tourism in the Melton Borough Area report at the meeting held on 18 October 2022. The following points were outlined to the Cabinet by the feedback report:

- The hard work and dedication of the team in promoting events and attracting tourists was recognised.
- Concern was raised that once visitors arrived in Melton, there is a lack of information and nowhere for them to go to find out what there is to do and where to go.
- The comment was made that there should be more promotion of Eye Kettleby Lakes.
- Members commented that the Council should promote the town centre more effectively.
- Members expressed a preference for funding to be invested into the town centre, as well as out of town centre locations such as the Stockyard.
- The comment was made that there are not enough food related attractions in the town centre, particularly as the town is known as the 'Rural Capital of Food'.
- The query was made on why churches are not mentioned, particularly as the Borough have some of the best churches in the country.
- Members welcomed the presentation but wanted more information on how the service measures success.
- Concerns over the lack of accommodation within the Borough were mentioned. Members suggested converting Parkside or a section of Parkside into a hotel.
- A Member suggested that leaflets could be sent out to all residents with their Council Tax bills.
- The Committee advised that the town and countryside should be advertised as separate tourism offers. The Borough has a considerable amount of history and not all of it is in the town.
- The comment was made that the service should have a greater presence at future events.

The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### Police and Crime Commissioner Meeting – 16 November 2022

The Scrutiny Committee met with the Police and Crime Commissioner on 20 October 2022. The points outlined on page 11 were presented to the Cabinet via a feedback report. The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### Strategic Partnership Business Case – 6 December 2022

The Scrutiny Committee considered the Strategic Partnership Business Case at the meeting held on 22 November 2022. The following points were outlined to the Cabinet by the Scrutiny Chairman:

- In reviewing the cost apportionment for a shared Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executives, the comment was made that whilst the cost would be shared 50/50 there are other options to base the sharing of costs. As this option would clearly disadvantage MBC, clarity was sought (and received) on why a 50/50 split was being applied.

- Members commented that the business case was too lengthy and repetitive and the suggestion was made that the business case should be slimmed down and focus on the proposition and recommendations which are due to be considered at the Council meeting on 20 December.
- Members commented that the business case lacked the financial detail to support assumptions detailed within the business case that the strategic partnership would save each Council the money through future service collaboration.
- The comment was made that by deleting a director post and sharing Senior Officers, that this may weaken management in these areas and undermine confidence with the danger that the performance of some services may deteriorate.
- Concern was raised regarding termination arrangements, particularly if there is a change in political leadership after the elections in May 2023 and subsequent change in priorities.
- A comment was made that the benefits for Harborough appeared to be greater than the benefits for Melton.
- A Member of the Committee raised a concern about the impact of sharing senior staff at a time of good progress and improvement in performance in Melton, particularly in the Housing Services.
- A concern was raised about how manageable it would be for a shared Chief Executive to manage different priorities across two councils.
- The timescales for considering the strategic partnership was questioned.
- The need to be able to monitor progress of the partnership was noted.
- The Committee raised the need to ensure that Members retain control of the decision-making process.
- Members of the Committee recognised the need for change, with some broadly expressing support for the strategic partnership.

The Cabinet noted the feedback from the Scrutiny Committee.

### Damp and Mould – 25 January 2023

The Scrutiny Committee considered the Damp and Mould report at the meeting held on 11 January 2023. The following points were outlined to the Cabinet by the Scrutiny Chairman:

- The comment was made that the report was well written and structured.
- Concern was raised regarding damp and mould in social housing not owned by the Council.
- It was recognised that there is a particular issue with void properties.
- The response of the service was praised when made aware of a particular case of damp and mould.
- A concern was raised that the damp and mould leaflet had not been circulated to tenants.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their feedback. The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### Debt Management Update – 25 January 2023

The Scrutiny Committee considered the Debt Management Update at the meeting held on 11 January 2023. The following points were outlined to the Cabinet by the Scrutiny Chairman:

- Members welcomed the approach of engaging tenants at an early stage of rent arrears and recognition that external factors affect tenants' ability to pay.

- The comment was made that the letters to inform tenants of rent arrears were previously overly threatening and that a better worded letter may lead to more engagement and willingness to resolve ongoing arrears.
- Concern was raised with the amount of legal work that could be required to process the number of cases.
- The Committee questioned whether garages and their contents could be seized if rents are not paid.
- Members commented that the historic sundry debt needs resolving and removing from the balance sheet.
- Members agreed with the approach that Officers require more delegation and can therefore adopt a flexible approach when deciding whether to write off debt.
- Members weren't too concerned about the Council Tax and Business Rates arrears considering the Council's collection rate in comparison to neighbouring authorities is favourable.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources thanked Scrutiny for the report and the diligent way it had dealt with the matter of debt. The Leader thanked Scrutiny for the in-depth investigation. The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### [Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy – 25 January 2023](#)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy at the meeting held on 11 January 2023. The following points were outlined to the Cabinet by the Scrutiny Chairman:

- Members commented that the report was well written and structured and were positive about the level of response to the countywide consultation exercise.
- Members were pleased with the service provided by the existing waste collection contractor.
- The Committee were pleased that action against fly tipping had been added as a specific pledge.
- The addition of 'what three words' to help pinpoint the location of fly tipping when reporting was noted by Members.
- Members noted the important role that the wombles and other community groups play in local communities in collecting litter.
- Concern was raised regarding the recent legislative change relating to the collection and disposal of items containing Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and that this could result in an increase in fly tipping.
- Members noted that some of the strategy pledges had been caveated, as they are subject to total and ongoing Government funding.

The Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement thanked Scrutiny for the report. The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### [Budget Proposals – 8 February 2023](#)

At the meeting held on 24 January 2023, the Scrutiny Committee considered the following budget reports:

- General Fund Revenue Budget 2023/24 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27;
- Capital Programme 2022-2027 – General Fund and Capital Strategy 2023/24;



- Revenue Budget Proposals 2023/24 for Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The following points were outlined to the Cabinet by the Scrutiny Chairman:

- Scrutiny noted that the budget position would be significantly improved once the backdated service charges relating to Parkside and Phoenix House had been recovered.
- Members sought assurances that the £142k NNDR cost recharge to the contractor for occupation of Lake Terrace under the terms of the lease would be paid.
- The query was raised as to whether, in light of the challenging financial situation the Council finds itself, why was it deemed appropriate to create the post of Assistant Director overseeing the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The issue of funding for staff vacancies was raised, as well as the impact of hiring interims to temporarily fill those vacancies was having upon the budget.
- Concern was raised regarding the cost to the Council of replacing vehicles.
- Concern was raised regarding the underspent Disabled Facilities Grants and whether the unspent funds would have to be returned.
- Concern was raised on the voucher scheme to provide tenants a one-off payment to assist with the cost of living and how this was to be managed and audit considerations.
- The comment was made that the Council can and should be acting more decisively when recovering garage rent arrears which currently total £18k.
- A concern was raised on whether capital investments on Council-owned homes will provide sufficient reduction energy use and carbon emissions.

The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### Homelessness – 21 June 2023

The Scrutiny Committee considered the Homelessness report at the meeting held on 14 March 2023. Scrutiny's comments were presented to Cabinet at their first meeting of the 2023/24 municipal year held on 21 June 2023. The following points were outlined:

- Scrutiny thanked Officers for the work they do and were told that the work is appreciated by partners and the community.
- A Member mentioned that in their experience of encountering residents who are homeless or facing homelessness, the feedback received has been positive and the actions that have been taken have been above and beyond what was expected.
- Concern was raised regarding the number of people living in temporary accommodation, however Members were reassured that the Council discharges legal duties under the homelessness legislation.
- A comment was made by a Member that the Council is doing an exceptional job in regards to homelessness.
- Members welcomed the clarification that Armed Forces Veterans are treated as a priority need when presenting as homelessness.
- The lack of supported accommodation in the Borough was raised as a risk.
- The concern of out of area people being housed within the Borough was raised. Officers confirmed that they would always look at suitable properties in suitable locations relevant to each case and that availability of accommodation was a key consideration.

- Concern was raised regarding the houses (private rented sector) that can't be brought up to standard due to new guidelines around energy efficiency. The Committee were informed that the Council are aware of the risk in this area. Officers advised that it hoped to increase engagement with landlords through a landlord forum.
- A Member stated that they do not think it is helpful to house a person in a property where everything has been stripped out, however it was noted that this is usually done for health and safety reasons.
- Complaints have been raised with Members regarding why some people seeking assistance do not receive a call back. Members were reassured that all people seeking assistance are registered with a duty officer and their case is processed in the appropriate manner.

The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

### **Income Collection and Debt Management, Progress Update – 21 June 2023**

The Scrutiny Committee considered the progress update report on income collection and debt management at the meeting held on 18 April 2023. Scrutiny's comments were presented to Cabinet at their first meeting of the 2023/24 municipal year held on 21 June 2023. The following points were outlined:

- A Member welcomed the progress made in recovering outstanding debt, especially considering some tenants find paying their debt very difficult due to low incomes or only receiving benefit payments, coupled with the impact of the increase in the cost of living.
- It was suggested that weekly direct debits could be offered to make it more convenient for some tenants to pay off debt. Officers agreed with the principle of weekly direct debits, as rent is charged weekly and accepted that in doing so would make the service more flexible and supportive.
- In relation to garage rent arrears, the overall debt has been reduced by 11% since January. A comment was made that if the tenant has had a warning, then the Tenancy Services Manager should take the garage off the tenant if arrears persist and then the tenant should be prevented from renting another garage, this option is included in the income management policy.

The Cabinet agreed to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

## 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 Chairman 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 22 June 2022 to discuss the Annual 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 2022/23 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.

A Work Programme workshop will take place on 15 June 2023 in advance of the first meeting of the 2023/24 Municipal Year to establish priorities for the Committee.

## Training

All new Members to the Scrutiny Committee receive induction training. Induction training was delivered in March 2023. 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.

Scrutiny Members will receive comprehensive Scrutiny Training on 5 June 2023 as part of the Members Induction Programme.

## Further information

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

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