

**Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills, Executive Director responsible for Democratic Services**

Report to:	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Management Board</b>
Date:	<b>29 March 2018</b>
Subject:	<b>Current and Future Scrutiny Reviews</b>

**Summary:**

This report updates the Board on current scrutiny reviews and invites the Board to consider potential topics for future scrutiny review.

**Actions Required:**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

- 1) notes the position regarding current scrutiny reviews
- 2) establishes a working group to carry on the work so far undertaken by Scrutiny Panel A in relation to the scrutiny review entitled "Future IT Provision to Support Council Working Practices"
- 3) considers the potential topics for future scrutiny review and decides which, if any, should be progressed.

## **1. Background**

This report updates an original report that was published for the Board's meeting on 1 March 2018, which was cancelled due to adverse weather conditions.

The enforced delay in consideration of future review topics has allowed reflection on the status of the current reviews and for a recommendation to be made to today's meeting of the Board.

As members will be aware, at its meeting on 25 January 2018 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board instructed officers to consider a number of topics submitted for potential scrutiny review. The view was that topics could be listed to enable the Panels to be in a position to continue work at the conclusion of their current reviews. Members of the Board were invited to submit proposals for scrutiny review and these proposals are outlined in this report.

In considering current and future reviews the Board will always wish to be mindful of the following:

The purpose of scrutiny is ultimately to improve the quality of lives of local people through improved public services. To justify the resources allocated to scrutiny it is important to be able to demonstrate that scrutiny work adds value and makes a difference to local people.

The impact scrutiny has can be measured in two ways:

Outputs – quantitative expressions of the activities being reviewed. These can be expressed in financial terms to show return on investment.

Outcomes – what stakeholders experience as a result of the review, for example if the local community recognises an improvement. The Council and its partners could also be stakeholders when the recommendations relate to internal processes.

While assessing the suitability of topics for review, members are reminded to also consider the potential call on resources to support these reviews. In particular they should have in mind the cost of officer time in supporting the various meetings of the scrutiny panels, from the relevant service areas as well as Democratic Services. The expense of members attending panel meetings against potential benefits/outcomes should also be a consideration when assessing the value of scrutiny reviews.

Members may also want to 'share the load' among service areas to ensure that scrutiny does not have a negative impact in terms of resources. Consecutive or concurrent reviews in one service area could be considered unhelpful and cause undue pressure.

## **2. Status of Current Reviews**

### **Street Lighting Review**

This review has looked at the impact of the change in the Street Lighting Policy to turn street lights off in certain areas between midnight and 6am.

The review is considering topics including the environment, road collisions, crime rates, fears about safety and crime, emergency services, health and public health services, the impact on businesses and the night time economy.

A key aim of the review has been to ensure that the Council's Street Light Policy in relation to part night lighting is being managed to minimise any adverse impact on the communities in Lincolnshire affected by the changes.

From the start of the review, the Scrutiny Panel agreed that a key priority was to engage and listen directly to the people who live and work in Lincolnshire. A survey was developed to invite views from members of the public and was promoted via County News at the end of November. The survey attracted in excess of 5,000 responses.

The Scrutiny Panel has heard a range of evidence in order to form a better understanding of the matters relating to part night street lighting and is currently considering the recommendations to put forward to the Executive.

### **Future IT Provision to Support Council Working Practices**

During recent discussions between the Chairman of the Board, councillors and officers, the progress of the scrutiny review entitled: "Future IT Provision to Support Council Working Practices" was considered and a proposed course of action was agreed to be considered by the Board today.

Members of the Board will recall from the July 2017 meeting that the intention of this review "would look at the impact of current IT provision on council working practices with particular reference to the potential for enhancing roles by means of updated IT provision.

"The Review would consider ways of maximising the use of IT, what opportunities are available to communicate better and the costs involved."

Since the commencement of the review it has become apparent that certain building blocks need to be in place before consideration of future technologies can be properly considered. Whilst the emphasis of the review has been on future IT provision, it has not been possible to separate past and present circumstances from future plans.

That being the case, it is suggested that the review is unlikely to meet the expectations of the panel and the Board.

Furthermore if the review were to continue on its current course then it would not meet the criteria set out for successful scrutiny. What has also become clear is the high level of interest that members have in improving the Council's IT provision and that the considerable knowledge already acquired should not be lost.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel is of the view that a six-month review does not allow sufficient opportunity to delve into the detail of the topic. She welcomes the prospect of making a greater contribution through a more in-depth study within a working group setting.

Therefore it is proposed that a working group of members and officers is established to allow member engagement in this important area. Volunteers are sought from members with a particular interest in IT, specifically relating to service delivery.

If the Board is agreeable to this proposal then members are invited to nominate a review topic to be allocated to Scrutiny Panel A.

### **3. Future Review Topic Proposals**

Officers have discussed potential topics with the sponsors of those ideas and evaluated the potential benefits from any review against the prioritisation toolkit.

Prioritisation is a key tool for successful scrutiny. Selecting the right topics where scrutiny can add value is essential for scrutiny to be a positive influence on the work of the Council.

Scrutiny must be selective about what they look at and need to work effectively with limited resources. Scrutiny activity should be targeted, focused and timely and include issues of corporate and local importance, where scrutiny activity can influence and add value.

The questions below are a guide to help members and officers consider and identify key areas of scrutiny activity for consideration.

Will Scrutiny input add value?

- Is there a clear objective for scrutinising the topic?
- What are the identifiable benefits to residents and the council?
- Is there evidence to support the need for scrutiny?
- What is the likelihood of achieving a desired outcome?
- Is the topic strategic and significant rather than relating to an individual complaint?
- Are there adequate resources to ensure scrutiny activity is done well?

Is the topic a concern to local residents?

- Does the topic have a potential impact for one or more section(s) of the local population?
- Has the issue been identified by Members through surgeries and other contact with constituents?
- Is there user dissatisfaction with service (e.g. increased level of complaints)?
- Has the topic been covered in the local media or social media?

Is it a Council or partner priority area?

- Does the topic relate to council corporate priority areas?
- Is there a high level of budgetary commitment to the service/policy area?
- Is it a poor performing service (evidence from performance indicators /benchmarking)?

Are there relevant external factors relating to the issue?

- Central government priority area
- New government guidance or legislation
- Issues raised by an internal or external audit or from formal inspections, etc.
- Key reports or new evidence provided by external organisations

Criteria for not considering topics

- There is no scope for scrutiny to add value/make a difference or have a clear impact.

- New legislation or guidance is expected within the next year.
- The issue is being examined elsewhere - e.g. by the Executive, working group, officer group or other body.
- The objective of scrutiny involvement cannot be achieved in the specified timescale required.

### **Roundabout Sponsorship**

The Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee considered 'Roundabout Sponsorship' at its meeting on 22 January 2018. The Committee unanimously recommended that support should be sought from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for a Scrutiny Review Panel to be established to examine this topic in more detail.

#### **Scope of Proposal**

This scrutiny review would focus on reviewing the current 'Sponsorship of Highway Planting' policy. The current policy dealing with the sponsorship of roundabouts (HAT 63/1/10) has been in existence since 1996.

It is proposed that the scrutiny review consider and develops the policy to enable effective management of roundabout sponsorship in Lincolnshire, including:

- consider and debate the merits of commercial roundabout advertising, including reviewing current signage standards and associated road safety implications and concerns.
- whether the county council wanted to stimulate activity, and the level of sponsorship the council would look to encourage/promote
- consider the current appetite amongst district councils for sponsorship of roundabouts
- whether the policy is accessible to potential sponsors and encourages businesses to sponsor roundabouts
- consider further promoting and developing the economic and commercialisation aspect of the policy
- consider whether sponsoring other verges could also be an option as part of this policy

#### **Additional Information**

The current '*Sponsorship of Highway Planting*' policy provides a framework for the approval of planting schemes being licenced by the County Council as Highway Authority. Governance arrangements are in place where sponsorship deals are managed by Lincolnshire's District/Borough/City Councils working with their chosen commercial providers.

The Highway Authority's role is limited to approving the planting scheme on highway safety grounds and issuing the licence to use highway ground. The County Council receives no income from these sites. The maintenance costs are borne by the applicant, thus reducing the Authority's financial commitment.

There are currently around 60 agreements in place with the majority being in the City of Lincoln area. Currently the County Council does not directly manage or operate any sponsorship deals.

## **Transitions**

### **Scope of Proposal**

This scrutiny review could focus on young people as they transition from Children's Services to Adult Services, in the following two areas:

- SEND (Special Education Needs and Disability), including: -
  - Learning Disability
  - Autism
- Looked After Children

As part of the review, there would be engagement with young people and their carers, as well as consideration of services in other local authority areas and best practice.

In relation to Looked after Children element, the scrutiny review could take account of the implications of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, increasing the age of eligibility for support for care leavers, from the age of 21 to 25.

## **Implications of the Children and Social Work Act 2017**

### **Scope of Proposal**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 places additional responsibilities for care leavers on Lincolnshire County Council, and will increase the complexity of working relationships between ourselves and partner agencies.

This scrutiny review would explore the new responsibilities, including the developing corporate parenting responsibility for housing up to the age of 25 and the involvement of district councils, as housing authorities, in delivering this.

### **Additional Information**

Under the previous legal framework, all care leavers were entitled to receive support from a Personal Advisor until they reached the age of 21. This provision has been extended to all care leavers up to the age of 25. In addition, local authorities have to consult and publish their 'local offer' for care leavers. The Department for Education has indicated that examples of good practice in local offers will include:

- providing care leavers with access to specialist advice on housing options prior to them leaving care;
- housing authorities choosing to give reasonable preference to care leavers in social housing allocations;
- preventing homelessness amongst care leavers and – where a care leaver does become homeless – taking action to assist the young person to secure accommodation;
- providing intensive support to help care leavers maintain tenancies, including training on managing their finances and rent arrears; and
- taking a corporate decision to exempt care leavers from paying Council Tax.

## **Social mobility**

### **Scope of Proposal**

The Social Mobility Commission has published a report State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain, which ranked each Council area in England according to 16 indicators. The indicators covered the major life stages of early years, school, youth and working lives.

The rankings showed a marked difference between the council area in Lincolnshire with the most social mobility and the one with the least.

This review would examine those indicators where there was a marked differences within Lincolnshire and focus on how the Council could better promote social mobility within the county.

## **Community Cohesion**

A proposal has been received to review Community Cohesion across the County. The proposal references a review being undertaken by the Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee at South Kesteven District Council.

There could be a risk of duplication of the work of SKDC and other district councils who are required to have due regard to community cohesion issues in their area. The conclusions of the SKDC work may well be of interest to the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee in due course and could assist them in forming a view as to whether a countywide review would be beneficial.

## **4. Evaluation**

### **a) Roundabout sponsorship**

The highways service area is currently supporting the part-night street lighting review. Previous convention has been not to select the same service area for consecutive reviews, because of resource implications and the risk that scrutiny might become overly pre-occupied with one area of the Council's business.

Members may wish to reflect on whether this issue is of sufficient importance to warrant the level of resource that is applied in a scrutiny panel review.

b) Impacts of the Children and Social Work Act 2017

There have been two separate proposals for reviews. One a broader review of the overall implications of the Act and the second a more specific review looking at how increasing the age of eligibility for support from 21 to 25 has impacted two particular groups – Looked After Children and those with Special Educational Needs and Disability.

Children's Services have indicated that either review would be of merit. The Board, mindful of the criteria for scrutiny reviews, will need to consider if the overall review would be too broad. The Board may take the view that either it or the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee would need to gain a greater understanding of the Act in order to identify the scope for the most meaningful review.

c) Social Mobility

A proposal has been made to consider the issue of social mobility across the county. This proposal has been triggered by a report published by the Social Mobility Commission, which, amongst other things, identified that two areas of Lincolnshire had markedly contrasting levels of social mobility.

The proposal suggests a lack of understanding of the reasons for this difference. However feedback from officers has been that there is understanding of the reasons, but there is support for a review focusing on ways to improve this situation.

The Board may wish to consider if it should receive a report identifying the reasons for the current situation in the county before defining and commissioning a review.

The Board may also wish to be mindful about the strain on resources for service areas supporting concurrent reviews.

## **5. Review Tools**

In considering these and future proposals the Board may wish to reflect on the various review tools available to it. Scrutiny Panel Review remains the most significant and high profile review method, but this may not always be the most appropriate course of action. Working groups continue to be a fruitful mechanism and stand-alone reports to committee and, where relevant, visits to specific sites, can also be effective.

## **6. Conclusion**

This report updates members of the Board on the current scrutiny reviews and provides members of the Board with proposals for future scrutiny reviews and invites their consideration.



## **7. Consultation**

### **a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out??**

Yes

### **b) Risks and Impact Analysis**

The actions, if agreed are not considered to have any risk or impact implications.

## **8. Appendices**

No appendices.

## **9. Background Papers**

No background papers.

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