

Lincolnshire County Council Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013-14

(front cover to be added)

Welcome

Welcome to the 2013-14 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for Lincolnshire County Council. This report provides the opportunity to review last year's activity and to look ahead to the work of scrutiny over the next year.

We find ourselves in a period of unprecedented change both within local government and the wider public sector. With a backdrop of reduced funding from Government this Council along with its local government and public sector partners are seeking ways to work more closely together, to pool budgets where appropriate and to develop services to meet expectations and deliver efficiencies. In this environment the role of scrutiny has never been more important and all those involved with scrutiny have a clear responsibility over the next year to scrutinise the implementation of new approaches and to make sure they deliver the anticipated outcomes.

In this report we will highlight some of the significant activity that has taken place over the last year and briefly consider key areas of enquiry for each of the committees over the next year.

If you would like to know more about the work of scrutiny at the County Council then please get in touch. Contact details for the Scrutiny Team can be found on page six and you can find out lots more by visiting the scrutiny section of the Council's website at www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/scrutiny.

(signature to be inserted)

Councillor Pat O'Connor
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

All non-Executive councillors are eligible to participate in the work of scrutiny and to review, support and improve Council services and to consider wider issues affecting the people of Lincolnshire. Joining them to scrutinise particular issues are parent governors, church representatives, councillors from the district councils and representatives from other local organisations.

The Council has ten overview and scrutiny committees that consider new policies that are being developed, existing policies to see how well they are working and performance information to check that the Council is meeting the standards that have been set.

Each of these committees is also able to establish time-limited Task and Finish Group reviews that focus on a particular issue and consider it in greater detail than is possible at Committee. These reviews will typically last around six months and will include a mixture of interviews with relevant council officers, research of best practice elsewhere, meetings with service users and community groups and consultation with wider parts of the community.

An emerging trend over the last year has been the establishment of more working groups of scrutiny councillors which tend to work in a less formal and more collaborative way. These working groups have responded to national consultations, reviewed existing policies and looked to develop new policies in conjunction with officers. Going forward, working groups will also be able to play a useful role in addressing cross-cutting issues which may impact more than one scrutiny committee.

Scrutiny activity during the year

A new Council Term

County Council elections took place on 2 May 2013 and specific training on overview and scrutiny was provided to both new and returning councillors as part of the Induction into the new Council. Following the Induction further training has been provided during the year to scrutiny councillors in the form of half day development sessions on scrutiny skills and the role of chairing a meeting.

Scrutiny committees will normally meet at the County Offices in Lincoln but on occasions those committees will meet at other locations around the County so they can meet council officers or external partners or view local issues first hand. During the year scrutiny committee meetings have taken place at venues such as Lincoln Castle and RAF Scampton and visits have been made by whole committees or smaller groups of councillors to a number of sites including several hospitals around the County and providers of services to children.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee was pleased to welcome Mr Neil Rhodes, Chief Constable of Lincolnshire Police, to a meeting in the spring of 2014 in order to discuss current policing challenges and initiatives. This was a very positive meeting and the Chief Constable and Mr Alan Hardwick, Police and Crime Commissioner, have accepted an invitation to attend a further meeting of the Committee later in the year.

Performance and budget monitoring remains an integral part of the work of relevant scrutiny committees and every quarter the Council's performance against specific objectives, progress on major projects, budget expenditure and customer satisfaction are scrutinised in detail. Work is currently underway to further refine this process and make this activity as meaningful as possible for councillors and officers but also more accessible to members of the public who are interested in this work.

Task and Finish Group Reviews

Following the election, three Task and Finish Group reviews have been established to scrutinise particular aspects of the Council's work. Reviews on 'Frontline Social Workers and Safeguarding', 'The Impact of Transportation on Economic Growth' and a 'Speed Management Review' are well underway and will report their findings in the early summer of 2014. The key outcomes from these reviews will be reported in next year's report.

The 'Frontline Social Workers and Safeguarding' review is seeking to better understand the challenges faced by the Council's team of social workers and to make sure this important

group of officers receive the proper level of support in order to perform their role. Councillors have met with groups of social workers and observed some of the challenging activities social workers undertake including child protection meetings and visits to children and families in need of support.

Economic growth remains a key priority for the Council and councillors are investigating how the transport network contributes to and potentially limits economic activity and what benefits there might be in a further improvement in transportation links. Discussions have taken place with key representatives from other local councils, the Highways Agency and Network Rail.

Finally, Speed Management continues to be of great interest to many people across Lincolnshire and this has been reflected in the strong level of input into this review. Over 500 responses to a survey issued as part of the evidence-gathering process were received from parish councils, community groups and individuals and there has been positive feedback from four focus groups held to discuss speeding issues in more depth.

Scrutiny in the year ahead

Scrutiny work programmes are developing well for 2014-15 and key issues have already been identified. Over the next few pages some of the major topics under consideration for each of the Council's Scrutiny committees will be outlined. The review of Lincolnshire Health and Care and the Council's progress towards becoming a Commissioning Council will have a fundamental impact on the work of scrutiny over the next 12 months and beyond. In addition to any references over the next few pages, business connected to these important initiatives will feature widely on scrutiny agendas for the year ahead.

Scrutiny activity at the County Council is overseen by the **Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee**. This Committee will continue to perform its overarching role managing activity across scrutiny including the approval of any new Task and Finish Groups that are proposed. This will include considering any decisions that are 'Called-in' for review or local issues raised under the 'Councillor Call for Action' process. Significant cross-cutting issues will also be considered by the Committee and in the current climate of change this business is likely to become more frequent.

A carer is anyone who spends a significant proportion of their life providing unpaid support to another person. The importance of this caring role is reflected in the fact that one of the County Council's commissioning strategies is centred on carers. This is an example of one of the items in the **Adults Scrutiny Committee's** work programme for the coming year, and the Committee will be looking at how this commissioning strategy is being developed. Scrutiny councillors will be meeting representatives of the Lincolnshire Carers and Young Carers Partnership to see how their needs are being met. The Committee will also be considering elements of the *Lincolnshire Health and Care* programme, which are relevant to adult care.

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee will be considering some key issues over the coming year. As there continues to be a growing pressure on primary school places, the Committee will be considering a number of reports during the next year

relating to the expansion of primary schools or the establishment of new primary academies, in order to ensure there is a sufficiency of primary school places across Lincolnshire. The Committee will also be considering updates on the implementation of the recommendations from the School Admissions and Exclusions Scrutiny Review and the outcomes from the Frontline Social Workers and Safeguarding Scrutiny Review.

Over the next year the **Community and Public Safety Scrutiny Committee** will look at various aspects around access to justice, including the impact of the closure of local courts and the services available for victims of domestic abuse. As part of its role as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee, the Committee will continue to monitor the delivery of the Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership's priorities and assess the impact they are having on local communities.

Business growth and job creation will be the focus of the **Economic Scrutiny Committee** over the coming year. In April 2015, there will be the reopening of Lincoln Castle prior to the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta in June 2015. The Committee will be scrutinising the preparations for this major event, particularly around plans to realise the benefits associated with this investment such as working with the business community, promoting Lincoln and Lincolnshire more widely to visitors, and infrastructure to support the anticipated increase in tourists to Lincoln. The Committee will be visiting the Castle in early 2015 to see the final preparations prior to the reopening. The Committee will also be considering a number of reports relating to the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP), in order to continue to shape local economic strategies and to input into the distribution of funding allocated to the GLLEP to projects.

The potential development of Hydraulic Fracturing (or 'Fracking') across the County and the impact any developments would have on the local community and the environment will be a key issue for the **Environmental Scrutiny Committee**. The Committee will also scrutinise the progress made by the Council on its Climate Local Action Plan. The Committee also sits from time to time as the **Flood and Drainage Management Scrutiny Committee** will continue to work in partnership with the County's district councils, internal drainage boards, Environment Agency and Anglian Water. A focus during the coming year will be to examine the response to the Tidal Surge on the East Coast in December 2013 by all agencies and partners and look at how we can all be better prepared in the future.

The **Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire** will be considering proposals from local NHS commissioners for a major reconfiguration of health services in Lincolnshire, which are part of the *Lincolnshire Health and Care* programme. The Committee will also be seeking to respond to the consultation on national proposals forming part of the *New Review of Congenital Heart Services*. The Committee will also be reviewing the progress with the County's health and wellbeing strategy, looking at each of the five themes in the strategy over the coming year. The Committee's focus on seeking improvements to the ambulance service for Lincolnshire residents will continue, with the Committee seeking quarterly updates from the East Midlands Ambulance Service.

The performance of the Highways Alliance and winter maintenance programme are ongoing areas of interest for the **Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee**. Following its review into Speed Management in Lincolnshire the Committee will be monitoring the

development of a revised Speed Management Policy. The Committee will also monitor the progress of a number of key highway projects.

In early 2014 the **Value for Money Scrutiny Committee** undertook pre-decision scrutiny in relation to the contract award for the provision of back office services. Over the next year the Committee will be monitoring the transfer of services to Serco, the Council's new provider and preparing to undertake the monitoring of key performance indicators within the contract. The Committee will continue to refine the process for scrutinising performance and as developments are made these will be shared with other scrutiny committees. The Committee is also investigating a move towards more paperless working for councillors and a working group has been set up to progress this.

Contact Us

If you want to know more about our plans or about the work we have done then please contact the Scrutiny Team using the details below.

David Hair – Team Leader – Scrutiny
& Member Support
01522 552080
davidr.hair@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Tracy Johnson – Scrutiny Officer
01522 552164
tracy.johnson@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Simon Evans – Scrutiny Officer
01522 553607
simon.evans@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Louise Tyers – Scrutiny Officer
01522 552102
louise.tyers@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Or write to us at The Scrutiny Team, Lincolnshire County Council, Room 15, County Offices, Lincoln, LN1 1YL