



**Open Report on behalf of Andrew Crookham, Executive Director - Resources**

Report to:	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Management Board</b>
Date:	<b>17 June 2021</b>
Subject:	<b>Proposals for Scrutiny Reviews</b>

**Summary:**

This item enables the Board to identify and agree potential topics for in-depth scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by the two Scrutiny Panels, taking into account the Prioritisation Toolkit.

**Actions Required:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is invited

1. to determine whether a scrutiny review should be undertaken on *Lincolnshire Agricultural Sector Support* and, if agreed, approve the terms of reference as set out in Appendix B to this report and determine which Scrutiny Panel will undertake the review.
2. to identify and agree topics for future scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by the Scrutiny Panels.
3. to delegate to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board approval of the terms of reference for future scrutiny reviews.

## **1. Background**

One of the essential roles of overview and scrutiny is to carry out in-depth reviews where the outcomes can clearly influence and improve policy and service delivery for the people of Lincolnshire. This is carried out by the two Scrutiny Panels, Scrutiny Panel A and Scrutiny Panel B.

Scrutiny Panels represent an opportunity for scrutiny councillors to delve deeper into a particular subject or issue to find out more, speak to the individuals responsible and recommend any ways in which things might be improved at a level of scrutiny not always possible within the time limits and formal setting associated with Committee meetings.

Scrutiny Panel A and Scrutiny Panel B will conduct each review in accordance with the following principles:

- Scrutiny Panels should aim to collect a broad range of evidence on the particular review, interviewing interested parties, and engaging local communities, where this is feasible.
- Scrutiny Panels should focus on developing realistic recommendations for improvement in relation to the topic under review.
- Scrutiny Panels will submit their draft reports to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration, approval and onward referral as appropriate.

Scrutiny Panel A and Scrutiny Panel B will undertake in-depth scrutiny reviews in accordance with the terms of reference and timetable determined for each review by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

#### Establishment of a Scrutiny Panel

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will decide when a Scrutiny Panel is needed by determining whether a scrutiny review will proceed using the Prioritisation Toolkit attached at Appendix A.

Each Scrutiny Panel will have up to eight members including the Chairman and Vice Chairman. The membership should be politically inclusive and all non-executive councillors (and added members for education reviews) are eligible. Nominations for membership of the Scrutiny Panels will be sought from the leader of each political group.

The membership will be agreed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in conjunction with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

#### Identifying Potential Scrutiny Review Topics

A Scrutiny Panel should only be set up when a suitable topic for a scrutiny review is identified by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board using the Prioritisation Toolkit.

Suggestions for scrutiny reviews may come from a variety of sources such as the scrutiny committees, other non-Executive Councillors, Executive Councillors, and senior officers.

When considering a potential topic for a scrutiny review, it is important that the Board ensures that the potential scrutiny review will not be duplicating any review work that is being undertaken by officers or external partners.

The remit for the potential scrutiny review should be focussed and not too broad, so that an in-depth review can be completed within a set timescale and will lead to achievable outcomes.

Once a potential topic for a scrutiny review has been identified by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and assigned to a Scrutiny Panel, the terms of reference will

be completed by the Scrutiny Panel, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, if they have not already been approved by the Board.

### Potential Topics for Scrutiny Reviews

In February 2021, the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee identified support to farmers as a potential topic for a scrutiny review. The Committee established a working group, which met in March 2021, to identify some key lines of enquiry for a potential scrutiny review. These have been incorporated into the proposed terms of reference for a scrutiny review on *Lincolnshire Agricultural Sector Support* which are attached at Appendix B for the Board's consideration and determination as to whether a scrutiny review on this topic should be undertaken.

The following potential topics have also been identified for the Board's consideration:

- Town Centre Improvements – to consider what opportunities exist for the revitalisation of town centres around the county.
- Capital Programme Planning – An assessment and challenge of the current capital project lifecycle arrangements and any lessons learned from major projects, and how Overview and Scrutiny can be involved in the process.

## **2. Conclusion**

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is asked to identify and agree potential topics for in-depth scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by the Scrutiny Panels, using the Prioritisation Toolkit attached at Appendix A.

## **3. Consultation**

### **a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

Not Applicable

## **4. Appendices**

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Prioritisation Toolkit
Appendix B	Proposed Terms of Reference for <i>Lincolnshire Agricultural Sector Support</i> Scrutiny Review

## **5. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Nigel West, Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer, who can be contacted on 01522 552840 or by e-mail at [nigel.west@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:nigel.west@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

## Scrutiny prioritisation

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 committees 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?

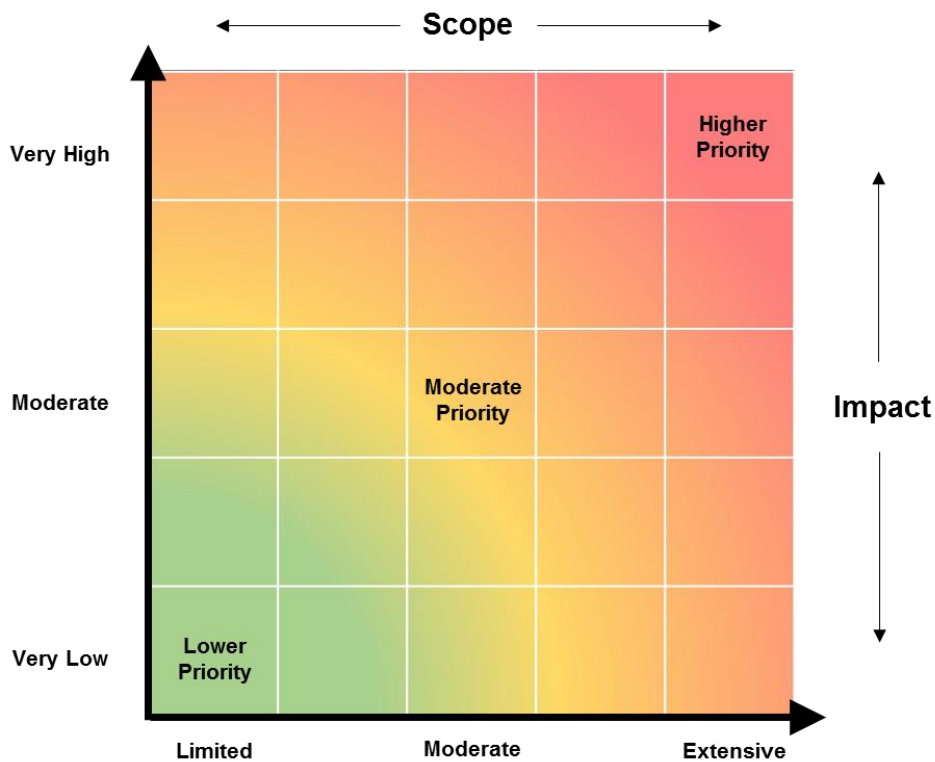
- Central government priority area.
- New government guidance or legislation.
- Issues raised by an internal or external audit or from formal inspections, etc.
- Key reports or new evidence provided by external organisations.

### 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.

### Prioritisation Matrix

The prioritisation matrix shown below is a framework to aid in prioritising a number of scrutiny options or topics. Each topic should be assessed in terms of the impact it would have and the overall scope of the activity.

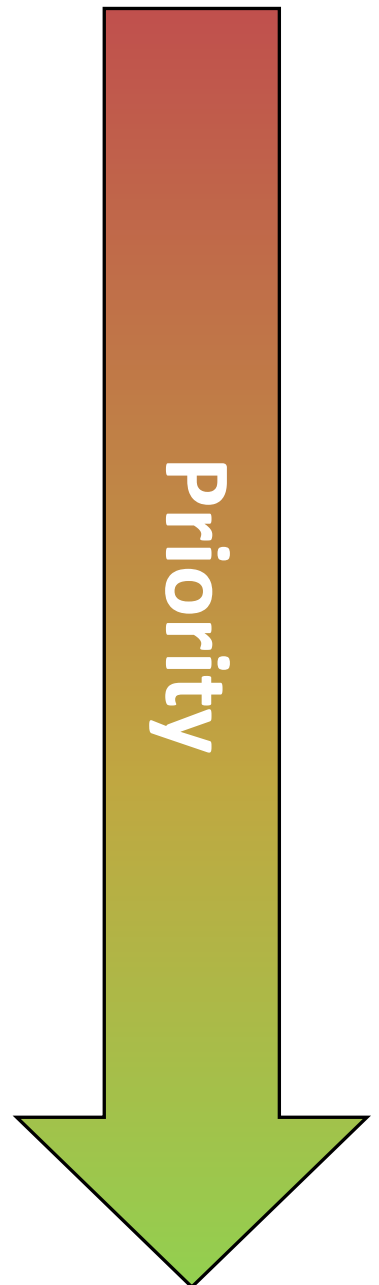
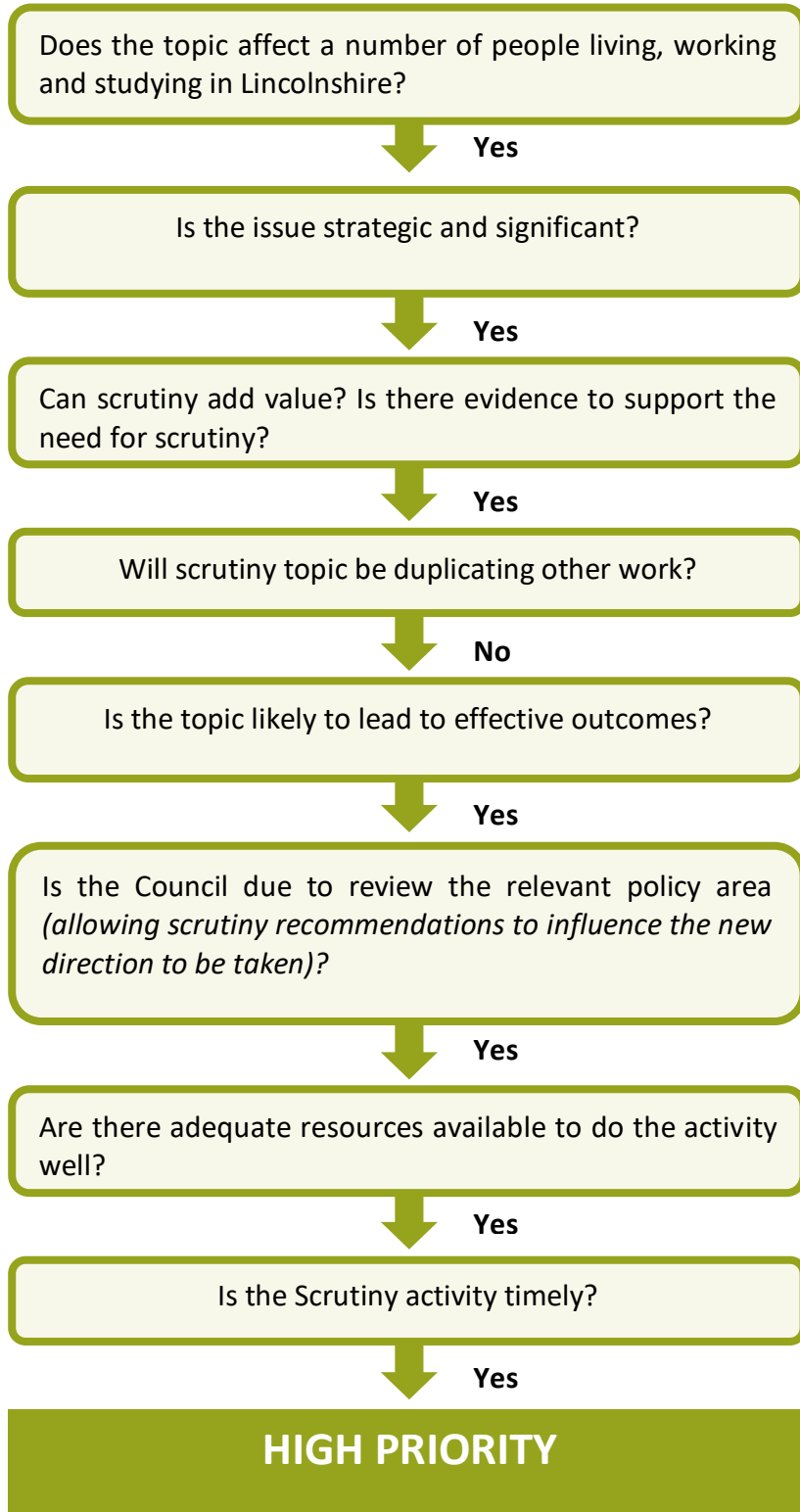


When considering the scope and impact of a Scrutiny item it is important to consider the following areas:

- People / Communities
- Assets / Property
- Financial
- Environmental
- Reputation
- Likelihood of Impact
- Resource Required
- Cost Effectiveness

## Prioritisation tool

The prioritisation tool below can be used in deciding on whether an issue would warrant being considered by Scrutiny or the subject of a Scrutiny Review.



### **Proposed Terms of Reference for *Lincolnshire Agricultural Sector Support* Scrutiny Review**

This review will consider how Lincolnshire County Council may develop its leadership and support to the agricultural sector in Lincolnshire.

#### Terms of Reference

- (1) To examine what support is currently available to Lincolnshire farmers from Lincolnshire County Council and partner organisations and identify any gaps in provision.
- (2) To examine ways of developing support to meet the unmet needs of the agricultural sector in Lincolnshire, arising from any hardships due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the EU Transition, in conjunction with the impact of the adverse weather experienced during the winter of 2019-20.
- (3) To examine and review what skills and training provision is required to meet the unmet needs of agricultural businesses, as well as to seek ways to diffuse best practice amongst these.
- (4) To examine and review the impact of the introduction of the Agriculture Act 2020 on Lincolnshire farmers regarding new approaches to farm payments and land management, producing “public goods” and improving fairness in the agricultural supply chain and on the operation of agricultural markets.
- (5) To consider ways of supporting/encouraging farms ‘Going Green’ (i.e., rent reduction, reducing CO2 emissions etc.) in line with the Lincolnshire Green Masterplan.

#### Exclusions from Review

This review will focus on the agricultural sector and the support available to Lincolnshire farmers. All other types of businesses outside the agricultural sector will be excluded from the review.

#### Completion Dates

Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee – 22 February 2022

Executive – 5 April 2022

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