

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

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
Date:	01 March 2018
Subject:	Potential Scrutiny Reviews

Summary:

This report invites the Board to consider potential topics for future scrutiny review.

Actions Required:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considers the potential topics for future scrutiny review and decides which, if any, should be progressed.

1. Background

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 a number have been received.

To assist the Board these proposals are listed within this report along with some consideration of their benefits. In considering these and future proposals for scrutiny review the Board will 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 time spent by members both in terms of attendance and travel, along with the significant time contribution made by service area officers supporting the review and the work of officers in Democratic Services.

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.

Scrutiny must be selective about what it looks at and needs 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.

Potential Topics for Review

Outlined below are the topics that have been proposed for review. Under each proposal heading there is detail of the scope of the review and any relevant additional information. At the end of the section members will see evaluations of each of the proposals to assist them with their consideration and conclusion.

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

Scope of the Proposal

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

The conclusion of that report was to undertake further research and to liaise with the County Council's Community Engagement Team.

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.

d) Community Cohesion

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.

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.

2. Conclusion

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

3. 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.

4. Appendices

No appendices.

5. Background Papers

No background papers.

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