

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

Report to:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	13 July 2021
Subject:	Proposals for Scrutiny Reviews

Summary:

On 17 June 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agreed to request that each overview and scrutiny committee identify potential topics for in-depth scrutiny reviews, which would be undertaken by the two Scrutiny Panels, taking into account the prioritisation toolkit. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board would consider all the suggestions at its meeting on 30 September 2021, with a view to making a decision on which reviews would be approved.

This Committee is requested to consider whether it would wish to make any suggestions to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Actions Required:

To consider whether to make any suggestions for in-depth scrutiny reviews, for consideration and decision by to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 30 September 2021.

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. In accordance with the Council's constitution, this role is undertaken by the two scrutiny panels, Scrutiny Panel A and Scrutiny Panel B.

These two scrutiny panels provide an opportunity for scrutiny councillors to consider a particular topic in great detail, for example by engaging with a range of individuals in less formal settings, which is not always possible in the formal setting of a committee meeting. Based on the evidence received, a report is compiled, with the panel making recommendations for possible improvement.

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.

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 focused and not too broad, so that an in-depth review can be completed within a set timescale and will lead to achievable outcomes.

Role of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is responsible for making decisions whether a scrutiny panel is merited, and in so doing the Board applies the guidance in the prioritisation toolkit attached at Appendix A.

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 drafted by the Scrutiny Panel and submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, if they have not already been approved by the Board. This does not prevent the panel from undertaking initial work on its topic.

Composition of Scrutiny Panels

Each scrutiny panel may comprise up to eight members including its chairman and vice chairman, who were appointed by the County Council on 21 May. The remaining members of each panel are appointed for each particular review, and there is an aim to make the membership politically inclusive. All non-executive councillors are eligible, with nominations for membership being sought from the leader of each political group.

Role of Overview and Scrutiny Committees – Approval of Final Report

As stated above, when each scrutiny panel completes each review, its draft report is submitted to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee for consideration and approval. Following its approval, the final report, including any recommendations, is submitted to the relevant decision-making body, which in most instances would be the Executive for matters relating to the County Council's executive functions. The relevant scrutiny committee is responsible for receiving the response to the review and for any future monitoring of recommendations.

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 a proposed terms of reference for a scrutiny review on Lincolnshire Agricultural Sector Support.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the proposed terms of reference at its meeting on 17 June 2021. There were mixed views expressed about whether a review of Lincolnshire Agricultural Sector Support would be a good idea at this moment in time, especially in the light of the uncertainty surrounding the outcome and content of the proposed Agricultural Bill currently going through Parliament. In addition, it was noted that it was not clear from the proposed terms of reference that mental health, which had been an area of particular concern raised by the working group, was included in the proposed review.

The proposed terms of reference have been amended to reflect the comments of the Board and are attached at Appendix B for the Committee's consideration prior to being re-submitted to the Board at its meeting on 30 September 2021.

Another potential topic that falls within the remit of this Committee which the Board considered at its meeting on 17 June 2021 was in relation to Town Centre Improvements. Any potential scrutiny review would consider what opportunities exist for the revitalisation of town centres around the county. This potential topic will also be re-submitted to the Board on 30 September 2021, and the Committee is invited to provide its views on this topic for the Board's consideration in September.

Separately, the Chairman of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee has identified that it could be valuable to establish a greater understanding of automation in industry and its impact on the labour market. This could either be a scrutiny review in the longer term or a theme which runs through the work of the scrutiny committee.

2. Conclusion

Following the decision by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 17 June 2021, this Committee is being requested to identify any potential topics for in-depth scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by the scrutiny panels, with the Committee's suggestions being reported to the Board on 30 September 2021. In so doing the Committee is requested to be mindful of 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	Scrutiny Prioritisation - Prioritisation Toolkit
Appendix B	Proposed Terms of Reference for Lincolnshire Agricultural Sector Support 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.

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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?

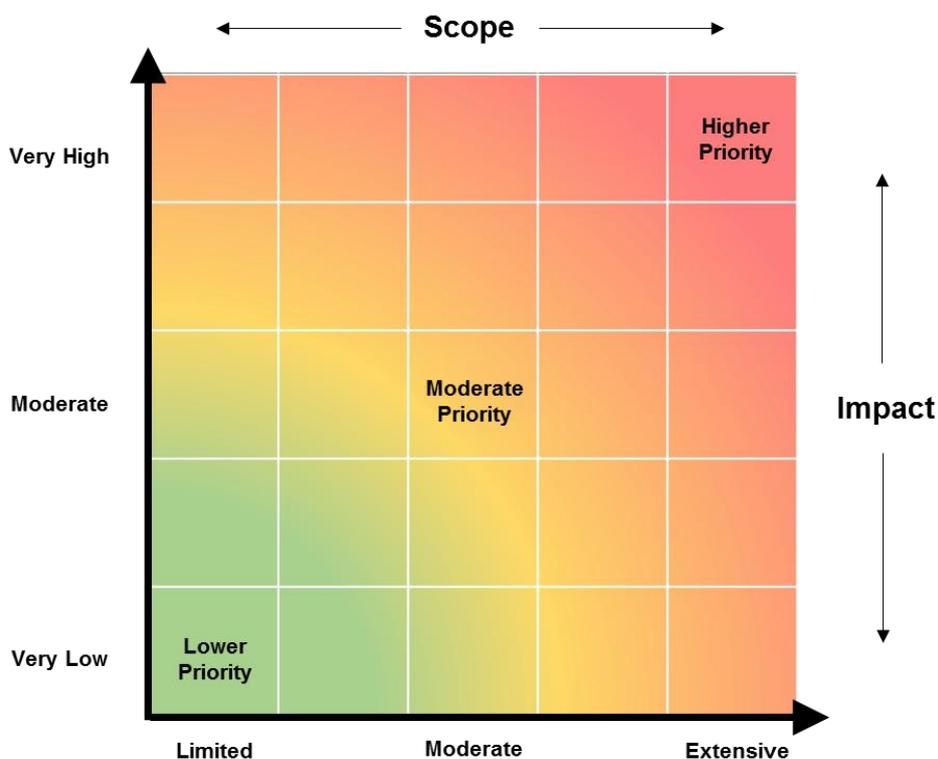
- Central government priority area.
- New government guidance or legislation.
- Issues raised by an internal or external audit or from formal inspections, etc.
- Key reports or new evidence provided by external organisations.

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.

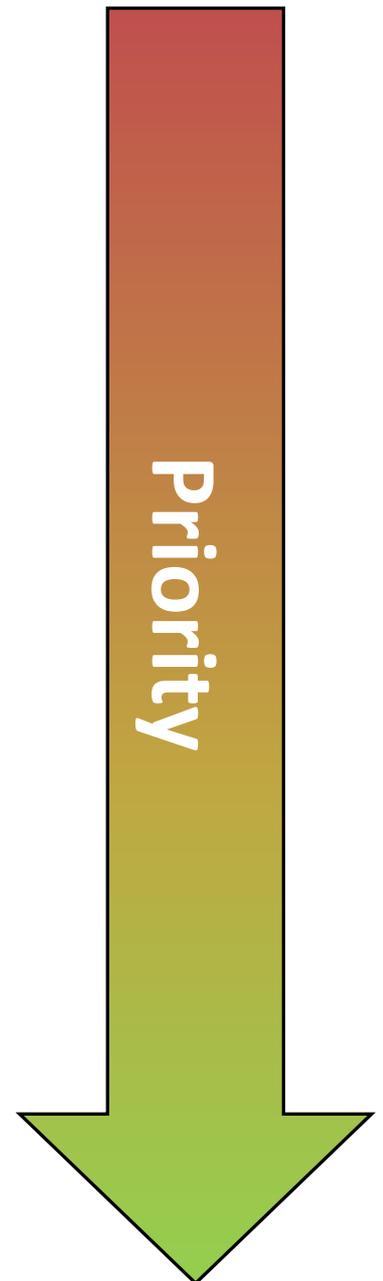
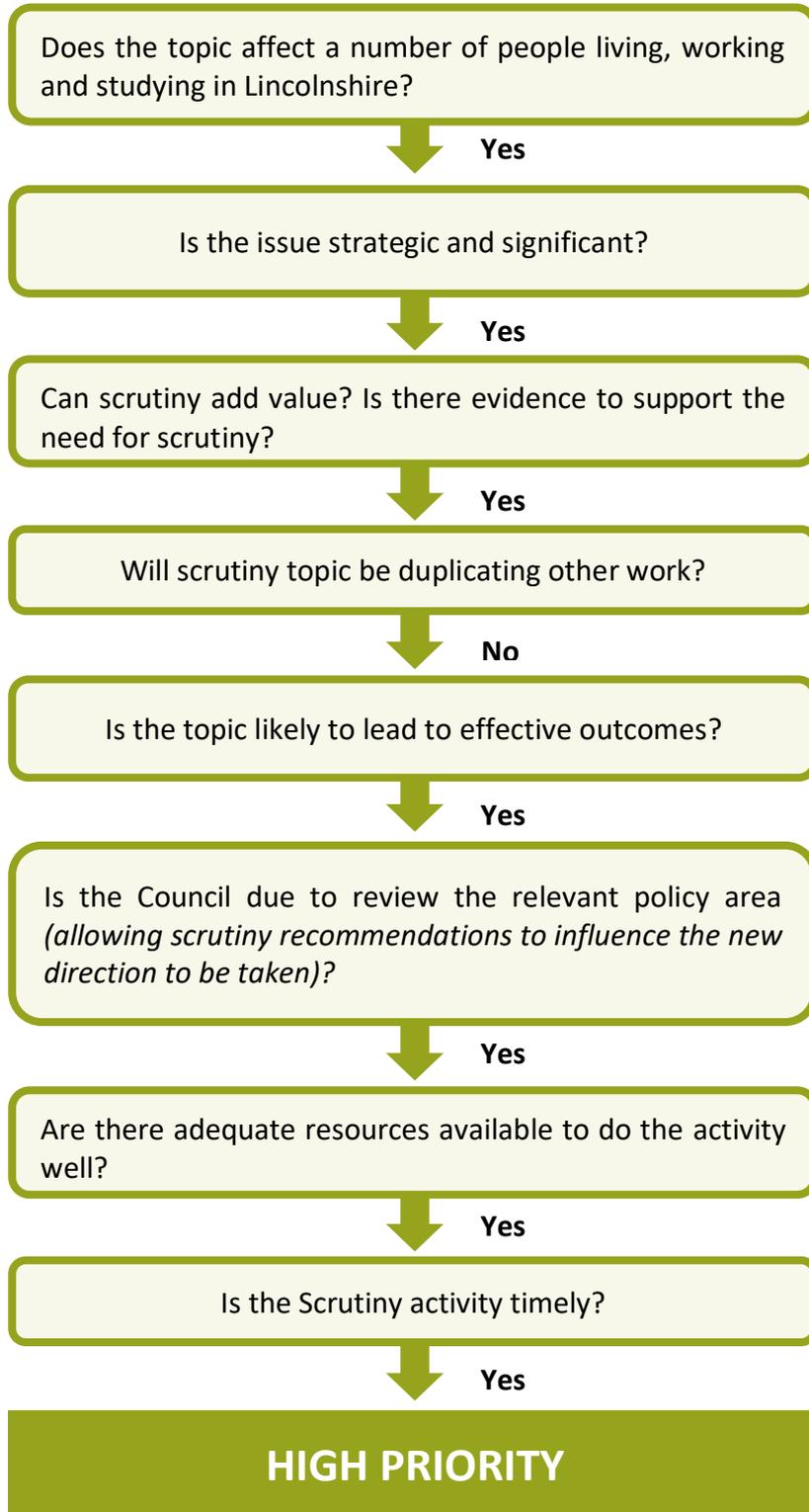


When considering the scope and impact of a Scrutiny item it is important to consider the following areas:

- 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*

Purpose of the Review

To 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.

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

Terms of Reference

- (1) To examine ways of developing support to meet the unmet needs of the agricultural sector in Lincolnshire, including mental health and any hardships arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and the EU Transition.
- (2) To examine and review what skills and training provision is required for agricultural businesses, as well as to seek ways to disseminate best practice amongst these.
- (3) To consider ways of supporting/encouraging farms ‘Going Green’ (i.e., incentives for environmental improvements, reducing CO2 emissions etc.) in line with the Lincolnshire Green Masterplan.

Benefits of the Review

This review will help to identify how Lincolnshire County Council can support one of the most important sectors in the county. Benefits of this review include:

- (1) Enhancing the Council’s leadership role in terms of engaging with farmers on a wide variety of topics, such as retirement, changing careers, diversification, alternative land use, tackling red tape, benefits of small farms joining together, succession planning and adapting to changes.
- (2) To identify if there is a need for a Lincolnshire agricultural masterplan, to build upon the environmental role of Lincolnshire farms, to sit in parallel with the Lincolnshire Green Masterplan.
- (3) To review ways of reducing the carbon footprint of Lincolnshire farms and encourage farm owners to ‘Go Green’ in line with the Lincolnshire Green Masterplan.
- (4) The identification of key skills and training required and how these can be delivered in partnership with key stakeholders.
- (5) Identification and dissemination of best practice and success stories as well as setting benchmarking examples.
- (6) Identification of gaps in support for the farming industry could be used for lobbying the government.

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 – 12 April 2022

Executive – 7 June 2022

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