

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020-21



FOREWORD

I am delighted to present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2020-21. The report contains a look at the key activities and successes for Overview and Scrutiny over the past year. The key aims of scrutiny work in the council are to:-

- Provide healthy and constructive challenge
- Give voice to public concerns
- Support improvement in services
- Provide an independent review

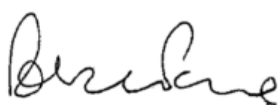
The 2020/21 year was severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in a number of scrutiny committee meetings being cancelled at the start of the council year. On 4 April 2020, the government published regulations to enable remote council meetings. Following a swift rollout of Microsoft Teams by IMT, and training of councillors on the functionality of Teams and procedures for virtual meetings by Democratic Services, the scrutiny committees were soon able to start holding virtual meetings to ensure the continuation of the democratic process during the pandemic.

Despite the impact of the pandemic, 67 scrutiny committee meetings were held, and 65% of all formal decisions were considered by a scrutiny committee in 2020/21 prior to them being made. Key achievements where overview and scrutiny has made a difference include:-

- supporting the development of the Fifth Local Transport Plan;
- recommending changes to the draft Infrastructure Funding Statement which were accepted;
- advising on the Green Master Plan adopted by the County Council in February 2021;
- providing a steer on the direction of the Corporate Support Services Review; and
- recommending a 'One Council' centralised system be developed to request, record and monitor Developer Contributions across the council.

Looking forward, a new cohort of councillors elected to the council in May 2021 are already getting to grips with Overview and Scrutiny, having completed a busy induction programme, and their work will be the subject of next year's Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report. With the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, we are getting back to holding face to face meetings in County Offices again.

Should you want to know more about our overview and scrutiny work then please feel free to get in touch using the contact details at the end of the report.

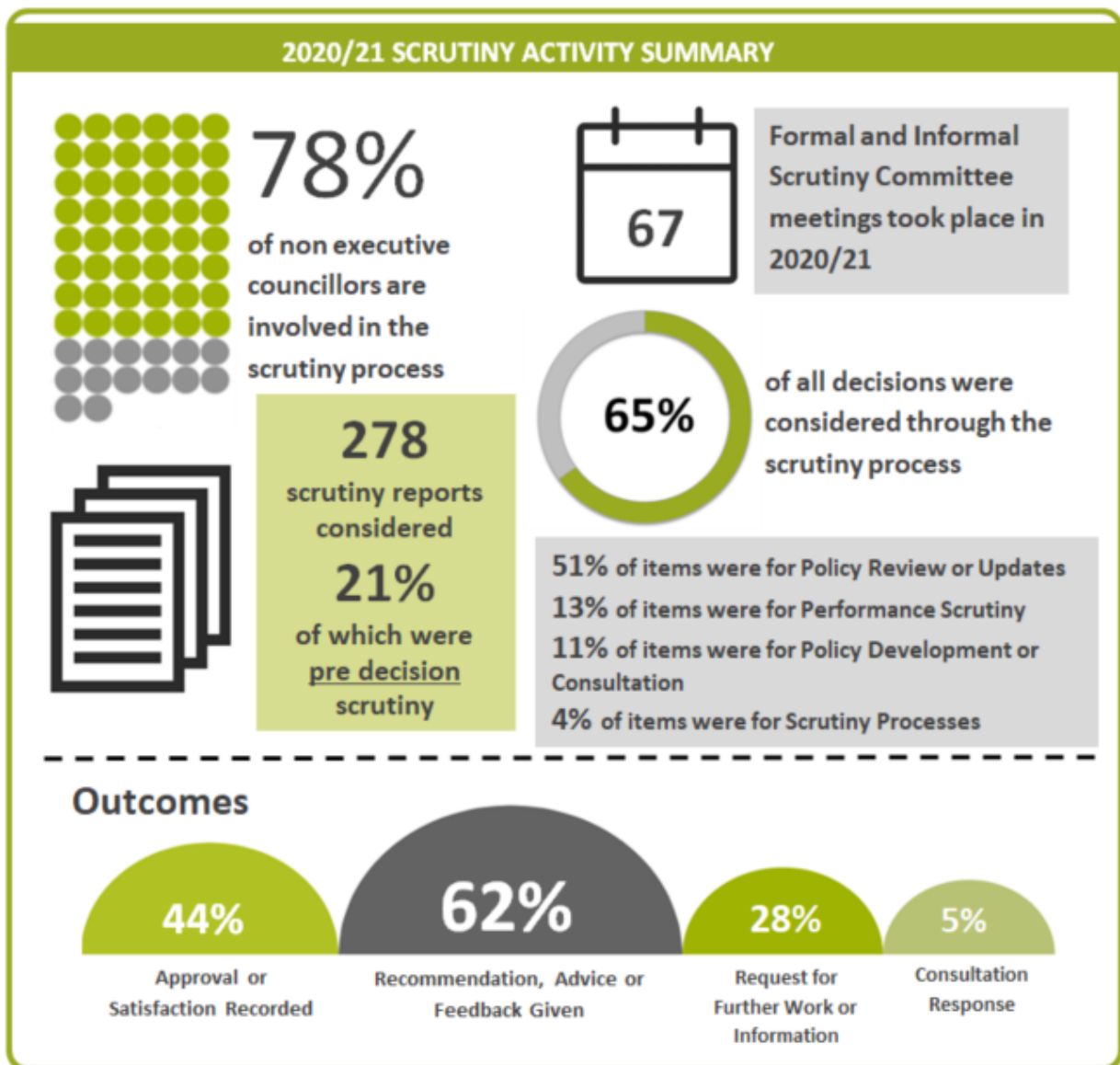


Councillor Robert Parker
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

INTRODUCTION TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Overview and scrutiny is the process whereby non-executive councillors of the council examine the authority's functions and services, plus those of partner organisations. 2020 marked the 20th anniversary of the legislative changes that led to the establishment of the overview and scrutiny function in English and Welsh councils, a function of local authorities in which all non-Executive councillors are eligible to participate in. Joining them to scrutinise particular issues are parent governors, church representatives, councillors from the district councils and representatives from other local organisations.

Lincolnshire County Council has eight overview and scrutiny committees that consider new policies and strategies, 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.



KEY OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

EAST COAST INUNDATION PLAN

Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee

"The Committee was reassured by the work being undertaken by Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue to respond to any inundation event on the East coast." – January 2021

At its meeting in October 2020, the Executive requested that the **Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee** consider the impact of a coastal inundation on Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue (LFR) Service's resources, particularly in the light of the decision by East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) to extend the caravan season into the winter/flood season.

The East Coast Inundation Plan had been developed and updated over a number of years, but had been written on the planning assumption that East coast caravan sites were closed during winter months. Following ELDC's decision to extend the caravan season into the winter/flood season from next winter season, the Committee acknowledged that further work would be required to gain a full understanding of the impacts that winter occupancy of caravan sites would have on the existing planning assumption, and that additional processes and resource requirements may need to be put in place before assurance could be given that the additional risk was accounted for.

Lincolnshire's Local Resilience Forum and partners participated in a virtual tabletop exercise of the East Coast Inundation Plan which took place on 10 February 2021 and was facilitated by the Emergency Planning Team to test LFR's response to an East coast flooding event alongside the concurrent pandemic incident, and by doing so complete the annual exercise of the East Coast Inundation Plan.



NHS RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire

"That the Committee's gratitude be recorded to all NHS staff, key workers and volunteers in Lincolnshire on their response to Covid-19, and for the Committee's condolences to be extended to the families who have lost loved ones." - June 2020

The **Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire** has focused on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the local NHS. The first challenge was the NHS's response to the pandemic, which peaked with over 250 Covid-19 in-patients in Lincolnshire's hospitals in early December 2020, representing over 30% of the available beds. The second strand was the restoration of other services such as treating cancer and other urgent procedures.

There were a number of temporary changes to services locally, for example, Grantham Hospital was designated a 'green site' allowing patients to receive cancer and other treatments in a safe environment, free of Covid-19. Other temporary changes included some urgent treatment centres closing overnight. Plans for the restoration of services have included reinstating service at Grantham Hospital, and the re-opening of urgent treatment centres overnight in Louth and Skegness, with new urgent treatment centres established in Gainsborough and Spalding. The Committee will be continuing to review the impact of the pandemic on the NHS in the coming year, focusing on specific services such as cancer treatment.



DRAFT INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

"The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board unanimously agreed to support the recommendation to the Leader, subject to the draft Statement being amended to include more detail and made clearer so that it was appropriate for the public domain." – December 2020

Under Regulation 121A of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, the council must publish an annual infrastructure funding statement before 31 December each year detailing: a statement of the infrastructure projects or types of infrastructure which the council intend to fund using the Community Infrastructure Levy; a report setting out specific information about the Community Infrastructure Levy, in relation to the previous financial year; and a report containing specified information about planning obligations, in relation to the previous financial year.

The draft Infrastructure Funding Statement was considered by the **Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** in December 2020, prior to a decision by the Leader of the Council to approve it for publication as Lincolnshire County Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement for 2019/20.

For a public facing document, the Board identified that the draft Infrastructure Funding Statement did not contain enough detail about how the Section 106 obligations totalling £11,854,236 would be spent; and that it should highlight the benefits of developer contributions to the community and public and what the council was trying to achieve with them. The Board suggested that a public statement or an executive summary on the Infrastructure Funding Statement should be provided by the Council's Communications Team to promote the Statement to the press and public given the amount of money involved.

The Board recommended that the draft Infrastructure Funding Statement should be amended to contain more detail and made clearer so that it was an appropriate public facing document.

The draft Infrastructure Funding Statement was reviewed and amended taking into account the comments from the Board, before the decision was taken by the Leader of the Council. In addition, a public statement was included on the council's website to explain what the Infrastructure Funding Statement was to the public.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S EDUCATION

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

"The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee extends its thanks to all teams within the council, who had worked hard through unprecedented times to ensure that children and young people in Lincolnshire were able to return to school." – October 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on schools and education in Lincolnshire which the **Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee** has been monitoring over the past year.

In September 2020, the vast majority of Lincolnshire schools reopened with 91.5% of pupils on average in attendance. To facilitate pupils being able to return to school, the council ensured that school transport was in place ahead of the new term, and also put in place additional transport provision to enable as many children and young people as possible to avoid having to use the public transport network. However, there was a new cohort of parents who made the choice to home educate to keep their children safe as a result of the pandemic, with 357 notifications received by the Elective Home Education team by early October. This was approximately 160 more referrals for the period March to October 2020 when compared to the previous year.

Ofsted carried out interim visits to schools between September and December 2020 to support schools in welcoming all pupils back and to form a national view of the response by schools to the pandemic. The Committee was pleased to hear that following the interim visits, Ofsted reported that Lincolnshire schools were generally in a better place than schools nationally regarding the establishment of remote learning. Since March 2020, the vast majority of Lincolnshire schools had offered elements of remote curriculum delivery, either on line or through the provision of paper based resources. Over 4500 laptops and tablets have already been distributed by the government to local authority maintained schools in Lincolnshire, in addition to the thousands of devices which have also been distributed to Lincolnshire academies, to enable vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people to access remote learning when they could not attend school due to Covid-19.

The Committee was pleased to see schools re-opening again on 8 March 2021, but recognised that it could take a number of years for the educational sector to recover from the pandemic. The first review of the national impact of the pandemic on education was published in June 2021, and the government has announced that it will keep reviewing the impact in the future. The Committee will continue to closely monitor the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's education.

GREEN MASTER PLAN

Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee

"That the recommendation to the Executive to adopt the Green Master Plan be supported and the comments from the Committee be passed onto the Executive for consideration." – January 2021

The county council has committed to net carbon neutrality by 2050, which is reflected in the Corporate Plan. To support this, a Green Master Plan has been developed with a focus on clean energy, transport, nature and innovative technologies. The plan also emphasises offshore wind power, using hydrogen for heating, the promotion of electric vehicles, decarbonised public transport, carbon-capture technologies, protecting and restoring the natural environment, and introducing targets such as 600,000 domestic heat pumps installed by 2028.

The **Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee** recorded its unanimous support for the Green Master Plan and congratulated the Sustainability Team on its development. The Committee highlighted alternative fuels, such as bioethanol, to maintain the delivery range of heavy goods vehicles. As with all alternatives, the challenge would be refuelling, and new technologies were expected for this purpose.

The Committee also referred to 'plastic-free communities', where individuals were working with communities and businesses to encourage them to reduce plastic waste. Following a recommendation from the Executive, the Green Master Plan was adopted by the County Council in February 2021.



The Wolds farmland

DECEMBER SURFACE WATER FLOODING AND IMPROVEMENTS TO LOCAL INCIDENCE RESPONSE

Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee

"That the recommendations to address the lessons learned from the events be supported." - February 2021

The **Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee** has a role to show local leadership to understand the risks of flooding in Lincolnshire and the work being undertaken to mitigate the risks and impacts of flooding across the County.

Over the course of the 23 and 24 December 2020, heavy rainfall led to a number of flooding incidents in the south of Lincolnshire, which mainly affected South Kesteven and South Holland. Whilst the event had not been large enough to trigger a standard multi-agency response, it did trigger a local response. However, the forecast had indicated a much lower likelihood of significant impact than what was actually experienced. This event highlighted a need to review how those events which went beyond the forecast were prepared for.

The Committee challenged the way that the flooding incident had been handled and was pleased to hear that stronger arrangements, to prepare in advance for these kinds of events, had now been put in place. Members of the Committee recognised that there was a need to help and inform residents with what they can do to protect themselves, and that it was important that organisations work together and adopt a precautionary principle as an approach.

FIFTH LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee

"The Committee supported:

- *the balance of proposed themes in the Local Transport Plan and their link to other local plans;*
- *improved connectivity between and within communities for public transport, cycling and walking; and*
- *the need to improve rail infrastructure, both to encourage the transfer of freight from road to rail, and to address the effects of Covid-19." – December 2020*

Work has begun developing a new Local Transport Plan for Lincolnshire, as the current ten year plan expires in 2023. The new plan will be used as a reference document to support bids to the government for funding to support transport initiatives. In its policy development role, the **Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee** considered possible themes for the plan in December 2020 and March 2021, and has provided the above advice. The Committee has also highlighted the need for more collaboration between Highways England and the county council on developing highway schemes. Other partners and stakeholders were also involved in the plan's development.

As the plan forms part of the council's policy framework, the Committee will be providing further advice on the draft plan, which will continue to be developed during 2021. The final plan will be adopted by the county council.

A white rectangular sign with a green border and a green base, mounted on two black posts. The sign features the Lincolnshire County Council logo, which includes the word 'Lincolnshire' in a large, bold, black font, 'COUNTY COUNCIL' in a smaller, black, sans-serif font below it, and a stylized green flower icon to the right. Below the logo, the slogan 'Working for a better future' is written in a green, cursive font.

Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL
Working for a better future

MENTAL HEALTH UNIVERSAL OFFER AND COMMUNITY BASED MODEL

Adults and Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

"That the Mental Health Universal Offer and Community Based Model be endorsed."

- January 2021

Lincolnshire has received national funding to transform mental health services and has tested new models of care for people of all ages with moderate to severe, long term mental health problems, in four accelerator sites: Boston, Gainsborough, Grantham and Lincoln South. The funding has helped to develop new dedicated support for people with a personality disorder; and provided support for those returning to the community from mental health rehabilitation services. It has also integrated dedicated mental health workers in primary care networks and neighbourhood teams, not as a separate service or team, but as a constituent part of the existing teams, which already included GPs, social care, emergency services, substance misuse workers and third sector providers. Based on progress at accelerator sites, it is anticipated that by 2023/24 there will be countywide integrated mental health teams, rehabilitation teams and a personality disorder service.

The **Adults and Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee** congratulated all those involved in developing this initiative, as an excellent example of partnership working between the council and the NHS, and looked forward to these innovative service models being extended across Lincolnshire in the coming years. The Committee also welcomed the digital offer for mental health, which had received excellent feedback from users.

CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES REVIEW

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

"The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board provided feedback on the emerging draft IMT model to be taken into consideration by officers as the work progressed." – March 2021

The Corporate Support Services Review Project was established as part of the council's Transformation Programme to support informed decision making around the future delivery of services in the current Corporate Support Services Contract, which had been in place since April 2014 and would reach its natural conclusion in March 2024.

Regular updates have been brought to the **Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** to report progress and seek the views of members on the way forward. The Board supported the scope of services included within the Corporate Support Services Review Project being limited to those services currently delivered by Serco and acknowledged that the single Business Process Outsourcing type provider was coming to an end and would likely be replaced by a number of specialist providers for future services.

Regarding the principles and rationale of the draft IMT model under development, the Board recognised the need to shape requirements to what the market offered. Off the shelf solutions would be introduced where appropriate, but where customised solutions would be considered, the Board requested to be informed of the risks and consequences, as customised solutions would be more expensive and likely to be riskier than off the shelf solutions. As IMT is a major part of the Serco contract, the Board recommended that change and exit should be phased to maintain stable service delivery. The Board will continue to monitor and provide feedback on this project as it progresses.

County Offices, Lincoln

OTHER SUCCESSES

COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION – HIGHWAY OBSTRUCTION: WEST STREET, BARKSTON

Councillors have an opportunity to raise a matter of local concern using the 'Councillor Call for Action' procedure. This is rare, as it can only be used as a last resort and when all other possible means of resolution have been tried. After initial advice from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, the **Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee** considered a 'Councillor Call for Action' on highway obstruction in West Street, Barkston, near Grantham, which had been submitted by the local county councillor. After considering several options such as physical or legal parking restrictions, road widening, or the provision of parking areas, the Committee agreed to request further information and later recommended two proposals, the introduction of a H bar and increased signage, to the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT to resolve the matter.

PATHWAY PLANS FOR CARE LEAVERS

Corporate Parenting Panel

"That the Pathway Plan, the process and associated documentation be endorsed." – September 2020

A review of the individual experiences of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transitioning into Adult Services was undertaken by the Transitions Scrutiny Panel in 2019. One of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel was the need to review the Pathway Plans for Care Leavers so that the structure of the document would be more useful in meeting the needs of young people, truly capturing their voice, tracking their progress and planning for their future.

The **Corporate Parenting Panel** was pleased to see that the revised Pathway Plan for Care Leavers had now been separated into two parts, the first of which was about the young person, their voice and their wishes; and the second part was to capture an on-going assessment and analysis of needs. The revised Pathway Plan and assessment documentation were being audited, and the Panel was pleased to hear that the initial findings had been positive. Feedback from staff and young people was that the new document was more flexible and easier to complete. Fewer young people were resistant to engage in the process of Pathway Planning, and staff believed that the document provided a better framework for discussions to help capture peoples wishes, feelings and actions.

The Panel agreed that the work undertaken on the revised Pathway Plan was an example of where the scrutiny function had been important and made a difference.

WORKING GROUPS

Committees can establish working groups to work in a less formal way either working independently or in collaboration with council officers. These working groups have responded to national consultations, reviewed existing policies and looked to develop new policies in conjunction with officers.

SUPPORT TO FARMERS

Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee

In February 2021 the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee identified the local agricultural sector and support to Lincolnshire farmers as a potential topic for a scrutiny review, especially in the light of the uncertainty surrounding the outcome and content of the proposed Agricultural Bill currently going through Parliament.



The Committee established a working group to identify some key lines of enquiry for a potential scrutiny review. The working group met in March 2021 and agreed that a potential scrutiny review should examine:

- the impact of the introduction of the Agriculture Act 2020 on Lincolnshire farmers;
- 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;
- what skills and training provision is required for agricultural businesses; and
- ways of supporting and encouraging farms 'Going Green' in line with the Lincolnshire Green Master Plan.

These key lines of enquiry were developed into a proposed terms of reference for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANELS

The council has two scrutiny panels to undertake 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. These reviews culminate in a final report with recommendations which are then presented to a meeting of the council's Executive.

REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

A review of overview and scrutiny was completed in May 2020 by **Scrutiny Panel B**, which made eight recommendations. Four of these recommendations were endorsed by the Executive, as they fell under its remit. These included the involvement of external organisations, including large contractors, at committees; and recording satisfaction with the level of support for the overview and scrutiny function from the council's officers.

In June 2020, the County Council approved a revised *executive – scrutiny protocol* which further aligned the protocol to the statutory guidance, and also emphasised the need for early involvement of overview and scrutiny committees, and other good practice. Where there were deviations from the guidance, they were also approved by the County Council.

DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SCRUTINY REVIEW

Developer Contributions help to ensure that the impacts of development are appropriately mitigated and that the right infrastructure is in place to ensure that the needs of current and future communities are met.

In September 2020, the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place, with the backing of Group Leaders, asked **Scrutiny Panel A** to carry out an urgent short review of Developer Contributions to see how the county council could maximise the benefits for local communities from such contributions.

The Scrutiny Panel recognised that a more joined up approach with the district councils would enable more collaborative working to maximise the benefits to local communities. This would be even more crucial if the proposals for Developer Contributions in the 'Planning for the future' White Paper were introduced, which could see local authorities receiving much lower levels of funding in future.

The Scrutiny Panel identified that there was a need for councillor training on Developer Contributions and more engagement by councillors in the planning process; a 'One Council' centralised system needs to be developed to request, record and monitor Developer Contributions across the council which should then improve the Section 106 income received; and a need for appropriate lines of accountability and strategic oversight of Section 106 agreements.

The review also identified the importance of Lincolnshire County Council setting a clear vision for the future of the county and of communicating that view to the government, local planning authorities, developers, and the public.

The Executive Councillor for Commercial and Environmental Management and the Executive Councillor for Economy and Place accepted the six recommendations contained in the final report from Scrutiny Panel A which aim to address the issues identified.

CONTACT US

If you have any questions regarding the overview and scrutiny process, or any of the work we have undertaken then please get in touch with one of the officers listed below.

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- Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
- Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee
- Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee
- Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee
- Corporate Parenting Panel

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Email: Scrutiny@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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