

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021-22



FOREWORD

I am delighted to present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2021-22. The report looks 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.

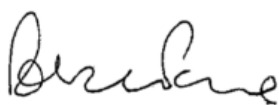
2021/22 has been the first full year of being able to hold face-to-face formal council meetings again, but we have still been embracing hybrid working by using Microsoft Teams for most of our informal meetings. There was a new cohort of councillors elected to the council in May 2021 and I am pleased to see that 92% of non-executive councillors have been engaged in overview and scrutiny during 2021-22, up from 78% in 2020-21.

During 2021/22, 54 formal scrutiny committee meetings were held, and 78% of all formal decisions were considered by a scrutiny committee prior to them being made, which is up from 65% last year. Key achievements where overview and scrutiny has made a significant contribution include:-

- supporting the new extra care housing developments;
- recommending changes to the Customer Strategy and accompanying action plan;
- advising on the development of the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone;
- appraising the impact and costings of the North Hykeham Relief Road highways scheme; and
- responding to the NHS consultation on the Lincolnshire Acute Services Review.

Looking forward, in 2022/23 we will see the outcomes of the current scrutiny reviews on Town Centre Improvements and Lincolnshire Agricultural Sector Support. Recommendations will be sent to the Executive on how these two important areas for Lincolnshire's economy can be supported further to develop and thrive.

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.

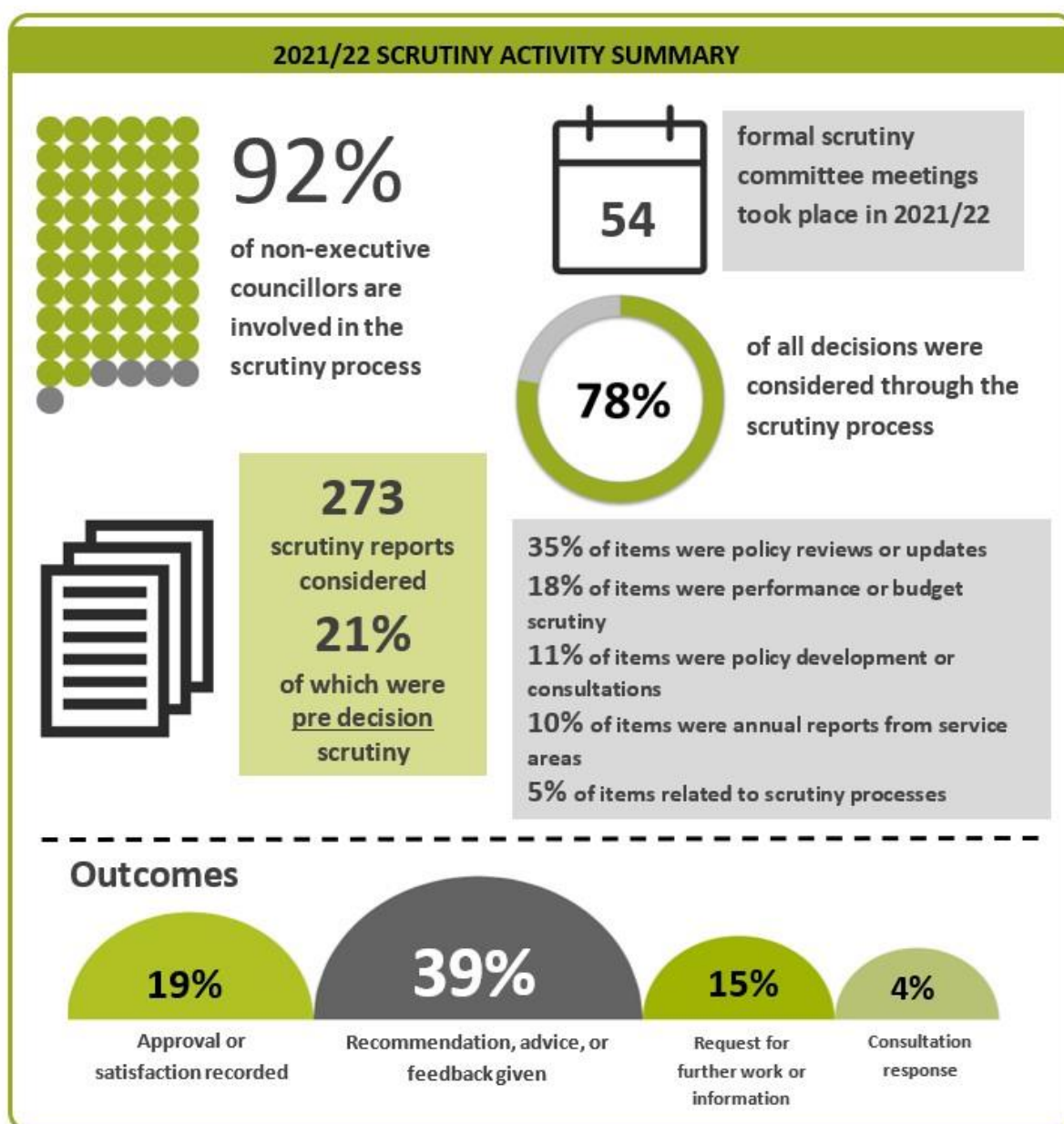


Councillor Robert Parker
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

INTRODUCTION TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Overview and scrutiny is the process whereby non-executive members 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

EXTRA CARE HOUSING

Adults and Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

“That the recommendations to the Executive for the extra care housing scheme at Prebend Lane, Welton, be supported.” - October 2021

Residents in extra care housing can live in a home of their own and be connected to their local community. They can be supported to live independently and benefit from a personalised package of care and on-site support. Residents also have opportunities for social and community activities. In October 2021, the **Adults and Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee** welcomed a proposed extra care housing scheme in Welton, in partnership with LACE Housing Ltd, as part of programme of extra care developments across Lincolnshire.

In March 2022, De Wint Court in Lincoln, which was approved in July 2019, was opened, providing 50 one-bedroom and 20 two-bedroom apartments. In this case the county's partners are the City of Lincoln Council and Homes England. De Wint Court has a wellbeing



Official opening of Lincoln's new De Wint Court Extra Care facility

suite, a restaurant, a hair and beauty salon and a communal garden. There is also a guest suite, which can be booked for visiting relatives. Residents' changing needs can be accommodated with variations to their on-site care and support.

A further proposed extra care scheme at the Hoplands site in Sleaford, in partnership with North Kesteven District Council, was approved in February 2021.

The committee will continue to receive reports on extra care housing developments.

CHILDREN IN CARE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

“That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee unanimously agreed to support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Children’s Services, Community Safety and Procurement for the use of £1.5m of allocated council capital funding from the Residential Children's Home Capital Programme to invest in two new children's homes in Lincolnshire” - November 2021

The Children in Care Transformation Programme has been developed in response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Children's Services. It will provide additional resource and capacity to respond to the pressures on the placement marketplace and availability and cost of external placements. In addition, the availability of in-house foster placements has reduced, as carers have had to self-isolate or enquiries from prospective foster carers have not progressed further. The ambition of the Transformation Programme is to ensure that the right help is provided to the right children at the right time and for the right duration. In September 2021, the **Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee** supported the six workstreams identified in the Children in Care Transformation Programme to address these challenges.

The Residential Capital workstream is focussed on the creation of two or three new mainstream children's homes. In November 2021, the committee welcomed the proposal for two new additional children’s homes as part of the first stage for increasing in-county placements and was pleased to hear that a third new children’s home could be developed in the future. The two new children’s homes in Lincoln and East Lindsey would provide additional capacity to place children in care within Lincolnshire and deliver a forecasted annual saving of £561,000 by reducing the number of out-of-county placements. The committee also supported the proposal for the provision of a new children's home in Lincoln through the relocation of existing short break services from Strut House at St Catherine’s to refurbished residential accommodation at St Francis Special School, and the alteration of Strut House to form a new four-bed children's home for children aged 6 to 12. The Lincoln children’s home is planned to be open from September 2022, with the second home opening from September 2023.

The committee is looking forward to receiving a future report on the provision of a second new children’s home in East Lindsey and will continue to monitor the work being undertaken as part of the Children in Care Transformation Programme.

SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE FOOD ENTERPRISE ZONE

Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee

"That the recommendations to the Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor for Resources, Communications and Commissioning) and the Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning for the construction of a managed workspace building (the Hub) be supported." – July 2021

The South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone offers the opportunity for a high-quality business environment to be developed, where the continued growth of the Agri-tech sector in South Lincolnshire will be fostered. The scheme already includes the University of Lincoln's Food Centre of Excellence building where there is a high level of interest in the development plots being offered as part of phase one. This links closely to the infrastructure works which includes highways improvements on the A17 and A151. Within this scheme, the construction of a Hub building will help to unlock large scale economic growth in the rural area of Holbeach and across southeast Lincolnshire by providing new purpose-built office and workshop space for new, start-up businesses and small enterprises. This will create a sustainable and suitable environment for those businesses to become well established. In addition, it is expected to create business growth opportunities for the supply chain of the agricultural sector located in South Holland and the wider region.

The Environment and Economy Scrutiny

Committee unanimously supported the construction of a managed workspace building on the council owned Plot 12 of the South Lincolnshire food enterprise zone and hoped that the new development would encourage greater use of the port of Boston stimulating further business and economic activity in that area as well.



The new Hub building at the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone

The committee also referred to key environmental features such as biodiversity and renewable energy beyond the minimum statutory requirements for the development. It welcomed the opportunity to look at alternative power solutions which may be more environmentally friendly as part of phase two and gaining further access to a greater parcel of land.

The committee will continue to monitor the development of the South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone.

LOCAL FLOOD INCIDENT MANAGEMENT - DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AND DISTRICT COUNCILS

Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee

"That the Local Flood Incident Management - draft Memorandum of Understanding between LCC and district councils be received." – February 2022



In 2021 Lincolnshire County Council and its partners had put in place new arrangements to help manage the impacts of flooding events which had local impact but may not have reached the broader trigger thresholds that caused larger scale and well-rehearsed multi-agency emergency response to be put into operation. A Memorandum of

Understanding was drafted as part of this process and shared with district councils. This aimed to clarify and describe the resources and responsibilities of partner authorities in the event of a localised incident where wider multi-agency arrangements are not triggered; outlined processes and procedures in this event, including the enhanced communication and liaison arrangements put in place during 2021; and showed how these arrangements fit into the broader multi-agency plans that are already well-rehearsed and practiced. This Memorandum of Understanding incorporated comments and suggestions for amendments offered by district councils.

The **Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee** was pleased to receive this report which gave greater clarity in relation to emergency responses and financial responsibility amongst partners. Furthermore, the committee received assurance that a robust plan was being developed to ensure effective communication to the public.

The committee will assess how well these new arrangements have worked if triggered by a future flooding event.

LINCOLNSHIRE ACUTE SERVICES REVIEW

Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire

"That the committee's final response to the consultation on the Lincolnshire Acute Services Review be unanimously approved." - January 2022

The **Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire** responded to the local NHS's public consultation on proposals for four hospital-based services:

- (1) creating integrated community and acute beds in place of the existing acute beds at Grantham and District Hospital;
- (2) the replacement of the accident and emergency department at Grantham and District Hospital with an urgent treatment centre;
- (3) establishing a centre of excellence for hyper-acute and acute stroke services at Lincoln County Hospital; and
- (4) establishing a centre of excellence for planned orthopaedic surgery at Grantham and District Hospital, with only unplanned and complex surgery at Lincoln County Hospital and Pilgrim Hospital, Boston.

All four proposals, part of the Lincolnshire acute services review, were considered by the committee between October and December 2021 and by a working group in January 2022. The committee accepted the arguments in the pre-consultation business case on the need for change in each case and the committee also supported proposal (1). However, the committee was not convinced that proposals (2), (3) and (4) were right for the people of Lincolnshire. The reasons for the committee's conclusions included concerns on travel and transport; the recruitment and retention of staff; and impacts on neighbouring health systems.



Lincoln County Hospital

The committee is expecting Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group to make decisions on the future of these services on 27 April 2022 and these decisions will be reviewed by the committee.

NORTH HYKEHAM RELIEF ROAD

Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee

"That the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee records its unanimous support for the recommendations to the Executive to deliver the North Hykeham Relief Road scheme." – March 2022

The North Hykeham Relief Road, previously known as the Lincoln Southern Bypass, is the last major highway scheme contained within the Lincoln Integrated Transport Strategy and also the last element of a complete ring road around the greater Lincoln urban area comprising both Lincoln and North Hykeham.

The ring road comprises four sections of carriageway: the Lincoln Western Relief



Plans for North Hykeham Relief Road

Road, the Lincoln Northern Relief Road, the Lincoln Eastern Bypass, and the North Hykeham Relief Road, and also forms part of the Lincolnshire Coastal Highway. The North Hykeham Relief Road has been a long-term aspiration of the county and district councils, and the principle of a relief road has been developed as part of several strategies and policy plans covering the Lincoln area for many years. The committee was consulted on the recommendations made that enabled the pre-construction stages to be implemented in a controlled manner.

The **Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee** unanimously supported the recommended actions to be implemented, which included approval to award Balfour Beatty, under the SCAPE Framework, a two-stage design and build contract for the delivery of the North Hykeham Relief Road. The committee requested more information around the impact of high inflation rates on costings and was satisfied that any cost overrun would be factored in through other various forms of funding and bids that could be explored. The committee was pleased to see that the North Hykeham Relief Road would be a dual carriageway, with cycling provisions which would be of great benefit to residents and those travelling through the area. Nevertheless, the committee requested assurances around having a robust communication strategy that ensured residents and landowners remained informed at all stages and that road closures would be communicated promptly. After raising points around heritage value and archaeological screening of the area, the committee was pleased to hear that early indicators suggested that although there will be finds, they are unlikely to be as significant as those found at the Lincoln Eastern Bypass and the team is working closely with the Heritage Team for the duration of the works.

The committee will monitor the delivery of the North Hykeham Relief Road through the quarterly performance reporting on major highways schemes.

CUSTOMER STRATEGY

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

“That the Board support the recommendations to the Leader of the Council to approve the adoption of the Customer Strategy 2021-2024” – August 2021

The Customer Strategy has been created to support the achievement of the Corporate Plan ambition to provide good value council services. The strategy and supporting action plan seek to engage, listen, and respond to the council’s customers and involve them in designing the council’s processes and services to better meet their current and future needs.

The **Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** welcomed the strategy which was

aimed at the council’s customers and was pleased with the style of the strategy due to being a well laid out and easy to read document. The Board recommended that the photographs included in the strategy should be relooked at to ensure that they

reflected the diverse nature of Lincolnshire's communities, and new graphics were subsequently requested based on this feedback for including in the strategy.



County Offices, Lincoln

The Board also recommended that the wording in the action plan should be relooked at as it was too corporate in the language used in some places for a public facing document. The Board was pleased to hear that the action plan will continue to be refined and developed as the strategy is implemented, and this feedback would be taken into account as part of this process.

The implementation of the Customer Strategy is one of the current projects being delivered through the council’s transformation programme. This project is working to achieve the council’s vision of delivering strong, joined up services that are designed to ensure the council is able to meet its customers’ current and future needs. The Board is regularly monitoring the progress and outcomes from the council’s transformation programme and the implementation of the Customer Strategy will continue to be reviewed by the Board through these progress updates.

ADOPTION AND PUBLICATION OF THE DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2021-2024

Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee

"That the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee unanimously support the recommendation to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement to approve the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024." – December 2021

The Domestic Abuse Bill received royal assent on 29 April 2021 as the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, creating new statutory duties for tier one local authorities from 1 April 2021. The Act introduced a number of changes including a legal definition of 'domestic abuse' that recognised children as victims in their own right; a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to stand up for survivors and life-saving domestic abuse services; and a legal duty on councils to fund support for survivors in 'safe accommodation'. In addition, through the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, funding was allocated to all tier one and tier two local authorities in order to ensure local areas could respond to the new duties in relation to accommodation-based services. Lincolnshire County Council was allocated £1.4 million for 2021/22 and each district council was also allocated slightly different amounts in the region of £32,000.

The **Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee** unanimously supported the approval of the Domestic Abuse Strategy and its publication by January 2022. The strategy summarises the national and local context in relation to domestic abuse, sets out the shared ambition and key priorities for the Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Partnership in tackling domestic abuse, and outlines the key areas of action over the next three years, including the new statutory duties in relation to accommodation-based services.

The committee was pleased to see that reporting of domestic abuse and data collection were featured in the strategy and that there was acknowledgement that people who have disabilities, both physical and otherwise, are at risk of domestic abuse. The committee welcomed the support structures in place for staff working in this particular area, including mental health support, and was pleased to hear that the commissioned service offered one-to-one provision and regular supervision not only in relation to workload but also in regard to their emotional and well-being needs.

The committee will continue to review the work being undertaken to tackle domestic abuse and will be consulted on the recommissioning of the domestic abuse services in July 2022.

OTHER SUCCESSES

FOSTERING PERMANENCE

Corporate Parenting Panel

"That the report be accepted as an accurate overview of the in-house matching activity of the service in relation to efforts made to secure permanence for Children in Care." – March 2022

Fostering Permanence seeks to ensure that every Child in Care has a long-term plan which prepares them for leaving care and entering adulthood. There are a range of options for permanence, inside and outside of the care system. All these seek to deliver good outcomes, giving children security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging to ensure future positive life chances. Permanence options for children include returning home to their families; living with kinship (family/friends and connected persons) carers, including special guardians; living with adoptive families; living with long-term foster carers; or living in residential care.

The **Corporate Parenting Panel** was pleased to hear that Lincolnshire remained focussed on meeting the needs of all Children in Care and supporting them to have long term stability and reach their full potential. In-house matching activities is aimed at bringing together the opportunity for those that know the children to present a profile of them, which has been developed using the Valuing Care approach. This looks to achieve the optimum 'match' between children and carers, which often depends on the 'chemistry' between them and on the latter's understanding of the experiences of each child and their unique traits, needs and characteristics.

The Panel also welcomed the detailed reference to the story of "Ellie" and her journey through Lincolnshire's foster care service, acknowledging that many Children in Care have experienced childhood trauma prior to entering the service. The Panel welcomed every opportunity to promote and encourage permanence and stability through long-term foster placement and other means that were best achieved by matching children with their future foster families.

The Panel is looking forward to receiving further updates on the work being undertaken to achieve permanence and stability for Lincolnshire's Children in Care.

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.

In 2021 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board requested each scrutiny committee propose topics for in-depth reviews to be carried out in the new council term. The scrutiny committees put their individual proposals forward and following detailed examination of the priority level of each, it was agreed that the initial reviews allocated to Scrutiny Panels A and B were Town Centre Improvements and Lincolnshire Agricultural Sector Support.

TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

Scrutiny Panel A

“High streets can be lively, dynamic, exciting and social places that give a sense of belonging and trust to a community” (The Portas Review, 2011)

The purpose of this review is to consider how Lincolnshire County Council could develop its leadership and support Lincolnshire's town centres and high streets to maximise existing opportunities, to achieve economic sustainability, to recover from the pandemic and to help stimulate a visitor economy as well as to support job creation in town centres.

Scrutiny Panel A was established in December 2021 and commenced the Town Centre Improvements Review in January 2022. To date the Panel has received evidence from officers, external partners and key stakeholders in relation to:

- the role and impact of the council in the town areas
- placemaking and identifying community assets - barriers and opportunities for our high streets
- Lincolnshire Extensive Urban Survey - how we are building an understanding of how our towns have developed
- Traffic Regulation Orders – a picture across Lincolnshire
- policy updates in relation to the Levelling Up White Paper.

The review is due to be completed in January 2023.

LINCOLNSHIRE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR SUPPORT

Scrutiny Panel B

“Our landmark Agriculture Act will transform the way we support farmers.” (George Eustice, Environment Secretary, 2020)

The purpose of this review is to closely examine the impact of the introduction of the Agriculture Act 2020 on Lincolnshire farmers. It relates to 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



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; 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; and 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.

The review seeks to consider how Lincolnshire County Council could develop its leadership and support to the agricultural sector in Lincolnshire.

Scrutiny Panel B was established in December 2021 and commenced the Lincolnshire Agricultural Sector Support Review in January 2022. To date the Panel has received evidence from officers, external partners and key stakeholders in relation to:

- broadband coverage across rural areas
- farm sector types (e.g., dairy, livestock, arable and vegetable/fruit growing etc.) and number of holdings
- county farm estates.

The review is due to be completed in January 2023.

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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