



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

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	20 October 2023
Subject:	Potential Topics for Scrutiny Review by Scrutiny Panel A

Summary:

On 28 September 2023, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board requested each overview and scrutiny committee to consider whether it has a topic that would benefit from an in-depth scrutiny review by Scrutiny Panel A. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is due to evaluate the suggestions at its meeting on 21 December 2023.

This Committee is requested to consider whether it would wish to make a suggestion for a potential scrutiny review topic to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Actions Required:

To consider the request from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for a suggestion for an in-depth scrutiny review by Scrutiny Panel A, bearing in mind the following criteria (as detailed in Appendix A):

- (a) Would the proposed review topic add value?
- (b) Is the proposed review topic of concern to local residents?
- (c) Is the proposed review topic a priority for the Council or partner agency?
- (d) Would the proposed review topic avoid duplication with any other reviews or actions?
- (e) Is the proposed review topic unlikely to be affected by new legislation or guidance in the coming year?
- (f) Is the review topic sufficiently focused to be completed within an appropriate timescale?

1. Scrutiny Panel A and Scrutiny Panel B

Scrutiny Panel A and Scrutiny Panel B have recently completed their respective reviews of Town Centre Improvements and Lincolnshire Agricultural Sector Support, which have each been presented to the Council's Executive. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, which is responsible for allocating topics, has already assigned the topic of Traffic Management in Lincolnshire to Scrutiny Panel B as its next review, and is seeking a topic for Scrutiny Panel A to undertake.

As has previously been reported, Scrutiny Panels conduct their reviews 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 Panels undertake their reviews in accordance with the terms of reference and timetable determined for each review by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

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.

These two scrutiny panels provide an opportunity for scrutiny councillors to consider a particular topic in 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.

2. 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.

3. Role of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is responsible for making decisions about 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.

4. Composition of Scrutiny Panels

Each scrutiny panel may comprise up to eight members including its chairman and vice chairman appointed by the County Council. 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.

5. Role of Overview and Scrutiny Committees – Approval of Final Report

As stated above, when each scrutiny panel completes its 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.

6. Commentary from the Executive Director / Lead Officers

The Executive Director of Children's Services has suggested the following two topics for consideration by the Committee:

- **Young Carers**

Young Carers' rights were strengthened under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014. Since this time the service has been integrated within Children's Services Early Help, whilst also maintaining support to partners in identifying and supporting young carers and their families. The service also works collaboratively with Adult Services and Public Health. Caring is a significant factor in the lives of many Lincolnshire families, with an estimated 7,000 young carers in the County.

Since the Covid-19 Pandemic, identification of young carers has increased significantly and the support they receive has had to adapt to the changing circumstances of family life. Some children have begun caring for the first time and others have had their caring role change

or increase during lockdowns. Our own staff and schools have responded to the additional challenges posed by Covid-19 restrictions.

Media and social media coverage of the issues for young carers has increased nationally and locally. As well as the challenges faced by young carers, Lincolnshire has tried to maintain a positive message to young carers and our young carers have been proud to tell us about their roles.

Our young carers participation group is going from strength to strength; and our young people, their families and our staff, would value the opportunity to tell their stories, and be recognised by councillors for the positive contributions they are already making. There is however more for us to do.

We need to ensure all young carers know where to access information and support for themselves and their families. In particular, we recognise that children and young people caring for family members with mental health problems, or who misuse drugs or alcohol, are less likely to identify as a young carer or access support. We also know that early identification of support for young carers at the point of diagnosis of their parents or carers would ensure need is met early and our engagement with wider partners, in particular GPs, would enable this to happen consistently.

We would like Scrutiny to consider whether the balance of awareness raising both within the Local Authority, and with partners and communities, is appropriate; and whether service provision both face to face and virtual is accessible and relevant to those who need it most.

- **Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

Having sufficient workforce numbers to deliver our services is a key aspect of successful delivery to our communities. Children's Services have prioritised recruitment and retention and have through their workforce development group implemented a variety of innovative and creative approaches, focusing particularly on areas such as Social Work, Children's Health and Residential Services to ensure we have the right people in the right place at the right time.

We would like Scrutiny to consider the work done to date and our ongoing plans for continuing to address workforce recruitment and retention challenges and feed back any further suggestions for improvement.

7. Conclusion

Following the decision by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 28 September 2023, this Committee is being asked to consider whether it wishes to suggest a scrutiny review topic, for the Board to assign to Scrutiny Panel A in December. In responding to the Board, the Committee may wish to be mindful of the criteria set out in Appendix A to this report.

8. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Scrutiny Prioritisation - Prioritisation Toolkit

9. 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

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