



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

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
Date:	30 November 2023
Subject:	Proposals for Scrutiny Review by Scrutiny Panel A

Summary:

At its meeting on 28 September 2023, the 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 committees considered this request at their meetings in October and November 2023.

This report enables the Board to consider an evaluation of all the potential topics for scrutiny reviews that have been identified by the overview and scrutiny committees and to agree which review should be undertaken by Scrutiny Panel A.

Actions Required:

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is invited:

- (1) to agree the topic for an in-depth scrutiny review to be undertaken by Scrutiny Panel A, taking into consideration the priority matrix at Appendix A.
- (2) to agree the draft terms of reference for the scrutiny review as set out in Appendix B, subject to finalisation by Scrutiny Panel A for subsequent approval by the Board.

1. Background

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 now being invited to allocate a topic for Scrutiny Panel A to undertake.

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.

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.

Establishment of a Scrutiny Panel

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.

Each Scrutiny Panel will have up to eight members including the Chairman and Vice Chairman. The membership should be politically inclusive and all non-executive councillors (and added members for education reviews) are eligible. Nominations for membership of the Scrutiny Panels will be sought from the leader of each political group.

Identifying Potential Scrutiny Review Topics

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

Following consultation with the Council's overview and scrutiny committees, a number of potential topics for a scrutiny review by Scrutiny Panel A have been identified and are set out below:

- **Young Carers**
- **Children's Services Workforce Recruitment and Retention**
- **Physical Exercise in Communities and Schools**
- **Vapes**

For each of these potential topics, sufficient information was provided to develop draft terms of reference which are set out at Appendix B to the report.

Once assigned to Scrutiny Panel A, the terms of reference will be finalised by Scrutiny Panel A for subsequent approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Prioritising Topics for Scrutiny Reviews

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 Overview and Scrutiny Management Board's scrutiny prioritisation toolkit has been applied to all the suggested topics for a scrutiny review to produce a priority matrix which is set out at Appendix A.

The Council's Policy Unit has been consulted on the proposals and has supported the prioritisation of topics for consideration by the Board through the addition of local and national policy context as part of the priority matrix.

2. Conclusion

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is asked to agree a potential topic for an in-depth scrutiny review to be undertaken by Scrutiny Panel A, taking into consideration the priority matrix attached at Appendix A, and agree the draft terms of reference attached at Appendix B for the review to be progressed, subject to finalisation by Scrutiny Panel A for subsequent approval by the Board.

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	Priority Matrix
Appendix B	Draft Terms of Reference for Potential Topics

5. 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 and Matthew Garrard, Head of Policy, who can be contacted on 07500 075211 or by e-mail at matthew.garrard@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

Priority Matrix

	Does the topic affect a number of people living, working and studying in Lincolnshire?	Is the issue strategic and significant? (Very High, High, Moderate, Low)	Is there evidence to support the need for scrutiny that can add value? (Very High, High, Moderate, Low)	Is the Scrutiny timely or duplicating other work?
Young Carers	Caring is a significant factor in the lives of many Lincolnshire families, with an estimated 7,000 young carers in the County.	<p>High This is significant issue and is linked to a key aim of the Council's Corporate Plan to "help our young people achieve". With so many acting as young carers it is essential that the right support is in place to ensure that young carers can achieve and are aware of and can access the support available to them.</p> <p>As the pandemic comes into the endemic stage there is evidence that 40% of young carers feel that their mental health has suffered.</p>	<p>High The proposed review explores relatively new implications for an area that the County Council can make a significant difference.</p> <p>Members can add value by analysing whether current practices go far enough and to consider if service provision both face to face and virtual is accessible and relevant to those who need it most.</p>	With a growing evidence base of the effect of the pandemic on young carers, a review would provide a timely opportunity to explore these issues.
Children's Services Workforce Recruitment and Retention	Nationally children's services recruitment and retention continue to be a challenge. This is also the case within Lincolnshire as the Council seeks to continue to provide an 'outstanding' rated service to the residents of Lincolnshire.	<p>High The Council's corporate plan places emphasis on all children having the best possible start in life.</p> <p>We continue to be rated 'outstanding' but face challenges in recruitment and retention and in order to maintain this standard of service over the long-term, these issues must be addressed.</p>	<p>Moderate Members can seek to identify how the County Council could improve promotion of its 'outstanding' children's services to encourage prospective candidates into the sector. Members could also engage in discussions with current staff to consider their concerns, to see if LCC can internally improve any of its practices.</p> <p>With recruitment and retention proving challenging across the sector there may be limits to how far the County Council can address these issues locally.</p>	Recruitment and retention continue to be challenging across the sector and a review would be timely with the potential to add value.

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Physical Exercise in Communities and Schools	Physical activity is important for a healthy life and can benefit residents physical and mental wellbeing across the whole county.	<p>Moderate</p> <p>The Council's Corporate Plan is ambitious for residents to have rewarding, active and healthy lifestyles. This is supported through the priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.</p> <p>A major contributor to wellbeing is physical exercise, and Lincolnshire experiences a lower level of physical activity than England for young people and adults. 65.4% of adults are active within the county compared to the England figure of 67.3%. For children and young people, the Lincolnshire figure stands at 46.3% compared to 47.2% for England.</p>	<p>Moderate</p> <p>Members can seek to identify methods in which physical activity take up could improve and consider if there is anything that the Council can do to improve accessibility to physical activity areas.</p> <p>Other partners including the voluntary and community sector and Active Lincolnshire make important contributions in this space.</p>	Lincolnshire experiences lower than average figures for those engaging in regular physical activity. The review would allow Members to explore the issues around this without duplication.
Vapes	<p>Vaping is a growing issue within Lincolnshire.</p> <p>One in four retailers in Lincolnshire retailers sold vapes to minors during test purchases. According to data compiled by Lincolnshire Trading Standards, 27 per cent of underage test purchases resulted in a minor being sold a vape.</p>	<p>Moderate</p> <p>The Corporate Plan aspires for residents to be able to live healthy lifestyles irrespective of their background. Whilst smoking has for some time been on the decline, vaping has increase year on year, particularly amongst young people.</p> <p>Whilst the health implications of vaping are yet to be fully understood, the NHS's current policy is that vaping is not completely harmless.</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Members can consider locally if there is enough accessible information about the current known risks of vaping and consider whether further local campaigning and information distribution is needed.</p> <p>Members could also consider if more what actions, if any the County Council could take to combat the sale of illicit vapes.</p>	This issue continues to increase in prominence with the number of users increasing all the time. The intelligence from trading standards indicates local challenges to be addressed therefore a review would be timely.

Draft Terms of Reference for Scrutiny Review of *Children and Young People: Young Carers*

Purpose of the Review

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

Terms of Reference

1. Following the increased identification of young carers since the Covid-19 pandemic, to consider ways in which the Council could effectively support the needs of those new and old to the role of caring in Lincolnshire.
2. To examine ways in which the Council can develop further media coverage of the issues to ensure all young carers know where to access information and support for themselves and their families.

Benefits of the Review

This review will help to identify how Lincolnshire County Council can support the increasing number of young carers in the county. Benefits of the review include:

1. Enhancing the Council's awareness of the increase of young carers since the Covid-19 pandemic and how 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.

2. Identification of the need to develop further support for the increasing number of young carers within Lincolnshire.

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.

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.

3. To review the need to have tailored methods of accessible information and support for young carers as each young carer's situation is unique.
4. 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.

Exclusion from the Review

This review will focus on the development of Lincolnshire County Council's tailored support to young carers due to the increase following Covid-19. All other types of business outside the sector will be excluded from the review.

Completion Dates

TBC

**Draft Terms of Reference for Scrutiny Review of
*Children and Young People: Children's Services Workforce Recruitment and Retention***

Purpose of the Review

To review the support provided to the workforce delivering essential community services. This scrutiny topic intends to tackle the challenges of recruiting and retaining staff.

Terms of Reference

1. To consider ways in which the Council could effectively improve the retention and recruitment of the workforce within this service area.
2. To explore ways in which the Council could improve the understanding and awareness of the 'outstanding' Ofsted rated service, to promote the environment in which current staff and prospective staff work/will work in.

Benefits of the Review

This review will help to identify that a problem exists in terms of both recruiting, retaining and developing staff. An exercise could gather feedback and information that can be used to address this issue effectively in the future. Benefits of the review include:

1. Enhancing the Council's awareness of the reasons for the recruitment and retention challenges faced in this area.

Lincolnshire County Council became one of only six local authorities across England after inspection in April 2023 to receive a second consecutive outstanding rating from Ofsted.

2. Identification of the need to develop further planning and strategy to combat the issue.

In terms of children's social workers, 83% of authorities said they were experiencing difficulties recruiting staff, with 72% saying retention was a problem.

2022 statistics showed that a third of local authorities cite staff recruitment and retention as a challenge, showing 5,400 social workers left the profession in 2022, a 9% rise on the previous year and the highest number since 2017. Vacancies are also at a record high of 7,900, a 21% rise in 2021.

1. To review the concerns of current staff and those apprehensions that may prevent prospective staff from entering the sector.

2. Promoting the Children's Services sector around the county and creating the conditions whereby people want to come and work for the service and convincing those who currently work in the sector, to stay.

Exclusions from the Review

This review will focus on how Lincolnshire County Council can recruit and retain staff in the Children's Services sector where the organisation has faced issues. All other types of business outside the sector will be excluded from the review.

Completion Dates

TBC

**Draft Terms of Reference for Scrutiny Review of
*Children and Young People: Physical Exercise in Communities and Schools***

Purpose of the Review

To review and consider how physical exercise amongst young people can be increased in the educational environment and within social settings.

Terms of Reference

1. To consider ways in which the Council can encourage young people to exercise.
2. To explore ways in which the Council can work with schools and communities to create environments that increases participation in physical activity and ensuring all are aware of the positive effects that physical activity can have on an individual.

Benefits of the Review

This review will help to identify why there is currently low levels of physical exercise within the younger community in Lincolnshire. Benefits of the review include:

1. Enhancing understanding around the possible options that could be utilised to encourage more young people to participate in physical exercise.

People who have a physically active lifestyle have a 20-35% lower risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease and stroke compared to those who have a sedentary lifestyle. Regular physical activity is also associated with a reduced risk of diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and colon/breast cancer and with improved mental health.

In Lincolnshire in 2021/22, 46.3% of children and young people were classed as physically active. This was below the regional figure of 49.6% and the number for England of 47.2%.

2. Acknowledging the positive effect on mental health that increased physical exercise can have.

A recent done by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health found that running for 15 minutes a day or walking for an hour reduces the risk of major depression by 26%.

Exercise can help provide: sharper memory and thinking, higher self-esteem, better sleep, more energy and stronger resilience.

3. The promotion across the county to improve understanding and willingness amongst young people to participate in physical activity.

Exclusions from the Review

This review will focus on how Lincolnshire County Council can promote and encourage more young people to participate in physical activity. All other types of business outside the sector will be excluded from the review.

Completion Dates

TBC

Draft Terms of Reference for Scrutiny Review of *Public Protection and Communities: Vapes*

Purpose of the Review

To review and consider the increased usage of vapes within Lincolnshire particularly amongst young people. To also look at the increased sale of illicit vapes and branding, and how this can be combated.

Terms of Reference

1. To consider ways in which the Council can help support the prevention of the sale and supply of illicit vapes.
2. To explore ways in which the Council could improve the understanding particularly amongst young people around the potential risks of vaping and why the uptake in vaping has been so large.
3. To consider whether Lincolnshire County Council can lobby or push for a change in how these products are branded and promoted.

Benefits of the Review

This review will help to identify the reasons behind the increased uptake in vaping. Benefits of the review include:

1. Considering the reasons behind the increased usage of vapes particularly among young people and exploring what Lincolnshire County Council can do to combat this.

In March/April 2023 the proportion of children experimenting with vaping had grown by 50% year on year, from one in thirteen to one in nine. In 2023 20.5% of children had tried vaping, up from 15.8% in 2022 and 13.9% in 2020 before the first COVID lockdown. The majority had only vaped once or twice (11.6%), while 7.6% were currently vaping (3.9% less than once a week, 3.6% more than once a week) and the remainder (1.3% in 2023) saying they no longer vape.

The proportion of those who have never smoked but who have tried vaping is 11.5%. However, eight out of ten children have never smoked, so this amounts to nearly half (48%) of children who have ever tried vaping. 62% of those who have never smoked but have vaped have only tried once or twice, while 70% current vapers have also tried smoking.

2. Identifying the need for the Council to work with partners to crackdown on the sale of illicit vapes and understanding the safety concerns of vapes that are illegal.

Shops selling illegal vapes and the sale of vaping products to children are the top threats on the UK's High Streets, according to Trading Standards officials.

In a survey of more than 400 Trading Standards officers, 60% said their main worries were shops selling illegal vapes which are potentially unsafe, and the sale of any vaping products to under-18s, which is also illegal.

As of a March 2023 in Lincolnshire, 5,417 unsafe products were removed from the market between April and December 2022. 5,062 were non-compliant vapes.

3. The Council can help raise awareness county-wide of the potential risks of vaping and the lack of trusted evidence currently around the implications of usage.

The NHS's current policy is that vaping is not completely harmless. They only recommend it for adult smokers, to support quitting smoking and staying quit.

Exclusions from the Review

This review will focus on how Lincolnshire County Council can address the issue of vaping in Lincolnshire and possible methods to aid the reduction of users and prospective users, particularly amongst young people. All other types of business outside the sector will be excluded from the review.

Completion Dates

TBC