

Allerdale
borough council

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Annual Summary 2019 - 20

“Allerdale – a great place to live, work and visit”

Foreword

I am writing this while we are still involved in a most serious health crisis and learning to live with its effects and after-effects, including finding new ways for committees to operate. This means our year did not conclude as anticipated and we have to trust the coming year will deliver effective ways for Council business to continue to serve the needs of our communities.

As a result of the current situation, we are still to conclude three task and finish groups from last year. We also have a substantial work programme for the year ahead, as a result we can expect to have a busy year in scrutiny going forward.

During this year we have continued to operate the co-chair arrangement for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, until the beginning of March 2020 when my co-chair during the year, Councillor Alan Pitcher, was asked to join the Executive.

I believe the Committee has had an interesting, useful and challenging year incorporating for example a councillor call for action through to the development of a response to the climate change resolution presented to Council.

I look forward to our next year being equally stimulating.

Councillor Iain Greaney

Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Committee membership 2019-2020

The Committee consists of twelve members. During 2019-2020 the members were:

Councillor Antony Annison*	Councillor Michael Heaslip
Councillor Carmel Bell	Councillor Joe Holliday
Councillor Nicky Cockburn	Councillor Adrian Kirkbride
Councillor John Cook	Councillor Michael Little*
Councillor Malcolm Grainger	Councillor Carni McCarron-Holmes
Councillor Iain Greaney	Councillor Alan Pitcher*

*Withdrew from committee during the year

Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met nine times during 2019/20, of which eight were committee business with one call in meeting. Two meetings were cancelled as a consequence of the lockdown resulting from the Covid-19 crisis. The Committee considered a wide variety of subjects over the course of those meetings and this year included a significant focus on the Council's approach to climate change.

At the meeting on 28 June, the new Committee members were introduced and agreed the work programme for the year.

At the meeting on 26 July, the Committee considered a Councillor Call for Action relating to Flimby Cemetery, and set up a task and finish group looking at the procurement process for waste collection and recycling, street cleaning and grass cutting.

At the meeting on 6 September, the Committee considered the housing strategy refresh and set up the budget task and finish group.

At the meeting on 11 October, the Committee considered the motion on climate change referred by Council for the committee to consider. The Committee also considered the draft Council Strategy and set up a task and finish group to consider future waste management services.

At the meeting on 15 November, the Committee considered the report of the investigation resulting from the Councillor Call for Action, and the proposed performance management framework.

At the meeting on 6 December, the Committee considered a report on the proposal to set up a community lottery in Allerdale and looked at the Quarter 2 performance and finance reports.

At the meeting on 11 January, the Committee heard from the Head of Place Development about the programmes being established to support the revitalisation of the town centres of Workington and Maryport.

At the meeting on 6 February, the Committee considered a call-in relating the decision to bring the management of markets provision in house.

At the meeting on 21 February, the Committee adopted the report of the climate change task and finish group as its report to submit to Council, and considered the Strategic Commissioning and Procurement Strategy.

Call-in meeting

There was one call-in meeting during the municipal year 2019/20 related to the Executive decision taken on 15 January to approve the in-house option for managing and operating the Council's market service (from 1 June 2020). A vote was taken on the motion, 5 voted in favour of letting the decision stand, 1 against and 0 abstentions.

Councillor call for action

The Committee received a councillor call for action in respect of Flimby cemetery, arising from concerns about footpath access to the new part of the cemetery. The meeting in July agreed a motion to conduct an investigation which was duly carried out. The results of the investigation were reported to the meeting in November and further representations were heard from Councillors and members of the public. The Committee agreed a motion that officers review maintenance options and have appropriate maintenance plans in place for cemeteries, and officers undertake a business case exercise in order to establish a possible budget bid for 2021/22 relating to the introduction of new footpaths in the new part of the cemetery.

Task and Finish Group activity

The Committee had agreed in previous years that each task and finish group will include at least one person from the Committee as a member and the chair of the group, however the aim is always to involve the wider membership with all members encouraged to take part in task and finish groups according to their interest/knowledge.

The groups which met during the year are summarised below:

Climate Change Task and Finish Group

A motion presented to Council on 25 September 2019 resulted in the Committee being asked to develop an approach for the Council to respond to the issue and report back within six months.

The Committee appointed a task and finish group which met almost weekly from inception and invited both council staff with specific expertise and a range of interested and qualified people to offer their contributions to the process through a workshop. The workshop was informal in nature and participants were encouraged to share their views with members of the Task and Finish Group who were all in attendance. Councillor Sally Lansbury took the group through the Climate Change motion adopted by full Council in September 2019 and then explained the steps that were being taken to address the commitments in that motion and the proposed next steps in developing the Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and ultimately to go back to full Council, stressing the importance of the workshop and to the need for the Council to develop a genuine partnership with external stakeholders in order to be able to address the challenge of climate change.

The themes had been grouped and set out in four work stations and the participants were invited to circulate around each of the work stations, engage in discussions with representatives from the task and finish group and give their views on the proposed next steps as well as identifying any gaps and possible sources of information.

The group consisted of Councillor Nicky Cockburn (chair), Councillor Allan Daniels, Councillor Janet Farebrother, Councillor Iain Greaney, Councillor Sally Lansbury, Councillor Elaine Lynch, and Councillor Alan Tyson.

Future Waste Management Task and Finish Group

This group was established to monitor and scrutinise the alternative arrangements once the decision to terminate the contract had been taken. The work of the group included monitoring all the management arrangements, issues for staffing including transfers and proposals for service operations upon transfer. The group were satisfied with the arrangements for the new company, Allerdale Waste Services, and intended to meet after operations had begun at the start of April 2020, however the lockdown prevented this occurring.

The group consisted of Councillor Alan Pitcher (chair), Councillor Sally Lansbury, Councillor Elaine Lynch, and Councillor Alan Tyson.

Procurement Task and Finish Group

The group focused on the procurement process followed in the selection of contractors for waste collection and recycling, street cleaning and grass cutting. The group heard from officers involved throughout the process, to be concluded with reviewing the lessons learned however at the time of writing this is in abeyance due to the lockdown being imposed.

The group consisted of Councillor Carmel Bell (chair), Councillor Iain Greaney, Councillor Malcolm Grainger, and Councillor Sally Lansbury.

Budget Task and Finish Group

The group considered papers with summaries of bids for recurring growth, non-recurring growth, recurring savings, non-recurring savings, salary changes, all of which had been considered at a series of budget review meetings. For each of these meetings the group consisted of the Leader and Deputy Leader, the Chief Executive, the Head of Finance and the Portfolio Holder for finance together the Head of Service and Portfolio Holder for each service area. The bids were considered and determined then colour coded as blue (items which we are required to finance), then green for bids agreed by the group, amber for those bids which were requiring further information to be provided pending approval, and red for bids which were being rejected.

Alongside these documents the task and finish group was provided with an overall summary comparing the 2019/20 revised budget and the proposed 2020/21 budget including all the blue, green and amber bids, and predictions for both 2021/22 and 2022/23 based on current predictions and knowledge. Overall the group was satisfied with the process, concluding it would approach members of the Executive and the Leader in particular to discuss aspects of the proposed budget.

The group consisted of Councillor Alan Pitcher (chair), Councillor Michael Heaslip, Councillor Elaine Lynch, and Councillor Andy Semple.

The future work programme

The work programme is reviewed by the Committee at each business meeting to ensure that it remains up to date and any changing circumstances or additional emerging topics are considered.

More information on the scrutiny function, including agendas, minutes, ongoing review work, and Councillor details can be found on the Council's website at www.allerdale.gov.uk