

Appendix C: Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee – Annual Activity Update 2023/24

The Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee has delivered an updated scrutiny programme providing challenge and oversight as a 'critical friend' in line with its constitutional duties.

Membership and Leadership

Whilst there have been some membership changes in-year, the current membership of the committee is shown below:

- Chair: Councillor Gill Mercer (June to January) now Councillor Graham Lawman (elected 5 February 2024);
- Vice Chair: Councillor Kevin Watt (June to January) now Councillor Philip Irwin (elected 25 March 2024);
- Members: Councillors Valerie Anslow, Melanie Coleman, Emily Fedorowycz, Macaulay Nichol (joined February 2024), Mark Pengelly, Geoff Shacklock and Lee Wilkes.

The cross-party membership of nine councillors has facilitated good and challenging scrutiny and pre-scrutiny during this period.

Terms of Reference

The committee's terms of reference were agreed at its first meeting on 27th. June 2023 and encompass the following key areas for review and scrutiny:

- | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|------------------|---------|
| • Transport | Regeneration | Neighbourhoods | Housing |
| • Highways | Climate | Community Safety | Leisure |
| • Tourism | Social Housing | Enviro-crime | Waste |

Scrutiny Activities and Outcomes

Appendix A - Table of meetings, activities and outcomes

A table highlighting the topics, date, brief description, outcome and type of scrutiny is provided as Appendix A.

Pre-decision Scrutiny

Please find details below of the pre-decision scrutiny decisions and the Executive decisions made.

1. Home to School Transport Policy – 27th. June 2023

Recommendation made by Scrutiny to Executive:

- (i) The format and wording of the policy be updated to make it easier to understand;
- (ii) Free transport to linked schools be ceased, for new applications, unless it is the nearest suitable school with places, with effect from September 2024.
- (iii) New applicants pay the full cost of the fare for those not eligible for free transport, but, those pupils currently within the system pay a suggested fare of £760, rising potentially over a three-year period from September 2024, with a caveat that consideration be given to the cost implications on older pupils undertaking examinations and to multiple children travelling from the same household;
- (iv) The 'guaranteed seat' option be removed, and applications received before the May deadline be offered on a first-come first-served basis.

Executive decision:

Agreed:

- (i) that the format and wording of the policy be updated;

- (ii) the discretionary service provision for all age groups be retained subject to:
 - (a) The guaranteed discretionary seat for early applicants to be withdrawn from all *new* applications for transport for September 2024 onwards. In doing so, discretionary seats will only be available on a first-come-first-served basis if there is spare capacity on transport arranged for pupils eligible for free transport.
 - (b) From September 2024, increase the fare contribution to £760/seat/year to reduce the subsidy provided by the council, funded from general taxation. This will apply to existing passengers as well as new applicants.
- (iii) the fare be reviewed annually in line with the council's fees and charge's structure.
- (iv) cease to provide free transport to linked schools unless it is the nearest suitable school with places. This would only affect net applications from September 2024 onwards.
- (v) the approval of the final draft of the policy be delegated to the Executive Member of Highways, Travel and Assets in consultation with the Executive Director for Place and Economy.

2. Kettering Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Kettering – 28th. August 2023

Recommendation made by Scrutiny to Executive:

- (i) The findings of the public consultation on the Kettering LCWIP be noted;
- (ii) The comments made by the committee be noted;
- (iii) The Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets be requested to recommend to the Executive that the routes identified in the Kettering KCWIP be progressed as soon as possible.

Executive decision:

Agreed:

- (i) the findings of the public consultation analysis for the Kettering Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) be noted;
- (ii) the Draft Kettering LCWIP be adopted as a council policy document;
- (iii) prioritisation of routes within the Kettering LCWIP should form the basis of work to develop preliminary designs for the routes within existing budgets to form the basis of future funding bids. Any further external funding secured as a result will form the basis of future report(s) to Executive.

3. Cornerstone Art Gallery – 28th. August 2023

Recommendation made by Scrutiny to Executive:

- (i) the report and presentation be noted;
- (ii) the comments of the committee be noted;
- (iii) the chair would inform the Executive of the urgent need to progress the repairs to the library roof to enable Cornerstone to open.

Executive decision:

Agreed

- (i) That Council approve a budget of £6,807,000 to be added to the Capital Programme to fulfil the Executive's longstanding commitment to replace the Kettering Library roof and to commit to repair the roof of the Art Gallery.
- (ii) Delegated authority be given to the Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism, in consultation with the Director of Public Health and the Director of Place and Economy, to procure the necessary works to replace the Kettering Library roof and undertake any actions required to deliver the project within the approved financial envelope.

Council approved the above on 7th. December 2023.

4. Household Waste Contract – 31st. October 2023

Recommendation by Scrutiny to Executive

- (i) approve the commencement of the procurement of the council's future HWRC contract;
- (ii) the operation of the HWRC facilities in North Northamptonshire be delivered under an outsourced operating mode for a duration of 15 years;
- (iii) an extension to the current lease for the Corby HWRC for three years to enable a review to be undertaken for alternative provision in the area;
- (iv) that officers undertake a review of alternative provision of a HWRC facility in the vicinity of Corby and to consider the sourcing of a new lease for, or purchase of, new or existing land, or utilisation of existing council owned land, dependent on which provided the greatest value to both the council and delivery of the service;
- (v) that delegated authority be given to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place & Economy, the Executive Member for Finance and the Executive Director for Finance, to take any further decisions and/or actions required in connection with the procurement and award of the HWRC contracts, without the need to return to the Executive.

Executive decision:

Agreed

- (i) That the procurement of the council's future Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) contract commence.
- (ii) that the operation of HWRC facilities in North Northamptonshire will be delivered under an outsourced operating model for a duration up to 15 years.
- (iii) the extension of the current lease for the land for Corby HWRC be agreed by 3 years to enable a review to be undertaken on alternative provision for the area.
- (iv) officers undertake a review of alternative provision at Corby to consider the sourcing of a new lease for, or purchase of new or existing land, or utilisation of existing council owned land, dependent on which provides the greatest value to both the Council and delivery of the service, on which to provide a HWRC facility in the vicinity of Corby.
- (v) Delegated authority be given to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, in consultation with Executive Director for Place & Economy, Executive Director for Finance and Performance and the Executive Member for Finance, the authority to take any further decisions and/or actions required in connection with the North Northamptonshire procurement process and award of the HWRC contracts, and property related transactions without the need to return to the Executive.

5. Local Development Scheme – 31st. October 2023

Recommendation by Scrutiny to Executive

Resolved that the committee recommend that the Executive be presented with the Local Development Scheme for adoption.

Executive decision:

Agreed that the LDS be adopted.

6. Communities Strategy & Strategic Investment into the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector – 5th. February 2024

Recommendation by Scrutiny to Executive

- (i) The Communities Strategy be approved;
- (ii) Approval be given to the proposed VCSE Strategic grants framework and the proposed VCSE Infrastructure support arrangements for the period 2024-2027.

Executive decision:

Agreed

- (i) the Communities Strategy be approved;
- (ii) approval of the VCSE Strategic Grants framework and the proposed VCSE Infrastructure Support arrangements for the period 2024-2027.
- (iii) Delegated power be given to the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up, in consultation with the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing to procure the new VCSE Infrastructure support contract and undertake any activities required to deliver this strategy.

7. The future of Kettering Leisure Village – Options Review - Additional 25th. March 2024

Recommendation made by Scrutiny to Executive:

- (i) Officers be thanked for the considerable piece of work undertaken and for supporting the ongoing business growth and continuing work with PLMS;
- (ii) the position regarding the legal ownership of the KLV site arising from the nature of the council's and PLMS's leasehold interest be noted;
- (iii) the Options Review by Max Associates be noted and that such options predicate the council having full control of the site, which is not currently the case;
- (iv) the council is not able to take control of the site, nor the day to day running of KLV, under any of the options in the Options Review, due to the nature of its legal interest;
- (v) should the site return to the full control of the council, it was noted that, in the short term, an external contractor would be the most sustainable solution as recommended within the Options Review; there would also be considerable budgetary pressures whilst the wider management model for the council's entire leisure portfolio was considered;
- (vi) it be noted that KLV was of great importance to North Northamptonshire and the local community and that PLMS should be encouraged to engage with users, councillors, stakeholders and parish and town councils;
- (vii) any business plan, financial projections and costings along with other data from PLMS be reviewed on a regular basis.

Executive decision:

Awaiting decision by Executive.

In-depth Reviews

Developer Contributions Scrutiny Panel

- Established in October 2023 by the committee;
- Dedicated panel of six members who have met on three occasions, 4th. January 2024, 29th. February 2024 and 4th. April 2024, with dedicated support from Stacey Wylie, Senior Project Manager – Developer Contributions, Rob Harbour, Assistant Director - Growth & Regeneration, Ian Achurch, Head of Economic Growth & Sustainability and Carol Mundy, Senior Democratic Services Officer, to consider the management of developer contributions, also known as Section 106 contributions.
- Report on the findings will be presented to the Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 30th. April 2024 by Stacey Wylie.

Effective Practices

- Cross-party representation and leadership structure

Conclusion

The committee has dealt with several reports as aligned to its terms of reference. It has provided pre-decision scrutiny, and strategic reviews, making recommendations to drive improvement, ensure value for money and aim for best results for the residents of the authority. It has undertaken some monitoring of contracts and made recommendations for continued improvement. As a new committee it has taken a while to establish itself, but, it now feels that the committee is making good and effective decisions, particularly in relation to pre-scrutiny.

Appendix C1 | Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee summary of meetings, topics and outcomes

Topic	Date	Brief Details	Outcome	Scrutiny Type
Home to School Transport Policy	27 June 2023	To consider updating the policy to make it easier to read and to make financial savings	Recommendation to Executive	Pre-decision
Kettering Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan	28 August 2023	Following a consultation exercise to consider the routes and recommendations	To request that the Executive Member, Highways, Travel and Assets to recommend the KLCWIP to the Executive	Pre-decision
Cornerstone (Art Gallery)	28 August 2023	To consult on the need to fund urgent repairs to the roof of the Library	Recommendation to Executive	Pre-decision
Local Development Scheme	31 October 2024	To consider the updated NN Local Development Scheme	Recommendation to Executive	Pre-decision
Setting up of Developer Contributions Scrutiny Panel	31 October 2024	To agree the terms of reference and membership of the panel	Approved by committee	Decision
NNC Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	31 October 2024	To agree the EVI Strategy for publication	Approved by committee	Decision
Review of Household Waste Recycling Centre April 2025	31 October 2024	To consider the future operation of the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC)	Recommendation to Executive	Pre-decision
Highways Contract Provider	19 December 2023	To review the performance of existing contract and make recommendations regarding any areas of concern	Approved by committee	Decision
Progress of Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs)	19 December 2023	To consider how the SUEs were progressing	Approved by committee	Decision
Communities Strategy & Strategic Investment into the Voluntary,	Additional 5 February 2024	To consider the strategy	Recommendation to Executive	Pre-decision

Community and Social Enterprise Sector				
Bus Service Improvement Plan	Additional 5 February 2024	To consider the improvement plan and develop an updated plan to incorporate the additional funding received	Approved by committee	Decision
Surplus Assets (incl. exempt report)	Additional 5 February 2024	To consider the disposal of under-utilised assets	Approved by committee	Decision
The future of Kettering Leisure Village – Options Review	Additional 25 March 2024	To consider the options review	Recommendation to Executive	Pre-decision
Waste Management – Three Year Plan	Additional 25 March 2024	To consider the progress made to date and the future delivery of the service in the East Northants area	Approved by committee	Decision
Asset Rationalisation Scrutiny Panel	Additional 25 March 2024	To consider the findings of the scrutiny panel	Approved for consultation with unions and staff	Decision
Findings of Developer Contributions Scrutiny Panel (Section 106)	30 April 2024	To provide feedback and recommendations on the items listed for this meeting	To review and provide feedback/recommendations	To be confirmed but likely to be pre-decision scrutiny.
Carbon Management Plan				
Taxi De-Zoning				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Bus Service Improvement Plan Air Quality Plan 	Additional Meeting date to be agreed, likely to be May-June 2024	TBC	TBC	TBC