

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 10 June 2021

Report number:	CAB/WS/21/025	
Report to and date:	Cabinet	29 June 2021
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Decisions Plan: This item is not required to be included on the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: All wards

Recommendation: It is recommended that Report number: CAB/WS/21/025, being the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be noted.

1. Context to this report

1.1 On 10 June 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held its virtual MS TeamsLive meeting, at which it considered the following items:

1. Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership Monitoring Report (April 2020 to March 2021)
2. Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates
3. Website Working Party Findings
4. Review of Council Markets – Terms of Reference
5. Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2022
6. Work programmes update and Councillor Call for Action Submission

2. Proposals within this report

2.1 **Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership Monitoring Report (April 2020 to March 2021) (Report number: OAS/WS/21/006)**

2.1.1 It was the duty of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee designated under the Police and Justice Act 2006, to scrutinise the work of the Partnership.

2.1.2 The Committee received and **noted** the report, which was presented to the Committee by the Chair of the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP), Councillor Joanna Spicer, and Councillor Robert Everitt, Cabinet Member for Families and Communities.

2.1.3 Over the past year the WSCSP continued to meet and discharge its statutory duties by carrying out an assessment of crime and disorder in the area, delivering the three-year plan and action plan to reflect the priorities of the partnership, and carrying out Domestic Homicide Reviews. Attached at Appendix A to the report, was the WSCSP Plan 2019-2022, which was required to reflect the Suffolk Police and Crime Plan published by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

2.1.4 Based on the outcomes of partnership discussions, the following priorities remained the focus of the WSCSP:

- County Lines.
- Violence against women and girls (including men and boys).
- Hate Crime.
- Prevent.
- Domestic homicide reviews.

2.1.5 The Committee considered the report in detail and asked a number of questions to which comprehensive responses were provided by Councillor

Spicer and officers. Discussions were held on what type of programmes did the Suffolk Rape Crisis offer for male victims; the unusual acronym used to describe “violence against women and girls including men and boys” and domestic abuse which was not just about violence.

2.1.6 Discussions were also held on Public Space Protection Orders, the different types of Orders, how they were enforced and how often they were reviewed; the need for more public engagement around community safety from all the agencies involved; how the WSCSP supported county lines and alcohol and drug user initiatives, and whether there were any statistics to show how initiatives had performed over the years, to which comprehensive responses were provided.

2.2 **Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates (Report number: OAS/WS/21/007)**

2.2.1 The Committee received and **noted** the above report which set out the approach to council tax and business rates debt recovery. The report also informed the Committee on how the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on business rates and council tax recovery, and how the recovery approaches have had to be flexed accordingly during the last year and into 2021 to support residents and businesses.

2.2.2 The report included information on its debt recovery approach; Covid-19 impact on recovery processes and collection; re-starting recovery; comparison of arrears and challenges for 2021, which was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation.

2.2.3 Discussions were held on whether there was likely to be any government intervention and support when furlough and self-employed income support ended in September 2021 to help with genuine hardship which might occur and the impact of income to the council; and how well West Suffolk Council compared with other areas for debt collection due to Covid-19, to which comprehensive responses were provided.

2.3 **Website Working Party Findings (Report number: OAS/WS/21/008)**

2.3.1 The Committee received the above report which set out the findings from the West Suffolk Website Working Party. The Working Party was set up following a work programme suggestion submitted by Councillor Terry Clements.

2.3.2 The Working Party comprised four councillors and met on three occasions to understand data on how the website was used; discuss their experience of using the website and agree an action plan. Between meetings members of the Working Party tested the website, including attempting to undertake the 10 most commonly used website functions

and testing “Find My Nearest”. At its last meeting the Working Party considered progress made on an Action Plan, which was developed during its second meeting (Appendix 2).

- 2.3.3 The Working Party had identified 15 improvements (Appendix 2) as a result of its work, and subject to endorsement by the Committee, these were with officers to progress. Some of the actions had already been completed or were in progress.
- 2.3.4 The Committee discussed the report and asked questions to which responses were provided. In particular, whether there was a requirement in law to have pages on the website in different languages and whether the Council’s website had been created in-house.
- 2.3.5 Discussions were also held on the planning portal, links to other organisations websites and search words (terminology used), to which responses were provided.
- 2.3.6 The Committee **endorsed** the action plan developed by the Website Working Party attached at Appendix 2 to the report, to be implemented with the support of the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities.
- 2.3.7 Councillor Robert Everitt, Cabinet Member for Families and Communities wished to thank Councillor Terry Clements and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for allowing the Working Party to carry out this piece of work and to officers for guiding the Working Party through the process.
- 2.4 **Review of Council Markets – Terms of Reference (Report number: OAS/WS/21/009)**
 - 2.4.1 In November 2020, the Committee reviewed a work programme suggestion form presented by the Chair of the Committee, encouraging a review of the West Suffolk Markets. The purpose of the review was to look at the strategic role of West Suffolk Council, aligning the operation of the markets to the Council’s strategic vision and supporting their development to meet the corporate priorities.
 - 2.4.2 The Group would be supported to find out more about the current market trading environment; engagement would be held with key stakeholders and research undertaken, with a view to then forming a view on the strategic direction of the markets.
 - 2.4.3 The Chair explained that it was important that the Working Group looked at the markets strategically. The proposed five members would need to be committed to the review, and it was about looking at how the Council could sustain markets for the future.

2.4.4 The Committee discussed the report and asked questions to which responses were provided. In particular it was suggested increasing the proposed membership on the Working Group from five to six, so all of the market towns were covered.

2.4.5 At the conclusion of the discussions, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **endorsed** the terms of reference as attached at Appendix 1, subject to increasing the membership to six members, and nominated the following members to sit on the Markets Review Group:

1. Ian Shipp (Mildenhall)
2. John Burns (Haverhill)
3. Marion Rushbrook (Smaller Markets/Clare)
4. Patrick Chung (Bury St Edmunds)

It was also advised that following the meeting, the Chair and officers would speak with Councillor Anderson to see if he wished to be on the Working Group for Newmarket (and if not, seek an alternative member representative for Newmarket), as well as Brandon members to seek a nomination.

2.5 **Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2022 (Report number: OAS/WS/21/010)**

2.5.1 The Committee reviewed and **noted** the latest version of the Cabinet Decisions Plan, covering the period 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2022.

2.5.2 A question was raised relating to the "Public Access to West Suffolk Council Offices" report being considered by Cabinet on 29 June 2021. The Committee asked how the proposals for staff working would interact with public access and staff being in the office to see people, and whether this was covered in the proposed report to Cabinet. Officers explained that the Council was working through the Government's rules and regulations and was looking at various options for the different offices; how people access our services and taking lessons learnt from the past year, which would tie in with the decision made about staff coming back into the offices.

2.6 **Work programme update and Councillor Call for Action Submission (Report number: OAS/WS/21/011)**

2.6.1 The Committee received Report number OAS/WS/21/011, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items, and items currently agreed but had yet to be programmed for 2021 as attached at Appendix 1. It also set out information seeking at least one new member from the Committee to replace Councillor Ingwall-King on the Modern-Day Slavery Working Group, and a Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) form submitted by Councillor Trevor Beckwith on the "Impact of

the Eastern Relief Road and A14 Junction 45 on the Moreton Hall Residential Area”.

2.6.2 The Committee discussed the CCfA and was supportive of including the CCfA into its forward work programme as the issue also impacted on neighbouring wards and acknowledged there was a high level of frustration with resident’s and agreed there was a reputational issue for everyone involved.

2.6.3 The Committee considered the request to nominate at least one new member from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to replace Councillor Ingwall-King on the Modern-Day Slavery Working Group who resigned as a West Suffolk Councillor in March 2021. The Committee felt that Councillor Julia Wakelam who would be replacing Councillor Ingwall-King on the Committee might be interested in sitting on this Group and agreed to defer this item to its next scheduled meeting on 8 July 2021 for further consideration.

At the conclusion of discussions, the Committee:

1. **noted** the current status of topics currently scheduled in its rolling work programme for 2021, attached at Appendix 1;
2. **deferred** nominating a Councillor to sit on the Modern-Day Slavery Working Group until it’s 8 July 2021 meeting; and
3. **accepted** the CCfA for inclusion into its forward work programme.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

3.1 Please see background papers.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

4.1 Please see background papers.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

5.1 Please see background papers.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

6.1 Financial:

Please see background papers.

6.2 Equalities:

Please see background papers.

7. Appendices referenced in this report

7.1 Please see background papers.

8. Background documents associated with this report

8.1 Report number: [OAS/WS/21/006](#) and [Appendix A](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership Monitoring Report (April 2020 to March 2021).

8.2 Report number: [OAS/WS/21/007](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates

8.3 Report number: [OAS/WS/21/008](#) and [Appendix 1](#), [2](#) and [3](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Website Review Group Findings

8.4 Report number: [OAS/WS/21/009](#) and [Appendix 1](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Review of Council Markets – Terms of Reference

8.5 Report number: [OAS/WS/21/010](#) and [Appendix 1](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2022

8.6 Report number: [OAS/WS/21/011](#) and [Appendix 1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#) and [7](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Work programme update and Councillor Call for Action Submission