

Annual Scrutiny Report 2021 to 2022



Introduction



Councillor Ian Shipp

Chair of the Overview and
Scrutiny Committee 2021 to 2022



Councillor Ian Houlder

Chair of the Performance and Audit
Scrutiny Committee 2021 to 2022

The West Suffolk Scrutiny Annual Report 2021 to 2022 highlights the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee over the past year.

This report presents some of the accomplishments and highlights of the scrutiny committees which have a vital role in helping the authority to continue to improve and strengthen. The following report aims to give a flavour of the work undertaken during 2021 to 2022 and to confirm to Council it has operated to deliver its role in line with its terms of reference.

The work has been varied and we have done our utmost to make it transparent, relevant, and insightful. We would like to thank councillors, officers, partners, and members of the public who have taken part in this important work and hope you find this annual report both informative and interesting.

We hope it may also encourage you to follow the progress of the scrutiny function at West Suffolk Council and you are welcome to find out more about our work on the Council's website.

Roll and approach to scrutiny at West Suffolk

West Suffolk has two such committees.

The primary purpose of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to improve the delivery of services provided to West Suffolk communities. It does this by reviewing and scrutinising decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of Council functions. It also undertakes specific reviews to look at new and evolving policies or an issue affecting the area and makes recommendations for improvements to the Council or Cabinet.

The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee has the specific role of monitoring the budget and overseeing the performance of services by considering a range of information such as performance indicators, inspection reports and action plan monitoring. It approves the Council's Statement of Accounts and is also the Council's audit committee. The Committee also carries out the Treasury Management function.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Key themes during 2021 to 2022

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee focus over the year is set out below:

Activity	Outcome
In June, the committee received the outcomes and recommendations from the West Suffolk Website Review Working Group.	The committee endorsed the action plan developed by the West Suffolk Website Review Working Group setting out 15 improvements identified for implementation, with support from the Portfolio Holder for Families and Communities.
Activity	Outcome
In July, the committee heard from the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive on the Draft West Suffolk Annual Report 2020 to 2021.	The committee made a number of suggestions for incorporation into the final document, for the Cabinet's consideration.
Activity	Outcome
In September, the committee held a Councillor Call for Action hearing on the Impact of the Eastern Relief Road and A14 Junction 45 on the Moreton Hall Residential Area.	The committee formulated a number of recommendations for Suffolk County Council's consideration. These would be monitored by the committee through regular updates from Suffolk County Council, with the first in January 2022.
Activity	Outcome
In November, the committee heard from the Cabinet Member for Housing on their responsibility for strategic health.	The committee supported linking strategic health and housing together and building health more into the planning process.

Activity	Outcome
In January 2022, the committee received a progress report from the West Suffolk Markets Review Working Group.	The committee noted the work carried out by the Review Group to date. It was expected that the findings and recommendations from the Review Group would be presented to the committee and Cabinet in summer 2022.
Activity	Outcome
In January 2022, the committee received a progress report on the Councillor Call for Action recommendations from Suffolk County Council.	The committee was disappointed with the responses received from Suffolk County Council and made a number of further recommendations, which were endorsed by Cabinet.
Activity	Outcome
In March 2022, the committee received a report on Homes for Life, setting out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How many Homes for Life were being built; and - What is specifically being built for the aging population. 	The committee noted the new building regulation standards which replaced "homes for life" being utilised across West Suffolk for the purpose of having accessible and adaptable dwellings – specifically M2(2) and M4(3). All developments were expected to meet this as a minimum standard.
Activity	Outcome
In March 2022, the committee considered a member suggestion to develop anti-idling options.	The committee agreed to progress the development of anti-idling enforcement options with the aim of making recommendations to Cabinet.

Other areas of focus

The committee has a key role in scrutinising community safety. In June 2021, the committee received the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership Annual Report from the Chair of the Partnership, Councillor Joanna Spicer.

Councillor Margaret Marks, the council's representative on the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee updates the committee on a quarterly basis on the work undertaken by the Health Scrutiny Committee, giving members the opportunity to discuss issues raised and where necessary, give their support on proposals.

Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

Key themes during 2021 to 2022

The Performance and Audit Scrutiny's programme continues to be impacted by Covid-19 given the dramatic impact the pandemic has had on West Suffolk Council's financial position.

The committee has received quarterly financial and performance reports to understand how the pandemic continues to impact on the achievement of West Suffolk Council's objectives, recognising the need for the council's priorities to change during the recovery phase.

The committee has evaluated quarterly and annual financial resilience reports to understand how the pandemic continues to impact on West Suffolk Council's longer term financial position.

The committee continues to assess how the pandemic has impacted on the work of West Suffolk Council's internal and external audit services, assessing whether, in the environment, sufficient assurance can be gained to provide audit opinions for the council.

The committee has evaluated the development of West Suffolk Council's budget, including both the annual and medium-term financial budget, to understand the longer-term effects of the pandemic on the council's finances to 2026.

The Health and Safety Sub-Committee has evaluated what steps West Suffolk Council is taking to protect staff and the public during the recovery phase of the pandemic, in terms of both physical equipment and measures and the wellbeing of staff.



Scrutiny on a page

Over the past year, the scrutiny committees have collectively considered the following:

West Suffolk Council Annual Report 2020 to 2021	Internal Audit Annual Report and Mid-year Report	Arrangements for appointment of external auditors from 2023-2024
Community Safety Partnership Annual Report	Internal Audit Plan	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report 2020 to 2021
Reports on the activity of Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee	Year-end performance out-turn	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) – Annual Report and Review of RIPA Guidance
Consideration of Councillor Call for Action	Quarterly performance reports	Health and safety summary report 2020 to 2021
Monitoring the Cabinet Decisions Plan	Annual financial resilience report	Health and safety incidence reports
Air quality and anti-idling campaign update	Financial resilience strategy	Health and safety measures to support COVID-19
Quarterly financial resilience reports	Annual Governance Statement	Health and safety policy amendments
External Audit Plan	Statement of Accounts	Health and safety training report
External Audit Annual Report and Annual Audit Letter	Sustainable medium term budget reports	Impact of COVID-19 on staff wellbeing

The year ahead

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has committed to three reviews during the next year:

- Final report and draft recommendations from the West Suffolk Markets Review Working Group.
- A review of West Suffolk Council's approach to modern day slavery (this review is presently awaiting new government guidance).
- A review of 20mph zones and their signage and work with Suffolk County Council, as the authority responsible for 20mph zones, to understand how councillors could work with their communities to support them through the process.
- To progress the development of anti-idling enforcement options with the aim of making recommendations to Cabinet.

Both committees will also be continuing to evaluate the impact of the pandemic on the council's services and on the council's financial and non-financial performance.

