

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 21 September 2023** at **5.00 pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present **Councillors**

Chair Sarah Broughton
Vice Chair Marion Rushbrook

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| Susan Glossop | Rowena Lindberg |
| Birgitte Mager | Julia Wakelam |
| Andrew Smith | Kevin Yarrow |
| Andrew Speed | Tony Brown |
| Luke Halpin | Dawn Dicker |

Substitutes attending for a full member

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|-----------|-------------|
| Sue Perry | Phil Wittam |
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Councillors In attendance

Mike Chester, Appointed representative on the Police and Crime Panel
Derek Davis from Babergh District Council
Donna Higgins, Cabinet Member for Families and Communities
Victor Lukaniuk
David Taylor, Cabinet Member for Operations

In attendance

Richard Baldwin, Suffolk County Council

234. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Councillor Sue Perry substituting for Councillor Andrew Martin.
Councillor Phil Wittam temporary substitute for Councillor Don Waldron.

235. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beccy Hopfensperger, Aaron Luccarini, Andrew Martin, and Don Waldron.

236. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2023 were confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

237. Declarations of interest

Members' declarations of interest are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

238. Announcements from the Chair regarding responses from the Cabinet to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chair informed members she attended Cabinet on 19 September 2023 and presented the Committee's report from its meeting held on 20 July 2023. As per the minutes confirmed above, the Chair updated Cabinet on the Committee's consideration of its work programme and suggestions for scrutiny; and request for an update on Modern Slavery and CCTV at West Suffolk Council, which were noted by Cabinet and on the Committee's agenda for tonight's meeting.

On 21 August 2023 the first Quarterly Scrutiny Meeting with the Leader of the Council and the Chairs/Vice-Chairs of both Overview and Scrutiny and Performance and Audit Scrutiny took place. A number of items were discussed and as you will see later on under the work programme a new item has been included for the Committee to receive at its November 2023 meeting an update on the progress of the Grass Cutting Review by the Cabinet Member.

239. Public participation

There were no members of the public in attendance on this occasion.

240. Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership Monitoring Report (April 2022 to March 2023)

[Councillor Birgitte Mager arrived at 5.05pm, during the consideration of this item.

Councillor Andrew Speed arrived at 5.07pm, during the consideration of this item]

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

The Committee received report number OAS/WS/23/012, presented by the Councillor Derek Davis from Babergh District Council as the Chair of the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP) at the time of the reporting period, and the Council's Cabinet Member for Families and Communities, Councillor Donna Higgins.

Councillor Davis explained that the report looked back over the previous year's work of the WSCSP for the period April 2022 to March 2023.

During that time, the WSCSP had continued to meet and discharge its statutory duties by:

- Carrying out an assessment of crime and disorder in the area;
- Delivering a three-year plan and action plan to reflect the priorities of the partnership; and
- Undertaking Domestic Homicide Reviews.

The WSCSP action plan was reviewed throughout the year and where appropriate was updated to reflect emerging issues and trends. Based on the outcomes of the partnership discussions the following priorities remained as a focus for the WSCSP:

- Criminal exploitation;
- Violence against women and girls;
- Modern slavery;
- Hate Crime;
- Prevent; and
- Anti-social behaviour.

He then wished to thank all officers for their work on producing the report and during the year.

The Committee considered the report in detail and asked questions to which comprehensive responses were provided by Councillor Davis and officers. In particular discussions were held on the meaning of "Channel"; PREVENT; modern slavery and where the main criminal exploitation hubs were across Suffolk.

In response to a question asked about what the WSCSP was doing in addressing right-wing radicalisation and gang culture, the Committee was advised that the WSCSP continued to organise lectures in schools and to other various groups. The 18 September to 22 September 2023 was PREVENT action week to raise awareness and online information was being provided for teachers and parents to raise protective factors in further education. The Police were more involved in gang culture, which was not an issue in West Suffolk.

In response to a question raised regarding how local councillors could help, the Committee was advised it was about awareness raising and the more awareness raised on the issue of radicalisation and gang culture, the better. Also at a local level, West Suffolk Council sat on the PREVENT Group. A broad range of training was available, which Councillor Davis advised he was happy to share the training packages with Councillors.

In response to a question raised on the allocation of funding and whether the WSCSP was getting better or worse, the Committee was advised it was improving year on year and carried out a needs assessment each year, and a breakdown on budget could be provided. However, it was explained that funding received by the WSCSP was limited and there were no ongoing funding streams. Over the last four years approx. £120,000 had been allocated to WSCSP to tackle the priorities in the self-assessment, including funding for criminal exploitation. Of that approximately £40,000 was used in West Suffolk.

In response to a question on modern slavery in the context of how prevalent it was in West Suffolk, and in what areas to enable further local scrutiny. The Committee was informed it was mainly aligned to criminal exploitation around drugs and young people. The Police held the specific data and the WSCSP could seek to provide data on West Suffolk. The breakdown for Suffolk was 156 incidents, covering the following areas:

- 99 criminality.
- 27 labour forced.
- 17 sexual.
- 11 unknown.
- 2 domestic servitude.

The Chair thanked Councillor Davis for attending the meeting to present the report, and there being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the report subject to comments made during the meeting and requests for further information.

241. **Modern Slavery Update**

The Cabinet Member for Families and Communities presented report number OAS/WS/23/013, which had been an item in the Committee's forward work programme since November 2020, and had not been considered during that time due to the fact that local authorities were awaiting further guidance from central government relating to the preparation and publication of Modern Slavery Statements.

In September 2020 the Home Office had announced that changes would be made to strengthen the Modern Slavery Act 2015, including new reporting requirements for Modern Slavery statements. As of August 2023, this guidance had not been published. Organisations were therefore being advised by government to continue to report under the current requirements.

To support councils to meet their duties, in early 2023 the Local Government Association (LGA) published guidance and a matrix which sets out the ideal standards in local authority modern slavery provision.

Appendix A attached to report number OAS/WS/23/013, provided an assessment of how the council measured up against these standards. Members were asked to note that the LGA guidance was written to support unitary and upper tier authorities, as well as district councils. Therefore, in some instances Suffolk County Council was the more appropriate lead authority, with support from West Suffolk Council.

The Cabinet Member reassured the Committee the council was making good progress against the LGA criteria, but there was a need to update training.

The Committee considered the report and asked questions to which responses were provided.

In response to a question raised about engaging with town and parish councils on modern slavery, the Cabinet Member advised that forums were held with parishes, and this could be included on their agendas as well as

providing them with the LGA link to enable town and parish councils to carry out the exercise themselves.

The Chair of the Committee suggested the working group set up in November 2020 should be disbanded at this point, and if it felt necessary in the future the Committee could establish a working group, which was agreed as sensible way forward.

There being no decision required, the Committee thanked the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities for presenting the update on modern slavery and agreed to disband the modern day slavery working group.

242. **CCTV at West Suffolk Council**

The Committee received a presentation by the Cabinet Member for Operations, which provided an overview of the council's CCTV service, including the services provided, staffing, costs and income, incidents, arrests and equipment, including Hikvision cameras.

The CCTV service was responsible for monitoring over 700 cameras across West Suffolk and some in neighbouring areas. West Suffolk Council had 557 fixed cameras in Brandon; Mildenhall; Newmarket; Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds. These were located in parks; car parks; housing accommodation; sports pavilions; bus stations; toilet blocks; leisure centres; depots; town centres; West Suffolk House; Mildenhall Hub and West Suffolk Operational Hub. Three mobile cameras had also been purchased that could be deployed to areas with an identified crime or anti-social behaviour issue.

It was reported that 99% of all cameras were made by Hikvision and the other 1% by Axis. Hikvision was the biggest CCTV manufacture in the world. It was believed that Hikvision / Dahua was used by approximately 73% of local authorities; 35% of police forces and 63% by schools in the UK. Hikvision cameras had been used by West Suffolk since 2017.

Hikvision was used because it was a technically superior product; HD quality and optical zoom ability; and was much more reliable compared to other manufactures that the council had used. Hikvision also offered their own encoding format which had reduced the council's data storage requirements by up to 50% and were significantly cheaper than their competitors.

None of the council's cameras were directly connected to the internet and were all on a closed network behind firewalls and VPNs. The systems had been penetration tested by the council's third-party ethical hackers within the last year and had passed the hacker's test. Central servers storing data were vulnerability scanned on a weekly basis and patched monthly. The council adhered to the Government Surveillance Camera Code of Practice; secure system installation; storage of data and General Data Protection Regulations / Data Protection.

The Committee was reassured that West Suffolk CCTV security protocols were continually monitored, with security software updates applied and considered safe. Existing camera technology represented best value and Hikvision was currently certified by the Information Commission Office as safe to use.

There was not Government policy on the use of Chinese surveillance equipment. It would cost the Council a significant amount of money to replace all CCTV cameras, estimated to be in excess of £1.5m. There was a potential risk of loss of third-party contracts if new cameras were required due to increased costs. The current situation was being monitored and if there were any changes to legislative policies the Council would act upon them.

The missing patch that the BBC had referenced in a recent Panorama documentary was applied to the council's systems at the end of 2022 by the council's CCTV maintainer after being identified by the penetration testers. Under the council's contract the CCTV maintainer was responsible for ensuring that all cameras were patched as soon as updates were released. Any system would become increasingly vulnerable if updates and patches were not used. Some Local Authorities had decided to find an alternative non-Chinese manufacture when their cameras either needed replacing or new ones were needed. However, the vast majority of councils were awaiting further guidance from Central Government.

The Committee scrutinised the presentation in detail and asked questions to which comprehensive responses were provided. In particular detailed discussions were held on whether the coverage of the cameras was adequate; whether there were enough cameras as unable to monitor in real time; whether staffing levels were adequate to operate the system 24/7, 365 days a year; the location of cameras; body worn cameras; and the replacement of cameras.

In response to a question raised as to whether the council had the capacity to sell extra monitoring services externally, the Cabinet Member advised that the current location of the CCTV control room was at capacity. To expand the current service, more space and at some point, additional staffing capacity would be required.

In response to a question raised about being unable to monitor all screens at the same time, the Cabinet Member explained there were three airwave monitoring units in the CCTV room, which was used by the CCTV operators to liaise with the police headquarters and directly with individual officers to direct units to an incident or be directed by the police to monitor one. The CCTV room was also able to communicate with pubs and shops through a radio system called Shop Watch.

In response to a question raised on how to request a mobile camera unit, the Cabinet Member explained the mobile units could be booked out by local community groups (subject to adherence with the code of practice for surveillance) at a cost, and the council was looking to buy more mobile units.

In response to a question raised about whether the council had looked at where there might be gaps in the lack of cameras and whether town/parish councils could be asked to help in funding more cameras, the Cabinet Member explained the council was reactive and when an issue was identified a review was carried out to identify a solution. There could never be 100% coverage and assets need to be prioritised to higher risk areas.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chair felt when the current Hikvision cameras needed replacing/broken they were replaced by another provider to ensure the council was future proofing itself. In response the Cabinet Member reiterated that one of the issues was how reliable the Chinese made cameras were. The council was awaiting further advice from Government and the current cameras were approved by the British Standards and Surveillance Division, the system was set behind an American manufactured firewall and VPNs, and he wished to reassure members the council was doing everything required.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the presentation provided on the council's CCTV service.

243. Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee - 12 July 2023

The Committee received report number OAS/WS/23/014, presented by Councillor Sue Perry, substitute member on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee, on behalf of Councillor Andrew Martin.

Attached at Appendix 1 and 2 of Councillor Martin's report was a summary of topics discussed at the Health Scrutiny meeting held on 12 July 2023, being:

- Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation NHS Trust Mental Health Services Provision; and
- NHS dentistry provision.

Councillor Perry also updated the Committee on the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Trust mortality rates over the last five years, focusing on reported deaths, which was more difficult for mental health. A report was published in July 2023, and had been referred to the Health Ombudsman which had now led to a statutory public enquiry taking place.

The Committee considered the report and requested that it be kept up to date on progress with dentistry provision.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of Councillor Martin's report from the Health Scrutiny meeting held on 12 July 2023.

244. Suffolk County Council: Police and Crime Panel - 14 July 2023

The Committee received report number OAS/WS/23/015 and Appendix 1, presented by Councillor Mike Chester, one of the council's appointed representatives on the Suffolk County Council Police and Crime Panel.

This was the first time the Committee had received such a report from the Police and Crime Panel and was a way for Committee members to make comments, as appropriate for the appointed representative to then present back to the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel for its consideration.

Councillor Chester set out the context and role of the Police and Crime Panel which was there to act as a critical friend to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

He went on to explain the Crime Panel on 14 July 2023 scrutinised the effectiveness of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions by review actions he had taken under objective 4 of the Police and Crime Plan 2022 to 2025, "work in partnership to improve criminal justice outcomes and enhance community safety".

The Committee considered the report and update from Councillor Chester and asked questions to which responses were provided.

In response to a question raised on the turnover of police officers which was increasing, Councillor Chester advised this issue was discussed at the Panels meeting in July, which it would continue to monitor.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

245. **Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 September 2023 to 31 May 2024**

The Committee received report number: OAS/WS/23/016, which informed members on forthcoming decisions to be considered by the Cabinet for the period 1 September 2023 to 31 May 2024.

The Committee considered the Decisions Plan and did not request any further information on items contained in the Plan.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the 1 September 2023 to 31 May 2024 Decisions Plan.

246. **Work programme update**

The Committee received report number: OAS/WS/23/017, which updated members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2023-2024 (Appendix 1).

The Democratic Services advised the Committee of an amendment to the Committee's work programme for 9 November 2023, in that the Cabinet Member for Leisure was leading on the Grass Cutting Review and not the Cabinet Member for Operations, which the Committee **noted**.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the update and the disbandment of the Modern Slavery Working Group.

The meeting concluded at 6.05 pm

Signed by:

Chair

