

# Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 5 December 2023

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/23/052</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	5 December 2023
<b>Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:</b>	Councillor Sarah Broughton Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Telephone: 07929 305787 Email: <a href="mailto:sarah.broughton@westsuffolk.gov.uk">sarah.broughton@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Lead officer:</b>	Christine Brain Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) Telephone: 01638 719729 Email: <a href="mailto:christine.brain@westsuffolk.gov.uk">christine.brain@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	

**Decisions Plan:** This item is not required to be included in the Decisions Plan.

**Wards impacted:** All wards.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that Report number: CAB/WS/23/052, being the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be noted.

## 1. Context to this report

1.1 On 9 November 2023, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the following items:

1. Review of West Suffolk Council Grounds Maintenance Operations
2. Abbeycroft Leisure Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Group – Findings and Recommendations
3. Suffolk County Council Police and Crime Panel: 6 October 2023
4. Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee: 11 October 2023
5. Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024
6. Work programme update 2024.

A separate report is included on the Cabinet agenda for Item 2 above.

## 2. Proposals within this report

### 2.1 **Review of West Suffolk Council Grounds Maintenance Operations (Report number: OAS/WS/23/018)**

- 2.1.1 The Committee received the above report which asked members to consider and discuss the intended scope (set in paragraph 2 of report number [OAS/WS/23/018](#)) of the Grounds Maintenance Review being carried out by the Cabinet Member for Leisure, and to offer any specific perspective or issues which may help guide the review or should be considered as part of the review.
- 2.1.2 The Council owns or is responsible for a significant amount of public open space in the district amounting to over five hundred hectares. The responsibility for maintaining the grass within these areas' rests with the Landscape Team within the Green Space and Heritage Service in the Operations Directorate.
- 2.1.3 The focus of the review and its report was on the cutting of amenity grass throughout the district. However, grass cutting was just one of the seasonal ground's maintenance tasks performed by the in-house Landscape Team, and it was important to also consider grass cutting and any potential changes in a wider context.
- 2.1.4 The review was also looking at the impact of the cessation of using glyphosate or any other chemicals to treat weeds on land owned by the Council which was instigated from April 2023. This was being considered in conjunction with the approach being carried out by Suffolk County Council for its treatment of weeds on the highway.
- 2.1.5 The Committee considered the report and the intended scope in detail and asked questions to which responses were provided. In particular,

discussions were held on listening to responses from parish/town councils and improving communication; insurance issues; the possibility of some parish/town councils taking on grass cutting in their areas; working more collaboratively with partners; scheduling grass cutting by level of importance; and looking at whether some form of weed killer should be used.

2.1.6 It was suggested that the Review Group should look into the Suffolk County Council's Community Self Help Scheme and the equivalent of the Chapter 42 Safety Training.

2.1.7 At the conclusion of the discussions the Committee **noted** the scope of the Review Group's work subject to the above comment made at paragraph 2.1.2 above.

## 2.2 **Suffolk County Council Police and Crime Panel: 6 October 2023 (Report number: OAS/WS/23/020)**

2.2.1 The Committee received and **noted** the above report and Appendix 1.

2.2.2 Appendix 1 to the report was a summary of topics discussed at the Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 6 October 2023, being:

- The Panel ratified the appointment of Simon Furlong as an Independent Co-opted Member.
- The Panel scrutinised the effective exercise of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) functions by reviewing actions he had taken under Police and Crime Plan Objectives 1.
- The Panel reviewed and commended the PCC's Annual Report 2022 to 2023.
- The Panel questioned the PCC on the 2013 to 2024 financial position.

2.2.3 The Committee considered the report and did not raise any issues.

## 2.3 **Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee: 11 October 2023 (Report number: OAS/WS/23/21)**

2.3.1 The Committee received and **noted** the above report presented by Councillor Andrew Martin, the Council's appointed representative on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee.

Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was a summary of topics discussed at the Health Scrutiny meeting held on 11 October 2023, being:

- Pharmacy provision.

- 2.3.2 The Committee considered the report in detail and asked questions to which Councillor Martin responded. In particular, discussions were held on whether there were any plans on addressing the pharmacy closures; the impact of prescriptions being delivered to your door; the reduction of pharmacies offering services on Sundays and the national shortage of the pharmacy workforce.
- 2.3.3 At the conclusion of the discussions, the Committee **noted** Councillor Martin's report.
- 2.4 **Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024 (Report number: OAS/WS/23/022)**
- 2.4.1 The Committee reviewed the latest version of the Cabinet Decisions Plan, covering the period 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024.
- 2.4.2 The Committee considered the Decisions Plan and did not request any further information on items contained in the Plan.
- 2.5 **Work programme update 2024 (Report number: OAS/WS/23/023)**
- 2.5.1 The Committee received Report number OAS/WS/23/023, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items at attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.5.2 The Committee considered the rolling work programme and did not raise any issues. However, some members raised concerns about the recent increases in service charges, in particular for Havebury Housing tenants, during the cost-of-living crisis which was putting even more pressure on tenants and suggested inviting them to its January 2024 meeting. Concerns were also raised about the disposal of housing units by Flagship Homes in certain wards.
- 2.5.3 It was agreed that officers would brief Councillor O'Driscoll, Cabinet Member for Housing, on these concerns so that he or officers could speak to the Registered Social Landlords and update the Committee accordingly. The outcome of these discussions could also be included as an additional update at the Committee's January 2024 meeting when Cllr O'Driscoll he was due to attend to present the West Suffolk Housing Strategy and Homelessness Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 2.5.4 It was further suggested inviting Registered Social Landlords to a future meeting of the Committee.
- 2.5.5 The Committee **noted** the current states of its rolling work programme, and the Chair agreed to submit a work programme suggestion form,

setting out key lines of enquiry to invite Registered Social Landlord's to its meeting in March 2024.

### **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/23/018](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Review of West Suffolk Council Grounds Maintenance Operations

8.2 Report number: [OAS/WS/23/020](#) and [Appendix 1](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Suffolk County Council Police and Crime Panel – 6 October 2023

8.3 Report number: [OAS/WS/23/021](#) and [Appendix 1](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee – 11 October 2023

8.4 Report number: [OAS/WS/23/022](#) and [Appendix 1](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Cabinet Decisions Plan 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024

8.5 Report number: [OAS/WS/23/023](#) and [Appendix 1](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Work Programme Update 2023