



EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT COVER SHEET

Title of Report:	Chairman of the Scrutiny (Audit & Value for Money Council Services) Committee: Annual Report 2019/20	To be marked with an 'X' by Democratic Services after report has been presented
Meeting of:	Corporate Management Team: N/A	
	Leader and Deputy Leaders: N/A	
	Leader's / Leader of the Opposition's Advisory Group / Independent Alliance Advisory Group: N/A	
	Council: 23rd March 2020	X
	Scrutiny Audit and Value for Money Council Services Committee / Scrutiny Community Regeneration, Environment and Health and Well Being Committee: N/A	



Is this an Executive Decision:	NO	Is this a Key Decision:	NO
Is this in the Forward Plan:	NO	Is the Report Confidential:	NO
If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A LGA 1972:	N/A		

Essential Signatories:

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN THE NAME OF A HEAD OF SERVICE

Monitoring Officer: **Angela Wakefield**

Date Signature

Chief Finance Officer: **Sal Khan**

Date Signature

EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Council

Date: 23rd March 2020

REPORT TITLE:	Chairman of the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee: Annual Report 2019/20
PORTFOLIO:	Leader of the Council
HEAD OF SERVICE:	Chief Executive
CONTACT OFFICER:	James Abbott (Corporate and Commercial Manager) Ext. No. 1244
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Non-specific

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To provide a summary of the Scrutiny activities undertaken by the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee during 2019/20.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Council's Scrutiny Committees discharge the overview and scrutiny function under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 2.2. The Committees are tasked with:
- 2.2.1. Reviewing and/or scrutinising decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions;
 - 2.2.2. Reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Council;
 - 2.2.3. Serving as consultees in relation to executive decisions and key elements of service plans when required; and
 - 2.2.4. Producing progress reports and recommendations to the Executive arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process or refer to the Executive entire reports produced as a result of the scrutiny process. However it is

the decision of the Executive whether or not such a report is subsequently submitted to Full Council.

3. Contribution to Corporate Priorities

- 3.1. This report can contribute to all priorities to some degree (depending on the subject matter of the scrutiny review in question); however the remit of this particular Scrutiny Committee is to consider services within the corporate priority area of “Value for Money Council”.

4. Committee Activities

4.1. Scrutiny Work

- 4.1.1. The Committee has undertaken various scrutiny work, including keeping a watching brief on corporate items and completing a number of specific reviews:

4.1.1.1. **Ongoing Scrutiny:** There has been ongoing scrutiny from the Committee of the quarterly Corporate Plan Performance Reports as in previous years. An additional corporate item this year has been the quarterly Leisure Services Contract Performance Report, looking specifically at the new partnership arrangement with Everyone Active. The Committee has also scrutinised Executive Decision Records on an ongoing basis.

4.1.1.2. **Completed Review of Representations on Outside Bodies:** It has been several years since the last review of Representation on Outside Bodies and as such the Committee decided to review the current arrangements. The final report was presented to Cabinet on 19th August 2019. The following recommendations were agreed:

- That organisations that fall within categories 3, 4 and 5 (Ward Specific, Community Focus, None of the above) are removed from the list of outside bodies associated with East Staffordshire Borough Council with the exception of Consolidated Charity of Burton, CPRE and SARAC. Therefore a reduction of 22 to 18, losing the following organisations:
 - Nottingham East Midlands Airport Consultative Group;
 - Rolleston Alms Houses;
 - Barton and Dunstall Key Trust;
 - Henry Warford Trust.
- That it be left to the individual Ward Elected Member(s) to decide whether they wish to attend outside groups.
- To reduce the number of representatives to 1 Elected Member per outside body with 1 appointed substitute, with the exception of East Staffordshire Sports Council; Consolidated Charity of Burton; Uttoxeter Leisure and Development Company Ltd, thus allowing flexibility for both the Council and the outside body, where deemed

necessary. This would require constitutions or terms of reference for organisations being amended in certain cases.

- To write to all remaining bodies and request that they update all records to include latest representatives and also copy Democratic Services in all correspondence.

4.1.1.3. **Completed Review of Car Parking Services:** The Committee wanted to consider the current services provided by the Council to ensure users of its car parks are receiving value for money and the best user experience. The final report was presented to Cabinet on 17th February 2020. The following recommendations were agreed:

- To invite the Communities, Open Spaces and Facilities Manager to an Audit and Value for Money Council Services Scrutiny Committee in March 2021 to consider the impact of the recommendations of the internal review as the recommendations of that report will not be implemented until April 2020. Specifically:
 - To consider the impact of the changes in parking fees.
 - To consider the success of the new parking app.

4.1.1.4. **Completed Review of Disabled Facilities Grants:** It was proposed by the Committee that a review should be undertaken into the process of the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant. The report was agreed by the Committee on 10th February 2020, and it is scheduled to be presented to Cabinet in the near future. The recommendations to be presented to Cabinet are as follows:

- To set targets for each stage of the process;
- To adopt the Audit recommendation to implement new procedures;
- For the Corporate Plan Target to be reviewed: 55 days for urgent & 150 days for non-urgent cases;
- The Environmental Health Manager to provide quarterly performance updates for urgent and non-urgent cases to the Audit (Value for Money Council Services) Scrutiny Committee;
- To undertake a follow up of the DFG Scrutiny review within 12 months.

4.1.1.5. **Current Scrutiny Reviews:** The Committee has agreed a work programme which includes the topics below. Initial scoping for these reviews was undertaken during February and March 2020, and the reviews will be completed as soon as possible in the next financial year (2020/21):

- Leisure Centre Charges;
- The Council's E-services.

4.2. Audit Work

4.2.1. The Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee is also delegated a number of statutory functions in relation to Governance, Treasury Management and the Annual Statement of Accounts. The following activities have been undertaken:

4.2.1.1. **Statement of Accounts:** The annual Statutory Statement of Accounts for 2018/19 (via the Audit (Approval of Statement of Accounts) Committee) was approved, including agreeing the annual Letter of Representation on behalf of the authority.

4.2.1.2. **External Audit:** The Committee has received regular updates and scrutinised reports from our appointed external auditors (Grant Thornton).

4.2.1.3. **Internal Audit:** The Committee scrutinised the internal audit work plan and monitored progress against the plan during the course of the year. This included monitoring to ensure that agreed actions are implemented in a timely manner.

4.2.1.4. **Treasury Management:** The Committee scrutinised the Annual Treasury Management Strategy and Report, the mid-year update and the Annual Investment Strategy prior to their consideration and approval by full Council.

4.2.1.5. **Annual Governance Statement:** The Committee scrutinised and approved the statutory Annual Governance Statement, which is published alongside the Statement of Accounts.

4.2.1.6. **Financial Performance:** The Committee received and scrutinised the quarterly finance reports, covering the revenue budget, capital programme, treasury management and risk management.

5. Financial Considerations

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit: **Anya Murray***

5.1. There are no financial issues arising from this Report.

6. Risk Assessment and Management

6.1. The main risks to this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are as follows:

6.1.1. **Positive** (Opportunities/Benefits):

6.1.1.1. None identified

6.1.2. **Negative** (Threats):

6.1.2.1. None identified

6.2. The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register. Any financial implications to mitigate against these risks are considered above.

7. **Legal Considerations**

This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team:
Angela Wakefield

7.1. There are no significant legal issues arising from this Report.

8. **Equalities and Health**

8.1. **Equality Impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

8.2. **Health Impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question does not require a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

9. **Human Rights**

9.1. There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

10. **Sustainability** (including climate change and change adaptation measures)

10.1. Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) **N/A**

11. **Recommendation(s)**

11.1. To note the report

12. **Background Papers**

12.1. None

13. **Appendices**

13.1. Appendix 1: Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee Reviews 2019/20 (**below**).

Appendix 1: Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee Reviews 2019/20

Representations on Outside Bodies

Background and Scope

Background

It was recommended from a previous Internal Audit Review of Representation on Outside Bodies that as a measure of transparency and for good practice, these reports should be presented to one of the Council's Scrutiny Committees. For the past several years, this has been the Value for Money Scrutiny Committee, and more recently the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee.

Scope

It has been several years since the last review of Representation on Outside Bodies and as such the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee decided to review the current arrangements. On more than one occasion, Members of the Scrutiny Committee identified that they did not understand the purpose of some of the outside bodies or indeed why they attended them. Initially, at the request of the Committee, the Corporate and Commercial Manager was tasked with reviewing the number of responses received for the calendar year 2017. As the review progressed, the Scrutiny Committee agreed that a sub group should meet to finalise the review.

Approved Recommendations

1. That organisations that fall within categories 3, 4 and 5 (Ward Specific, Community Focus, None of the above) are removed from the list of outside bodies associated with East Staffordshire Borough Council with the exception of Consolidated Charity of Burton, CPRE and SARAC. Therefore a reduction of 22 to 18, losing the following organisations:

- Nottingham East Midlands Airport Consultative Group;
- Rolleston Alms Houses;
- Barton and Dunstall Key Trust;
- Henry Warford Trust.

2. That it be left to the individual Ward Elected Member(s) to decide whether they wish to attend outside groups.

3. To reduce the number of representatives to 1 Elected Member per outside body with 1 appointed substitute, with the exception of East Staffordshire Sports Council; Consolidated Charity of Burton; Uttoxeter Leisure and Development Company Ltd, thus allowing flexibility for both the Council and the outside body, where deemed necessary. This would require constitutions or terms of reference for organisations being amended in certain cases.

4. To write to all remaining bodies and request that they update all records to include latest representatives and also copy Democratic Services in all correspondence.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Background and Scope

Background

It was proposed that a scrutiny review should be undertaken into the process of East Staffordshire Borough Council's Disabled Facilities Grant.

Disabled Facilities Grants were introduced in 1990 but the principal legal provisions are now contained in the Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996 (HGCRA) and regulations made under it. Under this act and regulations East Staffordshire Borough Council has a statutory duty to provide financial assistance to disabled people for a range of essential adaptations to their homes through the Disabled Facilities Grant.

The provision of Disabled Facilities Grants is a key component in delivering the Government's objective of providing increased levels of care and support to both disabled and vulnerable people to help them live independently in their own homes. Its aim is to aide disabled people to live comfortably and independently in their homes through providing the correct adaptations.

Scope

1. What are Disabled Facility Grants and who is eligible?
2. How does someone access the funding? Where would they make first contact?
3. If a person decided they did want to apply for funding, what would the initial process be?
4. What is the average time period from first contact to submitting an application to ESBC?
5. Once an application has been submitted, what is the average time period from application submission to a decision being made by ESBC?
6. After a decision to approve an application has been made, on average how long does it take to complete the work?
7. From first contact to works completion how does ESBC compare with other districts in Staffordshire?
8. In the past year how many applicants have complained formally to either ESBC or another public body about the application process which ESBC use?
9. How many DFG's each year do ESBC provide?
10. Are there any organisations that either work with or on behalf of ESBC?
11. What is the total amount of money in the DFG budget over the last 5 years?
12. Of this amount how much does ESBC contribute?

Draft Recommendations

1. To set targets for each stage of the process;
2. To adopt the Audit recommendation to implement new procedures;
3. For the Corporate Plan Target to be reviewed 55 days for urgent & 150 days for non-urgent cases;
4. The Environmental Health Manager to provide quarterly performance updates for urgent and non-urgent cases to the Audit (Value for Money Council Services) Scrutiny Committee;
5. To undertake a follow up of the DFG Scrutiny review within 12 months.

Car Parking Services

Background and Scope

Background

The Committee wanted to consider the current services provided by ESBC car parks team to ensure users of the council car parks are receiving value for money and the best user experience. At its meeting on the 23rd July 2019, the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee agreed to review the Council's Car Parking Services. The results of this process may support the review that has recently been undertaken by the Communities, Open Spaces & Facilities Manager.

Scope

The following questions were suggested and agreed by the sub-committee in order to provide a focus for this review:

1. Is "Free After 3" making any impact on the footfall into the Borough's towns?
2. Are we charging the right amount and do we charge at the correct times?
3. Are we using the correct payment technology? Are there better alternatives available?

Approved Recommendations

To invite the Communities, Open Spaces and Facilities Manager to an Audit and Value for Money Council Services Scrutiny Committee in March 2021 to consider the impact of the recommendations of the internal review as the recommendations of that report will not be implemented until April 2020. Specifically:

- To consider the impact of the changes in parking fees.
- To consider the success of the new parking app.