



EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT COVER SHEET

Title of Report:	Chairman of the Scrutiny (Audit & Value for Money Council Services) Committee: Annual Report 2020/21	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: 1st March 2021	
	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: 1st March 2021

REPORT TITLE:	Chairman of the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee: Annual Report 2020/21
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 2020/21.

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. In a year somewhat curtailed by the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the Committee has undertaken various scrutiny work, including keeping a watching brief on corporate items and working on a number of specific reviews covering a broad spectrum of subject matter:

4.1.1.1. **Regular / Ongoing Scrutiny:** There has been ongoing scrutiny from the Committee of the quarterly Corporate Plan Performance Reports as in previous years. The Committee also scrutinises the quarterly Leisure Services Contract Performance Report, looking specifically at the partnership arrangement with Everyone Active. The Committee has continued to scrutinise Executive Decision Records on an ongoing basis.

4.1.1.2. **Completed Review of Digital Services:** This year the Committee signed-off a detailed scrutiny review of the Council’s digital services. The timing of this review also meant that the sub-group of the Committee leading the review could gain insight from and provide input to Council colleagues working on developing the new Digital Strategy. The scrutiny review looked at what services are currently available digitally, how they are implemented and what provisions the Council has to ensure that our residents and businesses have access to our services. It considered the Council’s vision for its digital provision; its most popular online services and solutions; the promotion of these services; the intuitiveness of the solutions; and how accessible these are. The Committee concluded that substantial progress has been made towards full digital services with the most popular services having a digital option, and that overall the digital services are good and fit for purpose. The full scope and recommendations arising from the report presented to Cabinet on 15th February 2021 are detailed in **Appendix 1**.

4.1.1.3. **Currently Reviewing Leisure Centre Charges:** A sub-group of the Committee is currently reviewing Leisure Centre Charges to allow the Committee to gain an overview of the Leisure Centre pricing structure and charging strategy. The Committee received a draft report from the subgroup in November 2020, however the Committee

agreed that further work could be undertaken on this review. This additional work is currently ongoing and a further report will be presented to the Committee in due course. A summary of the scope of this review can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

4.1.1.4. **Currently Reviewing Waste Management Services:** A sub-group of the Committee is currently reviewing the Council's Waste Management Services to review value for money in the delivery of the this function and associated strategic approaches to ensure effective waste collection, disposal and recycling. A summary of the scope of this review can be seen in **Appendix 1**. The Scrutiny (Community Regeneration, Environment, Health and Well-being) Committee have also indicated an interest in scrutinising elements of the Waste Management function, and these reviews are being aligned accordingly.

4.1.1.5. **Currently Reviewing Council ICT Infrastructure:** The Committee have agreed to review the Council's ICT Infrastructure. The full scope for this review is currently being collated.

4.1.1.6. **Ongoing Programme of Reviews:** The Committee continues to maintain a programme of future reviews, with Members highlighting and prioritising potential topics on an ongoing basis. This approach ensures a full and productive programme of work for the Committee, with additional reviews commencing in the near future as existing work is completed.

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 (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: Lisa Turner

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 2020/21 (***below***).

Appendix 1: Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee Reviews 2020/21

Digital Services

Summary of Background and Scope

Background

The Committee wanted to consider the current digital services that the Council offers to ensure that it provides value for money.

The purpose of the report was to review what services are currently available digitally, how they are implemented and what provisions the Council has to ensure that our residents and businesses have access to our services.

Scope

The scope of the review included:

- Current Digital Services:
- Intuitiveness of Digital Services:
- Access to Council Services:

Approved Recommendations

- Good progress had been made on developing a digital service on which the officers are to be congratulated. Substantial progress has been made on most of the remaining work. However further progress is needed in areas such as connecting systems to enable a one account solution. Particular areas such as planning where the application search takes a bit of getting used to and improvements to document handling. These are known issues and appear to be in hand either currently or the forthcoming delivery of the new digital strategy.
- Most solutions appear to be produced in house and this can have significant benefits in terms of cost and exact tailoring to ESBC requirements. However different packages and commercial options are available. Consideration should be given to alternative packages as it is quite possible that this will increase the range of options and may offer solutions that have not been considered.
- Perhaps the most significant and ambitious of which is the aim of introducing a single account for users across all council services. (My account) and is offered by several other councils. This is an ambitious objective and as most residents do not interact with their council on a regular basis would reduce the number of account details to remember.
- We would suggest some thought be given to the possibility of some kind of shared access to County services so that for a functional aspect customers have 1 port of call and one set of details to remember. We accept this might prove to be infeasible.
- It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee be kept informed of the progress of the new Digital Strategy throughout the lifecycle of the Strategy.

Leisure Centre charges

Summary of Background and Scope

Background

The Committee agreed to conduct a review of the Leisure Centre Charges.

The purpose of this Review is to gain an overview of the Leisure Centre pricing structure and charging strategy.

Scope

The scope of the review included:

- What was the Council's capital investment?
- What are the Council's ongoing financial commitments for the duration of the contract?
- What is the Contractual fee / charges mechanism and protection?
- What is the charging policy for the duration of the contract?
- What is the comparative position before and after contract commencement?

Recommendations

- To be confirmed

Waste Management

Summary of Background and Scope

Background

The Committee agreed to undertake a review of Waste Management.

The purpose of this review is to scrutinise value for money in the delivery of the Council's Waste Management function and associated strategic approaches to ensure effective waste collection, disposal and recycling.

Scope

The scope of the review included:

- Value for money in delivery of services
- Future of how and where we dispose of waste
- The key challenges to recycling and strategy to address

Approved Recommendations

- To be confirmed

ICT Infrastructure

Summary of Background and Scope

- To be confirmed

Approved Recommendations

- To be confirmed