

## **REPORT OF THE CHAIRS OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

### **ANNUAL REPORT OF SCRUTINY 2011-12**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To present the annual report on the Scrutiny work programme

#### **Information and Advice**

##### **Background**

2. The County Council constitution requires the preparation of an annual report detailing the work of the Scrutiny Committees. Information regarding the work programme for 2011-2012 appears below.

##### **Overview Committee**

3. In May 2011, Overview Committee commenced the examination of issues relating to shared services and received information from Borough and District Councils. The final report of the Shared Services Review reached the following conclusions:
  - Whilst on the face of it shared services can have a beneficial cost impact on Authorities; there are numerous obstacles to overcome in order to successfully implement such arrangements. It is, therefore, important that before any such arrangements are pursued a full cost benefit analysis is undertaken as the cost of implementation of any arrangements may well outweigh any savings made.
  - That joint procurement/commissioning arrangements have proved very effective in terms of cost savings and improved quality and should be encouraged wherever possible.
  - That Nottinghamshire is in a similar position to other Authorities in relation to shared services and has many more examples of successful joint procurements than others.
4. Other issues examined by the Overview Committee included: Supported Employment, Localism and the operation of the Improvement Programme. The Overview Committee also undertook its annual examination of budget consultation. The committee was content with the arrangements for budget consultation but made suggestions as to how the less responsive parts of the County might be better engaged with.

5. The Overview Committee examines the work programmes for all standing committees at each meeting. The Chair of the Overview Committee stated the following: “The programme of work across the standing committees has been extremely diverse this year. Everything from a new illness in dogs to important changes in hospital services has been covered. The Scrutiny work programme has made a valuable contribution to the development of policies in Nottinghamshire County Council – and perhaps more importantly served to hold external organisations forcefully to account when necessary.”

## **Standing Committees:-**

### **Communities and the Environment**

6. The Communities and the Environment Standing Committee concluded a review of Conservation and Heritage issues in September 2011. The review made recommendations regarding the development of a heritage strategy and the management of heritage assets.

The recommendations from this review were as follows:

- A Heritage Strategy should be developed for the County which would identify all the County’s heritage assets and provide a strategic plan for their conservation and management.
- Management of the most important County Council-owned heritage assets should be conservation-led and conservation management plans should be in place to guide marketing, business, access and transport plans and strategies.
- A Heritage Protocol should be developed which would identify all Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) operations likely to have an impact on the historic environment and provide guidelines for avoiding or mitigating any negative impacts.
- The knowledge and expertise within NCC's heritage service is a hugely valuable resource, providing advice on a range of issues, including development control, spatial planning and projects. To ensure that this knowledge and expertise is retained, options for charging for some services currently provided free of charge, such as planning advice to District and Borough Councils, should be explored.
- The Historic Environment Record (HER) is recognised as a strategic asset that should continue to be held and maintained at County level and should continue to be publicly accessible. Ways of funding the maintenance and upgrading of the HER should be investigated with the District Councils.
- The County Council should continue to play a lead role in heritage-led regeneration and greater engagement with volunteers to identify and monitor Heritage Assets at Risk that should be investigated.
- The external facing role of the heritage specialists must be maintained, providing advice and support to local communities and groups to enable them to continue to play a role in managing their heritage assets.

- It is recognised that Members' Divisional Funding and the Local Improvement Scheme have been highly important in providing funding for small heritage projects and match funding for Heritage Lottery/ English Heritage funded projects. It is recommended that this role continues and is strengthened by ensuring that all Members are aware of heritage groups and opportunities in their wards.
  - The County Council should continue to play a lead role in developing and delivering major heritage projects in partnership with other local authorities, groups and organisations. The development of such projects attracts significant amounts of investment into the County and provides opportunities for delivering economic benefits through, for example tourism.
  - A marketing strategy should be developed, as part of the over-arching Heritage Strategy, and Members should be encouraged to investigate opportunities to publicise events and projects in partnership with local groups.
7. All of the recommendations from the review were fully accepted by the Portfolio Holder.
8. The Communities and the Environment Standing Committee also undertook a review of Seasonal Canine Illness. During the course of this review the Authority hosted a seminar at which the Animal Health Trust revealed the results of their investigation into Seasonal Canine Illness at the Sandringham Estate on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen. Although the cause of Seasonal Canine Illness (SCI) cannot be stated with complete certainty one of the possible vectors for the illness is the 'chigger' form of the Harvest Mite. The recommendations from this review are as follows:
- In the event of any case or outbreak of SCI in Nottinghamshire, the County Council should aim to arrange a site visit from one of the experts who have been assisting the Animal Health Trust.
  - The County Council should monitor developments during the course of the year and report back to the Communities and Environment Standing Committee's successor towards the end of 2012.
  - Appropriate signage should be deployed on Nottinghamshire County Council land frequented by dog walkers during the anticipated period, i.e. late August through to early October, warning of the risk of SCI. The advice to the public should be to keep dogs on a lead and on the path.
  - The County Council should continue to engage positively with local land owners and offer guidance and advice on the use of warning signage as necessary.
9. The recommendations from this review were passed to Cabinet for consideration on 14 March 2012.
10. The Standing Committee also undertook a review of Water and Gas Emissions from Disused Mines. This is a highly complex technical subject, but nevertheless it is a subject upon which elected Members have views. The review received evidence from the Coal

Authority and the Environment Agency. The recommendations from this review are as follows:

- Consider preparation of a response to, and be committed to the wider stakeholder discussions which will precede the development of a control strategy for the inevitable minewater rebound and any rise in groundwater levels.
- Consider what contingency planning issues are raised should a “Plan B” be required in the event that minewater breakout is realised.
- The monitoring of the prevailing groundwater and minewater levels is fundamental to informing and validating the groundwater model of minewater rebound. The County should consider how best it can assist the Coal Authority/Environment Agency monitoring programme by making borehole sites available within the property holding of the Green Estate (Colliery Yards, Spoil Tips etc which have been restored). The long term impact of a monitoring borehole is minimal with only a small 30cm flush borehole cover visible at the surface.
- Consider a request to the Coal Authority to receive an Annual Report of Minewater levels across the county. This report could also include commentary as to whether minewater levels in any of the monitoring boreholes/ shafts approach or exceed the various Long Term Control Minewater Levels. This way the council could engage more readily and responsively with any minewater control strategy which is developed.
- Consider the dissemination of the potential impacts of the minewater rebound to relevant County/District Council departments which have responsibility for the council portfolio of property, and in particular the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems in areas likely to be affected by minewater rebound.
- Consider the recommendation that the successor committee undertake an annual review of liabilities and responsibilities which may fall to the County with regard to regulatory changes in mine and former mine developments and minewater
- Consider an evaluation of current and future commercial opportunities for harvesting energy from mines and minewater. The potential offered by minewater rebound and the application of ground source heat pumps should be considered at the earliest opportunity.

11. The Chair of Communities and the Environment Standing Committee stated the following:

“The Committee has spent time this year looking at Culture, Heritage and Tourism. We made several interesting visits to sites within the County. Our final recommendations for the Culture and Heritage review were well received by the Cabinet Member. I recognise that they cannot all be implemented immediately as there is a necessity to work with partners, but the recommendations will be implemented over time. This was a most enjoyable and beneficial Scrutiny both to Members and this Council. Working groups have looked at Seasonal Canine Illness, where Nottinghamshire County Council has played a large part in seeking

out a possible cause and the groups have also looked into concerns regarding Water and Gas emissions from Disused Mines.”

### **Education Standing Committee**

12. In July 2011, the Education Standing Committee set up a review group to examine the issues associated with the recruitment and retention of school governors. Witnesses who provided evidence to this review included: Chris Parker from One Stop Shop, Helen Bent Head Teacher of Jeffries Primary and Nursery School, Alison Jacobson Education Administrative Officer from the Diocese of Southwell, Councillor Philip Owen Cabinet Member for Children and Young Peoples Services, Councillor Lynn Sykes, Jane Mansell Governing Body Services.
13. The recommendations from this review group were as follows:
  - Governing Body Services to ensure that the materials it provides for schools and to the public are accessible and clear. This will include reviewing information about how to apply to become a governor, model application forms which can be used by schools, and the documentation used by the County Council regarding the application process for Local Authority Governors.
  - Re-design the exit questionnaire to allow governors to record further reasons for leaving and ensure it is routinely sent to all governors on resignation. A follow-up telephone/ face-to-face interview with a sample of leavers to be undertaken.
  - Improve data collection to provide more accurate reports eg: regarding numbers of governors from minority groups. Take measures to encourage existing governors to complete disability and ethnicity data monitoring forms.
  - The existing parent governor ‘Election Pack’ be revisited and refreshed as a general recruitment and retention information pack with exemplar letters, bright ideas and tips on good recruitment and retention practices and some frequently asked questions.
  - Governing Body Services to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, and lead by example.
  - Through training opportunities and briefings, encourage Head Teachers to promote and develop the role of governors in the life of the school.
  - Provide further advice to promote the involvement of young people in the recruitment of governors.
  - Make further use of the successful clerking service to welcome new governors and thank existing governors for their service.
  - Consider an annual governor recruitment campaign linked to ‘One Council’ events.
  - Creative use of the County Council website and social networking sites.

- A celebration 'Recruitment and Retention' edition of the Nottinghamshire Governor available electronically with interviews with both new and experienced governors.
- Consider any amendments to the LA governor appointment procedure which may be required in response to the Education Act 2011, and which enable governing bodies to set criteria for LA governors.

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15. Education Standing Committee also conducted a review in its main committee meetings on Child Poverty in Education. The review received evidence from: Michelle Squires – Community Development Worker, Children Centres, Mandy Strafford – Children Centre Team Manager, Rob and Lisa Poole, Children Centre services users, Sue Green – Adult Community Learning Service, Leonie Meikle – Governor Services, Gareth Parson Head Teacher Intake Farm Primary School, Janice Addison Principal Brunts Academy, Laurence Jones Group Manager Targeted Youth Justice and Chris Thompson Nottinghamshire Police.
16. At the time of writing, the final report and recommendations of this review are due to be agreed at the final meeting of the Education Standing Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> April.
17. The Chair of the Education Standing Committee stated the following regarding the work of the committee this year: “The work that this Standing Committee has carried out during the past year has been both enjoyable and rewarding. Both these reviews have been thorough and supported well by our very professional officers at the County Council, with excellent briefings from the many witnesses called to give evidence. The process has enabled Members to ask questions and ‘dig deeper’ into the subjects, therefore reaching strong recommendations that will go forward to assisting decision making in the future. It has been a pleasure working with all members and officers serving on the committee and I hope that the good practice of conducting reviews will continue, with successful outcomes.”

### **Social Care and Health Standing Committee**

18. In July 2011, the Social Care and Health Standing Committee held a one-off study group to consider whether or not to embark on a review of services for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME). Further to hearing from the service providers Members of the study concluded that ME should not be a topic for review at this time.
19. Following further consideration of the changes to services at Newark Hospital, on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011 the Standing Committee decided to refer the matter to the Secretary of State for Health for the second time on the basis that the Primary Care Trust had lost the confidence of local people and local elected representatives, including the District and Town Councils. The Chairman of the Standing Committee received a further response from the Secretary of State for Health on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2012. This response indicated that the service changes at Newark Hospital would not be subject to a full review by the independent reconfiguration panel. Further to this, on 16<sup>th</sup> April the Standing Committee accepted the conclusions of the second independent assessment.
20. The Social Care and Health Standing Committee also undertook a review of an examination of the issues associated with the Bassetlaw Clinical Services Review. The changes related to fractured neck of femur and obstetric, paediatric and gynaecological services. A special meeting of the Standing Committee took place on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2011 and a final update on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012.
21. On 5<sup>th</sup> September 2011, representatives of NHS Nottinghamshire County provided information to the Social Care and Health Standing Committee on the actions proposed

to address concerns regarding the Walk-in Centres in Ashfield and Stapleford – the closure of the Walk-in centres was of sufficient concern to Members that it had been previously referred to the Secretary of State for Health. Members accepted the quantifiable evidence presented by NHS Nottinghamshire County and the reassurances that local services and primary care streams at King’s Mill Hospital and the QMC could accommodate extra patients arising from the closures. The Committee received a further update at its final meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

22. A review group comprising Members of the Social Care and Health Standing Committee examined the arrangements for rota visits at adult social care establishments. This review included considering how the outcomes from visits should be reported and what sort of form should be used to capture the observations of Members. The draft final report of this review group was agreed at the final meeting of the Social Care and Health Standing Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012.
23. The Chair of the Social Care and Health Standing Committee stated the following: “The committee has spent most of its time scrutinising changes in the NHS; with a duty to ensure there was proper consultation and changes were in the best interest of the public. The working parties put forward suggestions to the NHS on its proposals that have resulted in benefits to the public. These have included a 24/7 service at Newark Minor Injuries Unit and a bus service between Newark and Kings Mill Hospitals. A report on changes to Rota Visits will, hopefully, reinvigorate Members’ interest in visiting our adult social care homes and day-care centres.”

### **Joint City and County Health Scrutiny Committee**

24. The Joint Health Committee has examined or received briefings on a large number of areas in the past year including the following: The Joint Health Committee has continued pursuing its longstanding interest in the quality of Patient Transport Services and has already met with the new service provider Ambuline (who will be providing the service on behalf of Arriva). The Committee also received updates on visual impairment and audiology issues at Nottingham University Hospitals – where there had been issues communicating effectively with patients.
25. The Committee also considered the development of services at Lings Bar Hospital regarding reducing length of stay and providing appropriate community support.
26. The Committee has also continued its work learning about the role of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and where health scrutiny and the CQC can work together to achieve service improvement.
27. The Committee continues its ongoing work examining and commenting on the draft Quality Accounts of provider Trusts in Nottinghamshire. Discussion on priorities for Quality Accounts has taken place with the following Trusts: Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust, Nottingham University Hospitals Trust, East Midlands Ambulance Service and NHS Nottingham Treatment Centre.

28. The Committee also formally concluded the review of Dementia Care in Hospital after receiving details of the implementation of recommendations by Nottingham University Hospitals Trust.
29. The Committee also concluded a review of Health Messages and Eating Disorders, the recommendations of which are as follows:
- That each school's food policy should be presented to OFSTED.
  - Schools should seek early professional advice whenever they suspect that a child may be suffering from an eating disorder.
  - Academies should seek proper advice on their food and healthy eating policy from a suitably qualified source
  - A letter to the Secretary of State for Health requesting greater promotion of healthy eating framed in a policy which counters eating disorders.
  - Healthy eating should be promoted via the Health and Wellbeing Board
  - The focus of all healthy eating messages, especially those aimed at schools, should be on eating a balanced diet rather than on banning particular foods.
  - Development of nuanced healthy eating messages aimed at particular areas and demographics on the basis that one size does not fit all.
  - An educational package for use by schools and academies should be developed to enable special sessions on body image to take place which could serve to counteract the unrealistic body image portrayals that are prevalent in the media.
  - Substantial long term research should take place as to whether or not health messages to prevent obesity have a positive or negative effect on eating disorder prevalence.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

30. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Nottinghamshire County Council note the annual report of Scrutiny 2011-2012.

**Councillor Joyce Bosnjak - Chair of Overview**  
**Councillor Sue Saddington - Chair of Communities and the Environment**  
**Councillor Liz Yates - Chair of Education**  
**Councillor Ged Clarke - Chair of Social Care & Health**  
**Councillor Mel Shepherd - Vice-Chair of Joint City & County Health**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments (SG 08/05/2012)**

31. County Council is the appropriate body to consider this report. Article 6 of the Council's Constitution states that the Overview Committee must report at least annually to Full Council.

### **Background Papers**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Standing Committee work programmes and final reports

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.