

Scrutiny Chair Report to Council

Since the last report to you at April's Full Council, the Scrutiny Committee met on 1st June and 5th July.

At its meeting on 1st June, the Committee considered its work programme for the new municipal year along with the formation of potential Scrutiny Review Groups. A proposal was outlined for a Review Group which would explore the potential impact of utilising Chatbots in the Liberata Contact Centre. A Review Group was established to look at how the Chatbot may work, its impact and to contribute to any improvements and implementation.

At the meeting on the 5th July, the Committee received the Planning Authority Monitoring Report for 21/22, which provided information regarding the progress of the Local Development Scheme and the implementation of the Local Plan. The report coincided with the Committee's consideration of the Statutory Review of the Local Plan and Revision of the Local Development Scheme report, which was due to be put before the Council's Executive on 12th July 23.

Members gave positive feedback on the report and asked questions around the Gypsy and Traveller site allocations DPD, and whilst this was on hold pending the outcome of the planning reforms, it was reported that people's needs and potential sites would be given consideration when the outcome of the reforms was known.

We received a report which provided an update on the Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Budget. This was of interest to Members as a Scrutiny Review Group proposal had been received to look at this area in more detail. A scoping session is to be arranged to determine the specifics of the review.

The protection of species, habitats and wider biodiversity was discussed in terms of how the use of signage could make a difference. The Committee resolved to recommend to the Executive that this be suggested to United Utilities regarding public access on the rural land they own and manage across the borough. Furthermore, detailed information in respect of Active Travel is to be submitted to a future meeting.

The Committee also received finance reports on the Final Revenue and Capital Outturn Positions for 22/23 and the Annual Treasury Management Report, which reviewed 2023/23 activity.

Finally, we received a report on the Allotment Review 2023. The review identified that there is a shortfall in provision and recommended increasing supply by splitting larger and under used plots and investigating the provision of additional allotment sites on existing green spaces. Members were keen that along with existing sites, potential new sites be considered due to the growth within the town.

Councillors Gail Barton and Bill Horrocks, Scrutiny Committee Chair and Vice Chair - July 2023