

# **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2024/25**

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## **Acknowledgements**

I am pleased to present this year's Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report, which contains information about the Committee's activity over the past year.

It has been a demanding year for the Council which continues to face challenges in delivering services to the residents of the District. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been tasked with analysing and monitoring services in order to provide constructive feedback to increase efficiency as well as, where possible, reduce costs.

This Annual Report demonstrates the wide range of issues that have been considered within the scrutiny process and providing committee members the opportunity to select areas to review. It has also been noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's interest in a number of work programme areas has inspired action aimed at improving key services elsewhere in the Council's democratic structure.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognises and appreciates the valuable contributions that Elected Members, Officers and representatives of organisations have made towards its work, and acknowledges that without this support and co-operation, it could not fulfil its aim to improve services for the benefit of South Derbyshire residents.

Councillor Sean Bambrick  
Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

## **1. Background**

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

This is the Annual Report to Council from Overview and Scrutiny, as required by Article 6 of the Council's Constitution.

Overview and Scrutiny plays an important part in local government decision-making and is a principal way of achieving open, democratic accountability for the provision of public services. The aim of Overview and Scrutiny is to improve public services and quality of life for local residents. Its main value is in holding the Council and other service providers to account, monitoring performance and in its capacity to inform and influence the actions of the Council and its partners. Overview and Scrutiny is a legal requirement, introduced by the Local Government Act 2000, extended in later legislation, and consolidated in the Localism Act of 2011. Overview and Scrutiny allows Councillors to examine, question and evaluate various functions of the Council and other providers of public services on behalf of the public in an open and effective way.

The report outlines how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has discharged its functions during the municipal year 2024/25 and details the current position and outcomes of its activities.

### **1.2 Composition of Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

From May 2024 until May 2025, the Committee consisted of eight Members: five Members of the Labour Group and three Members of the Conservative Group in accordance with the political balance of the Council.

*For the period of May 2024 to May 2025 the following Members were appointed to the Committee:*

#### **Labour Group**

Councillor S Bambrick (Chair), Councillor A Jones (Vice-Chair), Councillor M Gee, Councillor I Hudson and Councillor G Jones

#### **Conservative Group**

Councillor N Atkin, Councillor A Kirke and Councillor D Muller.

### **1.3 Main Purposes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The main purposes of the Committee are as follows:

- (a) Write reports and/or make recommendations to Council, Policy Committees or Area Forums in connection with the formulation of policy and the discharge of any functions.
- (b) Consider any matter affecting the District or its residents.

- (c) Review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions.
- (d) Exercise the Call-In procedure in respect of decisions made, but not yet implemented, by any Policy Committee or Area Forum.
- (e) Oversee the appropriate processes and report findings to the relevant Policy Committee.

#### **1.4 Functions of Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- (a) Holding the Council and its statutory partners to account in the public interest, enabling transparent and effective decision-making. This includes the power to 'call-in' a decision made by any policy committee that has not yet been implemented. (See 1.6)
- (b) Supporting effective policies and initiatives, which have a beneficial impact on the community through policy review and development.
- (c) Contributing to continuous improvement in services through monitoring quarterly departmental performance reports and the implementation of improvement plans.
- (d) Having a positive impact on the work and outcomes of external agencies and providers of public services.
- (e) Aiding Councillors in engaging with their communities and playing the role of community representatives and leaders.

#### **1.5 Meetings**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee usually meets every six weeks, on Wednesday evenings at the Council's Civic Offices. In order to engage on a more direct level with residents, meetings can also be taken out into the community. Meetings are held in Open session unless there are Exempt items for consideration by the Committee. Additional task groups can be set-up to undertake work on the Committee's behalf, which usually happens when there is a need to review a topic in greater depth.

#### **1.6 Call-In of Policy Committee Decisions**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to determine 'call-in' requests of any policy committee decision made but not implemented. During the year 2024/25 the Committee was required to deal with one 'called in' decision from the 30 May Environmental and Development Services Committee relating to the item titled Planning Services Review.

#### **1.7 Member Requests**

Any Member of the Council is able to request an item, relevant to the functions of the Committee, to be included in the Work Programme for review. During the 2024/25

municipal year there were no requests for an item to be included in the Work Programme.

## **2. Specific Areas of Activity**

### **2.1 The Annual Report**

In May 2025, the Chair and Vice-Chair considered the draft Annual Report for the 2024/25 municipal year, which looks at each of the priorities in turn and provides an overview of some of the outcomes achieved by the Committee and how it has discharged its function throughout the year.

### **2.2 Setting the Committee Work Programme**

In June 2024 the Committee outlined suggestions and agreed possible issues to form the basis of its Work Programme during the remainder of the municipal year. Members considered a range of potential areas for the Committee to review and the specific focus of their attention.

The key areas identified were:

- (a) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000
- (b) Demand and Supply of Children's Homes Throughout South Derbyshire
- (c) Approach to Residential Property Management Fee
- (d) Consideration of Car Park Widening in South Derbyshire District Council Car Parks
- (e) Discretionary Business Rates Relief Policy
- (f) Review of Recycling Collection Streams
- (g) Grass Cutting and Care of Land
- (h) Rural England Prosperity Fund Community Grant Awards
- (i) Community Buildings
- (j) Section 106 Funding Agreement – Education
- (k) Budget Setting Approach
- (l) Consolidated Draft Budget 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2029/30

A short summary of the Committee's work during the year is set out below.

**(a) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)**

The Committee has a standing function to monitor the Council's use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIPA) on a quarterly basis, following the Council's Inspection by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners. The Committee noted the Council's use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 Policy and Guidance during the municipal year 2024/25

**(b) Demand and Supply of Children's Homes Throughout South Derbyshire**

In February 2025 the Head of Planning presented a report to the Committee regarding the review of Children's Homes in the Planning System in the District which explained how evidence had informed the Local Plan Part 1.

Members considered that the planning decision to give a 2 year temporary approval was an intelligent decision and a way to protect residential amenity which needed to be tested by the appeals' process.

The Committee noted the planning decisions in relation to Children's Home applications and proposed that either an additional policy or supplementary planning guidance should be included in the review of the Local Plan Part 2.

**(c) Approach to Residential Property Management Fee**

In April 2025 the Executive Director – Place and Prosperity advised the Committee that due to legislation changes that a report would be brought to a future Committee meeting during the 2025/26 municipal year.

**(d) Consideration of Car Park Widening in South Derbyshire District Council Car Parks**

In April 2025 the Head of Property Services presented a report to the Committee that covered a review of the width of car parking spaces and proposals and parking at the bus station in Swadlincote. The Committee was advised there was no intention by the Council to charge for parking.

The Committee noted the outcome of the review of the width of Council Car Park spaces and supported the proposals for the Bus Station Car Park.

**(e) Discretionary Business Rates Relief Policy**

In November 2024 the Head of Customer Services presented the report to the Committee and outlined the policy.

The Committee considered and approved the revised Mandatory and Discretionary Rates Relief Policy.

**(f) Review of Recycling Collection Streams**

The Head of Operational Services presented a report to the Committee in October 2024. The Committee was advised that transitional funding streams and grants were subject clarification from Derbyshire County Council and that that legislation regarding weekly food waste collections was expected in April 2025

The Executive Director - Environment and Communities provided assurance to the Committee that efficiencies across the board and advised that other authorities had been carrying out food waste collections for twelve months.

The Committee considered the options for the supply of food waste caddy liners and recommended options to be considered by the Environmental and Development Services Committee.

**(g) Grass Cutting and Care of Land**

In February 2025 the Head of Operational Services presented a report to the Committee regarding a review of the grass cutting services.

The Head of Operational Services advised the Committee that one meter of uncut grass around trees was to protect the root system and that there had been a move away from No Mow May to No Mow Areas and the use of wild flowering. The Executive Director – Environment and Communities informed the Committee that work had been developed around the environment and promoting ecology.

Members noted that communication with residents was key and required improvement and sought clarity when the ecology report would be brought to Environmental and Development Services Committee.

The Committee considered the report and made any necessary recommendations to the Environmental and Development Services Committee.

**(h) Rural England Prosperity Fund Community Grant Awards**

The Communities Manager presented a report to the Committee in April that provided details of funding that had been allocated during the previous two years. The Committee was advised that a report regarding future funding was expected to be presented to the Environmental and Development Services Committee.

The Committee noted the impact that the funding would have helping to address significant rural deprivation and welcomed the allocation, distribution and details of Community Grants awarded through the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) by South Derbyshire District Council.

**(i) Community Buildings**

The Head of Cultural and Community Services presented a report to Committee in August 2024.

The Committee sought clarification relating to responsibility and management of future community buildings and play areas. The Head of Cultural and Community Services confirmed that these would be secured under Section 106 Funding Agreements.

Members that there was scope to reduce energy costs by undertaking energy improvements. The Executive Director – Resource and Transformation referred the Committee to the 5-year plan and sustainable finance programme.

The Committee noted the information and details that related to the District's Community Buildings.

**(j) Section 106 Funding Agreement – Education Contributions**

In August 2024 the Head of Development for Derbyshire County Council Education Services addressed the Committee and provided a detailed explanation on the allocation Section 106 Funding Agreement contributions.

Members raised concerns regarding Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provision throughout Derbyshire, particularly in rural areas.

The Head of Development for Derbyshire County Council Education Service informed the Committee that work had commenced in February 2023 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provision in local both local authority and private schools.

The Committee noted the Section 106 Funding Agreement, education contributions held by the Council and Derbyshire County Council.

**(k) Budget Setting Approach**

In October 2024 the Head of Finance presented a report to the Committee outlining the budget setting approach.

The Committee approved the budget setting approach within the report.

**(l) Consolidated Draft Budget 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2029/30**

The Head of Finance presented a report to the Committee in January 2025.

The Committee considered draft budget and associated information and provided feedback to Finance and Management Committee. The Committee noted the Indicative Assurance Statement provided by the Section 151 Officer.

**3 Challenges for 2025/26**

- To build on, and update, the achievements of Overview and Scrutiny.

- To ensure that Overview and Scrutiny continues to make a positive contribution to the development of policy and the continuous improvement of the Council's operations.
- To continue to ensure the Overview and Scrutiny work programme reflects concerns of service users, community and the public.
- To continue to ensure Overview and Scrutiny works with the community and key partners to respond to local concerns.
- To continue to ensure that the work of Overview and Scrutiny has a positive effect on decision-makers and provides evidence that it has made a real difference.
- To ensure Overview and Scrutiny takes a more active, appropriate role in respect of the work of the Policy Committees and their decisions.
- To balance the focus of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee both inward on existing and proposed Council services, and outward to other areas of the community and partner organisations.
- To build on the existing scoping procedure to make it more robust, to ensure the original scope is used as a point of reference for each work programme item and a tool to measure progress and the value being added by the committee as it completes its work.

Chair, Vice-Chair and Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
May 2025