

Scrutiny Committee's Chairs' reports

Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee

The Committee met on 9 December, to consider an update on the Council's progress towards a Local Plan. The Committee also considered a report on the Town Deal and Future High Streets Funds, Planning enforcement and performance and the future work programme.

The Committee noted progress on the Local Plan and that, following the consultation, the intention was that Council would submit the Final Draft Borough Local Plan, comments received in their entirety (at Regulation 19 Stage) and the related evidence base to the Secretary of State for public examination by the end of the year. The examination of the Final Draft Borough Local Plan would then be anticipated to take place sometime in 2025.

The Committee received a comprehensive paper setting out progress and noted that good progress was being made with the various projects that are being funded or part funded through the two Town Deals – Newcastle and Kidsgrove, and the Future High Street Funds for Newcastle Town Centre. The work undertaken by Capital and Centric would likely inspire other authorities about the potential behind the regeneration of old structures.

The Committee noted the organisational arrangements for undertaking planning enforcement at the Council and received information on planning enforcement-related activity that has taken place over the past 12 months. The Committee felt that the report could be enhanced in future by the provision of additional data to support the headline figures and percentages, subject to this not causing significant additional work.

The work programme was considered and the Committee noted that the work programme was to be refreshed for 2025. An update is to be provided on waste and recycling. An update on how the Car Parking Strategy is working will be provided in December. A presentation from Aspire Housing to all Council members will take place early in the new year (dates are being considered).

Cllr Robert Bettley-Smith

Vice Chair

Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee

The Health, Wellbeing and Environment Committee met on November 25th. An update on the activities of the Staffordshire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee was received.

A Walleys Quarry update was received. Councillors discussed several issues including the data correlation between the increasing odours and complaint figures,

the response and actions of the operator and the reporting procedures for both residents and non residents of the borough.

Following a request from Councillors, Committee heard an update on Park management in the borough. Options were presented to set up a Task and Finish Group to scrutinise park management. It was decided by vote that the a Task and Finish Group be set up to review council owned play parks.

The Committee heard a report on the Councils Tree Risk Management strategy and approved it's sending to Cabinet.

The future work programme was discussed.

Cllr Rupert Adcock

Chair

Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee

The Committee met on 5 December and on 16 January, to conduct detailed scrutiny of the administration's proposed Budgets and associated strategies, and the scale of fees and charges for the forthcoming financial year.

At its January meeting, the Committee also received a report reviewing the outcomes of the One Council programme, including relevant figures and feedback from the 2024 staff survey. The Committee commended and endorsed the significant efforts of the Council's teams that were involved in the transformation programme, which has realised lasting service improvements and generated a recurring £1.17m annual financial saving for the Borough Council.

The Committee will meet again on 27 March.

Cllr Mark Holland

Chair