


# Scrutiny Annual Report

2018-2019



 @Eastherts

 EastHertsDC

 easthertscouncil

01279 655261

[www.eastherts.gov.uk](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk)



# Scrutiny Annual Report 2018-2019

## Contents

1.0	Introduction .....	3
2.0	Overview and Scrutiny Committee .....	3
2.1	Membership.....	3
2.2	Reports and Updates .....	3
2.4	Task Groups .....	4
3.0	Performance, Audit and Governance Scrutiny Committee .....	4
3.1	Membership.....	4
3.2	Reports and Updates .....	4
4.0	Joint Scrutiny .....	5
5.0	Review of Scrutiny.....	6
	Appendix A .....	7

## 1.0 Introduction

This report provides a summary of scrutiny undertaken at East Herts Council in 2017-18 and sets out changes to the arrangements for scrutiny from May 2019. (See Appendix A for a brief explanation of Scrutiny and its implementation in East Hertfordshire.)

There are 2 scrutiny committees, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Section 2) and the Performance Audit and Governance Scrutiny Committee (Section 3). These committees also sat together on two occasions for which a summary is provided in Section 4. Section 5 provides an overview of the proposed changes to scrutiny that will be implemented upon council approval in May.

## 2.0 Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### 2.1 Membership

**Chairman:** Cllr Allen

**Members:** Cllrs Abbott, Bull, Casey, Cutting, Deering, Devonshire, Drake, Hollebon, J Jones, Moore, Stevenson Symonds

### 2.2 Reports and Updates

Through the course of the year the committee received updates from the Leader of the Council, the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing, the Executive Member for Housing the Executive Member for the Environment and the Public Realm

They received reports on:

- Council Tax Support 2019-20;
- Night Time Economy and Public Health: Impact of Alcohol Use;
- Proposed Capital Development of Hertford Theatre and surrounding areas;

- Old River Lane, Bishop's Stortford;
- Shared Services: Revenues and Benefits;
- Homeless Strategy;
- CCTV Partnership Shared Service Update;
- IT - Shared Service;
- Digital Innovation Zone Strategy;
- Customer Complaints; and
- Planning Enforcement

The Community Governance Reviews for Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford and Eastwick and Gilston were also presented to the Committee

## 2.4 Task Groups

Three task and finish groups were commissioned on:

- Climate Change
- Brexit: and
- Contract Options for Grounds Maintenance Contract

## 3.0 Performance, Audit and Governance Scrutiny Committee

### 3.1 Membership

**Chairman:** Cllr Pope

**Members:** Cllrs Alder, Ballam, Boylan, Cousins, Crofton, Oldridge, Page, Radford, Reed, Ruffles, Stainsby, Stowe, and Wyllie.

### 3.2 Reports and Updates

Through the course of the year the committee considered the following:

- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) – Update
- Shared Anti-Fraud Service Draft Plan 2018/19

- Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) Internal Audit Plan 2018/19
- Housing and Health Strategy Update
- Draft Annual Report 2017/18
- Castle Weir Micro Hydro Scheme
- Q2 and Q3 Financial Health Check Reports and Performance Reports
- Treasury Management - Mid-year Review 2017-18
- Implementation of the Annual Governance Statement 2018/19 – Action Plan
- Annual Audit Letter and External Audit Grants Certification Summary
- Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) Update on Audit Plan
- Progress on Anti-Fraud Plan 2018/2019
- Cyber security and IT disaster recovery
- Section 106 Agreements
- Performance relating to CVS SLA 2018/19 and proposals for 2019/20
- Annual Leisure Performance Report 2018
- External Auditor 2018-19 Audit Plan
- Shared Anti-Fraud Service with draft plan for 2019/20 for approval
- Shared Internal Audit Plan (SIAS) 2019/20
- SIAS Audit Plan Update
- Annual Review of Risk Management Strategy

#### **4.0 Joint Scrutiny**

After reviewing the work of Scrutiny Committees in 2017-18 and in response to feedback, a joint scrutiny committee meeting has been added to the scrutiny work programmes for 2018-19, to ensure that all members of both scrutiny committees can participate fully in scrutinising the Council's medium term financial plan for 2019-20. This meeting took place in November 2018 in order to allow comments from scrutiny to feed in to the corporate planning and budget setting process.

## 5.0 Review of Scrutiny

An internal review of scrutiny was carried out to assess the effectiveness of the changes made in 2017. The review revealed that the PAGs work programme was heavily focussed on work required by the organisation in response to national deadlines for audit reports and financial statements. This work did not represent scrutiny as defined by the Local Govt Act 2000.

With respect to the OS, it was also evident that the balance in the work programme between items driven by evidence and members' recognition of issues affecting residents and work requested by the organisation was heavily in favour of the latter.

It has been proposed that, from May 2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would continue but with a drive to build a programme driven primarily by its members. For this reason a forward plan of topics is not included and members will be shaping the forward plan during their induction. The PAG is proposed to become an Oversight Committee and so allow for the appointment of members with appropriate skills and the freedom to build a forward plan that is more focused and better reflects organisational and national timelines. These proposals will be put to the Council on May the 15<sup>th</sup> 2019

## Appendix A

### What is scrutiny?

Scrutiny is a process where elected councillors can review the work of the Council to check that policies and services are meeting the priorities and the needs of local people and consider policy and proposals at an early stage when the views of the Scrutiny Committees can be fed back to officers and the Executive. Scrutiny committees are not decision making bodies but they have the power of influence and are entitled to review, scrutinise and challenge the functions of the Council and the decisions of the Executive. Scrutiny serves as a 'critical friend' to the decision-making Executive.

### Scrutiny at East Herts

Following a review in early 2017, scrutiny is carried out by the following two Scrutiny Committees:

- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OS)** - This committee is 'forward-looking', shaping new policies at an early stage of their development, and undertaking major reviews of existing policies or service delivery models in order to make improvements and commissioning recourse to Task and Finish Groups to focus on specific subjects in greater depth where appropriate.
- **Performance, Audit and Governance (PAG) Scrutiny Committee** – reviews progress on delivery of the corporate strategic plan, the medium-term financial plan, key performance targets and incorporates the Council's audit committee function. Task and Finish Groups can focus on specific subjects in greater depth, where appropriate. This committee also has a sub-committee to deal with councillors' code of conduct issues (the Standards Sub-Committee.)

## **How did the committees decide what to scrutinise in 18/19?**

Scrutiny committees aim to be responsive and flexible in order to ensure the topics they examine are relevant and meaningful. Members of the Scrutiny Committees are encouraged to submit proposals for scrutiny at any point throughout the year and a work planning workshop was held for each committee in June 2018, where members discussed and prioritised topics for scrutiny in 2017/18. The proposed topics are currently being scoped by officers. The topics selected are issues Scrutiny Committees believe to be:

- Of local public interest or concern
- Linked to the council's corporate priorities
- Holding the potential of having an impact on the lives of residents
- Not being scrutinised by another body

At East Herts, Members believe it is important to spend time scrutinising issues that

- reduce risk for residents and the council,
- might incur significant costs;
- or could bring substantial savings to the council

Scrutiny uses the council's corporate priorities to focus its work. As the economic environment and local issues change, these are reviewed annually to keep them relevant. During 2017/18 and until 19/20, the council priorities are:

- Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities
- Enhancing the quality of people's lives
- Enabling a flourishing local economy

## **How to find out more about scrutiny in East Herts**

Scrutiny is strengthened by involving residents and partner organisation, who can bring valuable expertise, local knowledge, fresh ideas and external challenge. Members of the public are welcome to attend any meeting of the new Overview and Scrutiny (OS) and Performance Audit and Governance (PAG) committees. Meetings start at 7pm and are held in the Council Chamber, Wallfields, Hertford. Dates in 2018/2019 are published on the East Herts Council website.



**Contact us...**

Tel: 01992 531481

Email: [scrutiny@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@eastherts.gov.uk)

Agendas, reports and minutes of every council committee are posted and regularly updated – and meetings are open to the public:

<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/Committees>

If you ever take part in one of our scrutiny reviews and every time you attend as an observer, we would value your feedback to help us improve the process. An on-line feedback form is available at

<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/scrutinyfeedback>