

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2020-21

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FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR



It's been an unprecedented year for Scrutiny; like many members of the committee, I didn't expect to be here for another year, but that doesn't mean we haven't covered a huge amount of ground.

The pandemic necessitated a rapid switch to new ways of working meaning that briefings and formal committee meetings had to move online - Gloucester managed to achieve this ahead of many other councils in the country, holding our first virtual meeting on 15th June. The switch to Microsoft Teams rather than the chamber has presented challenges but also many opportunities - it has been easier for the

public to engage with the scrutiny process, external witnesses can give evidence without the need for travel, and as Chair I've often found managing the flow of discussion easier on the internet than in real life. Whether or not the regulations allowing meetings in this way will continue beyond May, and beyond the pandemic, remains to be seen but should they be, this represents a real opportunity to do things differently in the future.

The pandemic has dominated the Council agenda, and Scrutiny has played its part in feeding into the City's recovery. Over a period of months, we offered our insight and recommendations on the 8 strands of the Council's recovery agenda, and Members have been able to offer insights from their communities about the impact and challenges of COVID-19 as well as the amazing ways in which groups and individuals have responded to the crisis.

This doesn't mean that the committee has neglected its usual duties, and scrutiny of all areas of the Council has continued uninterrupted. As well as our standing look into finances and performance, the Committee has managed to feed into major changes to the way that the City Council performs its roles. Two of the council's major and most visible contracts - Waste, Street Scene and Grounds Maintenance, and Revenues and Benefits came before members, and we made recommendations which will have a huge impact on residents accessing these services. Following our earlier investigations around Marketing Gloucester, we looked at the new ways in which the City manages festivals and events and plans to market itself as a destination. The Committee looked at the ways in which we engage with communities and the work they do, which has been of huge importance throughout the pandemic and will continue to be so.

I have been privileged to serve as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for five years, almost a quarter of the time that the function has existed in Local Government. I remain as convinced now as I did in 2016, that scrutiny has an important role to play in holding the Cabinet to account and feeding into policy development to improve the lives of residents - if anything, the work done over the

last five years has only cemented this view. The way in which we have carried out Scrutiny since 2016 has drawn regional and national praise for our non-political and collaborative approach, which is how it should be done. I'd like to thank Emily Ryall for her support as Vice Chair over the past 5 years, and Andy Lewis, Collette Finnegan and Laura Brooker for their work as Spokespersons. I'd also like to thank Officers and all who have served on the committee for their dedication to Scrutiny.

I hope that whoever forms the administration and Committee after the May elections will continue to operate in this way, and I wish whomsoever should succeed me as Chair the best of Gloucester luck.

MEMBERS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2020-21



Councillor Tom Coole
Chair



Councillor Emily Ryall
Vice-Chair



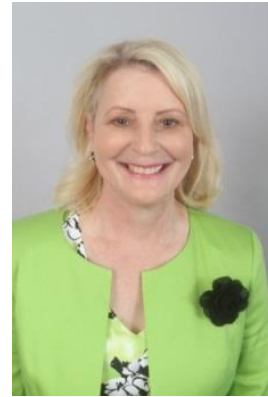
Councillor Andrew Lewis
Spokesperson



Councillor Ashley Bowkett



Councillor Gerald Dee



Councillor Collette Finnegan



Councillor Kate Haigh



Councillor Jeremy Hilton



Councillor Howard Hyman



Councillor Colin Organ



Councillor Terry Pullen



Councillor Kevin Stephens



Councillor Gordon Taylor



Councillor Paul Toleman



Councillor Pam Tracey



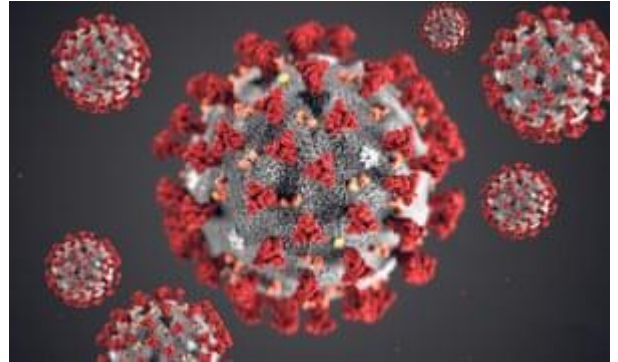
Councillor Clive Walford



Councillor Declan Wilson

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC & SCRUTINY

The COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on communities across the world, and as the LGA put it “there is not a single area of local government that is not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic”.¹The Overview & Scrutiny Committee’s role as a “critical friend” to Cabinet has perhaps never been more important than in the past year as the Council shifted its focus from responding to the pandemic to recovery planning. The Committee has played a key role by providing robust scrutiny to the recovery planning process ensuring that the plans have democratic legitimacy by placing the communities which the Council serves at the heart of any considerations. Where appropriate, the Committee has made recommendations to the plans.



In June 2020, the Corporate Director & Monitoring Officer presented the Gloucester City Recovery Plan where he outlined the eight workstreams (**Economic Recovery & Growth, Visitors & Cultural Recovery, Community Development, Housing Recovery, Environmental/Climate Recovery, City Council Service Recovery, Democratic Governance, City Council Financial Recovery**) which had been identified as well as the four-pronged approach to recovery which would be used (**Return, Retain, Resist, Reimagine**). During the course of the year the Committee invited the relevant Cabinet Member for each workstream to discuss the work being undertaken and future plans.

Yet, despite the pandemic it was also important to ensure that scrutiny of regular Council business still carried on. The Committee has been able to achieve this, for example, this year amongst other things the Committee considered two contracts for two major services, firstly, the Waste. Street Scene and Ground Maintenance contract and then the Revenues & Benefits Contract.

Changing the Way Scrutiny Meetings are Carried Out:

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only impacted the Committee’s substantive focus, but it has also changed the way committee meetings are carried out. Alongside the rest of the Council, the Committee had to shift to virtual meetings. These have been largely well received, and have also perhaps enabled greater accessibility for the general public than in-person meetings may otherwise allow.

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/coronavirus-information-councils>

THE YEAR IN SCRUTINY

At the time of writing the Overview & Scrutiny Committee has held 10 meetings with 2 further meetings (including a special meeting) due to be held in March.

The meetings held considered a range of different issues as shown below:

Meeting	RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS
15 June 2020	
COVID-19 Gloucester City Recovery Plan	<p>RESOLVED: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the Report.</p> <p>*Although there were no formal recommendations, Councillor Ryall made a suggestion for a fifth R Resilience to be added to the Four Rs to being used as an approach to the recovery process which was accepted by Cabinet*</p>
COVID-19 Gloucester City Recovery Planning (Economic Recovery & Growth)	<p>RESOLVED - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the update.</p>
Council Plan Extension – Priorities & Actions for 2020/21	<p>RESOLVED that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee RECOMMENDS that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cabinet amends Priority 3 (13) in the Council Plan Extension Priorities for 2020/21 as follows: “<i>work with partners to improve the health and wellbeing of our population, in particular through the development of the Blackbridge site and other community initiatives</i>” 2. Cabinet removes the reference to “<i>commercial opportunities</i>” in relation to the Shopmobility Service in Priority 4 (16) of the Council Plan Extension. <p>Outcome:</p> <p>The recommendations were to put to a vote in a proposed amendment at the 9th of July 2020 Council meeting and this amendment lost.</p>

Annual Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee	RESOLVED - that the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019-20 to be received.
29 June 2020 (Special Meeting)	
Waste, Streetscene and Grounds Maintenance Services Options Report	<p>RESOLVED that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee RECOMMENDS that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Cabinet considers three options when it undertakes a Best Value Review: Amey, Ubico and In-House Service Delivery. 2.) The contract with the chosen provider stipulates a requirement to pay employees the real living wage. <p>Outcome:</p> <p>The recommendations were accepted at the 15th of July 2020 Cabinet Meeting.</p>
06 July 2020	
Report Into the Future Marketing of Gloucester	<p>RESOLVED; - that that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee RECOMMENDS that: Gloucester City Council does not proceed with a City of Culture bid between now and May 2021.</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>The recommendations were to put to a vote in a proposed amendment at the 9th of July 2020 Council meeting and this amendment lost.</p>
Gloucester City Recovery Plan: Economic Recovery & Growth	RESOLVED that: - The Committee NOTE the update.
Gloucester City Recovery Plan: Housing Recovery	RESOLVED: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the update.
Annual Report On the Grant Funding Provided to the Voluntary Sector/Voluntary Community Sector Response to the Current COVID-19 Pandemic	RESOLVED that: - The Committee NOTE the report.
07 September 2020	

Gloucester Community Building Collective	<p>RESOLVED that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee RECOMMENDS that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) The Overview & Scrutiny Committee receives an annual update report from the CIC. 2.) That the City Council ensures that partner organisations adhere to the Equality Duty, in accordance with the duties required of them by the Equality Act 2010, and that language used in any documents is in accordance with the said duty. 3.) The CIC produces a public facing document and associated public communications which outlines the business purpose of the organisation. <p>Outcome:</p> <p>The recommendations were accepted or actioned as appropriate.</p>
Gloucester City Recovery Plan: Community Resilience Recovery	RESOLVED: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the update.
Gloucester City Recovery Plan: Financial Services Recovery	RESOLVED: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report.
Financial Monitoring Quarter 1	RESOLVED: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report.
05 October 2020	
Gloucester City Recovery Plan: City Council Service Recovery	RESOLVED: - that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee NOTE the update.
02 November 2020	
Waste Street Scene and Grounds Maintenance Option Report	<p>RESOLVED that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee RECOMMENDS that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Cabinet no longer consider the option of extending the existing Waste, Streetscene Grounds Maintenance services contract with Amey. 2.) In the event that the above recommendation is not accepted, Cabinet should only consider an extension to the existing contract with Amey in the context of a competed model on the open market. 3.) The option of bringing services in-house should be retained at this stage.

	<p>4.) Cabinet examines and learns from examples of Local Authorities who have brought Waste, Streetscene Grounds Maintenance services in-house.</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>The recommendations were not adopted by Cabinet. Please see below extract from the minutes of the meeting held on the 11th of November explaining why they were not adopted:</p> <p><i>“He (the Leader of the Council) thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their recommendations (November 2020 minute 8.14) and advised that these not be adopted as they would incur additional expense and the loss of an opportunity for the new owners of the current contractor (Amey) to make an improved offer. “</i></p>
<p>Implementation of the Council Motion on ‘Black Lives Matter’</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report.</p>
<p>Gloucester City Recovery Plan: Democratic Governance</p>	<p>RESOLVED that: - the Overview & Scrutiny Committee RECOMMEND that Cabinet implement the technology to allow webcasting once Council returns to physical meetings.</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>At this same meeting, the Cabinet Member for Performance & Resources confirmed that the potential benefits of webcasting were being weighed up against the budget commitments required.</p>
<p>30 November 2020</p>	
<p>Gloucester City Recovery Plan – Environmental & Climate Recovery</p>	<p>RESOLVED that:- The Overview and Scrutiny RECOMMEND to Cabinet that: as part of climate recovery planning to enter urgent discussions with the bus operator to a) move vehicles on inner city routes to be powered by non-fossil fuels; b) on rural routes to consider non fossil fuels and c) to make progress on using non-fossil fuels in the private hire and taxi fleet.</p> <p>Outcome:</p>

	The Cabinet Member for Environment advised that he was having discussions with Stagecoach on sustainable bus travel.
Gloucester City Recovery Plan – Visitors & Cultural Recovery	RESOLVED that: - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the update.
Cultural Strategy Update	RESOLVED that: - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report.
Financial Monitoring Quarter 2	RESOLVED that: - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report.
Performance Monitoring Quarter 1 & 2	RESOLVED that: - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report.
07 December 2020 (Budget)	
Budget	<p>RESOLVED that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee RECOMMENDS that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Cabinet includes the following information which was requested at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee budget meeting within the final budget report or as an annex to the report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide details of where the Council ‘s BID levy contribution is located within the budget book. • To provide a detailed breakdown of the changes in the Senior Management budget from the 2020/21 budget. 2.) Cabinet changes the headings within the budget to be identifiable to the portfolio holder rather than service areas. 3.) Cabinet removes the proposals to change how the community grant is managed from the budget report. <p><u>Follow Up Action:</u></p> <p>Cabinet to make Equalities Impact Assessments on budget savings available to Committee Members prior to the Council Budget meeting in February.</p> <p><u>Outcome:</u></p> <p>Recommendations 1 and 2 and the follow up action were actioned/ a response was provided as appropriate.</p>

	Councillors may choose to propose a budget amendment in relation to recommendation 3 at the upcoming Council meeting on the 25 th of February.
04 January 2021	
Revenues & Benefits Contract	<p>RESOLVED that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee RECOMMENDS that:</p> <p>1.) A full People Impact Assessment is carried out in respect of the new contract with Civica UK Ltd. Furthermore, the Committee asks that this EIA is circulated to its Members.</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>An EIA was carried out and circulated to Committee Members.</p>
Festivals & Events Programme	RESOLVED that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report.
01 February 2021	
Gloucester Community Building Collective.	RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report subject to the undertakings to restructure elements of the report to provide for greater public access provided by the Cabinet Member.
Equality & Diversity Update	RESOLVED that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report subject to the undertakings provided by the Cabinet Member and Corporate Director as above.
01 March 2021	
03 March 2021 (Special Meeting)	

BUDGET SCRUTINY 2020-21

Due to the added financial pressures on local authorities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year 's budget monitoring meeting was particularly important. Here at Gloucester City Council, as well as quarterly financial monitoring, an annual money plan and budget proposal meeting with Cabinet form a part of the programme.

In December 2020, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members presented to the Committee the overall draft Money Plan as well the 2020/2021 budget proposal. Additionally, each of the Cabinet Members presented their individual portfolios, highlighting anticipated budget pressures, budget savings and any changes to the portfolio. Below are some of the key observations.

Key Observations:

- Local government and particularly second-tier authorities continue to face a tough financial outlook, and this has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, there were new financial pressures resulting from the pandemic specifically such as additional software license costs to ensure the ongoing effective operation of the Council 's IT platforms.
- However, whilst the Council has been forced to identify savings, it was not expected that these would have an impact on the Council's finances or reduce the Council 's ambitions, particularly in relation to regeneration.
- Nonetheless, there are many uncertainties arising from the pandemic and any potential lockdowns which could impact the Council 's future income streams. For example, it was possible that recovery could not go as well as planned which could mean reduced income from streams such as parking and commercial properties.

PRIORITIES FOR 2021-2022

Whilst the work programme for the next year will be the remit of the new Chair and Committee following the May local elections, it is anticipated that the below will be some of the key areas of focus for the Committee for 2021-22:

Gloucester COVID-19 Recovery Plan

It is likely that the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt for years to come by local authorities and communities. Overview & Scrutiny would have a continued role in working with Cabinet as part of the process to ensure the recovery of all of the Council 's services, and that of the wider community.

Culture Portfolio

For the past two years, the Committee has been actively involved in the culture portfolio, particularly as the Council has transformed the way it delivers place marketing. With the easing of lockdowns in the future and normal services returning to 'normal', it is expected that the Committee would continue to play a key role in the overseeing the culture portfolio, and ensuring that new place marking model continues to work well.

MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE RECORD

Nature of Meeting	Date of Meeting
Ordinary Business	15 June 2020
Special Meeting (Waste, Streetscene and Grounds Maintenance Options)	29 June 2020
Ordinary Business	6 July 2020
Ordinary Business	7 September 2020
Ordinary Business	5 October 2020
Ordinary Business	2 November 2020
Ordinary Business	30 November 2020
Budget	7 December 2020
Ordinary Business	4 January 2021
Ordinary Business	1 February 2021
Ordinary Business	1 March 2021
Special Meeting (Waste, Streetscene and Grounds Maintenance Options)	3 March 2021

Name of Councillor	Meetings Attended (Max: 10)
Councillor Tom Coole (Chair)	9
Councillor Emily Ryall (Vice-Chair)	8
Councillor Andy Lewis	10
Councillor Ashley Bowkett	5 out 5 possible meetings (1 as substitute)
Councillor Gerald Dee	9
Councillor Collette Finnegan	10
Councillor Kate Haigh	7/7 possible meetings (1 as Substitute)

Councillor Jeremy Hilton	10
Councillor Howard Hyman	10
Councillor Colin Organ	6
Councillor Terry Pullen	10
Councillor Kevin Stephens	9
Councillor Gordon Taylor	10
Councillor Paul Toleman	9
Councillor Pam Tracey	9
Councillor Clive Walford	9
Councillor Declan Wilson	10