

REPORT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE 8 JUNE 2022

ANNUAL SCRUTINY AND IMPROVEMENT REPORT – 2021/22

1 Executive Summary/Recommendations

1.1 The Scrutiny and Improvement at Aberdeenshire Guidance in Part 4 of the Scheme of Governance requires each Committee to consider an Annual Scrutiny and Improvement Report. The report includes highlights of key scrutiny activity undertaken by the Committee over the past year and outlines areas for inclusion in the scrutiny programme for the coming year.

1.2 The Committee is recommended to:

1.2.1 consider and comment on the activities detailed in the report; and

1.2.2 consider and agree the proposed programme of scrutiny activity for 2022/23

2 Decision-Making Route

2.1 The Scheme of Governance provides that each Area and Policy Committee and Audit Committee should receive and review an annual report of the Committee's scrutiny and improvement activity. This report provides an opportunity for Members of the Infrastructure Services Committee to consider their scrutiny activity in the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. A previous report covering the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 was considered by the Infrastructure Services Committee at the meeting on the 17 June 2021 (Item 9).

3 Discussion

3.1 The annual scrutiny report is part of the monitoring process allowing committees to keep track of progress and ensure any agreed actions have been implemented. The report also provides an opportunity to reflect on scrutiny undertaken and identify any future scrutiny requirements as part of an annual programme of activity.

3.2 The Scheme of Governance explains that Scrutiny, or challenge and review, is fundamental to transparent, accountable decision making and performance improvement. Scrutiny is about assessing the impact of the council's strategic policy and planning on communities and residents and the performance and quality of services.

3.3 Members are undertaking scrutiny continually whether when considering performance reports, approving new policies, plans and strategies, or considering regular budget monitoring reports.

Examples of formal scrutiny include: -

- Performance reports (including benchmarking)
- Strategies (where these carry performance-related information for monitoring)
- Policy development/approval/review
- Capital & Revenue monitoring
- Management information
- External inspection reports
- Internal/external Audit reports
- Resident consultation/feedback (e.g., Reputation Tracker, Citizen Panel, Complaints, Local consultation)
- Referral from Audit Committee

Examples of informal scrutiny include:

- Performance sessions outwith committee
- Members' surgeries
- Ward forums
- Joint Area Committee/Area Management Team meetings

- 3.4 Policy Committees are also responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of policy implementation and service delivery in respect of any function within its remit and identifying and implementing improvements as appropriate in accordance with the Policy Development and Review Framework. On occasions Committees will wish to further assure themselves and may want to undertake more detailed scrutiny. This can be undertaken through a three-stage process: -

Committee Review Process

- Stage 1 Report
- Stage 2 Workshop
- Stage 3 Investigation.

- 3.5 The majority of meetings of the Infrastructure Services Committee adopt the following format: -

- Opening Statements by the Chair
- 1 Sederunt and Declaration of Members Interest
- 2 Resolutions
 - (a) Public Sector Equality Duty
 - (b) Exempt Information
- 3 Minute of Meeting
- 4 Outstanding Business
- 5 - Reports for consideration grouped under:-
 - Planning & Economy
 - Roads & Infrastructure
 - Environment & Sustainability
 - Support Services
 - Business Services

Exempt Items

Minutes of meetings, working groups, joint committees etc.

- 3.6 7 meetings of the Infrastructure Services Committee were held during the year 2021-2022. The work of the Committee can be summarised in the table below: -

Committee Date	Number of Agenda Items	Number of Agenda Items Representing Formal Scrutiny Activity	Percentage Formal Scrutiny Activity
13/05/2021	19	6	31.6%
17/06/2021	21	7	33.3%
19/08/2021	16	4	25.0%
30/09/2021	19	7	36.8%
25/11/2021	20	8	40.0%
20/01/2022	20	9	45.0%
10/03/2022	24	8	33.3%
Total	139	49	35.25%

- 3.7 As it can be seen by the table 35.25% of the overall business of the Infrastructure Services Committee during 2021-2022 represents formal scrutiny activity. The type of formal scrutiny activity undertaken by the Committee is analysed in the table below: -

Type of Formal Scrutiny Activity	Number of Occasions	Percentage
Member Promoted Issue (MPI)	3	6.1%
Action Plan/Improvement Plans Updates	3	6.1%
Performance Reports	2	4.1%
Strategies – Progress Reports	14	28.6%
Policy Development/Review	6	12.2%
Capital and Revenue Monitoring	9	18.4%
Partnership Reviews	6	12.2%
Governance	2	4.1%
Service Planning Updates	2	4.1%
Development Planning	2	4.1%
total	49	100.0%

Key areas of the Committee's scrutiny activity over the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 are summarised below, with detail of actions taken as a result.

3.8 Committee Review Process

During 2021 – 2022 the Committee did not seek further assurance through the Committee Review Process.

However three Member Promoted Issues (MPI) were discussed by the Committee during the year:-

(i) In August the Committee considered a report on Speeding On Fintray Road Blackburn (item 9). The Committee agreed to support the recommendation in the report that a trial Speed Indicator Device (SID) should be installed at the location to aid consideration of any future measures and requested that the Director look at the budget implications for purchasing additional stocks of SIDs, and to come up with recommendations on how the devices could be used, rotating to locations to address speeding in specific areas when required.

(ii) In September the Committee considered a report on Complementary Currency in Aberdeenshire (item 9). The Committee agreed to note the Member Promoted Issue as presented in the report but decided that no further Council action would be required.

(iii) In March the Committee considered a report on More Trees in Aberdeenshire (item 8). The Committee agree that a report should be taken to a future meeting of Infrastructure Services Committee to provide a full update on storm damage and replanting following more recent storm events and progress on other measures identified within this report to increase tree coverage in Aberdeenshire.

3.9 Formal Scrutiny

Over the course of the reporting period, the Committee has also reviewed performance and monitored service delivery when considering management information reports, performance reports, policy development review plans and strategies and budget monitoring reports.

Examples of where the Committee has added value include:

- (i) *Development Plan Scheme (Item 7 May 2021)* - During discussion, the Committee commented that the Local Development Plan should be used as a tool to inform the public, to support public engagement within communities; to support community planning and to look at what other communities were doing. In preparation of the next Local Development Plan, Officers were asked to take forward those comments, for future reports being brought back to Committee.
- (ii) *Fleet Services Strategic Plan Update (item 11 May 2021)* - the Committee requested that consideration should be given to:
 - Charging points and bay blocking, if that was to be considered nationally, if it became a problem, the policy position may have to change.
 - Managing the fleet, fuel element, to look at fuel supply that would be required as part of the strategy.
 - Infrastructure to support transition to zero emissions, look at those suppliers, who have the technology to divert charges for energy to the Service for staff who take business vehicles home.
- (iii) *Economic Development Service Plan (item 13 June 2021)* – during consideration of the proposed plan discussion took place on the role of

the circular economy, community ownership, supporting sector growth and town centre challenges, and the Committee requested that the Service review the wording in the Plan to incorporate reference to the circular economy where appropriate;

- (iv) *Draft Local Flood Risk Management Plan For The North East District (item 7 August 2021)* - During discussion the Committee considered that public engagement would be extremely important to ensure everyone was working together and that engagement should involve Community Councils and Area Committees to get their feedback on issues identified at a local level. The Committee instructed Officers to promote the review, to get as many people involved as possible (including Community Councils) and to circulate a report to Area Committees in the most efficient and effective way.
- (v) *HWRC Review (Item 8 August 2021)* – during discussions on the proposed review the Committee raised various issues such as whether those who access the recycling centres, using bicycles and trailers were factored into the review and whether there were other ways to engage with communities to ensure feedback could be collated from those who use the recycling centres and from those who don't, to ensure that the Service were able to capture an overall picture of any issues which the service should consider as part of the ongoing review. The Committee requested that its comments be considered as part of the on-going review.
- (vi) *Road Safety Plan (item 8 September 2021)* – having discussed the draft plan the Committee requested that the sentiment of Section 4.6 and 4.7 to the report should be reflected more clearly in the plan (this relates to Ensuring roads are safe for all types of road users and recognizing that motorcyclists and older drivers have been over represented in the Aberdeenshire casualty statistics in recent years) and that any significant changes to the National Framework, or legislation, should be reported back to Committee to ensure the Road Safety Action Plan was updated before 2030.
- (vii) *Aberdeenshire Council Outdoor Access Strategy 2018-2021 and Outdoor Access Strategy 2021-2024 (item 7 November 2021) and Aberdeenshire Council Built Heritage Strategy Review 2018-2021 and Built Heritage Strategy 2021-2024 (item 8 November 2021)*– during discussions of the proposed strategies the Committee requested that consideration be given to the setting of targets for each performance indicator presented in the reports. It was agreed that Officers would take these issues away and look at what those targets should look like and that would be discussed in detail at the Planning and Economy Member/Officer Working Group.

The Head of Planning & Economy subsequently sought feedback from members on the changes and has developed revised measures/targets.

The progress bulletin which will be prepared for the June ISC will refer to the amended performance indicators.

- (viii) *Town Centre First Principles (item 10 November 2021)* – the Committee requested that Officers ensure that Portlethen, Mintlaw, Westhill and other towns would not be forgotten as part of the Place Strategy and Place Plans, in recognition of community concerns in those areas.
- (ix) *Household Recycling Centre Review Outcome (Item 12 January 2022)* - the Committee recommended that the Member Officer Working Group (Waste Management Working Group) give further consideration to a customisation of the service, on a site by site basis, to seek to provide further opportunities for users of the service, and to report back to Infrastructure Services Committee, as appropriate.
- (x) *Roads Policy Review (Item 15 March 2022)* - This report presented proposals for four policies (Street Naming and Numbering, Signing of Tourist Facilities and Attractions, Enforcement of Roads and Traffic Authority Powers, and Electric Vehicle Charging) and invited the Committee to consider and approve these. Furthermore, the report updated the Committee on the outcome from officer reviews of two existing policies (Road Markings, and Variable and Vehicle activated signs).

Note the review of the Variable and Vehicle-activated Signs Policy was undertaken following a request from ISC. These policies benefited from review by the Area Committees prior to being reported to ISC and a number of their comments were taken on board when preparing the final drafts for consideration by ISC.

3.10 Informal Scrutiny

In addition, the Committee has held the following informal sessions:-

(i) *Digital Connectivity Strategy Briefings* – at the Committee on 20 January 2022, following consideration of a report providing an Update on Digital Connectivity Projects (item 6) the Committee requested that Officers arrange information sessions for Councillors; and arrange for communications to be issued to highlight key information and deadlines. As a result briefing information was circulated to all Councillors, and Member Briefing Sessions on Digital Engagement and Digital Connectivity were held on the 9, 15 and 24 February.

3.11 Programme of Future Activity

The proposed programme of activity for 2022/23 forms **Appendix 1**. The programme shown provides the Committee the opportunity to scrutinise and comment on: -

- Operational performance and improvement

- Financial performance and delivery of agreed savings
- Policy approval and review
- Progress with strategies

In addition to these activities the Committee has identified the following service areas for further scrutiny: -

Rural Partnerships Challenge Fund – the Committee requested that an update report on progress with the Rural Partnerships Challenge Fund and the agreed Service Level Agreements be brought back to Committee in summer 2022.

Storm Damage and Replanting - the Committee agreed that a report should be taken to a future meeting of Infrastructure Services Committee to provide a full update on storm damage and replanting following more recent storm events and progress on other measures to increase tree coverage in Aberdeenshire.

Crown Estate Scotland Funding - the Committee asked that officers enter into further discussions with the Crown Estate in relation to work with coastal communities, including projects to assist the food and drink industry in the North East, and to bring a further report to the Committee by October on Crown Estate funding which will set out how the funds have been used in Aberdeenshire.

Policies For Review – an indicative list of Roads policies to be reviewed during the year is currently in preparation by officers. Following requests from ISC this list will include updates regarding the ongoing review of the EV Charging policy and the addendum to the Variable and Vehicle-activated Signs Policy regarding community operated signs.

4 Council Priorities, Implications, and Risk

4.1 The Council Plan has been developed around the three pillars and six strategic priorities. These are: -

<i>Pillar</i>	<i>Priority</i>
<i>Our People</i>	<i>Education Health & Wellbeing</i>
<i>Our Environment</i>	<i>Infrastructure Resilient Communities</i>
<i>Our Economy</i>	<i>Economy & Enterprise Estate Modernisation</i>

Underpinning the Priorities are a number of key principles. They are: right people, right places, right time; responsible finances; climate and sustainability; Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plans; human rights and public protection; tackling poverty and inequalities; digital infrastructure and economy.

4.2 Whilst the various issues and topics considered as scrutiny relate to all the Council's Priorities and Key Principles they particularly focus on the Pillar "Our People" and the Priorities "Education" and "Health & Wellbeing" and supports the principles around right people, right places, right time, the Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plans and tackling poverty and inequalities.

4.3 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		X	
Staffing		X	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland		X	
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing		X	
Climate Change and Sustainability		X	
Health and Wellbeing		X	
Town Centre First		X	

4.4 There are no financial or staffing implications associated with its report as its purpose is to report on the work of the Committee not on operational issues.

4.5 Stage One of the Integrated Impact Assessment process has not identified the requirement for any further detailed assessments to be undertaken because the report and the recommendations within the report concern the scrutiny role of the Committee. The report does not deal with operational activities so has no impact on policies or strategies of the Council.

4.6 No risks are associated with this report on either a corporate or strategic level. The various risks associated with each individual issue presented to the Committee will have been considered during the development of the relevant report.

5 Scheme of Governance

5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and had no comments to make and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

5.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section F 7.6 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of

Governance as this is the annual report of the committee's scrutiny activity that has taken place in accordance with the Committee Review Process.

Alan Wood
Director Environment & Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Alan Morris Service Development Coordinator
Date 19/05/2022

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Programme of Scrutiny Activity

Appendix 1

Programme of Scrutiny Activity, 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

Performance Reports	
<i>Meeting date</i>	<i>Item description</i>
8 June 2022	Infrastructure Services Directorate Plan Update October 2021 – end March 2022
1 December 2022	Infrastructure Services Directorate Plan Review April 2022 – end of September 2022

Financial Performance	
<i>Meeting date</i>	<i>Item description</i>
8 June 2022	Financial Performance Report
	Carbon Budget Update 2022-23 (Six Monthly Update)
25 August 2022	Financial Performance Report
6 October 2022	Financial Performance Report
1 December 2022	Financial Performance Report
	Carbon Budget Update 2022-23 (Six Monthly Update)
	Crown Estates Funding Annual Report
26 January 2023	Financial Performance Report
16 March 2023	Financial Performance Report

Policy Reviews	
<i>Meeting date</i>	<i>Item description</i>
16 March 2023	Policy Register Annual Reporting.

Service Areas for Formal Scrutiny	
<i>Meeting date</i>	<i>Item description</i>
8 June 2022	Directorate Plan Refresh
25 August 2022	Economic Development Service Plan Update
1 December 2022	Visit Scotland Annual Update
26 January 2023	Regional Land Use Planning Partnership – North East Region Pilot Project Annual Report

Governance	
<i>Meeting date</i>	<i>Item description</i>
8 June 2022	Annual Scrutiny Report 2021/22
	Draft Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

Strategies and Improvement Plans	
<i>Meeting date</i>	<i>Item description</i>
8 June 2022	Corporate Improvement Plan – six-monthly updates
	Strategic Transport Update
25 August 2022	Strategic Transport Update
1 December 2022	Roads Asset Management Update (Annual Status and Options Report 2022)
	Corporate Improvement Plan – six-monthly updates
	Strategic Transport Update
	The Natural Heritage strategy 23-25 (note there will be a range of progress bulletins to ISC in June).
16 March 2023	Strategic Transport Update
	Urban Gull Strategy Action Plan Annual Report