



South Hams
District Council

Overview and Scrutiny **Annual Report**

2019 - 2020



www.southhams.gov.uk

Foreword from the Panel Chairman



Cllr John Birch

Chairman of
South Hams
District Council
Overview and
Scrutiny Panel

South Hams
District Council
Member for Totnes

I am pleased to present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for the work undertaken between May 2019 and April 2020.

At the beginning of the year, there was a significant change to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Following the elections held in May 2019 the Panel membership comprised ten new councillors and only three councillors who had previous experience of its function and procedures. The training offered to Members proved valuable in helping them to undertake the challenge of scrutinising the work and performance of the Council with dedication and commitment.

The report includes a summary of the role and responsibilities of Overview and Scrutiny, the work undertaken over the past year and the various outcomes. It has been a busy year for Panel members overviewing and scrutinising the services carried out or provided by the Council. A broad range of topics was addressed and as a result, recommendations were put forward for action by the Council. The topics scrutinised and the outcomes are set out in this report.

Just prior to end of the Municipal Year the work of the Panel was curtailed for a short period due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Council faces a challenging time ahead especially on the financial front and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel will play its part in ensuring that the Council carries out its functions in an effective and efficient manner in difficult conditions.

It was a challenging year for members and I would like to thank all of them for their commitment and the contribution they made to the meetings and also the work and support of Cllr Peter Smerdon, the Vice Chair of the Panel.

I would also like to thank the Council officers for their support and hard work in facilitating the Overview and Scrutiny process and special mention goes to Steve Mullineaux of the Senior Leadership Team and Darryl White of Democratic Services.

I hope you find the report interesting.

Cllr John Birch

Introduction

We are pleased to present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report which outlines our work during the 2019-20 Municipal Year and which provides general information on the overview and scrutiny function at South Hams District Council.

Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the democratic decision-making process in local councils, where Panel Members can contribute to shaping Council policy, community wellbeing and accountability. The Panel does this by: reviewing Council services and policies, community issues and key decisions and making recommendations for improvement.

The four key principles of Overview and Scrutiny are:

- Provides a 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy makers and decision-makers;
- Enables the voice and concerns of the public to be heard;
- Is carried out by 'independent minded Members' who lead and own the scrutiny role; and
- Drives improvement in public services.

The Panel Members consider these principles when selecting topics to investigate whether it is holding the Executive to account, reviewing policies, policy development or the scrutiny of external bodies.

The Council recognises the importance of the overview and scrutiny function in its governance arrangements and officer support.

The Council's governance arrangements specify that all 31 Members of the Council are considered to be either an Executive Member (of which there are 6); a Development Management Committee Specialist Member (of which there are 12); or an Overview and Scrutiny Panel Specialist Member (of which there are 13).

The lead officers supporting the Panel for 2019/20 were the Council's Deputy Chief Executive and the Senior Specialist – Democratic Services.



Panel Membership

In May 2019, the residents of the South Hams elected 15 new Members to serve on South Hams District Council. This resulted in 10 newly elected Members being appointed to serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Whilst the Overview and Scrutiny function was a prominent feature of the Council's Member Induction Programme, at its first formal Panel meeting, Members were presented with (and ultimately supported) the 'Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities' that had recently been produced by the MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government).

The Panel membership for 2019/20 was:



Cllr John Birch
Chairman



Cllr Peter Smerdon
Vice-Chairman



Cllr Lance Austen



Cllr Matthew Chown



Cllr Susan Jackson



Cllr John McKay



Cllr Denise O'Callaghan



Cllr Trevor Pennington



Cllr Helen Reeve



Cllr Joseph Rose



Cllr Barrie Spencer



Cllr Jo Sweett



Cllr Dan Thomas

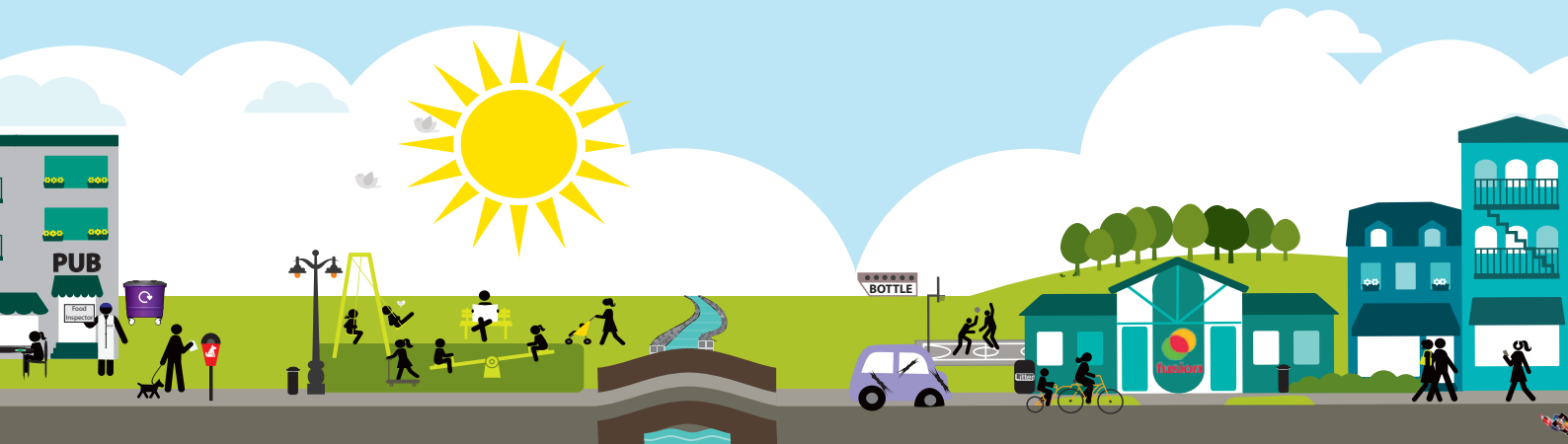
The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the Council's political structure and it plays a vital role in improving the services that people of the District use – whether a resident, employed here or just visiting. Overview and Scrutiny does not just look at the way the Council does things, it can look at anything which affects the lives of people within the District and it allows citizens to have a greater say in Council matters.

Overview and Scrutiny allows Members to review and scrutinise decisions, look at existing practices and make recommendations to help ensure the residents of the South Hams receive excellent services. The overall aim is to ensure overview and scrutiny adds value to the Council's decision-making process and makes a positive contribution towards policy development.

The detailed terms of reference and procedure rules for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel can be found at: Part 2 – Article 5; Part 3 – Delegation Scheme; and Part 4 – Rules of Procedure of the Council Constitution. The Council Constitution can be accessed via the following link:

[www.southhams.gov.uk/
article/3689/Our-Constitution](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/article/3689/Our-Constitution)



Agenda Items – Corporate Strategy

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel met formally on seven separate occasions during the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

In addition, the Panel met jointly with the Development Management Committee on one occasion to consider the draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2020/21.

In considering its work programme, the Panel gave great emphasis to the Council's Corporate Strategy and the six strategic themes, which are shown in the image alongside this text.

The Panel has consequently received a number of reports (and made a number of recommendations) which are linked to these strategic themes. Whilst it is acknowledged that a number of these cut across a number of these themes, for the purpose of this Annual Report, they are aligned to the theme that is considered the most relevant:

6





HOMES

Enabling homes that meet the needs of all

Action	18/19 Progress
Planning Enforcement Plan Review	<p>The Panel conducted a pre-Scrutiny review of the Planning Enforcement Plan and proceeded to make the following recommendations to the Executive and Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve the updated: Enforcement Plan; Harm Assessment Matrix and Enforcement Action Plan; 2. That two additional permanent members of staff be approved to be funded from the Planning Enforcement Reserve in 2019/20 and to be built into the Budget Setting process as a cost pressure for 2020/21; and 3. That Members receive notification of each Planning Enforcement Case (once it has been registered) within their local ward alongside its priority rating. <p>Each of these recommendations were subsequently approved by either the Executive or Council.</p>
Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2018/19	<p>The Panel considered and recommended that the Executive adopt the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan for 2019/20 and the South Hams and West Devon Rough Sleeper Strategy for 2019/22. In addition, the Panel also recommended that, once adopted, copies of these documents be sent to Town and Parish Council Clerks with an explanatory note of the relevant services (and officer contact details) that are provided by the Council.</p>
Formation of a Wholly Owned Company	<p>The Panel received assurances that the principal activity of any proposal to form a Wholly Owned Company would be to build genuinely affordable housing for local people.</p>
Housing Report	<p>A series of proposals were presented to the Panel that would ultimately help the Council to shape its emerging Housing Strategy.</p> <p>After detailed consideration, the Panel noted with concern:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the rise in recorded local Housing Need; 2. that levels of fuel poverty in the South Hams were currently above the national average; 3. the average house prices in the South Hams were currently 13 times the average salary; and 4. that rental levels were often higher than Local Housing Allowance Rates. <p>and, in order to address these concerns, the Panel supported the proposals to engage positively and help shape the emerging Housing Strategy and the principle of an interventionalist approach in the market.</p>
Pre-Application Process	<p>Members gave consideration to a report that presented the draft pre-application process and RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>The draft pre-application process be approved, subject to inclusion of the following revisions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. replacement of the word 'we' with the term 'the Council'; 2. move the definitions from the end to the beginning of the Policy; and 3. expand upon reference to 'disclosures' in the Policy.



ENTERPRISE

Creating places for enterprise to thrive and business to grow

Action	18/19 Progress
Investing in Kingsbridge	<p>Prior to its consideration by the Executive, the Panel requested a pre-Scrutiny review of this agenda item.</p> <p>Whilst a number of specific points were raised for the onward consideration by the Executive, the Panel welcomed the assurances that it received for close working with both Kingsbridge Town Council and local residents.</p>
Commercial Investment Strategy	<p>Before being presented to the Special Council meeting on 25 July 2019, the Panel received an update on a proposal to revise the Strategy to take advantage of opportunities from outside of the South Hams area to invest in renewable energy generation assets.</p> <p>Upon the conclusion of the update, the Panel informed of its broad support for the recommendation to amend the Strategy.</p>
Assets Register	<p>Following consideration of the Council's Assets Register, the Panel asked that a series of Drop-in Sessions for local Ward Members be arranged with the intention being to consider the Assets Register in more detail before being forwarded to Town and Parish Council Clerks for their information and reference.</p>
Capital Assets Projects	<p>The Deputy Leader provided an update to the Panel on the implications on proposed Capital Assets Projects of the unexpected rise in the Public Works Loan Board rates.</p>
Town Centres Strategy	<p>Members requested a report that provided an update on the progress that had been made on the Council's Town Centre Strategy.</p> <p>The Panel was of the view that there was a need for added emphasis to be applied to the Strategy and the following resolution was approved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That four separate meetings (per Cluster area) be arranged with local Ward Members to discuss possible initiatives that could be prioritised in each local Cluster area; and 2. That Option 3 (namely that the Council could 'take a more active role in promoting, leading and delivering change in the community. This might be achieved by a lead Officer / Officers and Members dedicating additional time to convening meetings, assessing opportunities and creating working groups / task and finish groups to deliver against the agenda') be fully costed and presented to the draft 2020/21 Budget Setting Workshop on Thursday, 7 November 2019.



Action	18/19 Progress
IT System Update and Resilience	<p>At its first formal meeting for 2019/20, the Panel considered a report that provided an update on the IT systems issues that had been experienced by Members since their Election and presented an outline plan for reducing the impact of future issues.</p> <p>The Panel proceeded to RESOLVE that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the IT Head of Practice be requested to consider the best methods and frequency for communicating system outages and resolution times to Members; 2. the IT Head of Practice be asked to note the concerns raised by Members and ensure that these are highlighted in the IT Resilience report that is to be presented to the Panel meeting on 11 July 2019; and 3. all Members be encouraged to have the 'Blackberry Client' application installed on their mobile phones. <p>At its next meeting, the Panel also considered an IT Resilience update report on both the work that had been completed to date and the proposed further service improvements and noted its contents.</p>
Peer Challenge Action Plan	<p>In considering the latest version of the Peer Challenge Action Plan, the Panel noted the progress made to date and asked for the next update to include more in-depth information around the perception of backbench Members that they still felt excluded from the decision-making process.</p>
Corporate Strategy	<p>The Panel considered a report that provided an update on the Council's progress made to date on refining its Corporate Strategy. The Panel also recommended to the Executive that targets be provided to the Panel that are based upon the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) principles and include the following additional subject areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate Change; - Electric Vehicle Charging Points; and - Planning Enforcement.
Brexit – Main Risk Areas to the Council and Future Communication Strategy to Members	<p>The Deputy Chief Executive provided a verbal update to the Panel on Brexit. Having received this update, the Panel was of the view that future Brexit related communications to Members should be undertaken via a regular 'Brexit Briefing Note'.</p>

<p>Information Commissioner's Office Procedure</p>	<p>In light of concerns arising from a recent Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) decision, the Panel considered a report that presented Guidance on the ICO Procedure and proceeded to RECOMMEND to Council that:</p> <p>'The following procedure be adopted to inform Members and the public of decisions made by the ICO in relation to requests for information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Council takes the necessary steps to publish on a quarterly basis details relating to the number of requests handled by the Council and the decisions taken in relation to those requests in accordance with the Section 45 Code of Practice; 2. That the Council reviews its Publication Scheme in the light of requests for information it receives annually; 3. When the Council is advised by the ICO that a request has been referred to it, the Leader and relevant lead Executive Member be notified and, if the matter relates to a planning issue, the local Ward Members are also notified. For non-planning issues, the Deputy Monitoring Officer will determine on a case by case basis whether it could be disclosed to local Ward Members; 4. That all Members be notified with a copy of the Decision Notice when it is received, in addition to it being published on the Council website and the matter will be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel; and 5. That, when an ICO decision recommends that further action is taken by the Council, the Freedom Of Information Officer will ensure that the relevant officer takes the action on behalf of the Council or seeks the agreement of the Monitoring Officer if they wish to challenge the Decision.'
<p>Accommodation Strategy Updates</p>	<p>To monitor the progress being made by the Accommodation Strategy Working Group, the Panel received two updates during 2019/20. During these updates, specific reference was made to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The ability for any Member of the Council to attend meetings of the Working Group; and - The fact that a report that presented an interim set of Working Group recommendations was to be presented to the Executive meeting to be held on 19 March 2020.

Fees and Charges 2020/21	<p>The Panel considered the setting of Fees and Charges for 2020/21 and recommended to the Council (via the Executive) that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the proposed fees and charges set out for Parks, Open Spaces and Outdoor Sports be approved; 2. the proposed Environmental Health Charges be approved; 3. the proposed unchanged Fees and Charges for Development Management be approved; 4. delegated authority be given to the Director of Place and Enterprise, in consultation with the lead Executive Member, to set the Dartmouth Lower Ferry Fees to take account of market conditions, including competitor charges; 5. charges be introduced for the use of the existing electric charging points at Follaton House; 6. delegated authority be given to the Commissioning Manager for Waste and Head of Practice Lead for Waste, in consultation with the lead Executive Member for Environment, to set the Commercial Waste Fees and Charges; 7. the proposed changes to Boat Storage Charges be approved; 8. the proposed 'Proof of Life' charges be approved and introduced with immediate effect; 9. the proposed changes to S257 Footpath Diversion Orders charges be approved with immediate effect; and 10. delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer and the lead Executive Member to set the Local Land Charges fees on a cost recovery basis.
Locality Service Update	<p>Members acknowledged that a formal service review had not been carried out since establishment of the Locality Service in 2015. As a result, the Panel established a Task and Finish Group to review the role of the Locality Service.</p> <p>Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Group was not able to present its concluding report during the 2019/20 Municipal Year and this matter would be revisited during the 2020/21 Year.</p>
Pay and Display Machine Update	<p>An update on the actions that had been taken into researching alternative Machine providers was presented to the Panel.</p> <p>In conclusion, the Panel was supportive of the officer view that the Council should continue its working relationship with Metric unless performance gives rise for concern, at which point officers will again evaluate alternative options.</p>
Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2019	<p>The Committee reviewed the Ombudsman Annual Letter for 2019 and welcomed the improved performance in respect of dealing with customer complaints. In particular, Members were assured that the Council was reviewing (and taking learning points) from each complaint received.</p>

<p>Revenue Budget Proposals for 2020/21</p>	<p>The joint meeting of the Panel and Development Management Committee considered the Revenue Budget Proposals for 2020/21 and recommended to the Council (via the Executive) that support be given to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the increase in Council Tax for 2020/21 of £5 (Band D of £170.42 for 2020/21 – an increase of 10 pence per week or £5 per year – equating to a 3.02% increase); 2. the financial pressures amounting to £1,578,640 (as shown in Appendix A of the presented agenda report); 3. the net contributions to/from Earmarked Reserves amounting to £63,243 (as shown in Appendix D of the presented agenda report); 4. the proposed savings of £959,477 for 2020/21 (as shown in Appendix A of the presented agenda report); 5. the proposed funding levels (as set out in section 2.38 of the presented agenda report), subject to the reinstatement of the £10,000 funding to the South Hams CVS; 6. the proposed use of £509,543 of New Homes Bonus funding to balance the 2020/21 Revenue Budget (as shown in Section 2.25 of the presented agenda report); 7. the use of £400,000 of New Homes Bonus funding to set up an Emergency Climate Change projects Earmarked Reserve; and 8. the inclusion of an Economy Officer post (shared with West Devon Borough Council within the staffing establishment as set out in Section 1.7 of the presented agenda report), subject to the Executive being in receipt of a draft Job Description and the associated outcomes and targets for the role.
<p>Capital Budget Proposals for 2020-21</p>	<p>The joint meeting also considered the Capital Budget Proposals for 2020/21 and recommended to the Council (via the Executive) that support be given to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the content of the Capital Programme Proposals for 2020/21 that totals £2,480,000 be supported; 2. the content of the Capital Programme Proposals for 2020/21 that totals £1,250,000 be supported; and 3. the proposed financing of the 2020/21 Capital Programme of £3,730,000 from the funding sources (as set out in Section 4 of the presented agenda report) be supported.
<p>Peer Challenge Progress Update</p>	<p>A report was presented that provided the Panel with an overview of the progress that had been made to date against the approved Peer Challenge Action Plan.</p> <p>The Panel concluded that the progress made to date on the delivery of the Peer Challenge Action Plan should be noted and the proposal to bring forward the Local Government Association interim review to ensure a solid baseline for the new Chief Executive should be supported.</p>

Member 2019 Induction Review	<p>The Panel considered the findings of the short survey into the 2019 Member Induction Programme and were generally very positive in their feedback on the Programme.</p> <p>Having suggested some minor improvements to future Induction Programmes it was then:</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the contents of the review into the 2019 Member Induction Programme be noted and the conclusions be taken into account in the design of future Programmes; and 2. That the Annual Work Programme be updated to include consideration of the draft 2023 Member Induction Programme.
Development Management – Performance Update	<p>Having considered the performance update on the Development Management service, the Panel expressed some concerns over the staffing position that had been identified in the report. Such was the depth of concern, that the Panel requested a verbal update on the position at its next meeting.</p> <p>In light of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the following meeting was cancelled and this update has been rolled over to the 2020/21 Panel Work Programme.</p>
Operational Performance	<p>The Panel considered a report that presented the latest operational performance information and noted the outcome report. Members also supported the approach to receiving theme-based reports in the future and requested that the 'Council Efficiency' theme be presented to the Panel first.</p>

COMMUNITIES

Council and residents working together to create strong empowered communities



Action	18/19 Progress
Partnership Funding Levels 2020/21	<p>In advance of being presented to the Executive, the lead Executive Member advised that the report would be seeking adoption of a 'Commissioning Model' based approach to award partnership funding for a three year period (instead of the current process of reviewing annually). The Panel was also advised that it was to be recommended that future funding decisions would be based upon one (or all) of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local need; - Alignment to the Council's Corporate Strategy; and - Statutory Duty.
Customer Satisfaction Quarterly Updates	<p>The Panel discussion focused on improvements to the Council website. In particular, Members welcomed the recruitment of a designated website officer and were encouraged to put forward local volunteers to help to review the effectiveness of the current website.</p>

Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Panel considered a report that provided an update on the scores achieved by the Council as part of a recent Institute of Customer Service Customer Satisfaction Benchmark Survey.

In noting the results, the Panel also recommended that the Executive approve actions that were contained within the presented agenda report that were headed as follows:

- Customer Service Improvement Manager;
- Complaint Handling Review;
- Staff Meetings, Performance Monitoring and Training;
- IT Procurement and Improvement;
- Continued Surveying; and
- Progress Reporting.

WELLBEING

Supporting positive, safe and healthy lifestyles and helping those most in need



Action	18/19 Progress
Food Safety Service Plan	<p>The Panel received and approved the Food Safety Service Plan for 2019/20, subject to a six-monthly progress report being presented back that made reference to opportunities available to the service to increase income and the areas identified for improvement and future development.</p> <p>In receiving the six-month progress update, the Panel expressed its support for the progress that had been made on the Service Plan.</p>



<p>Fusion Leisure Update and Feedback on their Cashless Project</p>	<p>Representatives from Fusion Leisure were invited to a Panel meeting to outline their cashless project proposals. During their presentation, the representatives expressed their apologies to Members for the late notification and the poor communication strategy that had prompted the agenda update.</p> <p>The Panel concluded that a Task and Finish Group should be established to undertake a review of the relationship between Fusion and local South Hams communities, with a concluding report being presented to the Panel a month before the Fusion Annual Report was considered.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group Outcome report was presented to the Panel at its meeting held on 23 January 2020. The Panel supported each of the recommendations arising from the Review and were particularly appreciative of the conclusion that the Review had helped to improve the working relationship between the Council and Fusion.</p> <p>When presenting the Annual Report to the Panel meeting held on 27 February 2020, Fusion representatives reinforced the positivity of the Task and Finish Group review and the consequent improved working relationship. At the end of the debate into the Annual Report, the Panel resolved that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fusion be thanked for its 2019 Annual Report and representatives be asked to take action on the Member issues that were raised at the meeting; 2. Fusion Lifestyle representatives be requested to provide a further report in six months' time specifically on the progress being made on their sustainability / environmental obligations; and 3. All Members be given advanced notice from Fusion of the rationale behind any proposed changes in leisure prices.
<p>Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020/21</p>	<p>A report was presented to the Panel that sought to recommend to the Executive that the Scheme was working satisfactorily and did not require any amendments to be made. Following a debate, the Panel supported this proposal.</p>
<p>Community Safety Partnership (CSP) – Annual Report</p>	<p>In line with statutory requirements, the Panel considered its annual update from the CSP and raised a number of issues that were to be taken forward. In their concluding comments, Panel Members resolved that 'the contents of the Annual Report be welcomed and an all Member Workshop be convened in January 2020.'</p>
<p>Safeguarding Policy</p>	<p>The Panel considered a report that sought to provide an opportunity to annually scrutinise and review Safeguarding practices and procedures.</p> <p>The Panel then RESOLVED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. they continue to formally review safeguarding on an annual basis; 2. the Executive be RECOMMENDED to adopt the revised Safeguarding Policy (as outlined at Appendix A of the presented agenda report); and 3. the Executive be RECOMMENDED to instruct officers to undertake a viability study regarding the merits of DBS checks for all Members, with the outcome of this study being reported back to a future Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting.



ENVIRONMENT

Protecting, conserving and enhancing our built and natural environment

Action	18/19 Progress
Climate Change	<p>Climate Change was a prominent agenda item for the Panel during 2019/20. This was reflected in the number of related public questions that were received on the Climate Change and Biodiversity agenda (as highlighted later in this Annual Report). Issues raised by the Panel included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - points of clarity before the Council considered a recommendation to declare a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency and develop an Action Plan; - a verbal update on the work of the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group (DCERG); - an opportunity to consider the Citizens' Assembly proposal prior to it being considered (and determined) by Full Council; - the following Panel Resolution: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the lead officer be requested to make representations to the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group calling for South Hams District Council Members to be able to attend the 'Call for Evidence' Themed Hearing at Follaton House; 2. That the Panel expresses its concerns over the lack of information that had been received from Devon County Council in relation to its Citizens Assembly proposal; and 3. That the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group be RECOMMENDED that the draft Climate Change Action Plan should attempt to address the dangers that Climate Change poses including, but not limited to, extreme weather events such as flood and drought. In cases where elements are outside its remit, the Council should aim to communicate with (and work alongside) those who are responsible for those elements.
Waste Procurement Closedown Report	<p>The Panel noted the contents of a report that provided an overview of the Waste Procurement project that detailed the successes, lessons learnt and the realisation of any immediate benefits.</p>
Electric Car Charging Points – Update	<p>An update was given to the Panel on the strategy for the installation of Electric Charging Points in Council Car Parks.</p> <p>The Panel subsequently RESOLVED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the update report, in respect of the Strategy for the installation of Electric Charging Points in Council Car Parks, be welcomed, with the exception of the concerns raised over the project installation date of 2022; and 2. a further update report be presented to the Panel meeting on 23 April 2020 that focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The lobbying to be undertaken on bringing the completion date forward; and - The costs associated with procuring and installing Charging Points in all Council owned Car Parks. <p>(In light of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Panel meeting was cancelled on 23 April 2020 and it is envisaged that the further update report will be presented to the Panel during the 2020/21 Municipal Year).</p>

Agenda Items – Public Forum

In line with its openness and transparency agenda, the Council has adopted provision for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to set aside 15 minutes at the start of each meeting to enable members of the public to raise issues and/or questions in line with its Procedure Rules.

During 2019/20, the Panel was presented with 14 questions/issues for consideration that focused on the following issues:

- assessing the viability of a 2030 target for achieving carbon neutrality in the Council's Climate Action Plan. In response, the questioner was directed to the Special Council meeting that was to be held on 25 July 2019 at which an Executive recommendation to address this matter was to be considered;
- the public consultation on the Council's Climate Action Plan. Assurances were given in the response that both local residents and expert organisations would have the opportunity to be involved in the formulation of the Plan;
- working in partnership with Teignbridge District Council (TDC) on the production of a Climate Action Plan. The questioner was informed that, where beneficial to do so, the Council would continue to work closely with TDC and other partners;
- the emphasis to be given by the Executive to the need to reduce local Carbon Emissions when taking future decisions on: Renewable Energy Investment, Electric Vehicle Charging Points, the Air Quality Action Plan and the future development of Langage Energy Park. In her reply, the Leader of Council confirmed that carbon emissions (and their reduction) would be one of many factors considered and taken into account by the Executive as part of its decision-making processes;
- whether or not the Council had consulted its employees on their views about the ethics and potential financial risks of investing their pension funds in Fossil Fuel industries. The response advised that the Devon Pension Fund's current approach was to manage the risks in relation to Climate Change and to promote change through engagement with companies rather than through disinvestment;
- methods to ensure that the Plymouth and South West Devon Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) fully accorded with the emerging Climate Action Plans for the South Hams and for Devon. The questioner was advised that the SPD would provide detailed guidance on how the policies in the adopted Joint Local Plan (e.g. the requirement for developers to implement low carbon building techniques and to enable the provision of local renewable energy projects) would be implemented;

- the progress made in exploring opportunities for investing in Solar Photovoltaic Panels over Council owned car parks and other assets. In response, it was confirmed that a meeting had been held with an organisation that was able to offer the provision of Solar PV Panels across the Council's Estate. The organisation concluded that the Council's rental properties were unviable for any provision and that Follaton House was already well provisioned. Also, investigations into Council owned car parks were ongoing and there was felt to be potential scope with the Council's Leisure Centre buildings;
- the level of support that the Council would offer to Town and Parish Councils who wished to draw up their own Climate Action Plans. The questioner was subsequently advised that the Council was taking the following steps:

 - setting up a website that would be populated with Plans, a carbon footprint calculator and a blog page for groups to exchange their views; and
 - convening a joint Council / Devon County Council Annual Consultation Event with town and parish council representatives that would include an open discussion on Climate Change.
- the measurable indicators of biodiversity levels that would be used by the Council. The Leader informed that the indicators had not been determined at the time of the Panel meeting;
- the obstacles that could obstruct delivery of an effective local Climate Action Plan. In response, the questioner was advised that the list of potential obstacles was still to be finalised and, to overcome them (once identified), one course of action would be to lobby Central Government;
- whether or not the Council's current electric vehicle charging points used electricity from 100% renewable suppliers. The questioner was advised that, at this stage, not all electricity was sourced from 100% renewable energy suppliers. However, the importance of the Council reducing the footprint of its energy purchases was recognised;
- working with other neighbouring local authorities to develop the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan. In response, the Leader of Council advised that the Council was working with a range of organisations including: Torbay, Plymouth, Teignbridge and Dartmoor National Park, primarily through the development of the Devon Carbon Plan;
- the scrutiny undertaken to date on the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan. In response to the question, the Member involvement prior to the Plan being presented to the Council was outlined to the questioner;
- concerns over the proposal to reduce the funding allocated by the Council to the South Hams Community and Voluntary Service (CVS).

Standards Update and Governance Matters

In accordance with the Council Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel is responsible for monitoring complaints (including Ombudsman complaints and those against Members alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct) and for the standards responsibilities under the Localism Act.

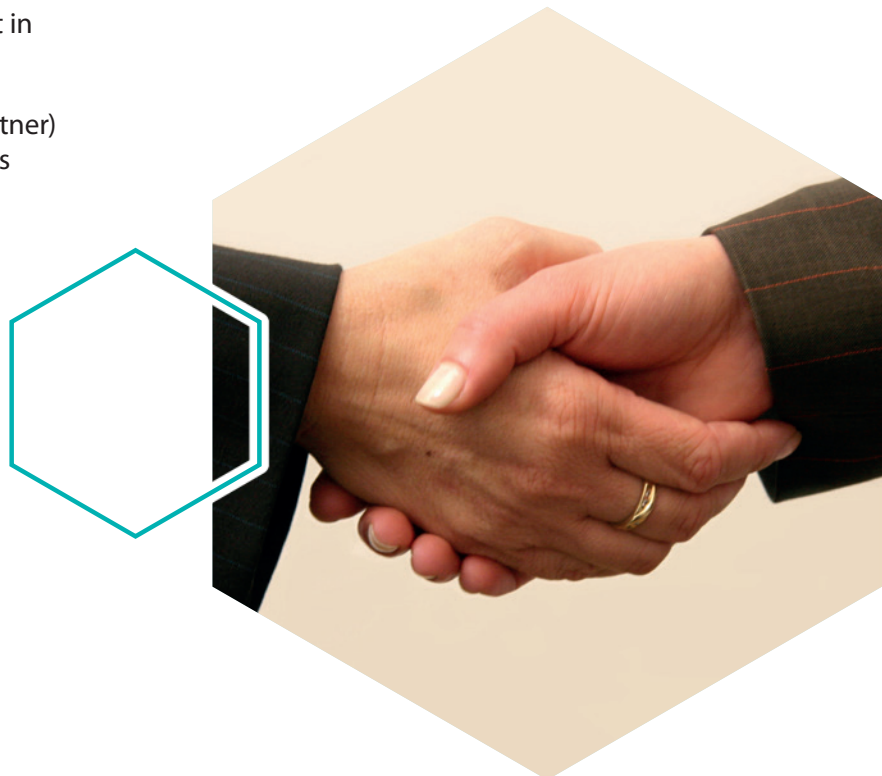
As part of these responsibilities, the Panel has considered during 2019/20:

General Dispensations to Members

The Panel considered a report that sought approval to grant the General Dispensations that were set out in the presented agenda report and RESOLVED that, from the Annual Council meeting in 2020 to the Annual Council meeting in 2023, the Panel grant General Dispensations to allow all Members of Council to speak and vote where they would otherwise have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following matters:

- Housing: where a Member (or spouse / partner) holds a tenancy or lease with the Council as long as the matter does not relate to the Member's particular tenancy or lease;
- Statutory Sick Pay: if a Member receives this or is entitled to receive it;
- An Allowance, travelling expense, payment or indemnity for Members;
- Any ceremonial honour given to Members; and
- Setting the Council Tax or a Precept

Multi or dual-hatted Council Members also have a General Dispensation to speak and vote on matters where they are a Member of another local authority and in receipt of a Members' Allowance from that other local authority, except where a conflict exists between South Hams District Council and Devon County Council Cabinet Members.



The 2020-21 Work Programme

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel has the ability to set its own annual work programme and it is acknowledged that sufficient flexibility is built in to enable for items to be included at short notice.

However, at the time of preparing this Annual Report, the following substantive agenda items have already been rolled over to the 2020/21 Work Programme:

- Locality Service Review (Task and Finish Group Review)
- Food Safety Annual Service Plan;
- Waste Contract Monitoring Report
- Community Safety Partnership – Annual Report;
- Safeguarding – Annual Report;
- Draft Amended Budget Proposals 2020/21 and Draft Budget Proposals 2021/22 (joint meetings with the Development Management Committee);
- COVID-19 Draft Recovery Plan (joint meeting with the Development Management Committee);
- Electric Charging Points – Update on Lobbying and Project Costs;
- Sustainable Community Locality Fund – Expenditure and Process;
- ‘Council Efficiency’ theme – performance report;
- Annual O+S Report for 2019/20;
- IT Resilience Annual Report;
- Fusion Leisure – Six-Month and Annual Report;
- Homelessness Strategy Action Plan – Annual Update;
- 2021/22 Fees and Charges; and
- Ombudsman Annual Letter.