

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Report for Council – 26 October 2017

Since the last Council report in July, meetings of Mid Suffolk District Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee have been held in July, August, September and October.

These meetings covered the following items:

- Homelessness and use of B&Bs
- Performance and risk
- Community Safety Partnership
- Void times
- Community engagement on public access

The October meeting (which at the time of writing will be held on 19 October 2017) will cover:

- An update on recommendations from the Neighbourhood Plan work
- Scoping of a review on supporting business growth for small and micro businesses.

Outcomes from the Committee's recent work can be summarised as follows:

Homelessness: It was noted that the use of B&B accommodation had fallen however there will be more changes next year when the Homelessness Reduction Act comes into force in April 2018. The councils are undertaking a huge amount of work in preparation for this and members will check progress at the November meeting.

Performance and risk: Risk is a key area for the Joint Audit & Standards Committee. Performance measures will be reviewed in December to ensure the right indicators are being monitored.

Community Safety Partnership: Members appreciated St Edmundsbury Councillor Robert Everitt's contributions to the meeting but it was felt clear outcomes should be stated from the Partnership's activities. Members asked that a report be provided to Council on an annual basis.

Void times in Council properties: With recent changes to the management of voids, including the creation of BMBS (Babergh and Mid Suffolk Building Services) and a new IT system, there had been less reduction in void times than expected over the last year. The Committee received assurances that steps were being taken to improve this and asked that any underperformance was monitored and reported.

Community engagement on public access: Members were advised that lessons had been learnt from recent activity including changes to the telephone system and general access to council services.

Forward plan: Items include:

- Review of the Shared Legal Service
- Pre-scrutiny of the Waste Strategy
- Review of BMBS (Babergh and Mid Suffolk Building Services)

Members also raised concerns regarding staff welfare (including absences, turnover and morale) and asked for assurance from Cabinet that this would be reviewed.

Councillor Rachel Eburne