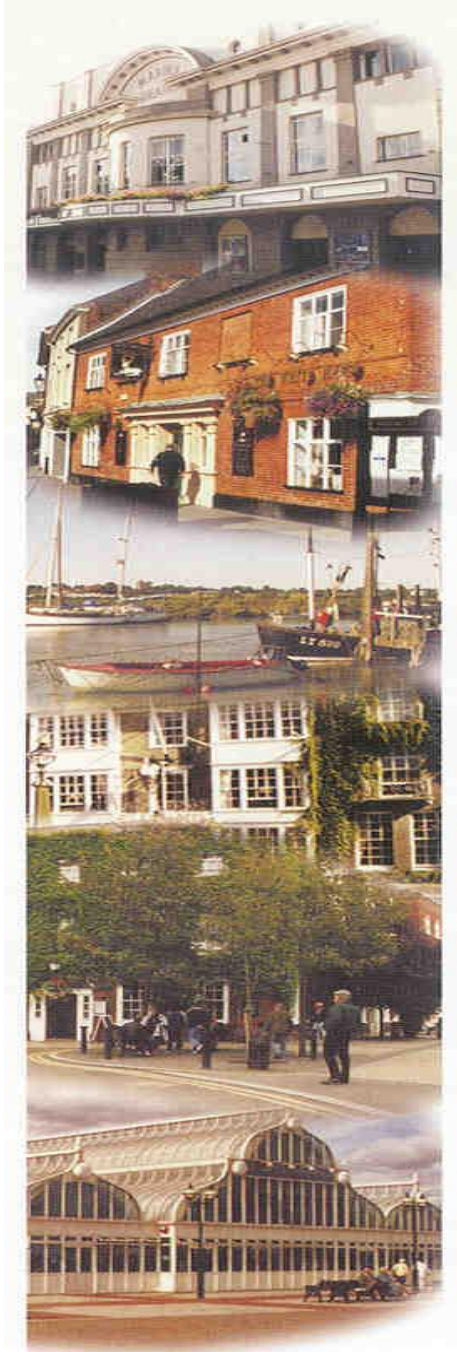




Waveney District Council
Serving the Community



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Annual Report

2017/18



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Vision for Scrutiny Activity within Waveney

Overview & Scrutiny at Waveney District Council aims to enhance the quality of life for all who live and work in the District by ensuring the provision of a safe, clean, attractive and prosperous environment for our communities.

Scrutiny aims to be objective, evidence-based, transparent and constructive, and to reflect the interests and concerns of local communities.

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Introduction

Councillor Sue Allen Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2017/18

Councillor Sue Allen, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for 2017/18, sadly passed away suddenly in April 2018. Councillor Allen was a dedicated Councillor who Chaired the Committee with enthusiasm and promoted the Overview & Scrutiny role within the Council. Councillor Allen will be missed by her Waveney District Council colleagues.

Councillor Alison Cackett, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2018/19

The following report covers Councillor Allen's term as Chairman.

Overview & Scrutiny is central to the Council's decision-making process, and this report presents some examples of where and how scrutiny has contributed to change, challenge and service improvements over the past year, and gives you a flavour of the work undertaken.

During 2017/18 the Committee scrutinised both internal decisions (by way of both pre- and post-decision scrutiny) and has also continued to work with partner organisations to achieve service improvements for the people of Waveney. We look forward to building on these achievements and positive relationships in the future, and all Members are aware of the good practice aim of scrutiny being politically neutral.

Looking ahead, the Committee has a rolling Work Programme, with scoping forms being completed for each piece of suggested scrutiny setting out exactly what the Committee can hope to achieve from any use of its time. This new way of working has led to more value-added and focused reviews.

What do we mean by Overview & Scrutiny?

The concept of Overview & Scrutiny was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 as part of an overall agenda to reform and modernise the way in which local authorities operate. The objective was to ensure that services are delivered and policies are developed in ways that provide quality and best value for the public and that these are relevant to their needs. As part of this, councils were required to establish at least one “overview and scrutiny committee” to monitor decisions made and, where appropriate, to advise the Council on matters of policy or service delivery.

The functions and responsibilities for scrutiny are set out in detail in the Council’s Constitution but they can be summarised as:-

- Developing new policies and reviewing the effectiveness of existing policies
- Holding the Cabinet, individual Cabinet Members, Joint Committees exercising executive powers and officers to account for the decisions they make
- Ensuring best value in the provision of services
- Monitoring and challenging the performance of services
- Considering any matter affecting the District Council or the people who live or work in Waveney, or who visit Waveney
- Review and scrutiny of other public sector bodies in the area and inviting reports from them regarding their activities and performance
- Encouraging public participation in policy development and review.

How does Overview & Scrutiny Work at Waveney District Council?

The Council has an Overview & Scrutiny Committee of thirteen members although there is currently one vacancy. The Committee also has the ability to set up time-limited “task and finish groups” to look into an issue in more depth, and to give it more time than the full Committee would be able to spare.

Responsibilities

- Community leadership
- Scrutiny reviews
- Pre-decision scrutiny
- Post implementation reviews
- Policy development and review
- External and joint scrutiny
- Call-ins
- Councillor Call for Action
- Holding the Cabinet to account
- Scrutiny improvement

Holding decision-makers to account

As the Council’s “critical friend”, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee holds the Cabinet, Full Council and officers to account by monitoring the decision-making process and testing existing practices to check they are working properly. It can also “call in” Cabinet decisions to check them before they are implemented. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is able to stand back from the decision-making process, look at the outcomes for the people of Waveney and contribute to ensuring improved performance.

Policy development and review

The Committee looks at the impact on the community of key plans and strategies within the Council's policy framework, investigating why things are as they are, researching options, challenging assumptions and suggesting improvements. When looking at a new policy, the Committee ensures it will contribute to the Council's priorities, and that any links to other Council policies demonstrate continuity. When reviewing existing policies, the Committee investigates how successful it has been, whether it achieved its objectives within budget and to timescale, and what needs to change. In all its policy development the Committee aims to enhance services and make life better for people living and working in Waveney, as well as those visiting us.

Call-in

Councillors have the ability to "call in" to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee decisions of the Cabinet, a Cabinet Member, a Joint Committee exercising executive powers or a key decision made by an officer for review before they are actioned.

The grounds for activating a call in are:

- The decision may be contrary to the Council's agreed policy framework
- The decision may be contrary to the Council's agreed budgetary framework
- The decision was not taken in accordance with the principles of good decision-making.

The call-in process should only be used in exceptional circumstances and is very much seen as a tool of last resort.

Any five Councillors are able to call an item in. The Council is keen to increase the level of public engagement with the scrutiny process and so has extended this facility to enable any five members of the public to call an item in. Additionally, joint call-ins of a mixture of at least seven Councillors and members of the public are possible. Call-in forms are available to download from the Council's website, or a form can be provided on request.

Councillor Call for Action

Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) is a scrutiny power which came into force on 1 April 2009, and which enables any Member of the Council to refer to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee any local government matter or any crime and disorder matter which affects their ward/division, within certain limitations. These limitations are set out in the Councillor Call for Action Protocol which is available on the Council's website, or by emailing scrutiny@eastsoffolk.gov.uk.

Meetings

The Committee has chosen to schedule meetings every month, in order to enable it to be more responsive to changing needs and local priorities, and to avoid the need to arrange Extraordinary Meetings to consider urgent issues, although these may still be called if required. In the main, Scrutiny meetings are open to the public to attend. The public may be excluded when a particular item contains 'exempt' information (as defined by the Local Government Act 1972, as amended).

However, the underlying principle will be for reports to be considered in the public section of meetings.

The Agendas, Reports and Minutes for Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings are available to view on the Council's website. Alternatively, copies can be provided for inspection on request and a limited number of agendas are made available to the public at meetings free of charge.

Community & Partner Engagement

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee works hard to develop and improve the scrutiny process at Waveney, and continually aims to increase the involvement of stakeholders and public engagement. To this end the Committee often gathers evidence with the involvement of external witnesses, and over the past year, in addition to any targeted consultations carried out as part of reviews, the Committee has formally invited and warmly received the Waveney Youth Council Project Lead at its meeting on 6 July 2017 who presented their annual update.

Opportunities for increased public/community involvement in scrutiny activities are explored as an integral part of the planning for future scrutiny reviews and public involvement in scrutiny reviews is welcomed. If you would like to assist the Committee in any future work or reviews, you can obtain a copy of the Council's Scrutiny Guide available on the Council's website, or by emailing scrutiny@eastsoffolk.gov.uk.

Training and Development

The Council recognises the importance of training and development for both Councillors and officers who support the scrutiny role at Waveney. Regular targeted training, both internally and externally, has facilitated the development of a successful scrutiny function.

On 20 November 2017 the Chairman of the Committee received 'Scrutiny Chairing Skills training' and the Committee also received 'Scrutiny best practice and effective questioning and listening skills' training.

Scrutiny Budget

A budget of £4,000 is available to the Committee to assist in its work, which can be used, for example, in engaging specialist assistance, obtaining evidence, carrying out site visits, paying for meeting accommodation, training and development. This budget provides an opportunity for the Committee to build upon its successes to date and to develop innovative approaches to scrutiny at Waveney, and constructive relationships with the Cabinet and the Council's partners.

Review of the past year

Committee Membership

The Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee during 2017/18 were:-



Councillor Sue Allen (Chairman)



Councillor
Nick Webb
(Vice Chairman)



Councillor
Edward Back



Councillor
Sue Barker



Councillor
Graham Elliott



Councillor
Tess Gandy



Councillor
Tony Goldson



Councillor
Louise Gooch



Councillor
Kath Grant



Councillor
Paul Light



Councillor
Jane Murray



Councillor
Kevin Springall

Outcomes for 2017/18

During the last municipal year, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee met 7 times, and joined two meetings of the Audit & Governance Committee. Regular scheduled meetings enable more business to be transacted and reduce the need to call Extraordinary Meetings. This section describes some of the key scrutiny topics covered during the year (May 2017 to March 2018), and their associated outcomes. A list of all the scrutiny topics covered during the past year is provided on page 13.

15 June 2017 – Audit & Governance Committee Meeting

This was one of the two occasions during the year when the Committee was invited to join the Audit & Governance Committee for joint scrutiny of a particular element of the Council's governance or budget. At this meeting, both Committees had input into the **Draft Annual Governance Statement 2016/17**. This is a key document which helps provide assurance to Members and other stakeholders as to how the governance of the Council is conducted and how effective it has been for the year. It also identifies emerging issues upon which the Council will need to focus over the coming year.

6 July 2017 – Setting the Scene, Youth and Food

The first meeting of the 2017/18 municipal year began with the Committee setting its **work programme** for the year ahead, and beyond. Overview & Scrutiny at Waveney is based on the principle of being Member-led, thereby making the best use of the local knowledge and expertise that Councillors possessed.

The Committee's work programme is a live document, updated on an ongoing basis to take account of changing priorities and urgent issues. This is a 'rolling' work programme to enable scrutiny to be more flexible and allows the Committee to be more responsive to changing needs. Members are also able to put forward specific items for scrutiny using a Scrutiny Scoping Form, which asks Members to set out exactly what they wish to achieve from any piece of scrutiny. This ensures that any scrutiny review is targeted, timely, makes best use of resources and has the potential to generate tangible outcomes and/or improvements.

Additionally, at this first meeting of the Committee, Members approved the **2016/17 Annual Scrutiny Report** for publication. This report gave an overview of the work undertaken by the Committee over the previous year, and is available to view on the Council's website, or by calling 01502 523614 or emailing scrutiny.wdc@eastsoffolk.gov.uk.

The Committee welcomed the Waveney Youth Council Project Lead who presented their annual update which highlighted key areas, including:

- Increased political engagement of young people at schools in Waveney and the success of the political question time events, whereby groups of young people were given the opportunity to collate ideas for social action and areas for improvement. The expo held in March 2017 had been particularly successful in boosting engagement.
- The Transition Ambassadors project focussing on high school students welcoming and accommodating new students. Over 270 students had completed training via the Transition Ambassadors Project over a 3 year period, which was considered a great achievement for the Youth Council. It was hoped to increase the number of students for the Phase 3 programme,

with the addition of Lowestoft Sixth Form College, who would undertake a pastoral and mentoring approach for new students.

- The expansion of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) with specific focus on life skills such as Money Management, Relationships and Careers Advice. This was a topic driven from grass roots, which students felt needed more attention. There was also a clear focus on mental health and many supportive contacts and services have been created throughout the community.

Also, at this meeting the Committee scrutinised the **East Suffolk Food and Health and Safety Service Plan 2017/18**. The Council's performance in meeting targets set for 2016/17 was the best the team had delivered with improvements in the percentage of premises inspected against the programme, an increase in the number of highest rated premises in the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and an increase in the percentage of food businesses broadly compliant with food hygiene requirements.

Since the introduction of the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in Waveney the Council had seen its highest levels to date of 5 rated premises (76.4%). The success of the scheme in driving up food hygiene standards demonstrated the importance of transparency and consumer pressure alongside more traditional enforcement programmes.

The report also set out details of the Eat Out Eat Well award scheme which would be looking to celebrate the 100th Suffolk food business to receive an award for providing healthy food choices on their menu. The scheme was also considering the addition of a Platinum award recognising the very best performing businesses.

The Committee also received the **Waveney Norse Annual Progress Report** which highlighted the following operational performance:

- The implementation of the Green Bin Scheme, which had worked well and was recognised across Suffolk as a good example of how to implement paid services.
- Good progress had been made regarding commercial cleaning and schools contracts, with new contracts being awarded to Waveney Norse from external organisations.

Finally, the Committee made **nominations** to the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Sub-Committee and the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee for the 2017/18 municipal year.

The Committee looked forward to a busy year ahead.

7 September 2017 – Community Safety and Partner Scrutiny



As the Council's nominated Crime and Disorder Committee, the Committee keeps a watching brief on levels of crime and disorder in the District by annual monitoring of the activities of the **Waveney Community Safety Partnership (WCSP)**.

The Cabinet Member for Community Health & Safety presented information on projects commissioned by the WCSP during 2016/17, together with a crime review update, and information

on the Suffolk Constabulary Policing Review. In general terms crime was down across Suffolk which continued to be a low crime county. All reported crime was judged against the new assessment of THRIVE which enabled calls to be assessed under threat, harm and risk criteria. This new assessment had provided an improvement in accuracy of incidents recorded.

The East Suffolk Communities Manager presented a summary of the Active Communities Team's (now known as the East Suffolk Communities Team) key project work from 2016/17 which included:

- The work inspiration initiative championed by Lowestoft Rising which provided mentoring and positive pathway support to Lowestoft primary and high schools. Over 100 young people had taken part in the mentoring programme led by the Council's Active Communities Team, delivered by 42 volunteer mentors.
- Government's PREVENT / WRAP Training - a series of workshops raising awareness of the Home Office Prevent Radicalisation Strategy delivered by the Active Communities Team (now known as the East Suffolk Communities Team) to front line staff across both local authorities. Approximately 220 frontline staff and Councillors had attended the workshops and work would progress into 2017/18 in training some frontline partners and organisations.
- Summer Activities Programme – The Anti-social Behaviour Unit and the Active Communities Team working in partnership, co-ordinated free diversionary activities twice weekly over the summer school holiday period. The activities were open to ages 9 to 16 years and over the period an excess of 500 young people attended. The aim of the project was to promote health and wellbeing, team building and prevention of crime.

The Committee considered the Sentinel Leisure Trust **Annual End of Year 2016/17 Partnership Report of Sentinel Leisure Trust** which operates Leisure Services on behalf of the Council.

The report gave an overview of the performance to date, highlighted key achievements and detailed future plans including improving health and wellbeing by creating a positive sporting habit that enabled customers to succeed.

9 November 2017 – Garden Waste and Parking Cars

The Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships presented a report which set out the performance of the **Easy Green Bin (EGB)** scheme for 2017.

The Committee was informed that the project had been a success in year one, with a level of sign up to the scheme that outperformed all other districts within the county. The Council's Customer Services team was responsible for managing the introduction of the service, and they had liaised extensively with Waveney Norse in its delivery.

The Committee agreed that a review of the EGB scheme would be added to its Work Programme with a report to be presented at the same time in 2018.

Also, at this meeting the Committee considered a report which reviewed the statistics of the reintroduction of **Car Parking** charges in Bungay and statistics from the period of reintroduction in Halesworth.

7 December 2017 – Commencement of Budget Planning and Tourism

The Committee plays a lead role, alongside the Audit & Governance Committee, in reviewing the Council's budget for future years, including recommending a level of Council Tax, alongside proposals for budget reductions and opportunities for increased income.

This process commenced at this meeting with the consideration of the **Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy and Efficiency Plan (MTFS)**, which is a baseline forecast of income and expenditure and provides a framework within which the Council's overall spending plans may be developed. The Audit & Governance Committee were invited to attend this meeting to jointly consider, debate and vote on this strategy.



Budget scrutiny is particularly important given the long-term Local Government financial picture which continues to be characterised by an increased shift towards locally-generated resources and both Committees' involvement in this work continued to February 2018, as detailed later in this report.

Also, at this meeting, the Committee considered the **Post Implementation Review of the Closure of Tourist Information Centres (TICs) and Replacement with Visitor Information Points (VIPs)**. The VIP's provide an alternative service to the traditional TICs by allowing visitors to be able to easily access free literature and receive information on local enquiries face to face. The network provides a number of locations in Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth as well as in key resort locations of Lowestoft and Southwold.

The Committee agreed that an annual review should be completed each spring to ensure that the service was monitored and continually improved.

4 January 2018 – The Call-in Process in Action

This meeting focussed on the consideration of a call-in report relating to a decision taken by Cabinet regarding Jubilee Chalets. As mentioned previously in this report the call-in process is used in exceptional circumstances and is very much seen as a tool of last resort. Having fully debated the item, the Committee agreed that Cabinet's decision was taken in accordance with the principles of good decision-making. Further reports will be considered by the Committee prior to going to Cabinet in the future.

11 January 2018 – Audit & Governance Committee

This was the second time during 2017/18 that the Committee had been invited to join the Audit & Governance Committee, this time for the annual consideration of the **Capital Programme 2018/19 to 2021/22**. The Chief Finance & Section 151 Officer advised that the capital expenditure within the Council was split into two main components, the General Fund Capital Programme and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme. As part of the annual budget setting process, the Council was required to agree a programme of capital expenditure for the coming four years, together with a revision of the current year's programme. The Capital Programme played an important part in the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which, in turn, supported the wider service delivery. The total General Fund Capital



investment for the period was anticipated to be £80.33m, the largest for the Council in recent years. The total Housing Revenue Account Capital investment for the period was anticipated to be £68.50m and would benefit from receiving £9.64m of external grants and contributions.

There followed a report on the Council's **Housing Revenue Account Budget** which highlighted the background issues, key points, national policies, central government proposals and the key components of the report. The report provided details of expenditure and finances. The Committee was informed that the HRA was a ring-fenced account following the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 which created a clear separation between the HRA and General Fund finances. In summary, it was noted that there were challenges due to the changes in policy and maintaining housing stock, however the Council had a good long term plan to increase housing stock, a good maintenance programme with Waveney District standards being higher than the 'Decent Homes' standard and the HRA was in a very strong and healthy financial position.

8 February 2018 – Budgeting and a Member Briefing

The Audit & Governance Committee joined the Committee in scrutinising the **Draft General Fund Budget 2018/19**, which gave an opportunity for the two Committees to submit any comments to Cabinet on the proposed budget prior to its referral to Full Council. A detailed debate was held with Councillors discussing a number of areas including Council Tax and Business Rates.

At the end of the debate the Committees jointly made recommendations to Cabinet and Full Council regarding the approval of the General Fund Reserves and Balances movements, the Efficiency Strategy and Council Tax.



At the same meeting the Committee received a presentation on the topic of poverty, deprivation, disadvantage, barriers to social mobility and hidden needs in Suffolk. The Head of Communities updated Members on the work undertaken during the fifteen months since the November 2016 report, including work to identify and respond to need in specific 'hot spot' areas, the reconfiguring of the Communities

Team to enable a targeted approach to hidden needs and practical examples of project activity to tackle needs identified.

8 March 2018 – At your convenience

In 2015 the Council commissioned a report to review the stock of Public Conveniences (PCs) across the district, aiming to seek to reduce planned expenditure over a five year period. The Head of Operations informed the Committee that progress had been made against the review with ten facilities being transferred to town and parish councils. Having fully debated the item, the Committee agreed to continue to endorse the strategy of divestment where parties were in agreement.

The Committee looks forward to recommencing its busy schedule in June 2018, when it will discuss its programme of work for the coming year and beyond.

The work programme of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in 2017/18

Meeting	Topics covered
15 June 2017 – Audit & Governance Committee meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint consideration of the Draft Annual Governance Statement 2016/17
6 July 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waveney Youth Council update • East Suffolk Food and Health and Safety Service Plan 2017/18 • Waveney Norse Annual Progress Report • Scrutiny Annual Report • Scrutiny Appointments to Outside Bodies
7 September 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year End Community Safety Update 2016/17 • Annual End of Year 2016/17 Partnership Report on Sentinel Leisure Trust
9 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Implementation Review – Garden Waste (Exempt) • Car parking – Bungay and Halesworth (Exempt)
7 December 2017 – *Audit & Governance in attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy & Efficiency Plan • Post Implementation Review – Tourist Information Centres replaced by Visitor Information Points
4 January 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in – Jubilee Chalets (Exempt)
11 January 2018 – Audit & Governance Committee meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint consideration of Capital Programme • Joint consideration of Housing Revenue Account Budget
8 February 2018 – *Audit & Governance in attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Draft General Fund Budget 2018/19 • Presentation on Poverty, Deprivation, Disadvantage, Barriers to Social Mobility and Hidden Needs in Suffolk
8 March 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Conveniences Review

Looking Ahead to 2018/19

Future Focus for Scrutiny Activity

As we look forward to the 2018/19 municipal year, the focus for future scrutiny activity will continue to be strategic, and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee will carry out reviews that provide critical challenge to both internal services and external organisations.

As this is a 'rolling' Work Programme, these allocations are subject to change and you are therefore advised to visit the Council's website for more up to date information on when these reviews are timetabled.

Meeting	Topics to be covered (draft programme subject to change)
14 June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anglian Water's Capacity to deal with the increased housing demands • Appointments to Outside Scrutiny Bodies
5 July 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food & Health & Safety Service Plan • Scrutiny Annual Report
25 July 2018 – Audit & Governance Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee will join the Audit & Governance Committee to consider and comment upon the Annual Governance Statement prior to the Audit & Governance Committee considering approval.
2 August 2018	To be advised
6 September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year End Community Safety Report • Annual Partnership Report – Sentinel Leisure Trust
September 2018 Date to be confirmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible Joint Extraordinary meeting with Suffolk Coastal District Council to review Coastal Partnership East objectives and the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project
4 October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waveney Norse Annual Report
1 November 2018 – *Audit & Governance invited to attend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Joint consideration of Medium Term Financial Strategy • Post implementation review of the introduction of charges for the collection of garden waste
6 December 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual review of St Peter's Court fire safety
3 January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be advised
17 January 2019 - Audit & Governance Committee meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee will join the Audit & Governance Committee to discuss the Housing Revenue Account Budget and Capital Programme
7 February 2019 – Audit & Governance invited to attend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint consideration with the Audit & Governance Committee of the Draft General Fund Budget 2019/20
14 March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Implementation update of the closure of Tourist Information Centres and replacement of Visitor Information Points

How to find out more about the Scrutiny Function in Waveney

For further information on how the scrutiny function operates at Waveney District Council, please contact a Democratic Services Officer on (01502) 523614 or email: scrutiny@eastsoffolk.gov.uk. Alternatively, visit our website at www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk.

Feedback

If you have any comments regarding the information provided within this report, please contact a Democratic Services Officer on (01502) 523614 or email: scrutiny@eastsoffolk.gov.uk.