

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 17TH FEBRUARY 2021

POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

The Scrutiny Commission and Committees are continuing to adapt to new ways of working making the best use of technology to ensure scrutiny continues its work despite current restrictions. By example, later this month we will be holding our first fully remote scrutiny member workshop to look at the work undertaken across the Council to support and engage with our communities and the role this has played during the Covid-19 crisis.

The workshop will provide a valuable opportunity for members to share their experiences and to identify what has worked well or not so well during this difficult time. The usual routes to contact and reach out to residents have had to be adapted over the last 12 months and whilst we have embraced the use of technology to continue in our work, it is recognised that this is not always appropriate or possible for all our residents and we must therefore work to ensure the Council's approach is as inclusive as possible despite current circumstances.

With this in mind, scrutiny members will consider the barriers to good community engagement, especially in light of restrictions necessary to battle the pandemic which may continue for some time to come, what lessons can be learnt and what positive experiences can be developed and captured as part of the planned review of the Council's Communities Strategy later this year. All Scrutiny members have been invited and are encouraged to take part in what we, the Commissioners, hope will be a valuable exercise.

Over the coming year scrutiny will continue to play a critical role in looking at growth and the implications of this on the County Council as a key infrastructure provider when it considers the Council's Infrastructure Policy. The financial consequences certainly need to be understood. The Commission had a useful and constructive discussion last year on the implications of the Leicester City Local Plan and will be keen to see how growth proposals are affected in the light of increased housing numbers now allocated by the government to Leicester City which will unfortunately have repercussions for the County as a whole.

A key area of focus for scrutiny throughout this year will continue to be the environment and how the Council will drive forward its commitment to become carbon neutral in its operations by 2030. The Environment and Transport Scrutiny Committee and the Commission will have a role to play and both will therefore be looking at the Council's Strategic Energy Property Strategy next month, which is a key delivery mechanism for the Environment Strategy in respect of the Council's own property assets. The Environment Scrutiny

Committee will also be looking at the new strategic approach to biodiversity issues.

The budget process has highlighted the significant cost pressures on the Council of SEND and in particular transport cost. A workshop is planned for later in March for members of the Children and Families and Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider the statementing process and how decisions are made regarding the provision of transport for these vulnerable young people. Invites will also go to the relevant Cabinet Lead Members and to the Lead Member for Resources so that we can have a full and informed discussion on this matter.

Mr S. Galton CC
Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission