



Strategic Overview & Scrutiny

Annual Report

2018-2019

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Foreword for O&S Annual Report

The annual report highlights the main areas of activity undertaken by the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee during the previous year from May 2018 to April 2019 under the Chairmanship of Councillor Liz Harsant.

The Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee has continued to have a busy work programme, with the committee receiving a range of annual reports as well as sessions and Task and Finish Groups on topical issues.

The Committee once again received a very comprehensive report from Superintendent Kerry Cutler on Crime and Police Matters which Councillors found extremely useful and prompted some useful lines of discussion, whilst reassuring us that Ipswich is a safe place to live.

Suffolk County Councillor Jessica Fleming, Chair of the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee, updated Councillors on their work programme and a range of health topics were raised as issues which could be considered by the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee.

The Orwell Bridge was discussed at no less than three meetings, showing the importance of this issue to both the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Town. It is certain to be a regular topic until matters are improved but I would like to thank James Jackson and his colleagues from Highways England for their willingness to support the Committee's work.

During 2017/18 a total of 7 Task and Finish Group Meetings were held discussing 5 different topics. As ever I am grateful to those Councillors who have volunteered their time to attend these discussions and to the witnesses and officers who provide evidence and support them.

We also continued with receiving Portfolio Holder updates, giving Councillors the opportunity to scrutinise Portfolios 'in the round'. I am grateful to Portfolio Holders for supporting this initiative and to Officers for attending meetings to provide assistance with some of the more detailed questions members of the Committee like to ask.

I would like to thank all Councillors for their support, but particularly Councillor Gage who so ably acts as Deputy Chair, and those who completed proposal forms or chaired Task and Finish Group Meetings. We also said goodbye to Councillors Goonan, Ion and Knowles whose time on the Council came to an end, and adieu to Councillors Cenci, Chisholm, Fisher, I Lockington, Parry and Grant who are no longer members of, or substitutes for, the Committee.

Finally, I would like to thank Trisha Sutton for the support she has given to the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee over her many years of service. Sadly the meeting on 28 February 2019 was her last as she moved on to the next stage in her life but her work has always been much valued by me and all others involved in Scrutiny at Ipswich. We now have Ainsley Gilbert as our support Officer who is already proving to be of great value to us.

Councillor Liz Harsant

Introduction

The annual report provides an overview of the scrutiny work carried out by Ipswich Borough Council from May 2018 to April 2019. It shows the investigations and recommendations made by councillors as part of scrutiny reviews to improve delivery of services to Ipswich people.

Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee (SOSC) scrutinises and reviews decisions or actions taken in respect of Executive and Non-Executive functions, including “call-in” of Executive decisions.

This year the SOSC continued to use a Work Programme proposal process whereby any Councillor could submit an item to be included on the Work Programme. Suggested topics were discussed with the Steering Group, which is made up of the lead councillors from each political party and relevant officers to prepare a scope of the work for the review to be carried out. Task & Finish Groups were appointed where appropriate to carry out reviews.

Summaries and recommendations of the reviews undertaken by the SOSC are shown later in this report. The Committee also receives updates on progress in implementing the recommendations of a review. This enables the effectiveness of review recommendations to be measured. Organisations or service areas that have been subject to scrutiny are invited to respond to any recommendations direct to SOSC.

Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee Councillors:

Cllr Collette Allen
Cllr Glen Chisholm
Cllr Sandra Gage
Cllr Martin Goonan
Cllr Sheila Handley
Cllr Adam Leeder
Cllr Jan Parry
Cllr Christine Shaw
Cllr Colin Smart
Cllr Oliver Holmes
Cllr Elizabeth Harsant
Cllr Stephen Ion
Cllr Richard Pope

Substitutes:

Cllr Stephen Connelly
Cllr Shelly Darwin
Cllr Elango Elavalakan
Cllr Peter Gardiner
Cllr Tracy Grant
Cllr Bill Knowles
Cllr Inga Lockington
Cllr Nadia Cenci
Cllr Ian Fisher
Cllr Eddie Phillips

Scrutiny Support:

Democratic Services Manager Ainsley Gilbert
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Scrutiny

2018-2019

Scrutiny: Annual report of the Health Scrutiny Committee	
Key elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How the emerging groups fit together ➤ The implications for Ipswich Borough Council 	Outcome sought: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To receive an update on the work of the Health Scrutiny Committee

The Committee received the annual update from the Suffolk County Council (SCC) Health Scrutiny Committee.

At the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on **30 August 2018** Suffolk County Councillor Jessica Fleming (as Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee) presented a verbal update to the Committee on the work of the SCC Health Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Fleming (SCC) said that she was also the Chair of the Essex & Suffolk Joint Health Scrutiny Committee and a member on the Great Yarmouth & Waveney Joint Health Scrutiny Committee. Although since being selected she had only chaired one meeting on 18 July 2018 but she was able to update on the meetings held during the previous municipal year on 12 July 2017, 17 October 2017, 27 January 2018 and 18 April 2018. Cllr Sheila Handley was the representative from Ipswich Borough Council on the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee.

The following topics were discussed:

- The merger of the Colchester And Ipswich Hospital Trusts.
- The new Emotional Wellbeing Hub.
- The use of Voluntary Sector Services in discharging patients and the West Suffolk Social Care integration pilot.
- Mental Health Services, including staffing issues.
- Sustainability & Transformation Partnership Performance.
- GP Services Provision.

[Committee Minute No 16](#)

Scrutiny: Write off of Bad Debts – 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018	
<p>Key Elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Under the Council's financial regulations certain officers are authorised to write-off bad debts up to a certain limit. ➤ To advise the Committee of the exercise of the power in the financial period 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 	<p>Outcome sought:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ That the Committee note the write off the bad debts for the financial period 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018.

The Head of Finance and Revenues presented this report on **27 September 2018**

The Committee raised concerns about the possibility of Business Rate avoidance through loopholes in national legislation and asked questions about the Shared Revenues Partnership's procedures for collection of Business Rate and Council Tax debt.

It was Resolved:

That the sums written-off under Financial Standing Orders, in the period 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 amounting to £1,273,145 be noted.

[Committee Minute No 24](#)

Scrutiny: Ipswich Park and Ride Review	
<p>Key elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To review whether the operating model of the Ipswich Park & Ride Service by First Buses was being run in the best interests of the town. 	<p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To see how the new Park & Ride model compared to other Park & Ride Services across the UK

On **3 January 2019** the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee received an update on the Ipswich Park and Ride Service from First Eastern Buses. Aidan Dunn, Interim Corporate Director for Growth Highways and Infrastructure, Suffolk County Council, and Councillor Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Suffolk County Council were also in attendance.

Key points raised in the discussion were:

- The impact of congestion on the bus services.
- That a successful bid had been made to Highways England to improve signage advertising the sites on major roads.
- The service operated without a subsidy, with sustained passenger numbers.
- There were a range of initiatives to incentivise those working in the town to use Park and Ride Services.

[Committee Minute No 44](#)

Scrutiny: Impact of A14/Orwell Bridge Closures	
<p>Key Elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To discuss the impact of closing the A14/Orwell Bridge and how the closures could be minimised. 	<p>Outcome sought:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To allow discussion between the Police, Suffolk Highways Agency, Suffolk County Council and those most affected by A14/Orwell Bridge closures.

At the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny meeting held on **5 July 2018** the committee received responses to a series of written questions asked of the Emergency Planning Manager at Highways England. These questions concerned the impact of the diversion of traffic through Ipswich, alternative diversion routes, traffic segregation, publicity in connection with planned maintenance and notice of closures.

[Committee Minute No 9](#)

At the meeting held on **25 October 2018** the committee received responses to additional written questions asked of the Highways England. These questions are listed below:

- The length of time the diversion routes needed to be in place during recent maintenance works?
- Timescales for the principle of segregation of traffic?
- The life expectancy of the bridge?

Points were also made about long distance traffic being diverted prior to entering Ipswich.

[Committee Minute No 32](#)

The Emergency Planning Manager at Highways England attended the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny meeting held on **3 January 2019** and the following points were discussed:

- An aerodynamics study, which would be completed by University College London, and was intended to establish options for traffic segregation.
- Publicity, signage and information on the closure of laybys near to the Orwell Bridge.
- The unsuitability of current diversion routes through Ipswich.

It was agreed that a representative of Highways England be invited back to the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee once the aerodynamics study had been completed.

[Committee Minute No 49](#)

Scrutiny: Budget Proposals 2019/20 Onwards

Key elements:

➤ **Discuss Budget Proposals**

On **3 January 2019** the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee received a presentation on the Budget Proposals 2019/20 from the Head of Finance and Revenues. Councillors Ellesmere and Martin Cook were in attendance to assist the Committee.

Questions were asked about:

- The proposed use of reserves to fund the budget deficit.
- The size of the proposed increase in Council Tax.
- The use of the funding obtained through the 2017/18 Business Rate pilot.
- The protection of funding to the voluntary sector.

[Committee Minute No 50](#)

Scrutiny: Crime & Disorder Matters – Annual Review	
Key elements: ➤ Annual Review of the Crime and Disorder Functions under the Crime and Disorder (Overview & Scrutiny) Regulations 2009	Outcome: ➤ That the Committee be informed of the work being undertaken by the Police & Crime Commissioner of Suffolk.

Superintendent Kerry Cutler, Area Commander for the Southern Area, Suffolk Constabulary, attended the meeting on **31 January 2019**. Councillor MacDonald also attended in his role as Portfolio Holder for Community Protection and Customer Services.

Supt. Cutler gave a presentation on policing in the area, including the following key points:

- The percentage of Emergency Response incidents attended within 15 minutes were: Ipswich Town Centre – 95.5%; Ipswich East – 90.8%; Ipswich West – 91.2%.
- Recording changes meant that number of Anti-Social Behaviour reports had reduced as these incidents were now being recorded more specifically, which had led to corresponding increases in other areas.
- Nationally 6% of violent crime involved the use of knives, whereas in Ipswich this was just 3%.

Questions were asked about:

- What had happened to victims of Modern Day slavery identified through a recent operation.
- Staffing levels and the level of continuity of police staff in roles.

Councillor MacDonald explained the importance of partnership working and commented on the role of Councillors as representatives of communities who could report issues to the Police.

[Committee Minute No 58](#)

Scrutiny: Review of the Council's Representation on Outside Bodies	
<p>Key elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The report provided details of Councillor representation on Outside Bodies that were formally constituted and appointed by Council. 	<p>Outcome sought:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ That the Committee considers the questions and decides any course of action they may wish to take.

The Democratic Services Manager presented this report to the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee on **28 February 2019** and questions raised about the following:

1. The different roles of Councillors appointed to different Outside Bodies.
2. The impact of having a Council representative on Outside Bodies.

Following discussion the Committee agreed to ask Outside Bodies whether representation of the Council by Councillors was effective for their organisation.

[Committee Minute No 60](#)

Portfolio Holder Updates

2018-2019

Portfolio Holder Update – Councillor S Meudec

Portfolio Holder for Communities

At the meeting on **30 August 2018**, Councillor Meudec presented a performance report for her portfolio.

During the discussion on this report the following key points were raised:

- The number of RIDDOR reportable incidents affecting Waste and Fleet Services employees had been quite high, but that employees had received additional training.
- Universal Credit had recently been introduced and 279 out of 365 applicants had been in arrears when they had transferred to Universal Credit.
- The uptake of Personal Budgeting Support offered by IHAG had been lower than anticipated.
- Area Committee Grants drew £5 of match funding for every £1 of Council money allocated.

[Committee Minute No 17](#)

Portfolio Holder Update – Councillor B Rudkin

Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Corporate Support

At the meeting on **27 September 2018**, Councillor Rudkin presented a performance report for her portfolio.

The following issues were discussed:

- The increased use of social media and decreasing popularity of paper advertising.
- The future plans for shows and events at the Regent and Corn exchange and the number of people attending these.
- The provision of gyms and potential changes to the current provision.
- The use of parks for personal and group training sessions.
- The future of the Tourist Information Centre.

[Committee Minute No 26](#)

Portfolio Holder Update – Councillor P Smart

Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

At the meeting on **25 October 2018**, Councillor P Smart presented a performance report on his portfolio.

The following key points were made through the Committee's discussion:

- The national trend for increased amounts of residual (black bin) waste and reduced amounts of waste sent for composting and the need for continued education of residents.
- The 'Love Your Street' campaign to try to engage residents in keeping the town clean which had been launched to respond to perceptions that Ipswich was suffering from increased litter problems.
- The low proportion of bin collections which were missed and the high cost and limited benefit of a glass collection service.
- The occupancy level of allotments was currently 90% although some sites were full and others relatively unpopular.

[Committee Minute No 34](#)

Portfolio Holder Update – Councillor C Jones	Portfolio Holder for Development
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At the meeting on **22 November 2018**, Councillor C Jones presented a performance report on her portfolio.

The Committee's discussed the following points:

- The submission of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for improvements to Ipswich Museum.
- That the number of visitors to the Ipswich Museum and Gallery and Christchurch Mansion were significantly above target. The proportion of schools visiting and action taken to increase this through linkages to curriculums were also discussed.
- The Planning and Development Service continued to process applications promptly, being one of the top 5% of authorities nationally, and the Council had received an award for its Local Plan.
- The Building Control Service had been involved in a number of high profile projects over the year and had performed well.

[Committee Minute No 41](#)

Portfolio Holder Update – Councillor M Cook	Portfolio Holder for Resources
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At the meeting on **2 January 2019**, Councillor M Cook presented a performance report on his portfolio.

The Committee's discussed the following points:

- Senior Officer Pay had been reviewed, with all Heads of Service and Operations Manager posts now filled.
- A number of employee welfare schemes had taken place, with a new 'Time to Change' mental health programme and a free flu vaccines scheme.
- Council staff had been trained for the introduction of GDPR in May 2018.
- The Council's Fraud Service continued to have good results with a number of Council properties recovered from fraudsters for those in genuine need.
- The Council's Agresso system was in the process of being updated to provide new tools and improve financial management.
- The Council's Procurement Team had been restructured and officers were now working to update the contracts register.

[Committee Minute No 51](#)

Portfolio Holder Update – Councillor A Ross	Portfolio Holder for Community Protection and Customer Services
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At the meeting on **28 February 2019**, Councillor A Ross presented a performance report on his portfolio.

The Committee's discussed the following points:

- The introduction of Body Worn Cameras for Parking Enforcement Officers had been successful and had prevented incidents from escalating.
- New CCTV Cameras were to be introduced and further information would be shared with Councillors when available.
- There were difficulties in sourcing suitably trained staff in certain Public Protection roles.
- There had been a reduction in the proportion of calls answered as a result of the Contact Centre's move from the Town Hall to Grafton House, but this had been a temporary problem.

[Committee Minute No 59](#)

Task & Finish Groups

2018-2019

Task & Finish Group: Universal Credit	
<p>Key Elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Was IBC prepared to support households through the change to Universal Credit ➤ To discuss the impact of Universal Credit changes in Ipswich and the services needed to support claimants ➤ To identify any gaps in service and consider the Universal Credit project plan 	<p>Councillors: Martin Goonan (Lead Councillor) Liz Harsant Tracy Grant Richard Pope Glen Chisholm Stephen Ion Sandra Gage</p> <p>Officers: Amy Mayes Vicky Moseley Bridie Green John Chance Karen Byrnand Deborah Carr Joanne Cherrington</p>

Further to the Task and Finish Group meetings held in November 2017 and January 2018 a further meeting was arranged on **18 June 2018** to review the effectiveness of preparations for Universal Credit post implementation. After hearing evidence on the successful measures the Council had taken to ease the introduction of Universal Credit the Task and Finish Group found that *'IBC had sufficiently prepared to support households through the change to Universal Credit in line with the Council's core values and strategic priorities that underpinned the Council's work and its delivery of service to the people of Ipswich and that the implementation had gone as well as could be expected'*.

The notes of the Task and Finish Group were considered by the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on **5 July 2018**.

It was resolved that figures be requested after 6 months to enable comparisons to be made.

An update report on the roll-out of Universal Credit was provided to the Committee on **28 February 2019** and it was noted that the speed of the change had been slowed which had limited the impact of Universal Credit.

Task & Finish Group: The Impact of Road Closures in Ipswich	
<p>Key Elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What was the impact on Ipswich when roads were closed for events such as half marathons etc. 	<p>Councillors; George Debman Sandra Gage Oliver Holmes Richard Pope</p> <p>Officers: Mark Whiting (Operations Manager, Commercial Development)</p>

The meetings of this Task and Finish Group were held in the 2017-2018 Municipal Year, whilst the notes were presented to the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on **5 July 2018**. At the meeting confirmation was received that Road Closure information for the Great East Run had been publicised at Area Committee meetings.

At the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on **30 August 2018** the Operations Manager – Commercial Development, provided a further update on Road Closures for the Great East Run and the measures taken to inform the public of these.

Task & Finish Group: Taxi Services	
<p>Key Elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To determine the conditions of Taxi licences in Ipswich with regard to the Code of Conduct and how the taxis operated at Ipswich Station forecourt 	<p>Councillors: Richard Pope Oliver Holmes Collette Allen Liz Harsant Adam Leeder</p> <p>Officers: Debbie Devine (Senior Licensing and Enforcement Officer) Clare Lovell (Operations Manager, Licensing)</p>

A meeting was held on **22 August 2018** and Councillors heard evidence about the policies and processes for licensing Taxi drivers in Ipswich. Councillors concluded that the current measures were sufficient to ensure that the travelling public were safe. Councillors were informed that a new Taxi Licensing Policy was under development which would strengthen these policies and procedures further. The Task and Finish Group expressed concern that drivers licenced by other Councils, who may have lower standards, could operate in Ipswich and proposed that a Suffolk Standard could be developed, working with other authorities.

On **27 September 2018** the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the notes of the review. Additional points regarding the transfer of bookings between taxi companies and provision for those with visual impairments were discussed and the Chief Executive agreed to discuss a Suffolk Standard for taxi drivers, with the Leader of the Council, the Chair of the Licensing & Regulatory Committee and Councillor Pope.

Task & Finish Group: Road Repairs	
<p>Key Elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To provide an opportunity to request revisions to the County Council's road maintenance plans to reflect resident's concerns and provide public scrutiny of what priority Ipswich's busiest roads have, compared to the overall maintenance programme 	<p>Councillors: Colin Smart (Chair) Richard Pope Jan Parry Sandra Gage Liz Harsant Stephen Ion</p> <p>Officers: Michael Newsham (Integrated Transport Officer)</p> <p>Witnesses: Representatives of road user groups SCC Cllr Mary Evans (Cabinet Member for Highways) John Clements (SCC Head of Highways)</p>

A meeting was held on **15 August 2018** and Councillors discussed the aims of the review and the agreed to invite the Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Highways and representatives of road users to future Task and Finish Group meetings. Councillors requested that information on the prioritisation of roads be supplied to the committee.

On **5 September 2018** representatives of road users gave evidence to the Task and Finish Group regarding:

- Management of Traffic during Roadworks.
- The impact of uneven road crossings and footpaths on people with visual impairments.
- Poorly designed and maintained cobble/brick raised areas causing damage to bus tyres and a danger to other road users.
- The length of time it took to repair potholes and the length of time that temporary traffic lights were in place.

Councillors also requested that updates on roadworks in their wards be sent to them by Suffolk County Council.

On **11 October 2018** representatives of Cycle Ipswich, Cllr Mary Evans (SCC Cabinet Member for Highways) and John Clements (SCC Head of Infrastructure Management, Highways) gave evidence to the Task and Finish Group. Key points made were:

- Cyclists were often advised to dismount and use the footway during roadworks.
- Dips in roads caused by buses were dangerous to cyclists.
- The £30,685,000 road maintenance budget was allocated by Suffolk County Council on the basis of condition surveys. In 2018/19 £3,138,334 capital

spend and £2,386,000 revenue spend would be allocated to Ipswich roads. This figure included £98,000 paid to IBC for its Service Level Agreement to cut highways verges.

- There was not a scheme to co-ordinate works between different statutory undertakers.
- Options for repairing concrete roads existed but these were not being considered at the time as the roads in Ipswich were not in an unstable condition.
- A review had considered the way road gangs worked and this meant that smaller potholes would be filled when workers were in close vicinity.

Councillors also raised questions on the likelihood of the programmed planned maintenance works in Ipswich being completed before the end of the financial year, and the engagement of the community in road maintenance schedules.

On **25 October 2018** the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the notes of the review. At this meeting it was resolved that the Chief Executive be tasked to write to Suffolk County Council Highways Department to express the following concerns of the Committee:

- 1. That the road classification be reviewed as vehicle movements in the growing economic area of Ipswich had increased significantly.**
- 2. That the local knowledge of the members of each Area Committee be considered, in line with that of the Town and Parish Councils.**
- 3. A presentation be given at each Area Committee about the planned year's maintenance for 2019/20 in line with the planned programme of works.**
- 4. That a plan be considered to review and prioritise the repair of concrete roads in relation to resident's concerns about noise and deterioration.**
- 5. That increased consultation with cyclists, the disabled and bus and taxi groups take place with regard to changes at road junctions.**
- 6. That there be reassurance that the publicised programme of maintenance for the roads listed in Ipswich would be completed by the end of the financial year.**

Task & Finish Group: GP Hubs	
<p>Key Elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To understand how a ‘5 hubs’ model would be implemented, what would happen to the services in the meantime and how the public would be involved in the process. 	<p>Councillors: Sheila Handley Collette Allen Richard Pope Oliver Holmes Sandra Gage Liz Harsant Christine Shaw</p> <p>Officers: Russell Williams (Chief Executive)</p> <p>Witnesses: David Brown, Deputy Chief Operating Officer NHS Clinical Commissioning Group Caroline Procter, Primary Care Commissioning Manager, NHS Clinical Commissioning Group</p>

A meeting was held on **6 December 2018** and it was noted that Councillors had little knowledge of the proposed changes to GP provision in Ipswich. It was agreed that information on the current provision at existing medical practices in Ipswich would be sought and that representatives from the Clinical Commissioning Group would be invited to a future Task & Finish Group meeting.

On **23 January 2019** the Clinical Commissioning Group gave evidence to the Task and Finish Group, the key points being:

- Currently there were no known discussions taking place about any GP surgeries merging or running alongside each other apart from at the Tooks Bakery site in the North West of Ipswich by the Chesterfield Drive and Deben Road surgeries.
- The CCG had no influence on where or when any GP services might merge or run alongside each other.

It was also agreed that Healthwatch and representatives of GPs surgeries would be invited to a future meeting.

Joint Scrutiny

2018-2019

No Joint Scrutiny meetings had been held during 2018/19.

2018/19

Call-In

There no call-ins during 2018/19.