

**SERVICES, CLIMATE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

1 July 2025
5.30 - 7.14 pm

Present: Councillors Young (Chair), Gardiner-Smith (Vice-Chair), Baigent, Divkovic, Glasberg, Griffin, Hauk, Pounds and Swift

In attendance: Councillors Bick, Nestor and Wade

Officers: Robert Pollock (Chief Executive), Jody Etherington (Chief Finance Officer), Frances Alderton (Communities Group), Claire Tunncliffe (Committee Manager), Matthew Stickley (Interim Committee Manager)

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

2x/1/SC&C Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cheney Payne, for whom Councillor Anthony Martinelli attended as a substitute.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Iva Divkovic, who arrived at 17:49.

2x/2/SC&C Declarations of Interest

Councillors Baigent and Glasberg declared membership of the Cambridge Cycling Campaign Group.

Councillors Gardiner-Smith and Young declared that they had attended the Cambridge Folk Festival.

2x/3/SC&C Minutes

The unapproved minutes of meetings of previously constituted Overview and Scrutiny Committees were presented. The Chair noted that because the remits of the two newly established Overview and Scrutiny Committees did not exactly mirror the previously constituted committees, the minutes were to be presented to the first meetings of both of the newly established Overview and Scrutiny Committees for approval.

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record subject to a spelling correction in the 25 March 2025 minutes of the Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee.

2x/4/SC&C Public Questions

There were no public questions.

2x/5/SC&C The Role of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Authorities

The Committee received a report on the role of Overview and Scrutiny in local government.

The Chair emphasised that this first meeting of the newly constituted committee was focused on setting priorities and work programming.

In discussion, members noted:

- The committee should provide both a “sounding board” and “constructive challenge” for Cabinet, providing both pre-decision and post-decision scrutiny.
- Opportunities for deep dives into specific issues should be built into future agendas and work programming.
- The importance of flexibility in the forward plan and openness to suggestions for items to be submitted outside formal meetings, channelling such requests through the Chair of the committee.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the guidance and discussion on the role of Overview and Scrutiny.
2. To invite members to submit suggestions for future agenda items to the Chair and Vice-Chair outside formal meetings.

2x/6/SC&C Update on Folk Festival

The Chief Executive provided an update on the work of the Communities Group on behalf of the Director of Communities.

In response to questions, officers clarified:

- There were ongoing and worsening challenges in keeping the festival cost neutral, with increasing infrastructure costs, economic conditions, line-up quality, competing events, and accommodation costs all leading to the costs of running the festival increasing with the continuity of affordable tickets increasing the budget gap.
- Officers' recommended course of action was in the process of being finalised and would be submitted to an upcoming meeting of Cabinet.
- Consultation was ongoing with the Folk Festival community, and officers were exploring additional options for investing in the local music scene.
- Data would be collected from 2024 and 2025 events to inform the sustainability plan for 2026.

The committee discussed:

- Whether the festival should prioritise folk music over other genres and the importance of maintaining inclusivity.
- The potential role of fringe events to support the local cultural scene.
- The need for clearer detail on costs and Cabinet decision-making.
- The submission of the report to Cabinet once the officer's recommendations were finalised.
- Concerns about the lack of written papers provided in advance of the meeting, the timing of a previous decision to postpone the 2025 festival, and the requirement of officers to balance commercial sensitivity against the public interest.

RESOLVED: To note the verbal update and ongoing review of the Folk Festival.

2x/7/SC&C Work of the Environment, Economy and Climate Department

The item was not considered due to the officer scheduled to present being unable to attend for personal reasons. It was agreed that a separate member briefing would be arranged.

2x/8/SC&C Overview and Scrutiny Annual Business: Work Programme and Forward Plan

The Committee considered the forward plan and discussed potential priorities for its work programme.

The committee discussed:

- The need for the work programme to align with new performance management frameworks and risk registers, which were still being developed.
- The possibility of including items such as the Retrofit Programme, Climate Change Strategy update, Leisure Management Contract, Heat Networks, and Community Wealth Building Strategy.
- The role of Task and Finish groups for in-depth scrutiny.

RESOLVED: To note the arrangements through which the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees will determine their business through the municipal year.

The meeting ended at 7.14 pm

CHAIR