



COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

2nd July 2026 at 2.00 pm

Present:

Councillor Clough (in the Chair)

Councillors Aisthorpe, K. Batson, Charlesworth, Hudson, Kaczmarek (substitute for Wilson) Mayne (substitute for Russell) and K.Swinburn.

Officers in attendance:

- Paul Caswell (Head of Community Safety, Environment Economy, and Infrastructure)
- Charlotte Dring (Assistant Director Housing and Communities)
- Dee Hitter (Assistant Director Environment)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer)
- Nick Middleton (Voluntary and Community Sector Coordinator and Relationship Manager)
- Jo Paterson (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Eve Richardson Smith (Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer)
- Joanne Robinson (Assistant Director Policy Strategy & Resources and Statutory Scrutiny Officer)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Callison (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Energy Security)
- Councillor Augusta (Park Ward Councillor)
- Councillor P. Batson (South Ward Councillor)

There was one member of the press and three members of the public present.

SPC.1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

It was noted that at the Annual General Meeting of the Council held on 21st May 2026, Councillor Clough had been appointed the Chair and Councillor Wilson the Deputy Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Panel for the ensuing Municipal Year.

SPC.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Russell and Wilson for this meeting. Apologies were also received from Councillor Sawkins, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities.

SPC.3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest for this meeting.

SPC.4 MINUTES

A member raised a question relating to the Quarter 3 Council Plan Performance and Finance report considered at the previous meeting, noting that waste collection data was promised for the Quarter 4 report. Given the widespread issues with waste collection, the absence of the Quarter 4 report hindered scrutiny. The member asked for confirmation on whether the new waste system was fully operational and if this data was now available.

Ms Robinson clarified that the Quarter 4 report had not been published due to the June Cabinet meeting being cancelled. Officers present stated that the Quarter 4 report would be circulated to the panel for questions once it was published and if the panel felt it necessary, a special scrutiny meeting could be called on this and any other matter within the report.

RESOLVED –

1. That the minutes of the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel held on 26th February 2026 be approved as a correct record.
2. That it be requested that the Quarter 4 Council Plan Performance and Finance Report be circulated to the panel for questions and responses once it had been published for Cabinet.

SPC.5 QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public for this meeting.

SPC.6 FORWARD PLAN

The panel received the current forward plan, and members were asked to identify any items for examination by this panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

The Chair highlighted that the Crisis and Resilience Fund had slipped from the June Cabinet meeting and sought reassurances that this delay would not impact its rollout or the distribution of support. Ms Dring confirmed that interim arrangements were in place with local providers for information and advice services, ensuring no gap in provision and as such the delay was only in tendering for a new three-year service.

No further items were raised from the forward plan.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

SPC.7 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer tracking the recommendations of the Communities Scrutiny Panel and tracking the Full Council Decisions that were relevant to this panel.

At SPC.29, Update from the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, a site visit to the force control room was to be organised. The Chair stressed the urgency of this visit as it would become inaccessible once the licence came into fruition.

At SPC.30, Recycling Rates, Ms Paterson advised that a briefing note covering improvements and understanding of recycling rates was to be provided. Ms Hitter confirmed this would be completed as part of wider waste and transformation items.

Under SPC.34 Persistent Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) data, Ms Paterson noted that there had been a previous request for a report on anonymised data showing how persistent ASB and repeated breaches were managed. A member explained that this stemmed from concerns from residents, particularly around Grant Thorald Park, regarding repercussions for young people involved in ASB.

The Chair noted that discussions regarding youth justice and related areas were moving over to the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel. Mr Caswell suggested that overarching views on vulnerability and thresholds for children were better addressed by Children's Services. Although he was happy to report on general ASB handling, specific youth offending (e.g., sexual offences, robbery), he felt it should be managed by Children's Services.

Ms Paterson referred to the list of Council resolutions, noting that officers had provided updates next to each resolution and invited members to provide comments.

The following comments were made by the panel:-

A member questioned how the success of environmental initiatives and project plans would be measured and how members would know if outcomes justified costs. Officers explained that for environmental initiatives, initial work involved defining measurable outcomes, identifying data gaps, and establishing assessment criteria. Measures could include complaint numbers or visible amenity, acknowledging that low reporting did not always indicate there was not a problem.

The panel felt that the question regarding measuring success and justifying costs be put to the portfolio holder at a future meeting.

Under Adopting the Preston model of local procurement, a member noted the lack of clear timescales for adopting the Preston model. Officers explained that

previous work was being refreshed to establish a baseline and that the Preston model aligned with existing procurement and social value policies.

Officers were keen to understand member's aspirations around the scope of the model, whether it is initially envisaged as an internal model or for the wider place as this would significantly impact timescales. Ms Robinson had contacted Councillor Mill who had put forward the motion at Council for further discussion on scope and was awaiting a response.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the request for Youth Justice to come under the remit of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel be referred to the Executive and Scrutiny Liaison Board with a view to seeking approval via Full Council.
3. That a briefing note covering improvements and understanding of recycling rates be provided to this panel.
4. That a site visit to the force control room be organised as soon as possible.

SPC.8 CRISIS AND RESILIENCE FUND

The panel considered a report from the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities seeking Cabinet approval for a procurement exercise for crisis resilience information and advice services.

A member supported the principles of early investment but expressed surprise at the report's lack of baseline data or targets. The member asked how the £1.5m investment's outcomes and value for money would be measured without clear starting points. Ms Dring stated that contract management, key performance indicators (KPIs), and a dedicated data system would be used, with the data system currently under development.

Another member raised concern that the next report would not be ready until January next year, by which time significant funds would have been spent. The member requested a briefing note or assurance to establish baseline data for ongoing monitoring and to clarify what the £1.5 million investment would deliver. It was agreed that a briefing note be provided regarding baseline data and monitoring for the £1.5 million investment.

The Chair raised concerns around potential glitches in the lengthy application form, specifically forms timing out, forcing agencies to restart. She sought reassurance that these glitches would be resolved before the fund moved forward. Officers confirmed this would be actioned appropriately.

The panel supported the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a briefing note be provided regarding baseline data and monitoring for the £1.5 million investment.

SPC.9 COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL - WORK PROGRAMME 2026/27

The panel considered the work programme for 2026-27 for the Communities Scrutiny.

Councillor Hudson enquired if the Household Waste Delivery Plan would cover food waste and potential contract changes. Ms Hitter clarified that while a paper on household waste delivery could be produced, food waste collections and the full scope of the waste contract would be presented in separate papers due to their complexity. A member requested sight of these papers. Ms Hitter suggested multiple papers might be beneficial given the complexity and stages of development.

A member reminded the panel that a report on Protecting our Coast and Rivers had been unanimously agreed at the last meeting. Officers confirmed that this was on the panels work programme under further items for consideration.

Ms Hitter advised that the council was not the primary responsible body for all aspects but confirmed actions that were within the council's remit. Members suggested that Anglian Water and the Environment Agency be invited to the panel to contribute to these discussions. Officers advised that Anglian Water and Environment Agency could not be held to account nor compelled to attend. As such the panel agreed for this item to go forward and be timetabled into the work programme and that Anglian Water and Environment Agency be invited to attend. Ms Paterson noted that there had been a request from the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel for a joint meeting with this panel on Domestic Abuse focusing on the Needs Assessment and Domestic Abuse Strategy, members were asked if they had an appetite to bring this forward. The panel unanimously agreed to a joint meeting with Health Scrutiny on Domestic Abuse.

Play Areas in the Borough which included anti-social behaviour, vandalism costs, and signage, was also listed under other items for consideration. The Chair suggested this also be added to the work programme linking this with the community payback scheme. Other members suggested adding bin provisions in parks to the discussions, questioning their placement, sufficiency, and contribution to litter and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

Mr Caswell outlined ongoing work to prevent bin fires and develop a borough-wide Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for parks and open spaces, in partnership with the Head of Parks and Open Spaces.

The Chair strongly supported adding this to the programme, citing significant council expenditure on repairs, and noting that some equipment has been out of action for a number of years due to vandalism and the need for future proofing. Another member asked about the effectiveness of gates in parks being locked at dusk, opened at dawn, and asked for a review of their management and impact. Officers acknowledged this issue and confirmed that the security service, was reviewing gate management and overall security measures.

RESOLVED

1. That the Communities Scrutiny Panel Work Programme for 2026-27 be approved.
2. That the River and Water Health report be added to this panel's work programme with an invitation extended to Anglian Water and Environment Agency to participate in discussions.
3. That a joint meeting be arranged with the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel to discuss Domestic Abuse.
4. That the Play Areas in the Borough item encompassing issues such as anti-social behaviour, vandalism, bin provisions, and security measures be added to this panel's work programme, linking this in with the community payback scheme.

SPC.10 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder at this meeting.

SPC.11 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS

There were no formal requests from members of this panel to call in decisions of recent Cabinet and Portfolio Holder meetings.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 2.38 p.m.