

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 7 November 2023

Report by: **Scrutiny Officer**

Report title: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Draft
Work Programme 2023/24**

Ward(s) affected: **(All Wards);**

Summary

- This report considers topics for inclusion in the Committee's Draft Work Programme. By establishing a work programme of topics for scrutiny Members are better able to plan their future workload, with an agenda which is focussed, maximising the efficacy of the scrutiny process by taking a longer term, strategic view of the issues facing the council.
- Following the workshop on 27 July and Members' consideration of the draft scrutiny items at their last meeting, the suggested topics are detailed in Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

(A) The update be noted; and

(B) The Work Programme at Appendix 1 be agreed

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 **Appendix 1** sets out the Draft Work Programme which may be reviewed at any time.

- 1.2 A key function of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to hold the Executive to account for its decisions, to review existing policies and consider proposals for new policies. In doing so, it will act as the Executive's critical friend in the process. The principle power of scrutiny is to influence policies and decisions made by the Council. Its aim should be to achieve positive outcomes for local people by undertaking a thorough targeted examination of the council's services and procedures and make recommendations for improvement.
- 1.3 It has no formal powers to make changes but where a recommendation is made to the Executive, the Executive is required to respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if it decides not to accept a recommendation and the rationale for that decision. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) recommends that the Executive has to respond to any recommendation within two months.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 At the workshop on 27 July 2023, the Chairman explained that a main role of Overview and Scrutiny was to add value to the functions of the council in terms of its policies and in optimising the provision of services to its residents. Items for consideration for scrutiny must be evidenced-based with measurable outputs.
- 2.2 Topics for scrutiny are detailed in Appendix 1. By way of an update, the Scrutiny Officer is liaising with officers in relation to a Play Park Site Visit, PCSO Support, Cyber Security, Literacy in the District and Hertfordshire, Registered Social Landlords, Climate Change and Smart Devices (ie. Digital innovation and how this can be adopted to improve council services).
- 2.3 At the request of Members' a two-page Bulletin Summary on the Digital Innovation Zone (its vision and work) was circulated

to all Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 September 2023.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 Members are welcome to submit a scrutiny proposal at any time. This form is available in the Microsoft Teams channel and provides Officers with sufficient information to assess if it is appropriate for scrutiny and to ensure that specific questions are addressed. A Scrutiny Flowchart is also available which explains the processes involved in submitting a Scrutiny Proposal Form. The Scrutiny Officer will then liaise with Officers and the Chairman to consider the best way forward to address the subject and complete the scoping document.

4.0 Options

4.1 The work programme will be kept under review by the Committee throughout the coming year.

5.0 Risks

5.1 The establishment of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee is enshrined in the Local Government Act 2000 (Section 9). The 2000 Act obliges local authorities to adopt political management systems with a separate Executive. Various sub sections of the 2000 Act set out the powers and duties for Overview and Scrutiny Committee including the right to investigate and make recommendations on anything which is the responsibility of the Executive. Legislative provisions can also be found in the Localism Act 2011 (Schedule 2) with options to retain or re-adopt a "committee system" Section 9B.

5.2 Potential risks arise for the council if policies and strategies are developed and / or enacted without sufficient scrutiny.

Approval of an updated work programme contributes to the mitigation of risk (and Call-Ins) by ensuring key activities of the council are scrutinised.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 Scrutiny is an important part of the local democratic process and represents the interests of residents. It holds the Executive to account on behalf of residents and helps review and improve the functions run by the Council and its local partners. With proper notification, members of the public can forward items for scrutiny (Section 5.19 of the Constitution) and if accepted by the Chairman, are allowed to address Members for a maximum of 15 minutes.

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

Yes – the proposed Work Programme envisages the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receiving reports on the progress of the council's environmental strategies.

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Yes - scrutiny is enshrined in statute (the Local Government Act 2000 as amended by the Localism Act 2011)

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix 1 – Draft Work Programme

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