

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 23 March 2021

Report by: Scrutiny Officer

Report title: Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Draft Work Programme

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

- This report reviews actions included in the committee's existing Draft Work Programme and proposes amendments to the ongoing Draft Work Programme.

RECOMMENDATION FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, that:

- (A) The main agenda items for the next meeting be agreed;**
- (B) The proposed Consolidated Work Programme, included at Appendix A, be approved.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 This report sets out items, identified or suggested for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny (OS) Work Programme in **Appendix A**. The Appendix is now presented as a consolidated report to include those issues for consideration by both committees. It was felt that consolidating the work of both Committees in one report would give Members of both committees a better perspective from the viewpoint of scrutiny.

1.2 Scrutiny committees have the power of influence and are entitled to review and scrutinise the functions of the Council and the decisions of the Executive. The Committee serves as a 'critical friend' and is not a decision-making body but can make recommendations to the Executive and who must respond formally to recommendations within a given timeframe.

2.0 Background

2.1 The draft agenda items for 2021 meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee is shown in **Appendix A**. The timing of some items shown may have to change depending on availability of essential data (e.g. from central government) external sources and officers.

2.2 In an effort to better plan the work of both Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Governance Committee, a quarterly meeting of the Co-ordination of Work Programme meeting was held on 3 March 2021. The meeting was attended by the Leader, the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Vice Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee to consider the work programmes of both Committees and the items included in the Forward Plan. Members should note that going the Forward Plan will contain items for decision over the next year.

2.3 Members are reminded that for a topic to be valid for Scrutiny it needs to be relevant to the work of the council and impact on a number of residents / or the wider area. In addition, there needs to be evidence, whether readily quantifiable or anecdotal, that this is an issue requiring investigation.

2.1 Members are welcome to submit a scrutiny proposal at any time by completing a Scrutiny Proposal Form (Available from the Scrutiny Officer) which will provide officers with sufficient information to assess it is appropriate for Scrutiny and to

ensure their specific questions are addressed. The Scrutiny Officer will then liaise with officers and the Scrutiny Chairman to consider the best way to address the subject and complete a scoping document.

- 2.2 Members are also asked whether there is any training relevant to scrutiny or to the function and remit of the OS Committee that they wish to suggest.

5.0 Reason(s)

- 5.1 This report provides an update on the current situation in relation to issues raised by Members.

6.0 Options

- 6.1 The Work Programme will be kept under review by the committee throughout the coming year. It is worth noting that this is a draft work programme which is continually reviewed and will evolve as the work programme develops triggered by external and internal influences

7.0 Risks

- 7.1 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 Committees 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).
- 7.2 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 this risk by ensuring key activities of the council are scrutinised.

8.0 Implications/Consultations

8.1 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 services and functions run by the Council and its local partners.

8.2 The proposed Work Programme has implications for Members' time and the resources of the council devoted to scrutinizing the issues included.

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

Yes – scrutiny of the services provided eg by registered providers of social housing will investigate how some of the most vulnerable people in the district, including those with protected characteristics, receive housing services.

Environmental Sustainability

Yes – although not subject to a further Task and Finish Group, the proposed Work Programme envisages the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receiving reports on the progress of the council's Environmental and Climate Forum.

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 A – Draft Work Programme

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