

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 8 June 2021

Report by: Scrutiny Officer

Report title: Overview and Scrutiny – Draft Work Programme 2021/22

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 (Overview and Scrutiny) 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 (eg. from central government) external sources and officers.

2.2 Members may recall that the Annual Scrutiny reports for 2019/20 and 2020/21 were presented to Council for consideration on 29 April 2021. These were approved for publication on the Council's website.

2.3 Members will be aware that a Scrutiny Training Session by Link Services took place on 11 and 12 May to which all Members of Audit and Governance and Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited. The bespoke training was provided by David McGrath of Link Services and was tailored to address the recommendations coming out of the Review of Scrutiny undertaken by the CfGS in 2020. **(UPDATE)??**

2.4 Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee will recall that Councillor Curtis expressed concern at an earlier meeting regarding the issue of litter in the District. The Head of Operations has met with Councillor Curtis and it has been agreed that the waste team will do a short update at an All Member Briefing session on a date to be confirmed, to ensure that all members understand what the Council is doing now and plans for the future.

2.5 Additionally the matter of vehicle parking SPD and new developments was an issue which was raised by the Chairman and Vice Chairman at a meeting of the Co-ordination of Work Programmes meeting. This was raised with the Head of Planning who has advised that a number of member engagement sessions are planned during week commencing 24 May and before a decision is taken by the Executive on 28 September; this will give Members an opportunity to raise concerns and issues.

2.6 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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