

# East Herts Council Report

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 7 September 2021

**Report by:** Scrutiny Officer

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

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### Summary

- This report considers actions for inclusion 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 a trialled approach to the structure for items for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme in **Appendix A**. The Appendix is now presented as a single report which takes on board recommendations following the review of Scrutiny by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), Scrutiny Training in May 2021 provided by Mr David McGrath of Link Services and views supported by the Chief Executive and the Leader on a way forward.

- 1.2 Members may recall that David McGrath suggested that there should be no more than two items on any O&S Agenda so that Members have sufficient time to scrutinise. Additionally he suggested that Members needed to focus on items for inclusion within the context of the Council's Corporate "SEED" Plan. Furthermore, that the Work Programme should be prepared covering a period of a year.
- 1.3 For the September meeting, there is now only one report for consideration by O&S Committee (which is included in the Forward Plan and will be determined by the Executive on 23 November). There is also a Progress Report which focusses on one of the "SEED" Priorities – in this instance, "E" for Enabling Communities. Following consultation with the Chairman a decision was taken for the Head of Service to provide an update report on Hertford Theatre and Hartham Leisure for inclusion in the September agenda.
- 1.4 Members will note that two items for information have been included as a separate agenda item, these are an Update on Economic Development in East Herts and Customer Complaints - Feedback. These are reports of an update in nature and do not have any recommendations to the Executive. These are not for discussion but if at the pre-meeting when Members consider the structure and format of the meeting, Members feel that a recommendation should be made to the Executive, then the key officer / Head of Service will be invited to attend the meeting to provide advice to Members. As the content of the report cut across a number of Portfolios, the Executive was invited to attend the meeting in order to provide further information should this be needed.
- 1.5 Moving forward the Chairman has advised of the need to report to a future meeting on:

**Planning** – how are we going to improve the service

considering the increase in workload? and, secondly:

**Transformation** – how are we going to deal with the new way of working, work from home, office requirements, front of house etc?

- 1.6 Both these issues align with the Corporate “SEED” objectives “Digital by Design” in relation to agile working across the organisations (specifically 3a – Agree and agile working Policy with staff and 3b – Agree a business case for creating modern workspaces). Members’ views are sought on including a request for a report to the November meeting of O&S Committee.
- 1.7 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 2021/22 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 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.
- 2.3 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.

2.4 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.

### **3.0 Reason(s)**

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

### **4.0 Options**

4.1 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

### **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 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).

- 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 this risk 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 services and functions run by the Council and its local partners.
- 6.2 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**

**Contact Officer:** James Ellis, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Tel: 01279 502170.  
[james.ellis@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:james.ellis@eastherts.gov.uk)

**Report Author:** Lorraine Blackburn, Scrutiny Officer, Tel: 01279 502172. [lorraine.blackburn@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.blackburn@eastherts.gov.uk)