

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 2 November 2021

Report by: Scrutiny Officer

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

Ward(s) affected: All

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 The Appendix setting out the draft work programme is now presented as a single report.

1.2 In deciding what items the committee should consider, Members need to have regard to the Corporate and Forward Plans and what is due to be considered at the next Executive. The item on the agenda this evening is for consideration and decision by the Executive on 23 November.

- 1.3 Members will note that two items for information have been included as a separate agenda item, these are the Performance report for Quarters 1 and 2 and the Communications report. 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.
- 1.6 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 (e.g. 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 if 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 Overview and Scrutiny 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 e.g. 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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