

## East Herts Council Report

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** Tuesday 16 January 2024

**Report by:** Scrutiny Officer

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

**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.
- A suggested list of 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 Background

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 Update**

- 2.1 Topics for scrutiny are detailed in **Appendix 1**. The Scrutiny Officer is liaising with officers and Councillors to arrange a site visit of some of the district's playgrounds to help facilitate the request from Councillor Williams for the Committee to scrutinise provision for disabled children in these playgrounds. Town and Parish Councils have been asked (via a monthly bulletin by HAPTC) to supply information on which still provide financial support to PCSOs. Furthermore, bulletin summaries have been circulated on a number of topics including IT and Cyber Security, the Digital Innovation Zone, Information Governance and Data Protection and Literacy in the District and Hertfordshire.
- 2.2 Information is currently awaited from two Registered Social Landlords on the queries raised by Members and when received the Scrutiny Officer will prepare a summary of

responses and circulate. A response on Climate Change and Smart Devices (ie. Digital innovation and how this can be adopted to improve council services) are still awaited.

2.3 The Executive has suggested that Members might wish to review the Anti-Racism Charter before this is submitted to the Executive and then onto Council for a decision. This has been provisionally added to the Work Programme and it is now for Members to determine when in the committee cycle, they wish to review this item.

2.4 The committee dates for 2024/25 have now been confirmed so Members will need to start thinking about what topics they would like to scrutinise in the next Civic Year.

### **3.0 Reason**

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 – Summary of topics**

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