

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: Tuesday 5 March 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 is detailed in **Appendix 1**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- (A) Members' views are sought on whether they wish to scrutinise further, the use of herbicides in the District (particularly the use of Glyphosate) following a request from the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability and to provide guidance in terms of a reporting timeframe for inclusion in the civic year.**
- (B) Members' views are sought on whether the Council might wish to explore further how it can improve the delivery of its services using smart devices and influencing social**

change digitally.

- (C) A workshop be arranged to discuss potential scrutiny topics for inclusion in the 2024/25 civic year.**
- (D) The update be noted; and**
- (E) 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**.

- Potential dates to visit some of the district's playgrounds have been forwarded to the Councillors who have expressed a wish to be involved in this topic. Officers are awaiting a response.
- Neighbourhood Policing – at the time of publishing the agenda, 14 Parish Councils have advised the Scrutiny Officer that they do not fund a PCSO. Buntingford Town Council have advised that they have funded a PCSO since 2018 and for the period 2024 have agreed to contribute £4516 a quarter. They have a Service Level Agreement in place but do not monitor performance. Information will be provided as and when received.
- At the request of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Bulletin Summaries have already been circulated on a number of topics and these are attached as a reminder at **Appendix 2**. More recently one was circulated on the issue of Smart Devices and how this could be used to provide better services. Members' views are sought on whether they wish to explore this topic further and add it to their future work programme.
- Summary Bulletins are awaited from Head of Services on Climate Change – Carbon Neutrality, East Herts Run Markets (part of a larger piece of work being progressed) and the Anti-Racism Charter.
- Information is still awaited from two Registered Social landlords on the questions posed by Members. The Scrutiny Officer continues to send out reminders.
- Members' views are sought on whether they wish to scrutinise further the use of herbicides in the District (particularly the use of Glyphosate) which has been raised by Councillor Tim Hoskin, Executive Members for

Environmental Sustainability. Should Members wish to progress this topic, guidance is sought on the reporting timeframe so that this can be programmed for the civic year.

- Members' will be aware that the Executive will be considering the Award of a Waste Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract at its meeting on 9 July 2024. A report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11 June 2024.
- The administration will be presenting their Corporate Plan to Council on 28 February 2024 which will help Members populate the work programme based on the Council's priorities. Prior to that the All-Member Briefing on 22 February will also provide a summary on the Corporate Plan.
- Members might also wish to hold a workshop to develop future topics for scrutiny for the civic year 2024/25.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 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

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

7.2 Summary Bulletins

Contact Member: Councillor David Andrews, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: James Ellis, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Tel: 01279 502170.
james.ellis@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author: Lorraine Blackburn, Scrutiny Officer, Tel: 01279 502172. lorraine.blackburn@eastherts.gov.uk