

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: Tuesday 4 March 2025

Report by: Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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) That 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. Members are reminded to complete the scrutiny proposal form when putting forward an item for the draft work programme.

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 at the following meetings are detailed in Appendix 1.

- 10 June 2025
- 16 September 2025
- 4 November 2025
- 20 January 2026
- 10 March 2026

- 2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met for a workshop on Tuesday 11 June 2024, to discuss potential topics for scrutiny on the work programme for 2024/25. A further workshop is in Members' diaries for March 2025 and the Executive have been invited to attend to share any upcoming matters they may have that the Committee might like to scrutinise.

- 2.3 The following topics are in the work programme for possible scrutiny in 2025/26, albeit none have yet been fleshed out via a scrutiny proposal form:

- Affordable Housing

- Section 106
- Development Management and Community Forums
- Anti-Racism Charter and the Equalities Strategy

2.4 All new up and coming strategies and policies will automatically be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme, and Members of Overview and Scrutiny can then consider whether they wish to look at these as part of the work programme.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 Members are welcome, and encouraged, 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. Democratic Services 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

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