

**Meeting: COMMUNITY SELECT
COMMITTEE**

Agenda Item: 4

Date: 6 MARCH 2017

2017/2018 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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1. PURPOSE

1.1 To agree the Scrutiny Work Programme for the Select Committee for the new Municipal Year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Scrutiny Members' feedback on ideas for improving Scrutiny (see section 4) be noted.

2.2 That having considered ideas put forward by individual Members, and from the public (see section 5), the Committee determine the subject matters to be added to a 'long list' work programme of potential Scrutiny reviews items for 2017/2018.

2.3 That the comments regarding the Future Town Future Council programme and the relationship between Scrutiny and the officer Senior Leadership Team (see section 5.4 & 5.5 respectively) be noted.

2.4 That consideration be given to including in the work programme specific monitoring or review of recommendations from previous studies (see section 6.2).

2.5 That the Policy Development work identified so far for the Committee (see section 7.1) be noted.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Scrutiny Committees are asked to draft their work programme ahead of the new Municipal year in order that work may begin as soon as the Committees are appointed at Annual Council. Any outstanding/unfinished studies, where applicable, might also need to be included.

3.2 During January and February 2017 Members provided feedback on current Scrutiny activity and on ideas for the Work Programme for the 2017/2018 Municipal Year.

- 3.3 When considering what work to undertake in the coming year Members may wish to consider if the matter in question is of a cross cutting nature and might lend itself to being considered jointly with another Select Committee.
- 3.4 Officers have also been requested to bring to the Committee's attention Policy Development items that the Select Committee might be requested to consider and comment on before reports thereon are submitted to the Executive.
- 3.5 The Committee may also consider whether specific time should be allocated for monitoring or review of recommendations of previous studies. It is recognised that there is a limited dedicated officer resource for the Scrutiny work of 3 Scrutiny Committees and therefore it is important to ensure that workplans are in place in order that the call on those resources and on each Committee's time on all its activities are prioritised and evenly spread across the year.

4. MEMBERS' IDEAS FOR IMPROVING SCRUTINY

- 4.1 In January 2017 all Members of Scrutiny Committees were emailed a survey to gauge views of the Scrutiny work undertaken and ideas for future studies. The following summary is based on the (12) replies received from the 22 Members who are on one or more of the Council's Scrutiny Committees.
- 4.2 Members were asked to comment on current Scrutiny activity and any issues that could be addressed to improve the current arrangements. Members provided challenge around the following areas:
 - 4.2.1 Opposition Members to Chair Scrutiny Committees - "Some of the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees should be allotted to the opposition parties."

Response: Officers are unable to comment specifically about this suggestion. However, there are many different scrutiny models in operation in different local authorities within local government. Some authorities invite the opposition to chair scrutiny committees others do not, as such this is a matter for the majority group as this is in their gift who is nominated as Scrutiny Chairs, which are agreed at Annual Council.

- 4.2.2 Improve the Scrutiny presence on the SBC website – "The Council's website could be updated with some of the information about the most extensive investigations. A lot of work goes into these and they need to be more easily accessible to the public."

Response: Over time many Scrutiny reviews have been undertaken by Members and there is limited scope at Committee meetings to return to reviews to monitor progress. Therefore collating past Scrutiny reviews into one place on the Council's Website would be a useful repository of past activity. Officers have begun the process of collating these documents into a single spreadsheet with hyperlinks to previous scrutiny activity. However, this is a time consuming process and will require more work before this is accessible via the Council's web site. This issue was raised

by Members previously, and the Scrutiny Officer has it as an objective to make progress in this area.

- 4.2.3 Access to previous scrutiny reviews – “I would be interested in having access to previous scrutiny topics, we could see what was done and the outcome and whether recommendations had been implemented.”

Response: Ditto the response provided at 4.2.2.

- 4.2.4 Fewer reviews – “Not too many reviews in one year, so that enough time is given to the topic to be scrutinised properly.”

Response: There is a balance to be struck with the resources available. Previously Members have indicated that they appreciate the in-depth reviews but also welcome a shorter look at some issues.

- 4.2.5 Linking the Modern Member Programme with issues raised by Scrutiny Members – “Better connection with the Executive and the MMP events. Feedback that addresses suggestions from Scrutiny.”

Response: The Scrutiny Officer is happy to explore with lead officers for the MMP events whether the issues raised by Members through scrutiny could, in part, inform the MMP events. This suggestion will be fed into the review of Member Training and Development activities.

- 4.2.6 More resources – “More resources (not going to happen).”

Response: Given ongoing budgetary pressures it is not envisaged that further resources to support scrutiny can be made available, unless activities elsewhere in the Council are deprioritised. However, supporting scrutiny is a key focus of the work of the Assistant Directors, see paragraph 5.6.

- 4.2.7 Choice of topic – “The most important thing is the choice of topic – it should be focussed and with the ability to recommend changes that will actually be implemented.”

Response: Work Programme topic selection is very important, that is why Members dedicate time each year to consider what matters each Committee wishes to focus on. Scrutiny reviews make recommendations to the Executive and the Strategic Leadership Team, it is hoped that these recommendations are both evidenced based and reasonable and might, therefore, be implemented.

- 4.3 Members have also previously provided feedback following Scrutiny Member Training, this included the following points:

- The scrutiny process must be more Member led and Members must take greater ownership

- There must be time made available to engage in scrutiny investigations/info gathering. Time committed must be utilised efficiently
- Members need to work on prioritisation
- Members need to work on identifying sources of verbal and written evidence and assessing the value of them.
- Members should review decisions post implementation
- Members must feel able to challenge evidence presented
- Any papers/ reports/evidence must be presented in a timely way
Members can say that they won't consider issues presented late

4.4 The Scrutiny Officer and the Assistant Director Corporate Services & Transformation attended a training seminar in March 2016 at the Institute of Local Government, University of Birmingham, which addressed the issue of the pros and cons of having longer detailed reviews versus simpler and shorter reviews. The consensus from the training is that there is no single approach to carrying out Scrutiny and both approaches can be used, as there are pros and cons with either method. For example, if Members conduct longer detailed reviews then they can have some confidence that their outcomes and recommendations will be robust and evidenced based. However this approach is time consuming and takes up a lot of resources. In contrast if the objectives of a shorter review, ideally 1 meeting with responses reported to a later meeting, are modest, then it is possible to look at more issues during the year but the quality of the outcomes and recommendations may not be as robust compared to a longer review.

4.4.1 Therefore continuing with a mix of, longer in-depth reviews including witness interviews and site visits etc. and shorter one-off discussion items with responses reported back to the Committee would appear to be the best use of the current resource, but this is a matter for Scrutiny Members to decide.

5. MEMBERS' & RESIDENTS' IDEAS FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY REVIEWS

5.1 Scrutiny Members Suggestions for future Scrutiny review items

5.1.1 Following the canvassing of Members, both in 2016 & 2017 the following topics have been suggested as potential scrutiny review items:

Issues raised in 2015 & 2016 by Scrutiny Members but were not scrutinised by the Committee:

2015:

- Integrated Community Transport (unlikely to go ahead as dependant on HCC future plans for Community Transport and they have not responded to previous approaches)
- The working of the new Housing Allocations Policy
- Issues in the quality of health care and social care raised by residents. Discuss with the Director of Public Health the service provided by GPs,

CCG, Social Care to see where the problems are and what can be done to help

- Older person's provision is an important issue, specifically housing, support provided in the home and safety
- Sheltered Housing looking at Elderly Resident's Courts to see if they are fit for purpose
- Supported Housing
- Scrutiny of provision of services in the community that serve those in acute crisis/poverty carried out by CAB, Credit Union, Food bank, debt counselling, with a view that those most in need are getting these services?
- Scrutiny to be led by what the community is saying – a Scrutiny of Residents Town Wide Survey would cover this
- Scrutiny of Residents' Meetings, looking at all available models to better engage residents
- Call in Executive Portfolio's to give a report on their work – to help inform future scrutiny reviews

2016:

- The way we consult (some of the consultation documents are huge!) in resident feedback – do we get a lot through the surveys we sent out, we give percentages in responses but if that is only 300 residents it is not representative (This work will be picked up by the Communications Peer Review and subsequent O&S Review)
- The SSE Energy Utility Contract repairs to Community Centres, as part of the contract is there a review built in?
- Support provided by the CAB are we getting value for money?
- Scrutiny of the councils' interaction with residents. How we disseminate information, how we consult and how we respond to feedback. Several consultations have very low returns and some of our community engagement goes unnoticed because it is not promoted efficiently. This could include social media as well as traditional forms of engagement and communication.
- Public Engagement - the annual survey- does it ask the right questions? What are we doing with the answers?
- Community Centres – the town wide view, is there a coherent approach to the communities needs in our community centres?
- Anti-Social Behaviour – is the council doing enough to educate and deal with anti-social behaviour in Stevenage?
- Council to Residents communications: written (letters), surveys, emails and website and customer service. How effective are these? What's working and what's not? How is the Council preparing to delivery digital services?
- Homelessness provision, capacity and service provided, is it working?

Potential Scrutiny Issues raised by Members in 2017:

- Housing Allocations: “This is raised a lot by the public”
- Sheltered Housing: “how it is allocated?” and “Last year we were told that there would be an internal review, what has happened? Can this now be scrutinised?” **(x2 suggestions)** (Officer Comment: Sheltered Housing is subject to an ongoing Future Town, Future Council programme of work, as such it may be suitable as a Policy Development Item regarding the shaping of the service for 2018/19 onwards, subject to officer advice).
- Lettings: “I’m aware that a review is about to start – or has just started so perhaps this will come under policy review” and “I’d like to look at lettings” **(x2 suggestions)**
- The SSE (Southern Scottish Electric) Energy Utility Contract with Community Centres – “Can Scrutiny Members please be updated on the monitoring of the contract?” (Officer Comment: An email outlining the current monitoring arrangements and also to provide comment on performance can be circulated to Members)
- CAB (Citizens Advice Bureaux): “Are we getting value for money?”
SLL (Stevenage Leisure Limited): “Match between SLL brief and delivery” (Officer Comment: Officers are currently working with SLL to seek to identify opportunities that will improve the performance of the facilities and reduce the cost of the contract to SBC. The outcome of this piece of work could be discussed with Members once the related proposals have been fully scoped out. It is suggested that this piece of work be concluded ahead of considering a further potential review of SLL’s performance against the contract)
- Face to Face interaction between officers and residents – “My residents would like more face to face interaction with officers”
- Community Development Team: “I’m interested in what initiatives have happened in the past 12 months, what is being done to support Community Groups in light of the new policy on charging rents – how this has impacted groups” and “Community Development” **(x2 suggestions)** (Officer Comment: Awaiting the Assistant Director Community & Neighbourhoods joining us and reviewing this function. Following the policy change on charging for rents there was a joint Officer and Executive Member process to determine these 10 Community Groups ability to pay rent. A number of groups were successful in receiving a further period of rent in kind. Further details of this process will be circulated to Members separately)
- The way we consult: “I am not sure whether this is covered by Scrutiny, but I have had complaints about the way that Council consults its residents. This was specifically about parking, but it seems like there are some flaws in the way we ask residents for their views on things” (Officer Comment: This work will be picked up by the Communications Peer Review and subsequent O&S Review)

5.1.2 If Members choose to scrutinise any Housing related items then these would need to be co-ordinated with the Housing Management Board.

5.1.3 Issues raised by residents via social media and the website

5.1.4 Following use of the Council's corporate social media (twitter and facebook) as well as pages on the SBC website the following issues have been raised by residents. For brevity the resident's suggestions have been abridged:

- The plight of rough sleepers: Stevenage Churches Together said "It would be good to ask Members to consider the plight of rough sleepers. I know there's the Haven and it's been enlarged but there are still people who don't meet their criteria or are waiting for a place and are out in the cold." (Officer Comment: An All Member Seminar and associated Action Plan was held with Members. A copy of the Action Plan can be provided to Stevenage Churches Together)
- Lack of facilities in Symonds Green and Community Centre: "I'm an OAP and feel there is a lack of facilities for the retired who have spare time they would like to fill. I've only once had a newsletter from the Symonds Green community group in 10 years. There does not seem to be a functioning local community centre where people could meet and engage in activities, and receive advice, health and fitness programs and training, allowing OAP's to use technology to maintain themselves better in the modern world and avoid feeling increasingly cut off and isolated" (Officer Comment: There is an ongoing extension to the facility at Symonds Green Community Centre – details about the scheme and activities available at the centre can be provided to the resident)

5.2 Members are asked to consider which of the above items they wish to include in their work programme and which approach they favour to review the items, based on those suggested at paragraph at 4.4 and 4.4.1, namely a more in-depth review or a one-off discussion item?

5.2.1 Members should note that whatever issues they agree to be scrutinised as a main review item would be subject to a full scoping process and subsequently a scoping document would need to be agreed by the Committee at a future meeting. Other items which can be addressed by a briefing/discussion item may not require a full scoping document.

5.3 Work Programme Schedule for 2017/18

5.3.1 When the Scrutiny Work Programme is agreed by the Community Select Committee the Scrutiny Officer will, using the agreed dates for generic Select Committee meetings in the Calendar of Meetings, draw together a work programme schedule for the 2017/18 Municipal Year, including scrutiny review meetings, monitoring of previous reviews selected by Members and policy development meetings, which will be circulated to Members, and electronic diary invites will be sent to all Community Select Committee Members.

5.4 Future Town Future Council

5.4.1 In future years each Scrutiny Committee should be mindful of the nine themed areas of the Councils Future Town, Future Council (FTFC) programme. As these strategically important projects are delivered over the coming years, Members may wish to align their Scrutiny Work Programme against the delivery these projects. However, it should be noted that the FTFC has its own governance arrangements that will ensure it is regularly reviewed and scrutinised, therefore any scrutiny activity carried out by Members that aligns to the FTFC projects will be in addition to and complement those governance arrangements and therefore there is not a requirement on Members to choose these projects as a Scrutiny review theme.

5.5 Alignment of Scrutiny with the Strategic Leadership Team

5.5.1 It is important that the three Scrutiny Committees (Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Community Select Committee and the Environment & Economy Select Committee) are aligned to the new Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), as such the following Scrutiny Committees are covered by the relevant nine Assistant Directors and SLT areas:

5.5.2 Customer – Community Select Committee:

Assistant Director Housing & Investment, Jaine Cresser
Assistant Director Communities & Neighbourhoods, (To be appointed)

5.5.3 Place – Environment & Economy Select Committee:

Assistant Director Direct Services, (Permanent post to be appointed – Interim Kevin Basford)
Assistant Director Regeneration, (Permanent post to be appointed -Interim Noel O’Neil)
Assistant Director Housing Development, Ash Ahmed
Assistant Director Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawad

5.5.4 Transformation & Support – Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Assistant Director Corporate Services & Transformation, Richard Protheroe
Assistant Director Finance & Estates, Clare Fletcher
Assistant Director Corporate Projects, Customer Services & Technology, Clare Watson (from April 2017)

5.6 Role of the Assistant Directors and Scrutiny

5.6.1 The Assistant Directors will take a leadership role in assisting and supporting the relevant Scrutiny Committees and specific reviews that align to their area of expertise. The Assistant Directors will support each review through its various stages, from scoping of reviews, attending Chair/Vice-Chair briefings and offering support to the Scrutiny Officer in providing written and oral evidence for reviews as well as identifying ‘Critical Friends’ and other review witnesses. The Assistant Directors will liaise with the relevant Executive

Portfolio Holder(s) and the Senior Leadership Team (CE and Assistant CE's, Scott Crudgington, Matt Partridge & Tom Pike).

- 5.7 Strategic Director, Matt Partridge from the Senior Leadership Team has overall responsibility for the Scrutiny function, deputised by Strategic Director Tom Pike.

6. MONITORING REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Committee may consider there is a need to undertake some follow-up work on recommendations arising from previous studies. It may be considered sufficient to simply request update briefings from the relevant Heads of Service to be circulated to Members at appropriate intervals. However, if the Committee requires more detailed consideration or examination of the progress of previous recommendations this should be factored into its workplan.
- 6.2 Reports within the remit of this Committee that have been issued over the last four years and also those that have been revisited within the last four years are as follows:
- Community Transport Review (Completed January 2014, Executive response May 2014). Members could schedule a report back for monitoring of recommendation agreed actions in 2017/18
 - Decent Homes Review (Completed January 2014, Executive response September 2014). Members could schedule a report back for monitoring of recommendation agreed actions in 2017/18
 - Community Safety Action Plan (Statutory review meeting, March 2014, November 2014, March 2015, November 2015, March 2016)
 - Public Health Discussion Item (annual review meeting April 2014, March 2015, October 2016)
 - Museum Review (Completed November 2012, Executive response January 2013, revisited for monitoring of recommendation agreed actions November 2014 & again in October 2016)
 - Homelessness Review (Completed June 2013, Executive response August 2013, revisited for monitoring of recommendation agreed actions January 2015 & revised update March 2015)
 - Local Private Rented Sector (Completed March 2015, Executive response June 2015, was scheduled to be revisited for monitoring of recommendations and agreed actions in March 2017 but is now deferred)
 - Local Community Budgets Review (Completed March 2016, Executive response June 2016, revisited for monitoring of recommendation agreed actions – to be scheduled for Summer/Autumn 2017)
 - Damp & Mould in Stevenage Homes (Completed January 2017, Exec Member Response March 2017 – In addition the Community Select Committee agreed to consider an update report on the performance of the service following improved monitoring arrangements and delivery of the Damp and Condensation Strategy in the autumn of 2017)

7. POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR 2017/2018

7.1 Following consultation with the Assistant Directors for Housing & Investment, Jaine Cresser and Community and Neighbourhoods (To be appointed) the following matters have been identified for potential Policy Development to be undertaken with the relevant Portfolio Holders during the Municipal Year for 2017/2018:

- Performance Management Framework
- Sheltered Housing (Future Town, Future Council Programme Item, future focus for Sheltered Housing for 2018/19 – Autumn/Winter 2017/18)

7.2 In line with organising meeting dates to deliver the Committee's work programme, as detailed at section 5.3.1, dates for the above Policy Development items will be scheduled into Members diaries once the relevant Head of Service confirms when Scrutiny Members can undertake this work, ahead of consideration by the Executive. If any further matters are identified by officers Members will be notified and a meeting invitation sent to Members in due course.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

A small budget of £2,500 is held to support the work of the Select Committees in their research and study.

8.2 Legal Implications

The role of Scrutiny and Overview Committees is set out in the Local Government Act 2000. The recommendations made in this report are to facilitate the Committees to fully undertake this role.

8.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

There are no direct Equalities and Diversity implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Specific Equalities and Diversity Implications are considered during each scrutiny review.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Submissions from Councillors and the Public.

APPENDICES

None