

Meeting COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
Portfolio Area
Date 18 MARCH 2020



COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21

Authors Stephen Weaver | 2332
Lead Officers Tom Pike
Contact Officer Stephen Weaver | 2332

1 PURPOSE

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

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That having considered ideas put forward by individual Members, (see section 5), the Committee determines the subject matters to be added to a 'long list' work programme of potential Scrutiny reviews items for 2020/2021.
- 2.2 That consideration is given to including in the work programme, specific monitoring or review of recommendations from previous studies (see section 6.2).
- 2.3 That the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meetings to carry out 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 and unfinished studies, where applicable, will also need to be included. Such cases are detailed at item 5.2.1 to 5.2.4

- 3.2 During February 2020 Members provided ideas for the Work Programme for the 2020/2021 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, likely Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) policy development items that the Select Committee might be requested to consider and comment on before reports there 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 three Scrutiny Committees and therefore it is important to ensure that work plans 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 Previously as part of the annual survey of Scrutiny Members, Members were invited to provide feedback on their ideas to improve scrutiny. It was agreed with the Chair that this area was covered as part of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements and as such will be addressed in the O&S Committee's recommendations.

5 MEMBERS' IDEAS FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY REVIEWS

5.1 Scrutiny Members' Suggestions for Future Scrutiny Review Items

- 5.1.1 The following issues have been raised by Members as potential Scrutiny review items:
- 5.1.2 **Liberty Gas** – The performance of Liberty Gas could be considered as there are a number of complaints recorded via the customer satisfaction surveys and Customer Services Centre data. **Officer comment:** The Gas contract is currently in a procurement process, with the award due later this year in August 2020. Complaints about the Gas service are lower than previous years, down from 200 in April 2018 to February 2019 to 155 in April 2019 to February 2020, the number going to stage two have also reduced to 3 and none have gone to stage three, the number closed out of target has reduced from 39 to 4. (Lead AD – Housing & Investment)
- 5.1.3 **Damp and Mould** – An urgent update is required in terms of current policy and answers to the continuing issues need to be provided. **Officer comment:** A Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meeting was held in February 2020 with scrutiny Members comments prior to the Damp & Condensation Policy being considered at the Executive in March 2020. General answers to the continuing issues are addressed within the policy and show an improving

performance over the last 18 months or so, as this is much better resourced than it has been in the past. It might be better to review this in Q4 next year once the policy has been in place to see if there is still an issue by that time. (Lead AD – Housing & Investment)

5.1.4 **Housing Repairs** – How are repairs booked in with tenants, there seems to be a number of complaints regarding repairs? **Officer comment:** The number of complaints for all types of repairs is still relatively low as a percentage of the overall complaints recorded (15.79%). It is also worth noting that a number of the complaints are actually comments rather than complaints and the number of upheld complaints is lower than the overall figure. In addition, the number of complaints has decreased in 2019 from those recorded in the previous year. Currently complaints for fencing repairs are higher compared to the rest of the repair categories, this is a reflection of the number of storms we have had. Officers are happy to provide further written commentary on this or discuss it at a meeting with Members. (Lead AD – Housing & Investment)

5.1.5 **SLL** – **Officer comment:** Subject to Members consideration and the preferred way forward the new Leisure Management Contract is due to commence in April 2023. It could be helpful to run a leisure management option session, perhaps with industry specialists to outline the options for the Council ahead of the current contract ending in April 2023. This could be delivered via one session by the third quarter of the municipal year. (Lead AD – Communities & Neighbourhoods)

5.1.6 **Museum Review** – What is happening with the Museum review? **Officer comment:** The Museum review was last considered in 2016 (following a review in 2012 and a revisit in 2014). A further review would need to take account of the Exec (in December 2018) asking officers to look at an options appraisal for the Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre with a view to developing the theatre and cultural offer within the town centre as part of the Town Centre Regeneration. As noted above the Assistant Director, Communities & Neighbourhoods may wish to seek Members support in developing the scope for such a review. This could be focused around the museum ambitions featured in the Cultural Strategy and to gain support for the First New Town's Museum idea and how this might relate to broader leisure/cultural facilities plans. Any work on this would also need to be considered in relation to plans for the Hub and SG1 regeneration. (Lead AD – Communities & Neighbourhoods)

5.1.7 **The roll out of the new play areas across the town** **Officer comment:** A written update to the Committee on the roll out of the new play areas across the town can be provided. (Lead AD – Stevenage Direct Services)

5.2 **Statutory and Standing Items**

5.2.1 Crime and Disorder Committee (Statutory Committee). This meeting includes input from the Herts Constabulary Chief Inspector Safer Neighbourhood Partnerships, Chair of the Responsible Authority Group (SBC CE), Executive Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and the Community Safety Manager.

- 5.2.2 Public Health Meeting (Standing Item). This meeting includes input from the HCC Director of Public Health, Executive Portfolio for Housing, Health and Older People and SBC officers engaged in public health.
- 5.3 **Items that are on the existing work programme but have not been delivered so far and deferred for 2019-20:**
- 5.3.1 **Sports & Leisure across the town – Officer comment:** The review is complete but requires the recommendations and report to be brought to a meeting early in the 2020-21 Municipal Year. (Lead AD – Communities & Neighbourhoods)
- 5.3.2 **Community Neighbourhood Management & Neighbourhood Wardens** It was agreed last year to include this in the work programme for 2019-20. This was due to be considered in quarter 4 but it was not possible to schedule a meeting to start this review, due to conflicting priorities of the Scrutiny Officer, this item will therefore be recommended to keep this on the work programme for 2020-21. However, an all member briefing was provided by officers in October 2019 and a further update on progress can be provided from quarter 3 2020/21. (Lead AD – Communities & Neighbourhoods)
- 5.4 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 paragraphs 5.1.2 to 5.2.2, namely a more in-depth review or a one-off discussion item?
- 5.5 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 and discussion item, may not require a full scoping document.
- 5.6 **Work Programme Schedule for 2020/21**
- 5.6.1 When the Scrutiny Work Programme is agreed by the 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 2020/21 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.
- 5.7 **Alignment of Scrutiny with the Strategic Leadership Team**
- 5.7.1 It is important that the three Scrutiny Committees (Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Community Select Committee and the Environment and Economy Select Committee) are aligned to the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT). As such, the following Scrutiny Committees are covered by the relevant nine Assistant Directors and SLT areas:
- 5.7.2 **Customer** – Community Select Committee:
Assistant Director for Housing and Investment (Jaine Cresser) and the Assistant Director for Communities and Neighbourhoods (Rob Gregory)
- 5.7.3 **Place** – Environment and Economy Select Committee:

Assistant Director for Direct Services (Dave Brown/Steve Dupoy), Assistant Director for Regeneration (Interim Chris Barnes), Assistant Director for Housing Development (Ash Ahmed) and Assistant Director for Planning and Regulatory (Zayd Al-Jawad)

5.7.4 Transformation and Support – Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Assistant Director for Corporate Services and Transformation (Vacant), Assistant Director for Finance and Estates (Vacant) and Digital & Transformation (Ruth Luscombe)

5.7.5 Role of the Assistant Directors and Scrutiny

5.7.6 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 and 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).

5.7.7 Strategic Director, Tom Pike from the Senior Leadership Team has overall responsibility for the Scrutiny function, deputised by Strategic Director Richard Protheroe.

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 work programme.

6.2 Reports within the remit of this Committee that have been issued over the last five years or have been revisited within the last five years are as follows:

- Housing Allocations Review (Completed 7 February 2018, Executive response 6 April 2018). Members are invited to schedule a report back on the actions linked to the recommendations in the 2019/20 Municipal Year.
- Community Transport Review (Completed January 2014, Executive response May 2014). Members could schedule a report back for monitoring of recommendation agreed actions in 2019/20
- Decent Homes Review (Completed January 2014, Executive response September 2014). Members considered a report back monitoring the recommendations and agreed actions on 23 October 2018
- Community Safety Action Plan (Statutory review meeting, March 2014, November 2014, March 2015, November 2015, March 2016, March 2017, March 2018 and is scheduled for a meeting in March 2019)

- Public Health Discussion Item (annual review meeting April 2014, March 2015, October 2016, Sustainable Transformation Plans November 2017 and February 2019)
- 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, Rough Sleepers and Homelessness presentation June 2017)
- 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 was deferred to June 2017)
- Local Community Budgets Review (Completed March 2016, Executive response June 2016, revisited for monitoring of recommendation agreed actions Summer 2017)
- Damp and Mould in Stevenage Homes (Completed January 2017, Executive 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. This was deferred until 2 October 2018, when the Committee received an update document)

7 PORTFOLIO HOLDER ADVISORY GROUP - POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR 2020/2021

- 7.1 Following consultation with the Assistant Directors for Stevenage Direct Services, (Interim Dave Brown), Regeneration, (Interim Chris Barnes), Housing Development, Ash Ahmed and Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawad, the following matters have been identified for potential Portfolio Holder Advisory Group Policy Development to be undertaken with the Portfolio Holders for Environment & Regeneration and Economy, Enterprise and Transport during the Municipal Year for 2020/2021:
- 7.1.1 Issues that have been highlighted by the Assistant Directors include:
- Service Charge Review to be scheduled for Executive in October 2020
- 7.2 The above schedule is subject to change and Members will be contacted with a meeting invitation closer to the PHAG meeting. Any further issues that the Assistant Directors can give notice of for Portfolio Holders Advisory Groups, Policy Development work in 2020/2021 will be advised throughout the year.
- 7.3 These meetings will continue to be clerked by Constitutional Services but are private informal meetings Chaired by the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder and supported by the relevant Assistant Director.

8 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 8.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 8.1.2 A small budget of £1000 is held to support the work of the Select Committees in their research and study.

Legal Implications

- 8.2. The role of Overview and Scrutiny 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.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 8.3. 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 DOCUMENTS

All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, i.e. they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:

- BD1 Submissions from Councillors.