

<b>Meeting</b>	ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE
<b>Portfolio Area</b>	Environment & Regeneration / Economy, Enterprise & Transport
<b>Date</b>	21 March 2018



## ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2018-19

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### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To agree the Scrutiny Work Programme for the Select Committee for the new Municipal Year 2018-19.
- 1.2 To consider the issues raised by the Communities and Local Government Parliamentary Select Committee – Effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Scrutiny Members' feedback on ideas for improving Scrutiny (see section 4) including their response to the Parliamentary Select Committee into the effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees (see section 4.6), be noted.
- 2.2 That having considered ideas put forward by individual Members, and from the public (see section 5), the Committee determines the subject matters to be added to a 'long list' work programme of potential Scrutiny reviews items for 2018/2019.

- 2.3 That consideration is given to including in the work programme, specific monitoring or review of recommendations from previous studies (see section 6.2).
- 2.4 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 and unfinished studies, where applicable, might also need to be included.
- 3.2 During January and February 2018 Members provided feedback on the current Scrutiny activity and on ideas for the Work Programme for the 2018/19 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 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 In January 2018, all Members of the Council's 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 10 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 Have a better range of witnesses (x2) - "I always think that it would be helpful to have a better range of witnesses, especially external, but appreciate this can be difficult to secure." and "More external witnesses and real life case studies."

- 4.2.2 Have more comprehensive responses from Portfolio Holders – “Better, more comprehensive responses from Portfolio Holders - Officers input during and after scrutiny has been of an excellent nature.”
- 4.2.3 Monitoring recommendations – “Revisiting all of the topics within a certain timeframe, as I know for example at least one of the recommendations has not been implemented for the Locality Budgets.”
- 4.2.4 Late submission of papers – “Scrutiny Members need time and resources to do the job properly. It is no good providing papers at the last moment.”
- 4.2.5 Revise Members taking lead roles on reviews – “We need to revise the intention where Members are given individual areas to cover within a scrutiny.”
- 4.2.6 Introduce debriefing sessions – “Introduce debriefing sessions following evidence gathering (which can be shorter meetings to discuss and digest information together).”
- 4.2.7 Scheduling of meetings – “Officers could do with being informed of known information about Members holidays and commitments prior to their setting.”
- 4.2.8 Happy with the Service – “Pretty excellent service already”
- 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 and information 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 and evidence must be presented in a timely way  
Members can say that they won’t consider issues presented late
- 4.4 As part of the 2018 Members’ Survey, Members have provided the following comment and suggestions for Scrutiny Member Training:
- 4.4.1 Scrutiny Public Opinion Survey – “I would like to explore setting out a survey in which to collect public opinion – where relevant parties can respond to relevant questions relating to the scrutiny topic, the data from which can be used to supplement scrutiny findings”
- 4.4.2 Improved evidence taking and questioning.
- 4.5 Annual Centre for Public Scrutiny Conference
- 4.5.1 The Scrutiny Officer and Councillor Jim Brown attended the annual Centre for Public Scrutiny Conference, where the following challenges were raised:

- 4.5.2 There was a strong emphasis on pre-decision policy development work with Scrutiny Committees, so to this end Stevenage is moving in the right direction with an increased emphasis on this.
- 4.5.3 Engaging the public in Scrutiny and in Policy Development is a challenge to all authorities and using digital platforms to achieve this is being pioneered by some authorities. Increased and meaningful public engagement can reduce the number of complaints
- 4.5.4 Challenging private partners who run services for local authorities is difficult but vital work which Members need to be prepared to do as they are protecting the public purse.

4.6 CLG Parliamentary Select Committee review into effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees

- 4.6.1 As part of the Members' Survey, Members were invited to consider the report and recommendations of the Communities and Local Government Parliamentary Select Committee review of the "Effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees." The summary and recommendations of the Parliamentary Select Committee are appended to this report - from this Members raised the following issues:

- 4.6.2 "At Stevenage Borough Council, Chairs of Committees are given independent license to select scrutiny items – including those given by members of the public. We are not guided by the Executive either in any informal way or any formal way.

The scrutiny work that has happened and policy development work undertaken has led to positive changes to council policy and kept expectations of services high.

The scrutiny practice at SBC has led to external witnesses giving evidence against officer testimony, which has given rise to evidence based recommendations and Committee has been able to identify issues with existing policy."

- 4.6.3 "I tend to agree with Party Politics and Organisational Culture – Point 4. Scrutiny Committees should report to Full Council, then the Executive to respond back to Full Council. Point 5 and 6 we do anyway. I tend to agree with points 7 and 8, though I think that the Chairs should be opposition Members. Accessing information - As far as I am aware, we receive all the information we require. We do points 12 and 13. Resources – Point 14, might be worth looking into. Point 15 – I think we do this. Point 16 – Might be worth looking into Member training and skills – we get training and can always ask for more. The role of the public – We engage with the public when necessary – not sure about digital engagement. Point 19 – We do this, but maybe more – hence my request – Stevenage Bus Service."

- 4.6.4 "In principle, I agree with all the recommendations, of these the standouts are:

That Executive Members should attend meetings of scrutiny committees only when invited to do so as witnesses and to answer questions from the committee. – "This would lead to greater independence of scrutiny committees"

That there is great merit in exploring ways of enhancing the independence and legitimacy of scrutiny chairs such as a secret ballot of non-executive councillors. This “would allow greater involvement of back bench Councillors in the forming of scrutiny committees and give further independence from the Executive.”

There should be a greater parity of esteem between scrutiny and the Executive, and committees should have the same access to the expertise and time of senior officers and the Chief Executive as their Executive counterparts. Councils should be required to publish a summary of resources allocated to scrutiny, using expenditure on executive support as a comparator. – “I would hope by publishing expenditure, the right amount of scrutiny resource could be secured. My personal feelings are that scrutiny and its officers in all councils in England are a Cinderella service, undermanned and under-funded.”

Scrutiny committees must be able to monitor and scrutinise the services provided to residents. This includes services provided by public bodies and those provided by commercial organisations. Committees should be able to access information and require attendance at meetings from service providers.

- 4.6.5 Personally, I agree that it is inappropriate for scrutiny chairs to be appointed by the Executive.
- Scrutiny members need time and resources to do the job properly. It is no good providing papers at the last moment.
  - I wonder if in smallish second-tier authorities it is worth revisiting whether the scrutiny model is better or whether a policy committee model would be more effective and engage members more. Where 29/30 members are not portfolio holders there can be a perception that scrutiny is to keep them busy but they can't actually change anything.
  - Members on scrutiny should certainly not be “whipped.” We cannot know in advance what our questions might be as they can be prompted by presentations and remarks by others.
  - Here and generally, who actually does policy development for planning?

## **5. MEMBERS' AND RESIDENTS' 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. The Chair met with the Strategic Director and the Assistant Directors to provide a brief commentary on these issues which are detailed below:
- 5.1.2 The District Plan linked to Regeneration – “We need to keep an eye on the district plan; SG1 (town centre regeneration including public transport provision and accessibility on foot and by cycle); Stevenage station including the fifth platform.”
- Officer Comment: A national Planning Policy Framework is due to be published by the government this year which officers would welcome an opportunity to hold a discussion with Members on the implications of this. As such it would cross over the E&E Select Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. There could also be scope to involve Members of the Planning Committee in this discussion.
- 5.1.3 Monitoring of the Indoor Market review and linked to regeneration – “The indoor market review is complete but we need an Executive response including whether the market features in plans for the future town centre.”
- Officer Comment: This issue is due to be brought back to the Committee to receive the Executive Member response to the review in March 2018.
- 5.1.4 Review of Fairlands Valley Park Facilities linked to SLL – “We should pick up the review of Fairlands Valley Park including the relationship with SLL; opening times and availability of facilities of toilets plus repairing the bandstand (or installing a traditional round band stand at the same or a different location).”
- Officer Comment: A scrutiny focus on Fairlands Valley Park and the facilities that serve it would be welcomed by officers, this could pick up on the issues that Members have raised previously including the toilet facilities and the current use and plan for this important open space and facility.
- 5.1.5 Asset Management Strategy – “One of the committees needs to keep an eye on the asset management review.”
- Officer Comment: The Asset Management Strategy is still at an early stage with a Member group developing this over the next few months, so scrutiny involvement would need to be considered when there are more concrete proposals to consider.
- 5.1.6 Public Toilets – “The more general review of toilets seems to have ground to a halt?”
- Officer Comment: This issue was scrutinised by Members recently and it was felt that there was nothing further to add on this at the current time. The Community Toilet scheme was not appropriate for Stevenage and it was considered that the provision in the town centre and in the neighbourhoods was currently adequate.
- 5.1.7 Locally economy. “All sorts of things on sustainability; proportion of people living and working in the Borough (including compared with others and

historically); comparison on average incomes for those working in the Borough and those living in the Borough; have we got the balance right in providing housing and allowing the conversion of employment sites into housing developer opportunities?”

Officer Comment: The current Business Technology Centre (Business Incubation and office space facility) was up for renewal in 2019 so officers were beginning to look at the current outputs and contract management agreement so would welcome Member input in early autumn 2018 (September/October) taking into consideration the work that Members previously undertook when they reviewed the BTC. This was considered suitable for a one-off meeting.

5.1.8 Success or otherwise of highways liaison meetings with HCC.

Officer Comment: A new Highways Liaison Meeting is being arranged by the County Council. Prior to these meetings officers of SBC and HCC will meet before the liaison meeting to agree understanding on issues before meeting with Members.

5.1.9 Progress with the draft cycling strategy (dated May 2017). “Possibly as part of one of those responses to the two cycleway inspections.”

Officer Comment: There is a draft Cycle Strategy but this has been delegated to the Executive Member for Economy, Enterprise and Transport and the Assistant Director, Planning and Regulatory, to progress as part of the Local Plan. This work could be shared in a one-off session with Members as part of the Local Plan.

5.1.10 Issues around licences to occupy – “Issues around licences to occupy and issues in obtaining”

Officer Comment: The Assistant Director, Stevenage Direct Services, is looking at making this process more streamlined than the current bureaucratic process which is focused on protecting the Council from potential legal problems but does not encourage community participation. A presentation on this work can be provided.

5.1.11 Use of council amenities such as sports field pavilions etc. and licence to occupy. - “Greater freedoms for local resident’s community group to take over running of these facilities.”

Officer Comment: Linked to 5.1.10 above.

5.1.12 Play area provision/outdoor space & sports provision (x2) – “Parks and Green Areas. Ensuring we make the most of these areas in terms of areas for exercise in the open, to support wellbeing and ensuring biodiversity and that areas are well maintained.”

Officer Comment: This could be linked to 5.1.20 Neighbourhood Maintenance but would recommend this is an item for future years as this work to deliver the strategy is only part way through its delivery.

5.1.13 Trees – overgrown etc. - “Review whether the policy on trees meets the expectation of the public. Reason: Numerous issues have arisen where the council policy means that an overbearing tree, near to a property is being left because reasons are found not to cut it’s height despite the tree causing

misery to a resident. The policy where SBC states that a tree causing total block of light to a property is causing misery for residents and needs to be changed. Trees need to be kept in check and within legal height restrictions.”

Officer Comment: This could be brought to Members as a piece of Policy Work of Street Scene and Grounds Maintenance covering the statutory responsibilities and the services resources.

5.1.14 Recycling – “managing overspill and flytipping (Oval)”

Officer Comment: The Business Unit Review will address these issues and could be brought to Members as a presentation covering recycling and the local neighbourhood recycling sites. One focussed meeting on this late in 2018-19 would be welcomed.

5.1.15 Waste and Recycling Contracts

Officer Comment: Linked to 5.1.14 above.

5.1.16 Parking management and enforcement in Stevenage

Officer Comment: Officers are currently looking at this and could provide a session with Members as Policy Development.

5.1.17 Neighbourhood Wardens

Officer Comment: Officers would need to know more about this from the Member who raised this issue.

5.1.18 Working towards a zero carbon future

Officer Comment: Officers would need to know more about this from the Member who raised this issue.

5.1.19 Traffic Congestion within the town and on the approaches to the A1 - “How are the plans for widening of the A1 developing, and can part time lights assist in breaking down traffic?”

Officer Comment: This could be addressed at the new Highways Liaison meetings.

5.1.20 Open Spaces -specifically facilities at Fairlands Valley Park – (This item was agreed in last year’s work programme)

Officer Comment: Linked to the item above at 5.1.4

5.1.21 Neighbourhood Maintenance – (This item was agreed in last year’s work programme but deferred until 2018-19)

Officer Comment: If Members decided to do this work it could be done jointly with Community Select Committee.

5.2 Issues Raised by the Public

5.2.1 “Something needs to be done about the bin men. Not collecting some of the bins when there is nothing wrong with the contents, and the rubbish they leave blowing around the streets. It attracts wildlife and rats. (The resident was sent a reply to this specific issue and was sent a link to the previous review that was undertaken into this issue)



- 5.2.2 “I don’t know if this is something you deal with but the dog mess all over the street around Shephall is revolting” (The resident was sent a link to the previous review that was undertaken into this issue)
- 5.2.3 “pot holes and pavements” (The resident was informed that this is a matter for the County Council and was invited to raise this with their County Councillor)
- 5.3 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 4.2.1 and 4.2.8, including a more in-depth review or a one-off discussion item?
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 Work Programme Schedule for 2018/19
- 5.5.1 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 2018/19 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.
- 5.6 Alignment of Scrutiny with the Strategic Leadership Team
- 5.6.1 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:
- 5.6.2 Customer – Community Select Committee:  
Assistant Director for Housing and Investment (Jaine Cresser) and the Assistant Director for Communities and Neighbourhoods (Rob Gregory)
- 5.6.3 Place – Environment and Economy Select Committee:  
Assistant Director for Direct Services (Craig Miller), Assistant Director for Regeneration (Pat Lewis), Assistant Director for Housing Development (Ash Ahmed) and Assistant Director for Planning and Regulatory (Zayd Al-Jawad)
- 5.6.4 Transformation and Support – Overview and Scrutiny Committee:  
Assistant Director for Corporate Services and Transformation (Richard Protheroe), Assistant Director for Finance and Estates (Clare Fletcher) and Assistant Director for Corporate Projects, Customer Services and Technology (Clare Watson)
- 5.6.5 Role of the Assistant Directors and Scrutiny

- 5.6.6 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, Scott Crudgington, Matt Partridge & Tom Pike).
- 5.6.7 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 Assistant Directors 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 and also those that have been revisited within the last five years are as follows:
- Refuse & Recycling (Completed January 2014)
  - Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrub beds (Completed February 2015, revisited October 2016)
  - Briefing on the Green Travel Plan – Action Plan (Revisited with officer briefing September 2014, October 2015 and again in November 2016)
  - Briefing on Cleansing of Children's Play Areas (January 2015)
  - Inward Investment Opportunities & Business Support (Completed June 2012 and revisited in February 2015)
  - Training & Employment Opportunities for Young People (Completed February 2013 and revisited in December 2014)
  - Business Technology Centre Review (Completed January 2016, update to Exec response July 2016)
  - Briefing on Fly Tipping, Littering & Environmental Law (January 2016)
  - Allotments (Completed January 2017), Executive Member response July 2017.
  - Briefing on Open Spaces (September 2016)
  - Briefing & site visit report on Underpasses (September 2016 and updated November 2016)
  - Briefing on the Provision of Public Toilets (October 2016 & to be revisited March 2017)

- Revisit to Recommendations and agreed actions from the Review of Environmental Campaigns & Fixed Penalty Notices (Dog Fouling) (October 2016)
- Flood Risk Management Policy (January 2018)
- Bus services (November 2017)

## **7. POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR 2018/2019**

7.1 Following consultation with the Assistant Directors for Stevenage Direct Services, Craig Miller, Regeneration, Pat Lewis, Housing Development, Ash Ahmed and Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawad, the following matters have been identified for potential Policy Development to be undertaken with the Portfolio Holders for Environment & Regeneration and Economy, Enterprise and Transport during the Municipal Year for 2018/2019:

7.1.1 Issues that have been highlighted by the Assistant Directors include:

- Waste exceptions for refuse collections
- Recycling
- Grounds Maintenance
- Parking Management
- BTC Contract Renewal
- Bus Interchange (subject to the delivery of Town Centre Regeneration)

7.2 Any further issues that the Assistant Directors can give notice of for Policy Development work in 2018/19 will be updated at the meeting.

7.3 In line with organising meeting dates to deliver the Committee's work programme, as detailed at Section 5.5.1, dates for the above Policy Development items will be scheduled into Members' diaries once the relevant Assistant Directors confirm 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. These meetings will be informal Policy meetings Chaired by the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder and supported by the relevant Assistant Director.

## **8. IMPLICATIONS**

### **8.1 Financial Implications**

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

8.1.2 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**

8.2.1 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.

### **8.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 8.3.1 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**

- BD1 Submissions from Councillors and the Public.

### **APPENDICES**

Appendix - CLG Parliamentary Select Committee report and recommendations – Effectiveness of local overview and scrutiny committees