

**Meeting:** COMMUNITY SELECT  
COMMITTEE

**Agenda Item:** **4**

**Date:** 7 MARCH 2016

**2016/2017 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 feedback received from Scrutiny Members regarding their ideas for improving scrutiny detailed at section 4 of the report be noted.
- 2.2 That having considered ideas put forward by individual Members and officers (see section 5), the Committee determine the subject matters to be added to a 'long list' work programme of potential Scrutiny reviews items for 2016/2017.
- 2.3 That the Committee agrees with the recommended arrangements for undertaking a single Community Safety focused meeting in 2016/17 (see section 5.5) acting in its capacity as the Council's statutory Crime and Disorder Committee (see section 5.5.1 – 5.5.6 for detail).
- 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 2016 Members provided feedback on current Scrutiny activity and on ideas for the Work Programme for the 2016/2017 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 Scrutiny 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 2016 all Members of Scrutiny Committees were emailed to gauge views of the Scrutiny work undertaken and ideas for future studies. The following summary is based on the 8 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:
- Promoting past scrutiny investigations – "it would be good to have a central place on the Council's Democracy pages which includes links to past reviews or investigations into key areas that effect the Town."

Response: Over time a lot of 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 Scrutiny activity. Officers will start the process of collating these documents, starting with previous Select Committee reviews, during the summer in 2016.

- Shorter scrutiny reviews – "Members need to be careful that the topic isn't too big, for example the LCB scrutiny raised a lot of issues that need to be looked at but could not be addressed sufficiently in the Scrutiny, for example, town wide versus ward funding, ward Councillors working together."

Response: The Scrutiny Officer is attending an Institute of Local Government (INLOGOV) training event in March addressing issues such as "Should scrutiny reviews be shorter and simpler? Could effective recommendations be made with minimal or no supporting reports?"

- Focus on a big issue and give enough time to examine it – “The CSC review into Locality Budgets has been very good, we have begun to make some good suggestions and the witnesses have been well chosen and useful. My previous experience of scrutiny was the Environment and Economy Committee which had a much looser focus. I think scrutiny works best when we focus on a big issue and give ourselves time to really examine it from every angle.”

Response: Ditto the response above. A case can be made for conducting one in-depth review or for more numerous short term reviews, to this end the learning derived from the INLOGOV training session in March should stimulate a healthy discussion for Scrutiny Members to consider which approach they favour.

4.3 Some further feedback was received from Members during recent Scrutiny Member Training, this included the following points:

- The scrutiny process must be more Member led and Members must take greater ownership – not be so Officer led
- 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

## **5. MEMBERS' 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 2015 & 2016 the following topics have been suggested as potential scrutiny review items:

2015:

- Integrated Community Transport (dependant on HCC future plans for Community Transport)
- 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 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
- 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.
- Damp and Mould in Stevenage Council Homes – is there a coherent and consistent approach that satisfies the national standards? (also received from another Member) - SBC policy and actions with dealing with mould, does it differ between SBC properties and private landlords? Do we meet national requirements?
- 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?

5.2 The Strategic Director, Community, and Heads of Services have suggested the following issues as potential scrutiny review items:

- Youth Agenda – this issue hasn't been covered for some time but it is not a District Council statutory provision. The Strategic Director, Community, has suggested it might be worth taking a 'whole place' approach to Youth. It could be argued that we need to do a better job for young people, how are they affected by Community Safety, Health? Perhaps a mapping exercise be conducted to see where the gaps in provision are? Look at other area models? Sharing resources?
- Scrutiny of Residents Town Wide Survey – What actions have been undertaken resulting from the survey?

5.3 As detailed at 4.2 officers are attending a training seminar in March 2016 at the Institute of Local Government, University of Birmingham which will address the issue of the pros and cons of having longer detailed reviews versus simpler and shorter reviews with effective recommendations made with minimal or no supporting report at all. Members are therefore recommended to agree a 'long list' of items for potential scrutiny reviews, see Recommendation 2.2, following which a decision can be taken as to which approach best fits Scrutiny Members and meetings and reviews be arranged accordingly.

5.4 If Members agree to a 'long list' of scrutiny themes then these could be grouped into themed areas which could be tackled at one off themed meetings. Taking the issues that Members have raised these could be grouped into the following themed areas (i) How we engage with residents, which would pick up on the Town Wide Survey, consultation, meetings (ii) Housing, including supported & sheltered housing, allocations, damp and mould, homelessness (iii) Community Centres, rationale for those we have and how they are supported; (iv) Anti-Social Behaviour (will be addressed when the Committee sits as the Crime and Disorder Committee); (v) Public Health, picking up on the quality of health care and social care; and (vi) Youth, what is the current youth provision offer? Following these themed meetings agreed actions and recommendations would be first agreed with the Committee and then raised with the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder and officers.

#### 5.5 Statutory Crime and Disorder Committee

5.5.1 The Community Select Committee as the Council's Statutory Crime & Disorder Committee is required by statute to hold a meeting to consider a Crime and Disorder /Community Safety agenda item/review at least once during the Municipal Year. Therefore the Committee must schedule at least one meeting a year to consider a community safety theme.

5.5.2 The statutory regulation governing Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees is detailed in the "*Crime & Disorder (Overview & Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 No. 942 – Regulation 4 – Frequency of meetings*":

"4. A crime and disorder committee shall meet to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions as

the committee considers appropriate but no less than once in every twelve month period.”

- 5.5.3 Home Office guidance (May 2009) Page 23 Section 3 – detailed guidance on sections 19 and 20 of the Act and Regulations, states:

*“ 3.3 Frequency of meetings*

*The regulations leave the frequency of meetings to local discretion, subject to the minimum requirement of once a year.*

*If a local authority decides to undertake “set piece” community safety scrutiny only once a year, this annual meeting could be in the form of an event looking at crime and disorder matters and discussing which crime and disorder matters should be considered in the next municipal year as matters of local concern.”*

- 5.5.4 As a District Council the Crime and Disorder Committees role is to hold the Responsible Authority Group (RAG)/SoSafe Community Safety Partnership to account regarding its setting of the District’s community safety priorities.
- 5.5.5 In the 2015/16 Municipal Year the Community Select Committee will have met as the Council’s statutory Crime & Disorder Committee on two occasions. At the first meeting on 2 November 2015 the Committee looked at the past performance of the Community Safety Partnership against the three priority areas. At the second meeting on 31 March 2016, the Committee will be looking at the draft Community Safety priorities for the coming year. Both meetings provided the Community Select Committee with an opportunity to challenge and have Scrutiny oversight of this area. At these meetings the Committee met with the Chair of RAG, the Executive Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Equalities and the Council’s Community Safety Officer as well as Hertfordshire Constabulary’s Chief Inspector for Stevenage.
- 5.5.6 The Committee is asked to consider having one community safety themed meeting during the year to look at past performance and for considering the following year’s priority areas, this meeting would need to take place at the end of March each year.

5.6 Public Health Discussion

- 5.6.1 Since the 2013/14 Municipal Year the Community Select Committee has met the Director of Public Health at Hertfordshire County Council to discuss with the Director issues around Public Health and how the Borough Council can work together with the County Council to address the local priorities. Members and the Director of Public Health have said that these meetings are beneficial, and although there are no statutory obligations to hold such meetings at a Member level it is nonetheless considered useful to arrange such a meeting at least on an annual basis. The Community Select Committee are therefore invited to include a further meeting with the Director of Public Health to be diarised for 2016-17.

5.7 Work Programme Schedule for 2016/17

- 5.7.1 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 plan schedule for the 2016/17 Municipal Year which will be circulated to Members, and electronic diary invites will be sent to all CSC Members.

5.8 Future Town Future Council

- 5.8.1 It is hoped that in future years Members will be able to align the Scrutiny Work Programme for each Scrutiny Committee against the delivery of the nine themed areas of the Chief Executive's Future Town Future Council programme, as these projects begin to be delivered.

**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 three years and have not previously been revisited\* include –

- Conditions in the Private Rented Sector (Completed 2 March 2015)
- Community Transport for Older People (Completed January 2014)

\*Museum Review (Completed 20 November 2012) and revisited Nov 2014 – Members asked for a progress report in December 2015 but this meeting was cancelled due to a flood earlier in the year at the Museum.

**7. POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR 2015/2016**

- 7.1 The following matters have been identified, in consultation with the Strategic Director (Community), for potential Policy Development to be worked on with the Portfolio Holder for 2015/2016.

- HRA Business Plan
- Performance Management Framework

- 7.2 Any further information available regarding other Policy Development for the Committee will be updated orally at the meeting.

**8 IMPLICATIONS**

**8.1 Financial Implications**

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

A small budget is held to support the work of the seven 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 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**

Home Office Guidance, Crime & Disorder (Overview & Scrutiny) Regulations 2009

## **APPENDICES**

None