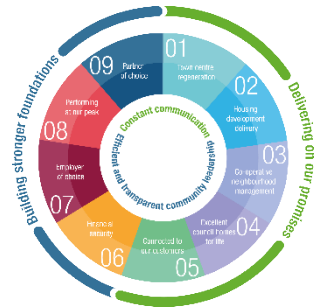


**Meeting** ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

**Portfolio Area**

**Date** 13 MARCH 2019



## ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20

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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 determines the subject matters to be added to a 'long list' work programme of potential Scrutiny reviews items for 2019/2020.
- 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 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, might also need to be included.
- 3.2 During January and February 2019 Members provided feedback on the current Scrutiny activity and on ideas for the Work Programme for the 2019/20 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 In January 2019, 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 ten 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 Scrutiny of the way that we do Scrutiny.
  - 4.2.2 Involvement of opposition members in the Scrutiny process – should opposition members occasionally be able to chair some Scrutiny functions like working parties?
- 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 2019 Members' Survey, Members did not provide any comment and suggestions for Scrutiny Member Training.

## 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:

5.1.2 **Post Office provision across the town** The Post Office in the town centre, which is located in WH Smith is due to be run by their staff. Members are concerned about the provision of post offices in Stevenage. **Officer comment:** The E&E Select Committee have previously conducted reviews of third party (non-SBC) services and could opt to do so again to consider Post Office provision within the town. The review would require particular participation and engagement from operators of these facilities. Considering other nearby towns (Letchworth Garden City, Welwyn Garden City, Watford, St Albans) Stevenage would appear to have as good a coverage (10 Post Offices) and in some cases be better catered for than others. (Lead AD – Planning & Regulatory)

5.1.3 **Fairlands Valley Park** - Members requested a wider review of the facilities at FVP when they consider this theme as a meeting in January 2019, possibly to be considered jointly with the Community Select Committee. **Officer comment:** A progress meeting following proposed improvements to FVP offer in summer 2019, could be held in the Autumn 2019. (Lead AD - Stevenage Direct Services & Communities & Neighbourhood)

5.1.4 **Impact of Brexit on the local economy** – Depending on what terms the UK leaves the European Union a review on the potential impact on the local economy could be following a no deal Brexit. **Officer comment:** Stevenage Together Board are reviewing the report presented on the impacts of Brexit, which had been presented to January Executive. This includes the option for an Economic Task Force to be established by the Board in the event of a no deal Brexit. Recommended option would be to await the potential Brexit outcome and the establishing of the ETF. If there is a no deal Brexit then this would likely have a far reaching impact on the Council and would need to be addressed by SLT and all Members. (Lead – SLT)

5.1.5 **Progress with the Town Centre Regeneration/Progress of the SG1 project** (x2 Members asked to review this) **Officer comment:** A review of the overall regeneration programme and SG1 scheme in particular can be provided, though the choice of timing may need to be carefully considered for

example in relation to the Planning elements of the regeneration programme. This topic may suit an All Member Briefing which would cover of any potential conflict of interest with Planning Members linked to the timing of related planning matters. (Lead AD – Regeneration)

- 5.1.6 **Emerging Transport Strategy Officer comment:** Consultation on Future Town, Future Transport is currently underway. A review of the consultation responses and subsequent update of the Strategy could be provided. It is recommended this takes place around Summer 2019, allowing time for the responses to be collated and taken into account fully. (Lead AD Planning & Regulatory)
- 5.1.7 **Outcomes of the Local Plan Officer comment:** As the Local Plan is yet to be adopted, it is recommended that a review take place at least 6 months after its adoption. This would allow its initial impact to be monitored. Should the plan be released it would very quickly be considered by the Executive and the O&S Committee, allowing Scrutiny Members to comment at this stage. (Lead AD Planning & Regulatory)
- 5.1.8 **Update on the Climate Change Strategy Officer comment:** Officers would welcome further direction from Members regarding which direction they wish to take any possible review in this area, does this relate to town wide initiatives or just SBC buildings? (Lead AD Planning & Regulatory)
- 5.1.9 **Pressures on non-domestic rate income from Government changes Officer comment:** There could be a case for this to be a review by Overview and Scrutiny Committee. (Lead AD – Finance & Estates).
- 5.1.10 **Impact on local schools from the Academisation Programme Officer comment:** The Council has no specific remit in this area. A review could be requested but it would be recommended to be at the level of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as is less directly linked to the remit of Environment and Economy Select Committee.
- 5.1.11 **Local Neighbourhood Centres** – The Neighbourhood Centres offer a poor range of shops, poor standard of appearance, empty premises a review could consider general improvements. **Officer comment:** It would be at the discretion of Members if they chose to review this. The Asset Management Strategy includes the intention to work through a series of Locality Reviews and there could be potential to use that process to also consider Neighbourhood Centres? If Members agreed to this item it could be the Committee's main review item for the year but would need to commence in the Autumn of 2019. (Lead ADs – Finance & Estates, Housing Development, Communities & Neighbourhoods & Stevenage Direct Services)
- 5.1.12 **Leisure facilities/Parks** – Usage or under usage of leisure facilities & parks potential for greater revenue, opportunities to explore ownership / responsibility to other organisations e.g.(football clubs, hockey, cricket etc.). Also a review could consider the use of public parks by businesses/fitness classes etc., Policy, Charges and Insurance. **Officer comment:** This would need to take a strategic view of the town's leisure facilities and parks including its formal and informal users and groups and could form part of a proposed linked strategy between parks and leisure and would need to be conducted with the two ADs for Stevenage Direct Services and Communities

& Neighbourhoods. E&E should be aware that this is also being considered as part of CSC work programme looking at leisure. (Lead ADs Stevenage Direct Services and Communities & Neighbourhoods)

5.1.13 **Fly-tipping of bulky goods** – Who pays for fly-tipped white goods at SBC flat blocks? Does the Council prosecute? If not, why not? (also raised with the Community Select Committee) **Officer comment:** The Assistant Director Housing and Investment can provide Members with a briefing note on how these cases are dealt with. (Lead AD - Housing & Investment)

5.1.14 **Offer from Govia Thameslink Railways** – Following the meeting in October 2018 & February 2019 GTR have offered to hold another meeting in the 2019-20 Municipal Year to provide a focus on rail services for Stevenage Station. **Officer comment:** Ongoing dialogue between the Rail Companies, HCC, officers and Members is welcomed. (Lead AD Planning & Regulatory)

## 5.2 **Items that are on the existing work programme but have not been delivered so far and deferred for 2019-20:**

5.2.1 **Play area provision/outdoor space and sports provision** **Officer comment:** There is a play areas strategy in place and in delivery, and a Sports and Open Spaces strategy drafted and completed in 2014.

5.2.2 **Cycling strategy briefing for Members** **Officer comment:** The cycling strategy is referenced within and closely linked to the Transport Strategy. As such, it is recommended that a briefing on this is combined with an update on Future Town, Future Transport.

5.2.3 **Neighbourhood Wardens briefing for Members** **Officer comment:** A paper on the CNM programme is intended to go to Executive in March 2019 to provide an overview of the programme.

## 5.3 **Issues Raised by the Public**

5.3.1 The following issues have been received via Facebook and Twitter following invitation on these social media platforms for the public to raise issues to be scrutinised:

(1) Cut the grass properly and review the streetlight timing policy now that they are moving to LED's **Officer comment:** The former issue related to a specific challenge in 2018 which is now resolved. The latter is an HCC responsibility but open to the Committee if they wished to consider this.

(2) Oppose the destruction of the green belt.... **Officer comment:** This is a matter for the development of Local Plan and individual planning applications.

(3) Paint the town centre buildings rather than keep on changing the floor and benches **Officer comment:** Where Stevenage Borough Council owns buildings in the town centre, these are all subject to regeneration plans in the short, medium and longer-term.

(4) Hi SBC yes I would like you to explain how you think supporting a planning application by EHDC that supports putting Travelers / show people yard in the middle of a solely residential area where the road network is already under strain and not designed for the size of vehicles!!! **Officer**

**comment:** This relates to a specific application within East Herts Council area, and an SBC response was approved at Council in February 2019.

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 4.4 and 4.4.1, namely a more in-depth review or a one-off discussion item?

5.4.1 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 and discussion item, may not require a full scoping document.

5.5 Work Programme Schedule for 2019/20

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 2019/20 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) (Interim Chris Berry)

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 (Caron Starkey interim AD)

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).

- 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 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:
- Rail Timetable Changes (Meeting October 2018, Update Meeting February 2019)
  - 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 PORTFOLIO HOLDER ADVISORY GROUP - POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR 2019/2020**

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 (Interim Chris Berry), 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 2019/2020:

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

- Review of Bring Back Recycling Sites scheduled for Executive in July 2019, PHAG meeting in June 2019
- Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to be scheduled for Executive in 2019/20, PHAG meeting to be scheduled in 2019/20
- Parking Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to be scheduled for Executive in 2019/20, PHAG meeting to be scheduled in 2019/20
- Economic Development Strategy to be scheduled for Executive in 2019/20, PHAG meeting to be scheduled in 2019/20
- Town Centre Parking Strategy to be scheduled for Executive in 2019/20, PHAG meeting to be scheduled in 2019/20

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 2019/20 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 and the Public.