

Meeting OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Portfolio Area

Date 18 MARCH 2019



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20

Authors Stephen Weaver | 2332

Contributor Richard Protheroe & Matt Partridge

Lead Officers Matt Partridge

Contact Officer Stephen Weaver | 2332

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To agree the Scrutiny Work Programme for the 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.
- 3.6 Budget & Policy Framework Items
 - 3.6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has responsibility to scrutinise Budget and Policy Framework items. The following matters have been identified for scrutiny by the Committee as Budget & Policy Framework items -
 - The HRA and Rent Setting
 - General Fund Budget and Council Tax Setting
 - Savings and Growth Proposals
 - Council Tax Support Scheme
 - 3.6.2 The Committee may be required to scrutinise any further Budget and Policy Framework items as and when required in accordance with the Council's Constitution, Article 4 and Section 4 Rules of Procedure.

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 **Procurement & General Robustness of our IT structures** **Officer Comment:** Officers are currently developing an IT strategy for consideration by Members. This will include a delivery plan to enhance our IT service provision and prepare for the future. An all Member briefing will be provided in late spring, and it is anticipated a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group will be set up to review the draft strategy ahead of consideration by the Executive.
- 5.1.3 **Scrutiny of the way that we do Scrutiny** **Officer Comment:** The Council is awaiting the Housing Communities & Local Government guidance on Scrutiny prior to embarking on a local review of the function. This was expected to be provided by the end of 2018, then in the new year. There is currently no expected publishing date from HC&LG nor any advice on this from the CfPS. There will also be links with the Constitutional Services Business Review.
- 5.1.4 **Involvement of opposition members in the Scrutiny process** – should opposition members occasionally be able to chair some Scrutiny functions like working parties? (Some connections with 5.1.3 above). **Officer Comment:** Opposition Members play a key role in the work of the three scrutiny Committees, and in their policy development capacity when supporting meetings of the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group.

- 5.1.5 **How widely SBC casts the net when asking for comments on planning applications.** Currently, it seems that they ask only immediate neighbours, but often the residents who live opposite would be more affected by a development because they are the ones who could see it. **Officer Comment:** The consultation requirements of planning applications is determined by national requirements and by the planning process. A factual response can be provided to this statement but it recommended that any further consideration would be a matter for the Planning & Development Committee to consider.
- 5.1.6 **Complaints handling** from the public or from members. I believe that this review was shelved in favour of the sickness absence review but it now needs to be done. **Officer Comment:** This review was started in 2017, was due to continue in 2018 but was replaced by the committees work on Sickness Management and it is possible to recommence this review if the Committee would like to prioritise this.
- 5.1.7 **The range, choice and style of live entertainment offered at the Gordon Craig Theatre** **Officer comment:** Note that this issue will be raised at the Community Select Committee a possible scrutiny review item.
- 5.1.8 **Provision of refreshments for members prior to 6pm meetings.** **Officer Comment:** A review was completed in 2014 on this subject.
- 5.1.9 **The role of Community Development Officers and Neighbourhood Wardens.** **Officer comment:** Note that this issue will be raised at the Community Select Committee a possible scrutiny review item. More broadly a review of the Cooperative Neighbourhood Management (CNM) programme will be presented to the Executive at its meeting in March 2019 which incorporates the work of the Neighbourhood Wardens and Community Development Officers would precede the start of the new Municipal Year. The O&S Committee will have an opportunity to comment on this item at the March meeting.
- 5.2 **Issues Raised by the Public**
- 5.2.1 None so far but any issues identified from the public via the Council's social media and the website will be updated at the meeting.
- 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 4.4 and 4.4.1, namely a more in-depth review or a one-off discussion item?
- 5.3.1 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.
- 5.4 **Work Programme Schedule for 2019/20**
- 5.4.1 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.

5.5 Alignment of Scrutiny with the Strategic Leadership Team

5.5.1 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:

5.5.2 Customer – Community Select Committee:

Assistant Director for Housing and Investment (Jaine Cresser) and the Assistant Director for Communities and Neighbourhoods (Rob Gregory)

5.5.3 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)

5.5.4 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)

5.5.5 Role of the Assistant Directors and Scrutiny

5.5.6 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).

5.5.7 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 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:
- Section 106 Agreements 2014-15
 - Members' Expenses and Hospitality 2013-14
 - Council Tax Support Scheme since 2012-13
 - Media & Communications 2015 & 2018
 - Complaints – Feedback Handling - (Incomplete review started in 2017-18)
 - Sickness Management – Completed 2019

7 PORTFOLIO HOLDER ADVISORY GROUP - POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR 2019/2020

- 7.1 Following consultation with the Assistant Directors for Corporate Services & Transformation, Finance & Estates & Corp Projects and Customer Service & Technology the following matters have been identified for potential Policy Development at a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) meeting to be undertaken with the relevant Portfolio Holders during the Municipal Year for 2019/2020:
- ICT Strategy & Investment Programme, scheduled for Executive in June 2019, PHAG meeting early June 2019
 - Customer Strategy to be scheduled for the Executive in 2019/20 and a PHAG meeting prior to this in 2019/20
- 7.2 In line with organising meeting dates to deliver the Committee's work programme, as detailed at Section 5.4.1, dates for Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meetings 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.
- 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.

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.