

Meeting ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Portfolio Area

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ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21

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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 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 has been 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 **Scrutiny of the LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) - Officer comment:** As well as being raised by Members there has been an offer from the LEP Chairman to provide and update on the work of the LEP at a local and County level and update on its future plans. (Lead AD Planning & Regulatory, Regeneration)
- 5.1.3 **Review of parks including Fairlands Valley Park - Officer comment:** Members previously requested a wider review of the facilities at FVP when they considered this theme as a meeting in January 2019. The Scrutiny Officer could provide an update to Members on the recommendations of the Community Select Committee's review into sports and leisure that referenced the facilities and community use at Fairlands Valley Park. However, Members

may wish to carry out a wider review of parks in the town with a focus on the green space environment. - (Lead AD - Stevenage Direct Services & Communities & Neighbourhood)

- 5.1.4 **CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)** Transparency of project allocation – **Officer comment:** CIL will be adopted on 1 April 2020. (*Zayd Al-Jawed to comment*) (Lead AD Planning & Regulatory)
- 5.1.5 **Progress with the Town Centre Regeneration/Progress of the SG1 project** **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 **Transport Strategy** - **Officer comment:** Members undertook a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group for the Integrated Transport Strategy in October 2018, and the Transport Strategy was considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee when it considered the work of the Executive in October 2019. If a further briefing is required this could be arranged. It is recommended this takes place a minimum of twelve months after adoption of the Strategy to give sufficient opportunity to progress relevant activities. (Lead AD Planning & Regulatory)
- 5.1.7 **Review of Grasslands Plan** - **Officer comment:** There is an officer project to manage parkland areas as meadow grassland as part of the Biodiversity Action Plan. Members could scrutinise these plans in parallel to any consultation exercise that is undertaken. (Lead AD Stevenage Direct Services)
- 5.1.8 **Update on the Climate Emergency** - **Officer comment:** As part of last year's work programming it was agreed that a regular item updating Members on progress with individual Executive Portfolio areas and related service departments and selected partners could be provided to the Committee starting in 2020-21. This would provide an opportunity to hold to account the ongoing Climate Change and Engagement process with a series of interviews with officers/Executive Members and Partners. (Lead AD Planning & Regulatory and all Assistant Directors)
- 5.1.9 **Review of the Council's Tree Policy** - **Officer comment:** Stevenage Direct Officers attended a meeting of the E&E Select Committee meeting in February 2020 to update Members on a previous review into, trees, hedges and shrub beds. It was agreed at the meeting that there should be an update of the Council's tree policy, so when officers are able to provide a draft of the updated policy, Members could comment on it. (Lead AD Stevenage Direct Services)
- 5.1.10 **How GIS (Geographical Information System) operates** – It is not easily identifiable to Members who the landowner is, whether its private, Borough Council or County Council owned. **Officer comment:** This could be addressed at via a Member briefing or written submission. (Lead AD Planning & Regulatory, Corporate Services & Transformation)

- 5.1.11 **Review of the Council's recycling offer** – In view of the proposed changes within the Household Waste Management Policy, Members could scrutinise the options being considered as part of the emerging Recycling Strategy. **Officer comment:** The recent approval of the Waste Policy included a recommendation to develop a Waste Strategy to achieve a significant increase in the recycling rates in the years ahead. This Strategy would be developed for consideration by the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny, with an expectation of a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group to be convened as part of the Strategy development. (Lead AD Stevenage Direct Services)
- 5.2 **Items that are on the existing work programme, which in some cases may have started but have not been completed and others which are yet to start are rolled over for completion or start in 2020-21:**
- 5.2.1 **Local Neighbourhood Centres** – **Officer comment:** The review has started with a number of site visits to various Neighbourhood Centres in Stevenage. Members and Officers have recorded issues that have arisen following a visual check of the Neighbourhood Centres and will use this evidence to inform the review going forward. In addition, the Asset Management Strategy includes the intention to work through a series of Locality Reviews and there could be potential to use the Neighbourhood Centre review to inform this work. (Lead ADs – Finance & Estates, Communities & Neighbourhoods & Stevenage Direct Services)
- 5.2.2 **Business Technology Centre** – Members agreed to receive an update on the on the reappointed operator of the centre, WENTA. **Officer comment:** An officer update is available and will be scheduled in for consideration during 2020-21. (Lead AD Planning & Regulatory)
- 5.2.3 **Neighbourhood Wardens briefing for Members** - **Officer comment:** An Executive report on the Co-operative Neighbourhoods was considered at the Executive and at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in December 2019. If Members are of the view that they still require a briefing this can be arranged. (Lead AD Communities & Neighbourhoods)
- 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 5.1.2 to 5.2.2, namely 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 2020/21**
- 5.5.1 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.

5.6 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 (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)

5.6.4 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)

5.6.5 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, 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 are as follows:

- Stevenage Rail Station Timetable Changes & 5th Platform (Meeting October 2018, Update Meetings February & July 2019)
- Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrub beds (Completed February 2015, revisited October 2016 & Feb 2020)
- 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)
- Business Technology Centre Review (Completed January 2016, update to Exec response July 2016) an offer to update Members on the reappointed operator of the centre, WENTA, is available.
- 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)
- Local Post Office Services (September 2019 & November 2019)

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:
- Economic Development Strategy to be scheduled for Executive in 2020/21, PHAG meeting to be scheduled in 2020/21
 - Commercial Insourcing to be scheduled for Executive in 2020/21, PHAG meeting to be scheduled in 2020/21
- 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.