

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No.
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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report invites the Committee to consider its work programme for 2013/14.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- review the Committee's draft work programme for 2013/14 at **Appendix A** in conjunction with the Forward Plan at **Appendix B**.
- Comment on the scopes for the task and finish groups at **Appendices C and D**; and
- Choose which task and finish group to do first.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to plan its workload effectively.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 The contents of the work programme will be subject to a full discussion of the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

5.1 The members of the Committee represent a range of urban and rural constituencies.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. PROGRAMME FOR COMMITTEE MEETINGS

7.1 The Committee is invited to consider which items to scrutinise at its meetings in 2013/14; and to indicate its preferred timings for presentations from portfolio holders and other attendees. A draft work programme, based on previous requests from the committee and including regular items can be found in table 1 at **Appendix A**, along with the Forward Plan for 20 May at **Appendix B**.

7.2 The Committee may wish to consider whether it could use any of these meetings as a vehicle to boost public participation.

8. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

8.1 At its meeting in March, the Committee asked for scopes to be prepared on three topics: highways, community rights and social inclusion. Scopes for the first two

topics are attached at Appendices A and B for the Committee's consideration; and advice on the third is given below.

- 8.2 The scope on **highways issues** is attached at Appendix A. Officers are concerned to avoid an outcome which increases the workload of NHDC's officers for a matter which is not NHDC's responsibility. The scope aims to:
- identify HCC's responsibility for highways issues and understand how it exercises that responsibility in practice;
 - understand the mechanisms for NHDC councillors to feed into policy and operational decisions, and to raise any concerns or give feedback both to Herts CC and to individual county councillors;
 - examine how communications could be improved between local members, county councillors and HCC, as this is likely to be the key issue;
 - see what happens with other district and borough councils.
- 8.3 The **community rights** created by the Localism Act are at an early stage with no activity in some areas at all. Officers have suggested splitting the task and finish group into two parts. SIAS (Shared Internal Audit Service) intends to look at the community right to bid on assets of community value as part of its work programme for quarter 2 this year, so we will need to consider how these reviews are timetabled and whether there is any repetition between the two reviews. Timing and scope will be key, and colleagues recommend handling the subject by theme, namely:
- examining what the Localism Act allows the community to do;
 - examining what is meant by community in the context of these discussions, and understanding whether the community has the skills and capacity to take these initiatives forward;
 - the role of the Council in assisting the community;
 - the mechanics of how the Council deals with applications.
- 8.4 I have not prepared a scope for the third task and finish group on social inclusion (now known as **inclusivity**) at this stage. The original scope was out of date, with many of the areas normally associated with inclusivity either outside the council's control (employment, transport, health care) or considered quite recently (housing). Consequently its value to the committee and the Council looked doubtful. Instead, officers suggested looking at the Council's provision of debt advice, possibly in conjunction with the Citizens Advice Bureau and other partners. With so many changes taking place, officers advised that it may be premature to look at this subject this year and suggested it may be better for the Committee to revisit this issue in 12-18 months time. Also, SIAS intends to undertake an audit of the council's processes for dealing with the benefits legislation which provide useful background to a task and finish group.

Topic Groups at Hertfordshire County Council

- 8.5 Hertfordshire County Council has decided that, rather than consider its Speed Management Strategy through a topic group, its full Overview and Scrutiny Committee should consider the matter on 23 and 24 October. It will hear evidence from districts and boroughs on 23 October. NHDC's representatives are yet to be decided.
- 8.6 Members may also wish to know that HCC will conduct a review of the implementation of its part-night operating street lighting policy on 24 September. The review will focus on whether the anticipated benefits have been delivered, and what impact the change has had on road safety and criminality. NHDC's Head of Housing and Public Protection and the police are due to give evidence.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None.

10. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None.

11. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1 October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5 April 2011. There is a general duty, described below, that public bodies must meet, and this is underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.

12.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions: give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

12.3 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no social value implications arising from this report.

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

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15. APPENDICES

15.1 Appendix A – Work Programme for Committee Meetings
Appendix B – Forward Plan for 20 May 2013
Appendix C – Draft Scope: Highways Issues
Appendix D – Draft Scope: Community Rights