

**TITLE OF REPORT: 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**.
- Note the progress on existing task and finish groups; and
- Choose which task and finish groups to do next.

**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 None.

**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 A draft work programme is attached at **Appendix A**, and the Forward Plan for 2 July is at **Appendix B**. The Committee is invited to:

- consider which items to scrutinise at its meetings for the remainder of 2013/14; and
- indicate its preferred timings for presentations from portfolio holders and other attendees, along with any particular topics they would like them to address.

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

## 8. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

### Existing Topics

- 8.1 At its meeting in June, the Committee:
- approved the scope for the task and finish group on highways issues;
  - decided to defer the task and finish group on community rights; and
  - asked for further advice on whether the task and finish group on inclusivity (debt advice) should take place sooner rather than later.
- 8.2 The task and finish group on **highways issues** will be chaired by Cllr Ian Mantle and will take place over two evenings in August or September. The other group leaders have been asked for nominations. The Scrutiny Officer will undertake a consultation exercise with all members through the July round of the area committees; and with the parish, town and community councils through their association meeting on 10 July.
- 8.3 A scope was not prepared on **debt advice** (formerly social inclusion) because officers advised that it was premature to look at this subject this year with so many changes underway; and it might be useful to wait for the outcome of the Shared Internal Audit Service review of the council's processes for dealing with the benefits legislation. They suggested it may be better for the Committee to revisit this issue in 12-18 months time, but the Committee asked whether it would be possible to look at the topic sooner.
- 8.4 Officers have reconsidered the matter as the Committee requested. A recent review by the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) of Increasing Financial Hardship in North Hertfordshire produced only a single recommendation – that NHDC should engage with social housing partners – which is in fact already well established and which officers have suggested SIAS changes to reflect this. Colleague in the benefits service have advised that non-payment of council tax is running at a similar level to last year. In the circumstances, officers have reiterated their advice that it is best to defer a task and finish group for the moment until any changes have bedded in.

### New Topics for Task and Finish Groups

- 8.5 By deferring consideration of debt advice and community rights, the Committee will need to consider which topic(s) to look at once the highways review is complete. This report asks the Committee to choose one or two topics so arrangements can be put in place before its next meeting in September. Previously, the committee has suggested looking at alternative service delivery and the management of the social housing waiting list, although it may wish to suggest other topics for consideration too.
- 8.6 SMT has previously advised that task and finish groups should improve information or services, save money, use resources more efficiently or produce other benefits to the council or community, either directly or indirectly. SMT questioned the value of pursuing too many task and finish group where the subject matter was outside the council's control; and considered that the committee should not look at a financial topics as this fell within the remit of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

## Topic Groups at Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)

- 8.7 HCC's review of its Speed Management Strategy will take place on 23 and 24 October. HCC's full Overview and Scrutiny Committee will the matter and will hear evidence from districts and boroughs on 23 October. Cllr Ray Shakespeare-Smith will give evidence on behalf of NHDC's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Scrutiny Officer will record the Committee's views at its next meeting so that the evidence given to HCC will be comprehensive.
- 8.8 HCC's review of the implementation of its part-night operating street lighting policy will now take place on 1<sup>st</sup> October. 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**

- Author  
14.1 Brendan Sullivan, Scrutiny Officer, 01462 474612  
[brendan.sullivan@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:brendan.sullivan@north-herts.gov.uk)

### **15. APPENDICES**

- 15.1 Appendix A – Work Programme for Committee Meetings  
15.2 Appendix B – Forward Plan for 2 July 2013