

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
9 JUNE 2015**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM No.**

**17**

**TITLE OF REPORT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR JULIAN CUNNINGHAM

**1. SUMMARY**

1.1 The Committee's draft work programme for 2015/16.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The Committee is asked to consider and comment on how it wishes to conduct its meetings and task and finish groups this year.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 To enable the Committee to plan its work effectively.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

4.1 None.

**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. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

7.1 At its meeting in March, the Committee discussed some of the difficulties with both task and finish groups and Committee meetings, discussed below for the Committee's consideration.

7.2 In the past, the Committee's agenda has been based around:

- Items from the Forward Plan;
- Traditional "performance" reports;
- Constitutional obligations namely RIPA and crime and disorder matters;
- Updates on various topics which the Committee has requested;
- Task and finish group reports;
- Special attendance by portfolio holders and others;
- Other topics – called in items, public participation, special meetings, the Committee's work programme etc.

- 7.3 Most of the substantive part of the Committee's agenda has been based on the Forward Plan's list of items scheduled for Cabinet. The Forward Plan for 22 May 2015 is attached at Appendix A. This approach has proved problematic for a number of reasons:
- items can be deferred from one Cabinet meeting to the next, sometimes at short notice, leaving gaps in the Committee's agenda for one meeting and overloading it for other meetings;
  - The Forward Plan only covers key decisions, so the majority of the Council's work goes unscrutinised;
  - It is difficult for the Committee's comments to have much impact when it scrutinises decisions so late in the process;
  - Reports can be lengthy and the key issues are not always easy to identify.
- 7.4 The Chairman has suggested that the Committee may wish to concentrate its meetings on:
- holding the Executive to account in the first instance;
  - quality not quantity;
  - topics which the Committee can influence;
  - making sure the Committee has a proper overview of the Council's work and performance.
- 7.5 To this end, the Committee is asked to consider how meetings should be handled this year, including the following possible changes:
- Inviting one (or occasionally two) portfolios holders to speak at each meeting about their portfolios;
  - Circulating a pack of background information to members before the meeting to help them identify key issues.
- 7.6 The Chairman will discuss these and other possible changes with the Committee on 9 June.

## **8. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS**

- 8.1 Two task and finish groups are at different stages of progress at the time of writing:
- The Task and Finish group on the Commercialisation of Council Services met on 25 February and will hold a second meeting on 29 May. A report will come to the Committee in September; and
  - The Task and Finish Group on the Quality of Council Reports will begin as soon as possible. A scope has been prepared.
- 8.2 Pressure on members' time made it difficult to arrange enough meetings to complete the task and finish group programme last year. There are a number of areas which may help task and finish groups use their time more efficiently:
- better member understanding of issues beforehand;
  - more outside evidence;
  - the chair to finalise the scope;
  - more work taking place away from meetings.
- 8.3 The Chairman and the Scrutiny Officer will discuss these options with the Committee in more detail at the meeting.

## **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. APPENDICES**

14.1 Appendix A – Forward Plan for 22 May 2015

## **15. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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## **16. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

16.1 None.