

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12 DECEMBER 2017**

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

16

TITLE OF REPORT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2017/18

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report identifies potential items for inclusion in the Committee's work programme for 2017/18 and lists items previously agreed by the Committee as well as those that are required to be considered by the Constitution.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee notes and comments on the work programme.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To allow the Committee to set its work programme and operate effectively.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Committee has varied its approach to overview and scrutiny over the years. The Committee has expressed a wish to enter the process of policy development at an earlier stage and in order to achieve this, may consider items associated with service action plans.

- 4.2 It is however necessary to ensure that constitutional requirements are observed and that the Forward Plan continues to be monitored.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 The Committee is consulted about its work programme at every meeting. It also held a workshop on 19 April 2017 to discuss the best way forward.

- 5.2 The Committee has expressed a desire to hold a managed workshop together with Members of Cabinet with the aim of identifying how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can ascertain effective methods of Overview and Scrutiny that result in added value and impact on decisions. A meeting has taken place between the Chairs of Scrutiny and Cabinet and the outline for the meeting is being developed.

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. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The Committee decided that the regular presentations, on a rotational basis, by Executive Members had not previously enabled effective overview or scrutiny and therefore for the future Executive Members will be invited to attend to address a specific issue of interest to the Committee or to present a report that is being considered for constitutional reasons.
- 7.2 The Committee has decided to consider a wider range of topics as potential agenda items and look at those topics earlier in the policy development process. By doing so it hopes to be able to influence policy making at an earlier stage.
- 7.3 The Committee will continue to use the Forward Plan; and meet the statutory obligations which have been delegated to the Committee when deciding issues to consider
- 7.4 The Committee have determined that consideration of agenda items should minimise additional burdens on staff resources and this would be achieved by requesting that, wherever possible, officers present documents already in existence rather than produce new documents specifically for this Committee.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 A work programme is set out at **Appendix A** for the Committee's consideration. The Forward Plan for 24 November 2017 is attached at **Appendix B**.

Members may wish to consider the following items on the Forward plan:

- Proposed establishment of a Housing Company – January 2018 (this may be an item that FAR considers in relation to finance/risk issues).
- Districtwide Survey 2017 – March 2018

- 8.2 Other potential topics will be identified for consideration and advised at the next meeting. If the Committee wish to consider additional topics it may be wise to select two or three topics of interest and to prioritise them.

- 8.5 If items for consideration by the Committee are identified between meetings of the Committee, the Chairman will agree any amendments to the work programme.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Under Section 6.2.5 of the Constitution the Committee is responsible for setting its own Work Programme.

- 9.2 Section 6.2.7 (u) of the Constitution allows the Committee “to appoint time limited task and finish Topic Groups to undertake detailed scrutiny work report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet.”
- 9.3 The legal implications at paragraphs 9.1 and 9.2 reflect that the Committee is able to set its own work programme. However the Committee must retain the capacity to undertake the statutory requirements included within its terms of reference.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The scope of the options presented in section 7 and 8 could be quite wide, depending on how they are applied in practice. As detailed in the Human Resources implications (section 14), there could be significant impacts on Officer time in terms of writing reports, analysing information and attending Committee meetings. The number of Officers has reduced over recent years in line with funding pressures, and this makes it unlikely that this could be absorbed within current resources. Even if it could be absorbed, it would limit the time that Officers could spend on other activities. From a financial perspective this could reduce the amount of time that can be spent on identifying and delivering cost reductions, income generation and project management.
- 10.2 Whilst not significant, for Officers below Senior Management level there is a Committee Attendance Allowance that is payable at £24.20 per Officer per meeting. This is in addition to providing Time off in Lieu.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Effective scrutiny of decisions and processes can help reduce the risk of making an incorrect decision. However this should always be balanced against the potential impacts of over-scrutiny which could lead to decisions not being made, or not being made at the right time.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 There are no direct equality implications arising from the report. However the impact on the additional reporting to the committee may affect the ability of officers to discharge their deliver of services to the diverse community of North Hertfordshire.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The change of approach suggested is likely to have a significant impact on Officer time in terms of reprioritisation of projects or their scope or their timetable and resources. Delivery of service plans to achieve the Council’s agreed Corporate plan objectives is the responsibility of the Heads of Service. Projects often require significant support service contributions as well. There would also be additional resources for report writing, collecting and analysing information and attending Committee meetings.

15. APPENDICES

15.1 Appendix A – Programme for Committee Meetings

15.2 Appendix B – Forward Plan for 24 November 2017

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 None