

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
11 DECEMBER 2018**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**TITLE OF REPORT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2018/19**

REPORT OF THE ACTING SCRUTINY OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report highlights items scheduled in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme for 2018/19 and includes details of those that have yet to be assigned to a specific meeting.
- 1.2 The work programme includes both items previously agreed by the Committee and those that the Committee is required by the Constitution to consider.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Committee prioritises proposed topics for inclusion in the work programme and where appropriate, determines the high level form and timing of scrutiny input.
- 2.2 That the Committee agrees the list of items to be considered at its meeting of 11 December 2018.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To allow the Committee to set a work programme which provides focussed Member oversight, encourages open debate and seeks to achieve service improvement through effective policy development and meaningful policy and service change.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The Committee has varied its approach to overview and scrutiny activity over recent years. Currently it seeks to enter the process of policy development at an early stage and consequently may consider items associated with service action plans.
- 4.2 The need to observe Constitutional requirements and monitor the Forward Plan for appropriate items to scrutinise remains a key aspect of work programming.

- 4.3 The Committee may wish to review and adjust its approach following delivery of the agreed training event.

## **5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

- 5.1 Each Committee meeting includes the opportunity for Members to comment on and input to the Committee's work programme.

- 5.2 A training proposal has been received from the Centre for Public Scrutiny which addresses amongst others:

- the identification and prioritisation of issues and topics for scrutiny review (minute 16, June 2017)
- the maximisation of the benefits of scrutiny (minute 31, July 2017)
- effective methods of overview and scrutiny (minute 32, July 2017)

The proposal has been agreed by the Chair of this Committee and the first of the training sessions took place before this evening's Committee. A second training session, which is being proposed as a joint workshop with O&S Members and Cabinet, is being arranged for February 2019. This workshop is in response to the following resolution:

- that the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meet with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to discuss holding an externally facilitated workshop for all members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet to ascertain effective methods of Overview and Scrutiny that result in added value and impact on decisions (minute 31, July 2017)

## **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.

- 6.2 The Committee is asked to review the Forward Plan at each regular meeting to identify potential issues for inclusion in the work programme. Identification of a focus for the Committee's future activity should be identified at this stage wherever possible.

## **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 Executive Members no longer deliver regular general presentations on a rotational basis. Rather they are invited to either speak on an issue of specific interest or present a report being considered for constitutional reasons.

- 7.2 The Committee now considers a wide range of issues, where appropriate, commencing its reviews early in the policy development process. By doing this it seeks to ensure assumptions are challenged at an early stage, mistakes are avoided and eventual outcomes provide optimal benefit to the community.

- 7.3 The Committee seeks to ensure that consideration of agenda items minimises additional burdens on staff resources. Wherever possible, requests are made for the presentation of documents already in existence rather than the production of new documents specifically for the Committee.

## **8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

### Work Programme

- 8.1 A work programme is set out at Appendix A for the Committee's consideration.

### Forward Plan

- 8.2 The Forward Plan for 20 November 2018 is attached at Appendix B.

### Other Topics for Consideration

- 8.3 Potential topics for consideration and inclusion in the Committee's work programme will be considered as part of this meeting. When considering additional topics, their risk assessment and prioritisation will ensure that the most appropriate items are taken forward to the work programme.
- 8.4 An additional topic regarding a review of the Hitchin Town Hall / District Wide Museum Project has been added to the work programme since the last meeting of this Committee.

### Waste Contract

- 8.5 Following the single item meeting on Waste at the September Committee, the review into the Waste contract will be undertaken following the completion of the SIAS review of the service. The SIAS review is expected to take place in January 2019. Following this, the scope for the review will be agreed by the scoping group in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and as per the new resolutions contained in the Resolutions Report.

### Commercialisation

- 8.6 The Commercial Service Director is attending the December Committee to provide an overview of the Commercial department since its recent formation, explain how commercialisation will be implemented through the organisation and provide an overview of the Commercial Strategy whilst it is in its development phase, to allow opportunity for Members' comments. He will then attend again at the January Committee to present the finished Commercial Strategy. Following the strategy presentation at the January Committee the decision on the timings and format of scrutiny input into the topic of commercialisation will be made.
- 8.7 The Commercial Strategy will focus on four strands
- Why we need a Commercial Strategy
  - What we want to achieve
  - How we will deliver the strategy
  - How we will measure success

## 8.8 Consultation Strategy and Citizens Panel

The Task and Finish into this topic was removed following the Chairman's suggestion at the July Committee that a meeting is instead held with the Communications Manager and the following volunteered Councillors: Sam Collins, Steve Deakin-Davies and Sue Ngwala, to advise on the Consultation Strategy and Citizens Panel. The group were contacted by the Communications Manager to attend a meeting in November; 5 date options were provided however not all Members provided a response. Confirmation is therefore sought on whether the Committee still wish involvement with this topic.

## 8.9 Review into Hitchin Town Hall / District Wide Museum Project

Following the agreement for full ownership of Hitchin Town Hall, the review into the project can commence. In view of this, a meeting took place on 6 November 2018, to discuss the outline approach for the review. The Chair, Vice Chair and Group Leaders were in attendance at the meeting and agreed in principle the scope of the review as: 'Hitchin Town Project Review: How the Council worked with community partners'. A copy of the meeting minutes is provided in Appendix C, and a report on the review process will be brought to January's Overview & Scrutiny committee.

## 9. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Under Section 6.2.5 of the Constitution, the Committee is responsible for setting its own work programme. However, it must ensure it retains sufficient capacity within the programme to meet its statutory obligations.
- 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 and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet."

## 10. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Dependent on how they are applied in practice, the scope of the options presented in Sections 7 and 8 have the potential to be wide reaching. As detailed Section 14, Human Resource Implications, the wider the reach, the more significant the impact on officer time in terms of report writing, data analysis and committee meeting attendance. Given recent funding pressures and the consequent reduction in officer numbers, significant requests to support scrutiny work will limit officer time available to spend on activities such as identifying and delivering cost reductions, income generation and project management.
- 10.2 Although not significant, a committee attendance allowance of £24.68 per officer per meeting is payable to officers below Senior Management level in attendance. This is in addition to providing time off in lieu.
- 10.3 Attention is drawn to the fact that a cost in the region of £900 will be incurred for the externally provided training event.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 Effective overview and scrutiny of policy, administrative, service delivery and expenditure decisions helps reduce the risk of an inappropriate decision being made. The scope and time frame for scrutiny interventions should be considered in the light of the potential impact of inappropriate scrutiny leading to decisions not being made, inappropriately made or not 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, and 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. Effective scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that local government remains transparent, accountable and open which ensures that the delivery of public services benefits all aspects of the community, where practical.

## **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 widening of the reach of scrutiny reviews has the potential to significantly impact on officer time in terms of the reprioritisation of already agreed projects, their scope or timetabling and resources. There is also the potential for additional resource requirements in relation to report writing, information collection and analysis and committee attendance. Delivery of service plans to achieve the Council’s agreed Corporate Plan objectives might, therefore, be potentially negatively impacted.

## **15. APPENDICES**

- 15.1 Appendix A – Work Programme for future Committee meetings
- 15.2 Appendix B – Forward Plan for 20 November 2018
- 15.3 Appendix C – HTH / District Wide Museum Meeting Minutes 6 November 2018

## **16. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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## **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 17.1 Previous reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and forward plans.