

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
16 JULY 2019**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2019/20

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 2019/20 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 16 July 2019.

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 Attendance from external bodies is encouraged, with Hertfordshire Constabulary attending the January 2019 Committee to assist Members in considering the local and crime disorder matters that may adversely affect its residents.
- 5.3 Work has also been undertaken with the Centre for Public Scrutiny in running two training sessions; the first held in December 2018 covering the essentials of Scrutiny and a second session held in February 2019.

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 01 July 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.

Work Programme

- 8.4 The Committee's work programme for the year requires reviewing and direction is sought from the Committee on the items they wish adding; Appendix A contains the current work programme.

Hitchin Town Hall Review / North Hertfordshire Museum Project

- 8.5 The panel for the scrutiny review into this topic is currently reviewing the witness statements submitted by external organisations and individuals; a total of 14 statements were received. Witness invites are being issued to all those who submitted statements to attend a panel hearing. The panel hearings will be public meetings and there are currently 2 dates scheduled for the 17 and 18 July 2019.

Universal Credit Impact Report – Council Tax Reduction Scheme

- 8.6 The Service Director – Customers has advised he will attend the December Committee in order to present a report on the impact of Universal Credit. By this point in the year the Council will have one year's data on Universal Credit and will therefore be more aware of the changes being considered to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Commercial Strategy Update

- 8.7 The Service Director – Commercial has provided a progress update against the Commercial Strategy Programme 2019 -2023; this is contained within Appendix C. He has additionally advised that the Commercial team was only fully established at the start of May 2019 and are therefore in the early days of the strategy implementation. He is happy to attend the committee to do a presentation if this is sought.

An updated on the status of the proposed new trading company has also been provided by the Service Director – Commercial and this was circulated by the Scrutiny Officer to the members of the committee on 05 July 2019.

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 evening meeting is payable to officers in attendance. This is in addition to providing time off in lieu, or overtime as an alternative.

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 01 July 2019

15.3 Appendix C – Commercial Strategy Programme update

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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