

Divisions Affected - All

PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 SEPTEMBER 2021

WORK PROGRAMME 2021

Report by Director of Law and Governance

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- (a) Consider the results of the limited work programme engagement exercise as detailed in Appendix 1;**
- (b) Consider suggestions made by the Cabinet and Senior Officers;**
- (c) Consider the methods by which the Committee would like to undertake its Overview and Scrutiny activity;**
- (d) Consider and agree the work programme for the Committee for the 2021/22 municipal year;**
- (e) Agree on whether to create any task group reviews and appoint membership of that review;**
- (f) Identify any specific training and support needs required to deliver the 2021/22 work programme**

Executive Summary

2. The purpose of this report is to support and advise Committee members to determine their work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.
3. This report sets out the following information to assist the Committee in this process:
 - The principles of effective scrutiny and the criteria against which work programme items should be considered;
 - The roles and responsibilities of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - The findings of the consultation exercise undertaken with councillors and Council senior management;
 - Support available to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee to determine, develop and deliver its 2021/22 work programme

New approach to Overview & Scrutiny

4. The Council agreed in July 2021 that three new overview and scrutiny committees would replace the two existing council scrutiny committees. The aim was to afford greater opportunity to review services on a thematic basis with regards to cross-cutting but defined areas of Place, People and Performance and Corporate Services. Increasing the scrutiny arrangements by one committee aimed to enable a wider range and depth of scrutiny activity than was previously possible.
5. The new overview and scrutiny arrangements contain three new elements:
 - i. A membership of 9 elected members per committee
 - ii. Chairs of these committees would be expected to come from the Council's Opposition Group (the Conservative-Independent Alliance Group).
 - iii. Call-in of executive (key) decisions would no longer fall only to one committee (the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee) but to each committee having regard to its own terms of reference and service scope

The Scope of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee is as follows:

Committee	Scope
Place	Climate change, transport, highways, planning and place-based services. Including the delivery of regulatory services, fire and rescue, community safety and community services such as libraries. NB This Committee will act as the Council's 'Crime and Disorder Committee'.

Principles of the Work Programme

6. The following key principles of effective scrutiny should be considered when the Committee is determining its work programme:
 - Be selective** – There is a need to prioritise so that high priority issues are scrutinised given the limited number of scheduled meetings and time available. Members should consider what can realistically and properly be reviewed at each meeting, taking into account the time needed to scrutinise each item and what the session is intended to achieve.
 - Add value with scrutiny** – Items should have the potential to 'add value' to the work of the council and its partners. If it is not clear what the intended outcomes or impact of a review will be then Members should consider if there are issues of a higher priority that could be scrutinised instead.

It is recommended that Members limit the number of items they wish to consider at a meeting to 2 or 3 to maximise the time and attention they can give the topic and maximise the potential for adding value.

- **Be flexible** – Members are reminded that there needs to be a degree of flexibility in their work programme to respond to unforeseen issues/items for consideration/comment during the year and accommodate any developmental or additional work that falls within the remit of this Committee.
7. Effective Overview and Scrutiny should provide extensive opportunities for community involvement and democratic accountability. Engagement with service users and with the general public can help to improve the quality, legitimacy and long-term viability of recommendations made by the Committee.
 8. Service users and the public bring different perspectives, experiences and solutions to scrutiny, this engagement can help the Committee to understand the service user's perspective on individual services and on co-ordination between services. The Committee is encouraged to ensure it considers opportunities for engagement with service users and the public when agreeing its work programme.

Models for carrying out scrutiny activity

9. There are a number of means by which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can deliver its work programme. Members should consider which of the following options is most appropriate to undertake each of the items they have selected for inclusion in the work programme:

Item on a scheduled meeting agenda/ hold an extra meeting of the Committee	The Committee can agree to add an item to the agenda for a meeting and call Cabinet Members/ Officers/Partners to the meeting to respond to questioning on the matter.
Task Group	A small group of Members, with officer support, meet outside of the scheduled meetings to gather information on the subject area, visit other local authorities/ sites, speak to service users, expert witnesses and/ or Officers/ Partners. The Task Group can then report back to the Committee with their findings to endorse the submission of their recommendations to Cabinet/Council This is the method usually used to carry out policy reviews.
The Committee asks for a report then takes a view on action	The Committee may need more information before taking a view on whether to carry out a full review so asks for a report to give them more details
Individual Members doing some initial research	A member with a specific concern carries out some research to gain more information on the matter and then brings his/her findings to the attention of the Committee if s/he still has concerns.

	This can only be done if agreed by the Committee which must consider the impact on resources and officer time in commissioning such items. Any emerging reports would need to go through the Council's reporting clearance process.
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10. Note that, in order to keep agendas to a manageable size, and to focus on items to allow the Committee to make a direct contribution, the Committee may choose to take some "information only" items outside of meetings, for example by email.

Limited Work Programme Engagement Exercise

11. To assist the Committee in developing a work programme a limited engagement exercise has taken place to seek the views of County Councillors and Senior Officers, the results of which are attached at **Appendix 1**.
12. As the aim of the work programme is to ensure that scrutiny makes the biggest impact possible the exercise advised that suggestions for inclusion consider the following criteria:
 - a. Is the issue a priority area for the Council?
 - b) Is it a key issue for local people?
 - c) Are improvements for local people likely?
 - d) Is it an opportunity to contribute towards significant policy development?
 - e) Does it examine a poor performing service?
 - f) Will it result in improvements to the way the Council operates?
13. The engagement exercise also provided guidance to consider the priority themes outlined in the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance 'A Fairer deal for Oxfordshire' which will direct the Council's approach to a new corporate plan and public consultation and engagement. This would maximise the opportunity for pre-scrutiny work and help shape the development of these priorities.

Agreeing a work programme

14. Committee Members are asked to consider the results of the engagement exercise and the contents of this report in agreeing a work programme for the remainder of the 2021-22 municipal year.
15. Committee is also asked to consider suggestions made by the Cabinet and Senior Officers which will be reported at the Committee meeting on the 22 September.
16. The Committee is also asked to agree whether to create any task group reviews and appoint membership of that review and to identify any specific training and support needs required to deliver the 2021/22 work programme.

Financial Implications

This report does not raise any financial implications.

Legal Implications

This report does not raise any legal implications.

ANITA BRADLEY

Director of Law and Governance

Annex: Appendix 1 – Response to limited work programme engagement exercise

Background papers: Report to Council 13 July 2021 – Review of Scrutiny Arrangements

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September 2021