

Overview & Scrutiny Committee
10 November 2020

Title: Work Programme, Forward Plan & Comments from Executive

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Portfolio Holder: Not applicable

Public report

Wards of the District directly affected: Not applicable

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report informs the Committee of its work programme for 2020 / 2021 (Appendix 1) and the current [Forward Plan](#).
- 1.2. In addition, it provides the Committee with the response that the Executive gave to its comments regarding the reports on 29 September 2020 (Appendix 2).
- 1.3. Appendices 4 to 8 are a mixture of briefing notes that the Committee requested, and information provided as part of verbal updates the Committee has requested.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Members consider the work programme (Appendix 1) and agree any changes as appropriate.
- 2.2. The Committee to; identify any Executive items on the Forward Plan on which it wishes to have an input before the Executive makes its decision; and to nominate a Member to investigate that future decision and report back to the Committee.
- 2.3. Members note the responses made by the Executive on the Comments from the Executive report (Appendix 2).
- 2.4. Members note the progress on items that were removed from the work programme but which had follow-up actions (Appendix 3).
- 2.5. Members consider Appendices 4 onwards. Members to note that in respect of Appendices 5, 6 and 8, the report authors are not scheduled to attend the meeting unless there is a specific request that they do so, in which case, Members should notify the report author of any questions before the meeting.
- 2.6. To consider the proposed criteria for discussing Executive items at Scrutiny Committees, (see Appendix 7), with a view to agreeing its trial use up to March 2021.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 3.1. The work programme should be updated at each meeting to accurately reflect the workload of the Committee.
- 3.2. The proposed plan at Appendix 1 has been developed in order for the Committee to focus on the four agreed core themes (Covid 19, climate Change, Medium Term Financial Strategy and Business Plan). While this Committee will not have as much focus on the Medium Term Financial Strategy, it will have to spend significant times looking at the other areas in detail.
- 3.3. Two of the five main roles of overview and scrutiny in local government are to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of Executive decisions and to feed into policy development.
- 3.4. If the Committee has an interest in a future decision to be made by the Executive, or policy to be implemented, it is within the Committee's remit to feed into the process.
- 3.5. The Forward Plan is actually the future work programme for the Executive. If a non-executive member highlighted a decision(s) which is to be taken by the Executive which they would like to be involved in, that member(s) could then provide useful background to the Committee when the report is submitted to the Executive and they are passing comment on it.
- 3.6. Appendix 2, Comments from Executive, is produced to create a dialogue between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It ensures that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is formally made aware of the Executive's responses.
- 3.7. Where Overview and Scrutiny Committee has made a recommendation as opposed to a comment, the Executive is required to respond to the recommendation(s) made, including whether or not it accepts the recommendation(s).
- 3.8. Appendix 3 lists reports that were removed from the work programme and the follow-up action taken or to be taken. This ensures that the Committee can check that these actions are completed.
- 3.9. At the Joint Scrutiny Committee earlier this year a small Group of Councillors (Davison, Grey, Milton, Nicholls and Margrave) agreed to draft a process for considering Executive items at Scrutiny. This work has resulted in the process shown in Appendix 7 to this report which has been shared with all Councillors and tested ahead of this meeting. The proposal would be to put this in place and review at the March meeting before formally requesting Council adds this to the scrutiny procedure rules.

4. Background

- 4.1. The five main roles of overview and scrutiny in local government are: holding to account; performance management; policy review; policy development; and external scrutiny.

- 4.2. The pre-decision scrutiny of Executive decisions falls within the role of 'holding to account'. To feed into the pre-decision scrutiny of Executive decisions, the Committee needs to examine the Council's Forward Plan and identify items which it would like to have an impact upon.
- 4.3. The Council's Forward Plan is published on a monthly basis and sets out the key decisions to be taken by the Council in the next twelve months. The Council only has a statutory duty to publish key decisions to be taken in the next four months. However, the Forward Plan was expanded to a twelve-month period to give a clearer picture of how and when the Council will be making important decisions.
- 4.4. A key decision is a decision which has a significant impact or effect on two or more wards and / or a budgetary effect of £50,000 or more.
- 4.5. The Forward Plan also identifies non-key decisions to be made by the Council in the next twelve months, and the Committee, if it wishes, may also pre-scrutinise these decisions.
- 4.6. There may also be policies identified on the Forward Plan, either as key or non-key decisions, which the Committee could pre-scrutinise and have an impact upon how these are formulated.
- 4.7. The Committee should be mindful that any work it wishes to undertake would need to be undertaken without the need to change the timescales as set out within the Forward Plan.
- 4.8. At each meeting, the Committee will consider their work programme and make amendments where necessary, and also make comments on specific Executive items, where notice has been given by 9am on the day of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. The Committee will also receive a report detailing the response from the Executive, on the comments the Committee made on the Executive agenda in the previous cycle.
- 4.9. The Forward Plan is considered at each meeting and allows the Committee to look at future items and become involved in those Executive decisions to be taken, if members so wish.
- 4.10. As part of the new scrutiny process, the Committee is no longer considering the whole of the Executive agenda.
- 4.11. On the day of publication of the Executive agenda all Councillors are sent an e-mail asking them to contact Committee Services, by 09.00am on the day of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to advise which Executive items they would like the Committee to consider.
- 4.12. As a result, the Committee considered the items detailed in appendix 2. The response the Executive gave on each item is also shown.
- 4.13. In reviewing these responses Committee can identify any issues for which they would like a progress report. A future report, for example on how the decision has been implemented, would then be submitted to the Committee at an agreed date which would then be incorporated within the work programme.

- 4.14. At the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's meeting 18 August 2020, the Committee was presented with a work programme to that had been amended to shape the new way the Committee would operate. The Committee accepted this work programme with the result that reports that had originally been scheduled for scrutiny would be removed from the work programme. However, decisions were made for follow-up action in respect of each one. Appendix 3 details these reports and the follow-up action taken or to be taken.
- 4.15. Appendices 5 and 6 are briefing notes that the Committee decided could be appended to its work programme at its meeting 18 August 2020. It was agreed that the report authors did not need to attend the Committee meeting unless there was a request made that they did so. Members were requested to submit their questions ahead of the meeting.