

Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee
21 April 2021

Title: Review of Work Programme and Forward Plan & Comments from the Executive

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Portfolio Holder: Not Applicable

Public report

Wards of the District directly affected: N/A

Accessibility checked: yes

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report informs the Committee of its work programme for 2020/2021 Municipal Year (Appendix 1) and of the current [Forward Plan](#).

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. The Committee to consider the work programme attached as Appendix 1 to the report and make any changes as required.
- 2.2. The Committee to identify any Executive items on the Forward Plan which it wishes to have an input before the Executive makes its decision;
- 2.3. The Committee to consider its workload for the coming months, specifically how it can accommodate the work within their scheduled meetings;
- 2.4. The Committee recommend to Council the addition of the protocol set out at Appendix 3, for embedding within Scrutiny Procedure Rules and asks Council to amend Scrutiny Procedure rules so that the deadline to request Executive items to be considered by Scrutiny is 9.00am on the morning after Group meetings.
- 2.5. The Committee to note the progress on the Audit Plan as set out at Appendix 4

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 3.1. The work programme as attached at Appendix 1 to the report should be updated at each meeting to accurately reflect the workload of the Committee.
- 3.2. 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.

Agenda Item 4

- 3.3. 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.
- 3.4. 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.
- 3.5. The proposed addition to Scrutiny Procedure rules is brought forward by Councillors Milton and Nicholls following several months of informal testing which has worked well.
- 3.6. At its meeting in September, the Committee asked for an update at each meeting on the revised Audit Plan so they are aware of progress. This has been appended to this report for information.

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. 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.
- 4.4. 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. 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.
- 4.5. 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.
- 4.6. 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 Finance & Audit 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.

Agenda Item 4

- 4.7. 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.
- 4.8. As part of the scrutiny process, the Committee is not considering the whole of the Executive agenda. On the day of publication of the Executive agenda, all Councillors are sent an e-mail asking them to contact Committee Services, by 9.00am on the day of the Committee meeting to advise which Executive items they would like the Committee to consider.
- 4.9. If the Committee made a comment on an Executive report, a response will be provided to the Committee at its next meeting (Appendix 2). In reviewing these responses, the Committee can identify any issues for which it 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.