

	Joint meeting of the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee 7 July 2020	Agenda Item No. 4
Title	Annual Report, Work Programme and Forward Plan	
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Wards of the District directly affected	N/A	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	11 February 2020	
Background Papers	Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities CfPS Guidance documents	
This report is produced for Scrutiny meetings for governance purposes. It is part of the process for ensuring that the Council is held to account for the decisions it makes or may make.		

1. Summary

- 1.1 The report sets out the annual end of term report to the Council on the work of both the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee have undertaken during the municipal year 2019/20 (Appendices 1 and 2).
- 1.1 This report asks the Committees to review their scheduled work for programmes for 2020 (Appendices 3 and 4) and of the current [Forward Plan](#).

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committees recommend to Council their end of Term reports for 2019/20 as set out at Appendices 1 and 2.
- 2.2 The Committees reflect on their approach to Scrutiny, consider any changes they wish to make for the municipal year and agree on proposals for Council to consider.
- 2.3 In light of the decision taken on recommendation 2.2, the Committees consider their workload for the coming year, specifically how they can accommodate the work within their scheduled meetings; review the work programmes, as set out at Appendices 3 and 4 to the report, and make changes to the programme as they see appropriate.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 3.1 Under Article 6 of the Council's Constitution, Scrutiny Committees are required to provide an end of term report to the Council on work they have undertaken during the year.

- 3.2 The matters considered during the year are attached at Appendices 1 and 2 to the report. These provide an overall context of achievement.
- 3.3 At the March meeting of the Committees, Members were due to reflect on their workload and approach to Scrutiny, with a view to report any variations in approach, to Council, as part of its Annual report when this was considered in April. An extract from the Work Programme report from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in March is set out below:
- "3.5 *The Committee should reflect on its work since May 2019 and what changes it could make or training it needed, to prepare itself for its work in the next 12 months. This would need to include detailed scrutiny of both the Business Plan for the Council and the Climate Change Emergency and how this could be incorporated alongside the planned work*
- 3.6 *The Committee also needs to reflect on the value of the reports from each Service Area, being mindful that from 1 April these would increase from 7 to 10. On that basis did the effort put into these provide value for money for the for members or could this information be delivered differently with the Committee taking a more Strategic level by scrutinising the Business Plan instead"*
- 3.4 Since this time, the global pandemic has occurred and the Council Leadership Co-ordination Group (LCG) are considering proposals for Programme Advisory Boards. The Council has had to move to remote meetings where it is considered business will take longer and as a result, there is less capacity at meetings. There is also the ongoing Governance Review of the Committee structure of the Council which may see wider changes during the year. As a result, the Committees have an opportunity to help change scrutiny at the Council.
- 3.5 With the above in mind, the Committees may find it useful to reflect on the [Statutory Scrutiny Guidance](#) and [Centre for Public Scrutiny Guidance](#) (specifically that relating to [Covid 19](#)).
- 3.6 Taking the context, in Paragraphs 3.1 to 3.6, the Scrutiny Committee Chairs have been discussing the potential for an improved approach to Scrutiny and will lead a discussion with the Committees on these points. They will ask members to focus on 4 questions overall, as set out below, to help address the challenges faced.
- 3.7 The questions to be considered are:
1. In the context of their terms of reference and the guidance referred to in this Report, what three things do you think the Committees do well at present, and what three things could they improve how they conduct scrutiny?
 2. How could the Committees ensure that a more strategic and developmental approach is taken to overview and scrutiny without losing their focus on improving shorter-term proposals, on risk, and on audit.
 3. How could the Committees take greater account of the views from residents and involve them more in their business?
 4. What additional resources, support and training might be helpful to members to ensure they can carry out their roles effectively?

- 3.8 To aid the Committees in their work programming the Forward Plan, the work programme for the Executive is set out at Appendix 5. 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.
- 3.9 The Committee have previously agreed to receive a review of a Service Area at each meeting. These were on rotation through the Portfolio Holder areas. Members should be aware that majority of this information will be included with a new online tool for members to access in the near future.
- 3.9 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee should be mindful that normally, at this meeting it establishes the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee. The next scheduled meeting of the Sub-Committee was on 23 June but this had to be removed from the calendar of meetings in order to enable the Scrutiny Committees to meet. At this time with the demands of remote meetings, there is not a time available within the calendar of meetings to schedule this and provide support to it. Therefore, the next meeting is scheduled for 17 September. The Committees may wish to reflect on this and the role of Sub-Committee in terms of consideration of its workload and approach to Scrutiny. This would be in line with the decision earlier this year to continue with the Sub-Committee pending the outcome of the Governance Review.
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 Committees 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 Committees, 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 Committees could pre-scrutinise and have an impact upon how these are formulated.
- 4.7 The Committees should be mindful that any work they wish to undertake would need to be undertaken without the need to change the timescales as set out within the Forward Plan.