

**Report To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** Wednesday, 28 July 2021

**Report Title:** Overview and Scrutiny (O & S) Committee proposed Work Programme for the 2021-22 municipal year

**Report By:** Mark Horan, Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager

**Key Decision:** N/A

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To summarise ideas received for the 2021/22 Scrutiny work programme and to propose the next steps for progressing these.

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### **Recommendation(s)**

1. **That the Annual Meeting reach agreement on their key lines of inquiry for the Scrutiny work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.**

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### **Reasons for Recommendations**

It is the responsibility of Members serving on Overview and Scrutiny to set their own work programme for each municipal year at the Annual Meeting, whilst taking into account the advice of officers present.

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## Introduction

1. Following the local elections in May 2021, a new Overview and Scrutiny chair and vice chair were appointed for the municipal year 2021/22 and eleven (in total) new and returning councillors were appointed to the [Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) at Annual Council.
2. The new committee to date have met formally to receive basic training and consider [quarter 4](#) performance for 2020/21 and informally via their Scrutiny Steering Group to consider and discuss ideas for their work programme for the municipal year 2021/22.
3. This report sets out a proposed work programme for the O & S Committee based on the ideas and discussions led by the new committee chair and vice chair and shared between Committee members to date.
4. These ideas and themes draw on previous O & S work and the Committee are mindful of the need to retain flexibility within their work programme given the unprecedented challenges the Town and the Council continues to face as a consequence of the pandemic.

## Proposed Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2021/22

5. Appendix A sets out the proposed O & S work programme for the year ahead breaking down proposed areas for focus over successive quarters.
6. Some of the work areas span across the various quarters and the bulk of the O & S work programme will need to be completed during quarters two and three with any report recommendations to Cabinet or Council following shortly thereafter.
7. This is because the outcome of the local elections and subsequent Annual Council meeting in 2022 often involves a change in committee membership. The timing of the quarter four meeting usually follows these.
8. Each of the proposed work areas in Appendix A are outlined below:

### Meet the Leader

9. As has been the case in recent years, the O & S Committee are keen to commence the year by meeting the Council Leadership. The Leader and Deputy will be invited to give an overview in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the year ahead.
10. This overview has proved helpful in assisting the O & S committee refine their lines of inquiry in terms of the work areas the committee are keen to pursue.

### Seachange Briefing

11. Several O and S members were keen to understand more and receive an update on Seachange progress and activity with regards to the town's economic growth and regeneration ambitions.
12. It was felt that an update to all HBC councillors would be useful in this regard, so a general update session is proposed. Following, O and S may seek to progress further lines of inquiry.

## Previous commitments

13. The O & S committee identified a number of areas for review based on (i) previous Scrutiny work and (ii) wider council commitments in the form of previous motions to Council.
14. An officer progress update is requested with regards to both the motion and O & S review on **single use plastics**. The new committee are keen to understand what has happened since (notwithstanding the ongoing pandemic) and to what extent this ties in with the Council's **net zero commitment**, and **climate change** strategy and action plan.
15. The Committee were also keen to follow up on activity in terms of the [regeneration funding](#) O and S review and Management response, mindful that the **Town Deal** is now a major focus for the Council and its partners.
16. The committee were also keen to review progress following previous O and S work with regards to **section 106** agreements.
17. Furthermore, the committee are also mindful of the interest the previous O and S committee had in terms of **Equalities** and ensuring the breadth of the town have a stake in the Town's **recovery** from the **pandemic**.
18. This also ties in with interest from the new committee in terms of **women and minority group safety**, the emerging **Equalities Charter** and **LSP** partnerships, and the previous motion on the **Older person champion**.
19. It is therefore proposed that O & S form a Task and Finish group to review these previous work areas and areas of interest outlined in paragraphs 13-17...to consider potential lines of inquiry during quarters 1/2.
20. The new committee are also keen to review previous Council motions, considering what has (and hasn't) happened since these motions were tabled.
21. An O & S Task and Finish group is also proposed to review previous motions picking up on the following areas of interest flagged by the committee- **Single Use plastics, Older people's champion, Net zero** commitments among others.
22. It is anticipated that at least some of these will be updated via the quarterly performance monitor O & S meetings.

## Town Deal

23. Given that the [Town Deal](#) is due to receive 24.3 million from the Towns fund, the O and S committee are keen that they and wider councillors are updated on associated plans as these unfold.
24. O and S are keen to understand the impact of this funding and the associated strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges this funding prompts for the council as the lead organisation.
25. It is proposed that this update takes place in quarter two, when associated officers are clearer of direction of travel and associated next steps, and potentially takes the form of a briefing session to all councillors in the first instance.

## Planning enforcement

26. Following on from O and S's quarter 4 meeting many committee members felt strongly and were keen to consider a scrutiny review on planning enforcement.
27. Committee members were concerned about the use of consultants given the national shortage of associated planning staff, and ultimately concerned that planning enforcement work be done in a quality and timely fashion.
28. They were also interested to hear from the Managing Director how this had been raised with other neighbouring districts and boroughs and whether it could warrant a shared solution.
29. It is suggested that a subgroup of O and S members be formed to scope associated potential review work by early autumn.

## Other areas

30. Based on the experiences of those who had previously been on the O and S committee, some members were keen to understand how well the **project management** and associated processes had bed down.
31. They are keen to receive a lessons-learned report, considering what has worked well, less well and if and where there is room for improvement.
32. O and S also requested an update on the council's **sustainable procurement policy**. It is suggested that this update be picked up through the quarterly performance returns of the Audit team.
33. The committee were also interested in **staff training and development**, in particular, how training budgets are prioritised and the take up of training across service areas.
34. It is suggested that this update takes place later in the year but that the committee seeks the advice of the Executive Manager of People, Customer and Business support in due course.
35. O and S members also queried to what extent HBC manages requests to other partners through My Hastings?
36. This item can be dealt with through an update although it is assumed that **My Hastings** only covers council services. Where council services are provided in partnership these are automated through My Hastings.
37. The final area of interest identified to date concerns our **communications** channels. How we engage with citizens through social media. Underpinning this is a wider interest into what extent our services are shaped, informed or codesigned with those for whom the services benefit?
38. It is proposed that this is picked up in quarter 3 by which time the new communications manager will have bed down.

## Next steps

39. The O and S committee will need to agree their work programme and key lines of inquiry outlined in this report, as per the report recommendation.

40. It is important they do so mindful of the need to complete prior to the new financial year if the existing committee wish to see through their proposed programme within year.
41. Moreover, the committee will also be mindful of the environment necessitated by the pandemic where council officers have taken on new pandemic commitments while also playing catch up where they have had to postpone work to meet pandemic commitments.
42. As intimated elsewhere in this report, the proposed work areas outlined in appendix A will need to retain some flexibility, adapting where appropriate mindful of demands on officers.
43. The scheduled quarterly performance monitoring meetings will provide the opportunity to check in with the Managing Director and lead councillors on service demand and associated performance via the Council's [performance Dashboard](#).
44. It will be necessary to now gauge the specific interests of the committee in participating in the respective scoping, sub and task and finish groups proposed.
45. It is suggested that these groups are firmed up at the next Scrutiny Steering Group.

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
O and S to agree their work programme	Work programme agreed	28 <sup>th</sup> July	O and S.
O and S to agree review groups for various work areas outlined	Interest groups agreed.	Next SSG -TBD.	O and S Chair and Vice Chair

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## Wards Affected

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## Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score:

**Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:**

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Y/N
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Y/N
Risk Management	Y/N
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	Y/N
Economic/Financial Implications	Y/N
Human Rights Act	Y/N
Organisational Consequences	Y/N
Local People's Views	Y/N

Anti-Poverty  
Legal

Y/N  
Y/N

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### **Additional Information**

Appendix A – Proposed Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22  
Also links in the main body of the report.

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### **Officer to Contact**

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