

Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, 27 July 2022

Report Title: Overview and Scrutiny (O & S) Committee proposed Work Programme for the 2022-23 municipal year

Report By: Coral Harding, Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Officer

Key Decision: N/A

Purpose of Report

To summarise ideas received for the 2022/23 Overview and Scrutiny work programme and to propose the next steps for progressing these.

Recommendation(s)

That the Annual Meeting reach agreement on their key lines of inquiry for the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for the 2022/23 municipal year

Reasons for Recommendations

It is the responsibility of members serving on the Overview and Scrutiny committee to set their own work programme for each municipal year at the Annual Meeting.

Introduction

1. Following the local elections in May 2022, a new Overview and Scrutiny committee was appointed at the Annual Council. The committee consists of eleven members (in total) and is a mixture of new and returning committee members including the Chair and Vice Chair.
2. The new committee to date has met to receive basis training and informally to discuss this year's work programme based on the committee's ideas and data from the organisation.
3. These ideas and themes draw on previous Overview and Scrutiny work. The committee have grouped work into themes to help retain the flexibility needed given the ongoing challenges the town and council continue to face.

Proposed Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2022/23

4. The committee has decided to pursue 4 themes this year; Finance, Equalities, Living Environment and Follow up 2021
5. They have prioritised 2 reviews within each theme to begin with and hope to explore other areas identified within the municipal year.
6. The work programme will use a combination of reviews and updates. It is also accepted that some of the information the require will be obtained from the quarterly review meetings.
7. The committee would also like a 'Meet the Leader' session with Council Leadership.
8. Appendix A sets out the proposed O&S work programme for the year ahead breaking down the proposed phases of each theme over the course of the year.
9. The bulk of the investigative work will be done through Quarter 2 and 3. Any recommendations from this work will be reported in Quarter 4. These recommendations will go to Cabinet or Full Council depending on relevance.

Meet the Leader

10. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are keen to commence the year by meeting the Council Leadership. The Leader and other cabinet portfolio holders will be invited to give an overview of the year and identify potential opportunities and challenges that the council might face.
11. The Overview and Scrutiny committee will welcome the feedback and use this to assist in refining their lines of enquiry.
12. The Overview and Scrutiny committee are keen to build a strong working relationship with the Leader and portfolio holders particularly given the committees 'critical friend' role. They would like to see positive outcomes for the public from a productive partnership.

Finance Theme

13. The Overview and Scrutiny committee are concerned by the large deficit the council faces this year which is currently estimated at £3.2 million. This is a challenging position for the council that has the potential to affect all public services provided.

14. Overview and Scrutiny committee are keen to help support efforts to lessen the impact of the deficit and will continue with the quarterly financial monitoring activities. They have also identified some review topic areas they would like to look at.
15. They have identified that the council may need to dispose of assets to help with the deficit. The committee have prioritised looking at how a criteria could be created to ensure any assets identified for disposal would provide both best value for the organisation and in the public interest.
16. The committee are keen to review how projects are prioritised and how financial over or underspends are monitored. They would like to see how the project selection and safeguards processes operate. This is also a prioritised review.
17. Other areas that the committee were concerned by is the current housing crisis and its impact on individuals and the large financial costs for the council.
18. They also wanted to review how income streams have been affected by the cost of living crisis such as car park revenue and council tax collections. They would like to see the support the council gives to individuals but also the impact this had on previous financial predictions.
19. The committee wants to review the Disabled Facilities Grant scheme. The budget for this remains large as residents have trouble successfully accessing the scheme. The committee would like to review the process and look for opportunities to improve this.
20. The committee would also like to see how newer funding schemes such as the Shared Prosperity Fund are accessible to the public.

Equalities theme

21. The previous years Overview and Scrutiny work programme included a review piece on equality and Women's safety.
22. The Women's safety piece focussed on the work conducted within Alexandra Park to improve safety following a petition from residents because of an incident. This was a successful review and the committee is still committed to monitoring the progress of this project.
23. The previous review was monitoring and supporting the work on the Equalities Charter with the previous portfolio holder.
24. The next steps to their work were to meet with relevant local groups to gather their views but this was unable to happen due to COVID.
25. The committee are keen to continue their equalities review as part of the new work programme and contribute still to the previous work on the Equalities Charter.
26. They would like to review how the organisation meets its statutory obligations under the Equalities legislation and the levels of accessibility & considerations in providing public services for a diverse population.
27. There has since been a motion to Full Council which has asked Overview and Scrutiny committee to consider the setting up of an Equalities working group. The committee has expressed that they would be keen to explore this.

Living Environment theme

28. Overview and Scrutiny noted residents' concerns in relation to their living environment. These included issues such as dog waste, potholes and sea water quality.
29. The committee would like to prioritise looking at the council's service provisions for waste, recycling and street cleansing given the high levels of public interest in this service. They would like to review how the council deals with issues of public concern such as fly tipping hotspots.
30. They highlighted the need for public education around issues such as dog waste and the issues residents have in disposing of bulky waste such as the cost of the service and access to the tip on foot.
31. They would also like to review 'My Hastings' data to see how well used the online reporting service is used. They would like to see if the data can be used to focus and improve services.
32. The committee would also like to prioritise looking at bathing water quality given the recent sewage spillages. They would like to review the working relationship between the council, residents and local groups with Southern Water in resolving the situation and preventing its reoccurrence in the future.

Follow up theme

33. The previous year's Overview and Scrutiny work programme was not completed in full by the committee, but they would like to continue and monitor progress from previous commitments.
34. The committee have decided to continue with the Equalities work in a separate theme for this year.
35. They would like to prioritise looking at how the motions review recommendations have been implemented. They would like to review the progress that would see a 6 monthly report to Full council showing how motions had been implemented. They would also like to see how motions have been implemented in the last 6 months.
36. They also would like when the opportunity arises to meet with Sea Change to discuss their achievements and future plans in the town. They are keen to learn about the progress and activity with regards to the town's economic growth and regeneration ambitions. Unfortunately, the original meeting scheduled last year had to be cancelled.

Next steps

37. The Overview and Scrutiny committee will need to agree their work programme and key lines of enquiry outlined in this report.
38. The committee needs to be mindful of the time and resources available to complete this programme in full prior to the next financial year.
39. The proposed work programme will need to retain some flexibility, adapting where appropriate to the demands on time and resource encountered throughout the year.
40. 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.

41. It is suggested that the review groups leads are firm up at this meeting.

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Overview and Scrutiny to agree their work programme	Work programme agreed	27 th July	Overview and Scrutiny committee
Overview and Scrutiny to agree review groups leads	Review groups leads agreed	27 th July	Overview and Scrutiny committee

Wards Affected

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score:

Have you used relevant project tools?: N/A

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	Y/N
Legal	Y/N

Additional Information

Appendix A- Proposed Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23

Officer to Contact

Officer: Coral Harding

Email: Charding@hastings.gov.uk

Tel: 01424 451484