

**Report To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**Report Title:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme (2022/23) Update

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

**Key Decision:** N/A

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### **Purpose of Report**

To provide an update of progress for the 2022/23 Overview and Scrutiny work programme and proposed follow up actions.

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### **Recommendation(s)**

**That the committee note the progress of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for the 2022/23 municipal year and follow up actions.**

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### **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 and complete the associated actions by the end of year.

## Introduction

1. Following the agreement of the work programme at Annual Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022. The committee has since met to provisionally confirm work groups and lines of enquiry.
2. The confirmed work programme can be found in appendix A. These ideas and themes draw on previous Overview and Scrutiny work. The committee have grouped work into 4 themes this year; Finance, Equalities, Living Environment and Follow up 2021
3. The committee work on the work programme was paused briefly in January as they participated in the consultation for the draft budget and corporate plan.

## Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2022/23

4. The committee has decided to pursue 4 themes this year;
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 they require will be obtained from the quarterly review meetings.
7. The committee wanted a 'Meet the Leader' session with Council Leadership. This session occurred successfully on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022.
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 has been completed 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.
10. The committee has been discussing potential new items for next years work programme. They believe Finance and Living Environment should continue but would like to include Health as well. The Equalities work group would continue to meet.

## Finance Theme

11. The Overview and Scrutiny committee are concerned by the large deficit the council faces this year which is now currently estimated at £3.36 million for 2022/23. Overview and Scrutiny committee are keen to help support efforts to lessen the impact of the deficit.
12. The work programme is focussing two areas; the disposal of council assets review & project prioritisation and spend review.
13. These reviews have been led by Councillor Patmore. Councillors Carr, Hay and Pragnell have been part of the review group and helping with investigations.
14. Councillors have been continuing their enquiries and building on previous work concerning the councils' finances and asset disposals.

15. Members of the review group participated in a session regarding the Housing Acquisitions proposals in January.
16. Senior Officers answered questions concerning the proposals. Councillors raised concerns about the level of costs associated with Homelessness and how this proposal would help with this.
17. After having their questions answered Councillors were satisfied that the Housing Acquisitions proposal would be of benefit to the public and help with the current housing and homelessness crisis.
18. Councillors have also been monitoring the councils finances and interjecting where appropriate.

## **Equalities theme**

19. The Overview and Scrutiny committee wanted to continue previous work from last years work programme. This included reviewing the park safety works and gathering views of local people.
20. Councillor Carr will lead this review. Councillors Arthur and Foster be part of this review group.
21. The review lead has requested an update on the ongoing park safety works and the previous work on the equalities charter.
22. An update on the Parks Safety works was given in December 2022. Installation of safety features such as CCTV and lighting is nearing completion.
23. They would like to review and have requested an update on how the organisation meets its statutory obligations under equalities legislation. The review is also looking at how the monitoring of levels of accessibility & considerations in providing public services for a diverse population.
24. The motion to Full Council that asked to look at setting up of an equality working group. The first meeting of this occurred in January.
25. The meeting was well attended, and it was agreed that Councillor Carr will Chair the working group and Councillor Arthur will be Vice Chair of the group.
26. The equalities working group will meet every 2 months. Councillors attending this meeting have identified the following actions.
  - Internal organisational surveys to identify equality needs.
  - Ward Councillors to identify groups in wards for possible consultation
  - Review of other local authority's equalities charter
  - Reviewing with the LSP about the effectiveness of their current equalities charter.
27. The equalities working group will also review the completed census data to help identify residents and there needs.

## **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. Councillor Jobson will lead this review. Councillors Carr, Foster and Roberts will be part of this review group.
30. The committee originally wanted to prioritise looking at the councils' provisions for waste, recycling, and street cleansing. They are going to look at how residents are using My Hastings online reporting service.
31. The My Hastings review has been investigated and had found that this area of reporting had been underused by comparison to other website areas. The committee are keen to find better ways to promote this service.
32. The committee have been concerned about the recent floods and the impact on local residents and businesses. They are pleased to see that the corporate plan has been updated with a section to address this.
33. The committee are keen to see the results of the East Sussex County Councils independent review of the floods. Pending the result of this they review the data at a follow up meeting.
34. Lead Councillors and Officers continue to meet with Southern Water to find solutions to resolve the situation.
35. The committee would like to explore to see if a 'Keeping it Natural' campaign could be developed. The focus of the campaign is to prevent people disposing of wet wipes and plastic waste in toilets. The campaign would encourage people to only dispose of natural waste instead.
36. The committee would like to work with housing providers as residents have been raising ongoing issues relating to noise and waste.
37. The committee would like to see improvements to encourage and use greener travel modes, walking, cycling, wheeling, but there are not safe routes, such as crossing busy roads, therefore identifying these must be relayed back to relevant parties.
38. The committee would also like to see the strategy for the clean up after major festivals following the reduction in staffing to the councils street cleansing service.

### **Follow up theme**

39. 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.
40. This work was put on hold for this quarter as the committee felt it was more important to focus on other parts of their work programme.
41. They will be looking at how the previous year's motions review recommendations have been implemented. They would like to review the progress on the requested constitutional reform 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.

42. 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.
43. They will be looking at appropriate timings for this meeting and scoping lines of enquiry.
44. This review will lead by Councillor Patmore.

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Overview and Scrutiny to agree their work programme actions	Work programme and actions agreed	29 <sup>th</sup> March 2023	Overview and Scrutiny committee

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## Wards Affected

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## Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score:48.1

Have you used relevant project tools?: N/A

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

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

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## Additional Information

Appendix A- Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23

## Officer to Contact

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