

Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, 12th July 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

Purpose of Report

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

Recommendation(s)

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

That the committee would like to give their thanks to previous committee members, Cabinet and Officers for their contributions and support with the work programme.

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.

Overview and Scrutiny committee appreciates the support it receives within the organisation. The committee recognises that working together produces a better outcome for the council and the public.

Introduction

1. Following the agreement of the work programme at Annual Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 27th 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 used the opportunity at quarterly review meetings to gain the information they required from Cabinet members and Senior Officers.
7. Additionally to the work programme, the committee wanted a 'Meet the Leader' session with Council Leadership. This session occurred successfully on 17th October 2022.
8. Appendix A sets out the O&S work programme for the year ahead breaking down the proposed phases of each theme over the course of this year.

Finance Theme

9. 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.
10. The work programme is focussing two areas; the disposal of council assets review & project prioritisation and spend review.
11. These reviews have been led by Councillor Patmore. Councillors Carr, Hay and Pragnell have been part of the review group and helping with investigations.
12. Councillors have been continuing their enquiries and building on previous work concerning the councils' finances and asset disposals.
13. They used the information from the financial and performance monitoring reports to help focus their enquiries.
14. Members of the review group participated in a session regarding the Housing Acquisitions proposals in January.

15. 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.
16. Councillors were keen to explore the results of the asset management review but this is still an ongoing piece of work for the council. The committee will continue to monitor this review as public interest is high in relation to buildings of cultural and historic significance.

Finance Theme Follow up Actions

17. The committee have identified the need for more financial briefings and training given the council's financial situation. They believe that Councillors need more insight and a stronger skill set to help with critical decision making in this environment.
18. The committee have identified the need for more pre scrutiny decision involvement. They believe that their role as a 'critical friend' is vital to the councils success.

Equalities theme

(i) Violence Against Women and Park Safety project

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 led this review. Councillors Arthur and Foster were also 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 were given on the Parks Safety works and a final report was submitted in May 2023 to the committee. Works were successfully completed including opening sight lines, additional lighting and installing CCTV. The public feedback for this was overall positive.

Violence Against Women and Park Safety project Follow Up Actions

23. The Park Safety Work has been completed. The committee will monitor its impact on park users.
24. The committee would like to thank the Community Safety Manager and Portfolio holder for their work on this project and the detailed updates they gave to committee members.

(ii) Equalities Working Group

25. The Equalities Working Group has met on 18th January and 28th March. The meeting is chaired by Councillor Carr (Chair) and Councillor Arthur (Vice-Chair). The meetings have been open to all Councillors and have been well attended.
26. The Equalities Working Group continue to look at how the council 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.
27. The Equalities Working Group will meet every 2 months. Councillors attending this meeting have been working on the following actions.

- Internal organisational surveys to identify equality needs.
- Ward Councillors to identify groups in wards for possible consultation.
- Reviewing the recent census data to identify needs within the community.
- Review of other local authority's equalities charter.
- Reviewing with the LSP about the effectiveness of their current equalities charter.
- Reviewing the councils equality performance indicators
- Reviewing accessibility issues for schemes such as the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

Equalities Working Group Follow Up Theme

28. The Equalities Working Group will continue to meet. They have an outline of work that they wish to continue;

- Development of equalities charter
- Development of equalities PI's
- Creation of surveys for internal and external use
- Working with community groups
- Review council services and identify any opportunities to remove barriers

Living Environment theme

29. Overview and Scrutiny noted residents' concerns in relation to their living environment. These included issues such as dog waste, potholes, and sea water quality.
30. Councillor Jobson has led this review. Councillors Carr, Foster and Roberts have been part of this review group.
31. 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.
32. 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.
33. 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.
34. The committee are keen to see the results of the East Sussex County Councils independent review of the floods. The initial report has now been released. The committee will review this.
35. Lead Councillors and Officers continue to meet with Southern Water to find solutions to resolve the situation. Given this situation has had a high impact on the borough, the committee will continue to monitor the progress on this.

Living Environment theme Follow Up Actions

36. The committee will continue to monitor Southern Waters response to floods and sewage discharges. They would like to see Southern Waters plans for prevention of further incidences.
37. The committee would encourage further promotion of My Hastings to increase the use of waste reporting services by residents.

38. The committee would like to see climate change delivery plan that would have clear milestones for the council to achieve. This would help the public to see the councils activities and achievements more.

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. They looked at how the previous year's motions review recommendations have been implemented. The constitutional reform has still to be agreed that would led to a 6 monthly report to full council to see how motions have been implemented. The committee does note that the public tracker for motions is present on our website.
41. 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. This had been put on hold this year pending an outcome of an external review.

Next steps

42. The work programme is now concluded for the year. Next years work programme will be confirmed at Annual Overview and Scrutiny on Thursday 27th July.
43. The committee have identified that they would like to approach the work programme differently and allow it to become more focussed.
44. They have identified that the areas of focus within the council will be Finance and Housing & Homelessness. This is due to the Councils current financial situation.
45. Areas of public interest outside of the council will be identified with more flexibility. Areas will be identified at the start of the year and during it. The committee believes this will give a better response to public needs rather than focus on one area for the whole year.
46. The committee may also continue lines of enquiry from 2022/23 should they choice to in next year's programme.

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Overview and Scrutiny to agree their Q4 work programme actions	Work programme and actions agreed	12 th July 2023	Overview and Scrutiny committee

Wards Affected

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

Additional Information

Appendix A- Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23

Officer to Contact

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