

Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 6 March 2024

Report Title: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme (2023/24) Update

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

Key Decision: N/A

Purpose of Report

To provide an update of progress for the 2023/24 Overview and Scrutiny work programme and proposed follow up actions.

Recommendation(s)

That the committee note the progress of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year and follow up actions.

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 27th July 2023. 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 2022
3. The investigations of the work have been delayed since the last meeting held on 5th December. This has been due to Councillors involved in the Budget process and the Christmas break.
4. There has also been changes to the political balance and leadership of the council that has led to changes on the committee. This has changed the leads and review groups for parts of the work programme.

Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2023/24

5. The committee has decided to pursue 4 themes this 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. Appendix A sets out the O&S work programme for the year ahead breaking down the proposed reviews of each theme over the course of the year.
8. 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.

Finance Theme

9. The Overview and Scrutiny committee are concerned by the large deficit the council faces this year which is currently estimated at £1.6 million. Overview and Scrutiny committee are keen to help support efforts to lessen the impact of the deficit.
10. The work programme consists of several different areas as followed;
 - Finance Peer Review Meeting with Council Leadership
 - Costs of Homelessness
 - Asset Management Review
 - Tourism & Cultural Strategy
 - Management & Staff restructuring
11. Overview and Scrutiny have contributed to the Budget Planning discussions. They held a meeting on 20th November 2023. The agenda and minutes for this meeting can be found [here](#)

12. Their conclusions were considered by Budget Planning Cabinet held on 4th December 2023 and Budget Planning Full Council on 13th December 2023.
13. Overview and Scrutiny were consulted regarding the Budget on 5th February 2024. The agenda and minutes for this meeting can be found [here](#)
14. These conclusions were considered by Budget Cabinet on 12th February and Budget Full Council on 21st February.
15. Councillor Patmore has led this review.

Equalities theme

16. The committee recognises that local residents come from many different backgrounds and have many different needs. The Equalities theme will look at how the council monitors the levels of accessibility and considerations taken in providing public services for a diverse population.
17. The Overview and Scrutiny committee wanted to continue previous work from last years work programme and were keen for the Equalities Working Group to continue.
18. The committee would like this work to continue and will look at what priorities can be achieved this municipal year.
19. Councillor Carr will lead this review.

Living Environment theme

20. Overview and Scrutiny recognise the need for a healthy living environment that is safe & clean, promotes healthy behaviours and is pleasant to live in.
21. Overview and Scrutiny believe in positively promoting a healthy living environment in the borough and actively support initiatives to reduce issues that can affect this such as pollution, climate change and cleanliness.
22. The Government has recently allocated funds for the Council's new food waste collection scheme due to go live in 2026. This has been identified as a funding gap.
23. The committee will monitor the implementation of the food waste collection scheme and the both the capital and revenue funding.
24. Councillor Hilton previously led the review. A new review lead will need to be implemented due to Councillor Hilton no longer being a member of the committee.

Follow up theme

25. 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.
26. The review will complete a review of the performance indicators and will look at the indicators for Finance, Housing and Climate Change as a priority. They are currently working with the Head of Strategic Programmes to achieve this. Senior Managers have been asked to review there current targets.

27. The review would still like to review Sea Changes activities and achievements. The committee are currently looking at ways to explore this review with other partners.
28. The review would also like to meet with Southern water to discuss the future plans for the town and the resolutions to the issues that are currently being experienced.
29. A meeting with Southern Water is currently being arranged by Officers with the aim to hold a meeting this municipal year.
30. This review will lead by Councillor Sinden.

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Overview and Scrutiny to agree their work programme actions	Work programme and actions agreed	6 th March 2024	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- Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24

Officer to Contact

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