

RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 SEPTEMBER 2023

REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND ELECTIONS

A.1 WORK PROGRAMMING – INCLUDING MONITORING OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY OF FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

(Report prepared by Keith Durran)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The report provides the Committee with an update on its approved Work Programme for 2023/24 (including progress with enquiries set out in its Work Programme), feedback to the Committee on the decisions in respect of previous recommendations from the Committee in respects of enquiries undertaken and a list of forthcoming decisions for which notice has been given since publication of the agenda for the Committee's last meeting.

INVITEES

None.

BACKGROUND

The Council commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to undertake an 'Overview & Scrutiny Development Review' in 2021 as a way of further improving that function at the Council. Two relevant recommendations arising from that review were:

“Further strengthening the annual process for developing work programmes for each O&S committee - Engaging Members, Officers, partners and the public to prioritise the topics for review. This could include a selection criteria to identify appropriate topics for the work programme. Currently the work programme is also the last item on the agenda at O&S meetings, we would recommend bringing it to the beginning, so it can be given greater priority and benefit from more considered discussion, rather than being subject to the inevitable end of meeting fatigue.

Reviewing how the recommendations are made and how impact is measured – This could include putting the ‘recommendations monitoring report’ at the beginning of agendas to orientate O&S towards outcomes-focused meetings, alongside an emphasis on finding strong recommendations from questioning to present to Cabinet (or partners) as improvement or challenge proposals.”

The inclusion of the matters set out in the “purpose of this report” section above seeks to further re-inforce the inter-relationship of the matters referred to. As such, it is designed to further support consideration of work programming of the Committee and contribute to addressing progress with the Corporate Plan.

DETAILED INFORMATION

WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

The detailed matters relating to the following matters are set out in the relevant Appendix identified:

- (1) Work Programme for 2023/24 – See Appendix A;
- (2) feedback to the Committee on the decisions in respect of previous recommendations from the Committee in respects of enquiries undertaken – see Appendix B; and
- (3) a list of forthcoming decisions for which notice has been given since publication of the agenda for the Committee’s last meeting – See Appendix C.

In considering work programming matters, the Committee is further reminded of the other recommendations from the CfGS review undertaken in 2021:

*“**Considering greater use of task and finish groups** – This more informal type of O&S can allow improved cross-party working and detailed investigation of a single issue focussed on producing substantive recommendations.*

***Improved agenda planning and management** - Committees should focus on one or two substantive items per agenda to allow for cross-cutting themes to be properly identified and explored, and different insights brought to bear on critical issues.*

***Considering how to engage the public in the work of O&S** - This could include O&S going on more site visits in the community, inviting the public to offer ideas for work programmes, and greater use of social media channels for resident input and communicating the progress and impact of scrutiny work.*

***A clearer focus on democratic accountability** - Scrutiny of Cabinet Members should form a key part of the work programme, providing an opportunity to hold the Leader and portfolio holders to account for delivery of the corporate plan and any other issues O&S feel is important.”*

The Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is one of two overview and scrutiny committees established by the Council to specifically focus on the following areas of Council work (as detailed in Article 6.02(i) of the Council’s Constitution):

“To perform the role of Overview and Scrutiny and its functions in relation to:

- *The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Committee will normally be Members of a political group that is not represented on the Cabinet. The Committee will hold 8 scheduled meetings per year but with the Chairman able to call additional formal meetings. Meetings of Task and Finish Groups can be called as required, following the terms of reference being agreed by the Committee.*
- *To perform the role of Overview and Scrutiny and its functions in relation to the effective use of the Council’s resources including approval of discrete researched and evidenced reviews on the effectiveness.*

Financial Forecast Budget setting and monitoring (including General Fund & Housing Revenue Account)

- *Service Delivery and Performance (where not delegated to the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee)*
- *Procurement and Contract Management*
- *Transformation and Digital Strategies*
- *Customer Service and Standards*

The Constitution provides for the two overview and scrutiny committees to submit a work programme to full Council for approval. Rule 7 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules sets out the position as follows:

“Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will submit a work programme for the year ahead and a review of the previous year’s activities to the full Council for approval. In addition it will be responsible for co-ordinating and prioritising its work programme on an ongoing basis.

In preparing, co-ordinating and prioritising its programme, each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will take into account:-

- *The General Role and Principles of undertaking its functions, as set out in Part 2 Article 6;*
- *The planned work on the preparation of elements of the Budget and Policy Framework, as set out in the Council’s Business Plan;*
- *The need for statutory timetables to be met;*
- *The wishes of all members of the committee;*
- *Requests from the Cabinet to carry out reviews; and*
- *Requests from Group Leaders in accordance with Rule 8.”*

The Committee should be aware that at present the Corporate Plan for 2024-28 is currently being worked on and provisions may have to reviewed once the new Plan is adopted.

To constitute the “Council Enforcement Arrangements” Task and Finish Group

On 17 August 2023, The Head of Democratic Services and Elections, under instruction from the Chairman of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, publish the decision of the membership of the “Council Enforcement Arrangements” Task and Finish Group.

This comprised of several different political groups (3 Conservative, 2 Tending Independents and 1 Labour Group Councillors). The size of the Task and Finish Group is considered near to optimal with a view to securing good representation at each meeting of the Group while not making the work of the Task and Finish Group too burdensome on the Members involved in the enquiry. All the members of the Task and Finish Group have volunteered to serve on it and two of the six Members are drawn from outside of the Membership of the ‘parent’ Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Authority for the decision derives from Minute 5 of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 June 2023. That provided for Officers to be authorised, in consultation with the Committee Chairman, to make appointments to a Task and Finish Group to undertake the enquiry into ‘Council Enforcement Arrangements’ as approved by Council (Minute 37 of 11 July 2023).

Cllr Paul Honeywood – Chairman of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee - was consulted on the proposed decision and confirmed he was content for the decision to be made.

Decision:

(1) To constitute a Task and Finish Group on behalf of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Task and Finish Group shall have the following name “Council Enforcement Arrangements Task and Finish Group”

(2) To note that the full Terms of the enquiry to be undertaken through the Task and Finish Group referred to in (1) above (as approved by Full Council) are set out at OSC Work Programme 2023 24 - Council Enforcement Arrangements.

(3) To appoint the following Councillors to the Task and Finish Group:
Cllr Paul Honeywood (Chairman), Cllr M Cossens, Cllr Sue Honeywood, Cllr Morrison, Cllr Smith and Cllr Sudra.

The first meeting of the Task and Finish group is Thursday 14 September 2023.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee considers and notes the progress with enquiries set out in its Work Programme 2023/24, feedback to the Committee on the decisions in respect of previous recommendations and the list of forthcoming decisions; and