

# RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 SEPTEMBER 2024

## 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 2024/25 (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 2024/25**

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

- (1) Proposed Work Programme Report for Full Council for 2024/25 – See Appendix A;
- (2) feedback to the Committee on the decisions in respect of previous recommendations from the Committee in regards to 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. Meetings of the Committee will be held in accordance with the programme of meetings approved at the Annual Meeting of the Council. In addition, extraordinary meetings may be called from time to time as and when appropriate. A meeting may be called by the Chairman of the Committee, or by the Head of Democratic Services & Elections, if considered necessary or appropriate. 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 of:*

*Financial Forecast Budget setting and monitoring (including General Fund & Housing Revenue Account but excluding those budgetary matters delegated to the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee)*

*Colchester/Tendring Borders Garden Community Housing Strategy and Homeless Service Service Delivery and Performance (where not delegated to the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee) Procurement and Contract Management”*

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;*
- *provision for budget scrutiny and scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy, as appropriate;*
- *the need for statutory timetables to be met;*
- *the expressed wishes of the members of the committee;*
- *requests from the Cabinet to carry out reviews and/or suggestions from the liaison meetings held under the Cabinet Overview & Scrutiny Protocol; and*
- *requests from Members and/or Group Leaders in accordance with Rule 8.*

In considering the Work Programme of enquiries, the Committee must have regard to the Corporate Plan 2024-28 and the themes of that Corporate Plan are:

- Pride in our area and services to residents
- Raising aspirations and creating opportunities
- Championing our local environment
- Working with partners to improve quality of life
- Promoting our heritage offer, attracting visitors and encouraging them to stay longer
- Financial Sustainability and openness

It should also be noted that the Chairman of this Committee held a meeting on 10 September 2024 with the Head of Democratic Services and Elections to discuss the work programme, Task and Finish Group membership and arrangements and the agenda for this meeting.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. That the Committee considers and notes the progress with enquiries set out in its Work Programme 2024/25, feedback to the Committee on the decisions in respect of previous recommendations and the list of forthcoming decisions.**
- 2. That the Committee makes the formal appointments to the following Task and Finish Groups:**
  - Asset Management arrangements of the Council – Acquisition and disposal links to the Corporate Plan.**
  - Housing Strategy, Development and Infrastructure – including Temporary Accommodation arrangements.**
  - Council Enforcement Arrangements – including corporate oversight, learning and data sharing.**