

RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 APRIL 2025

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (CORPORATE POLICY AND SUPPORT)

A.3 WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – INCLUDING MONITORING OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY OF FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

(Report prepared by Ian Ford)

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.

The report also provides an opportunity for updates on the work of the Committee's Task and Finish Groups.

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-enforce 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 matters are set out in the relevant Appendix identified:

- (1) Work Programme for 2024/25 approved by Full Council on 6 August 2024 – 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 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

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;*
- 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 Committee will hold an informal meeting on Wednesday 9 April 2025 with the Assistant Director (Corporate Policy and Support) to discuss the work programme and the agenda for this meeting.

Work Programme – 2025/2026 Municipal Year

Officers are beginning the process of developing the Committee’s work programme for 2025/26. Initially, this will involve seeking suggestions from:-

- Members;
- the Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council (through a joint meeting

under the Cabinet/Overview & Scrutiny Protocol with the Chairmen of the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, which will also involve the Chief Executive, the Corporate Director (Law and Governance) and the Assistant Director (Corporate Policy & Support);

- Management Team;
- Town and Parish Councils, partner agencies and community groups; and
- The public.

Officers will then collate the replies received that are relevant to this Committee, associating suggestions with a corporate plan theme, identifying information sources and possible invitees and what might be the benefit of the enquiries. That collation will then be firstly discussed with the Chairman of the Committee and then by the Committee at an informal meeting, which will be arranged in due course.

The proposed Work Programme for 2025/26 together with the annual review of the work undertaken by the Committee during 2024/25 will be formally submitted to the Committee for its approval at its meeting due to be held on 1 July 2025.

The Work Programme, as recommended by the Committee, together with the annual review of the work undertaken by the Committee during 2024/25, will then be submitted to the meeting of the Full Council due to be held on 15 July 2025 for its approval.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:-

- (a) considers and notes the progress with enquiries set out in its Work Programme 2024/25, plus any feedback to the Committee on the decisions in respect of previous recommendations and the list of forthcoming decisions;**
- (b) invites oral updates on the work of the three Task and Finish Groups established by the Committee (as referenced in the Work Programme at Appendix A):**
 - (i) Asset Management Arrangements (Cllr. Mark Cossens is its Chairman);**
 - (ii) Council Enforcement Arrangements (Cllr. Paul Honeywood is its Chairman);**
 - (iii) Housing Strategy Development and Temporary Accommodation (Councillor Dan Casey is its Chairman);**
- (c) notes the arrangements that are being made for the Committee to consider and decide in due course its Work Programme for 2025/26.**