



**BUSINESS SUPPORT  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
30 NOVEMBER 2017**

**TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH SCRUTINY REVIEWS – 2018/19**

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**Summary**

This report invites the Committee to consider and approve the topics suggested for in-depth scrutiny reviews in 2018/19.

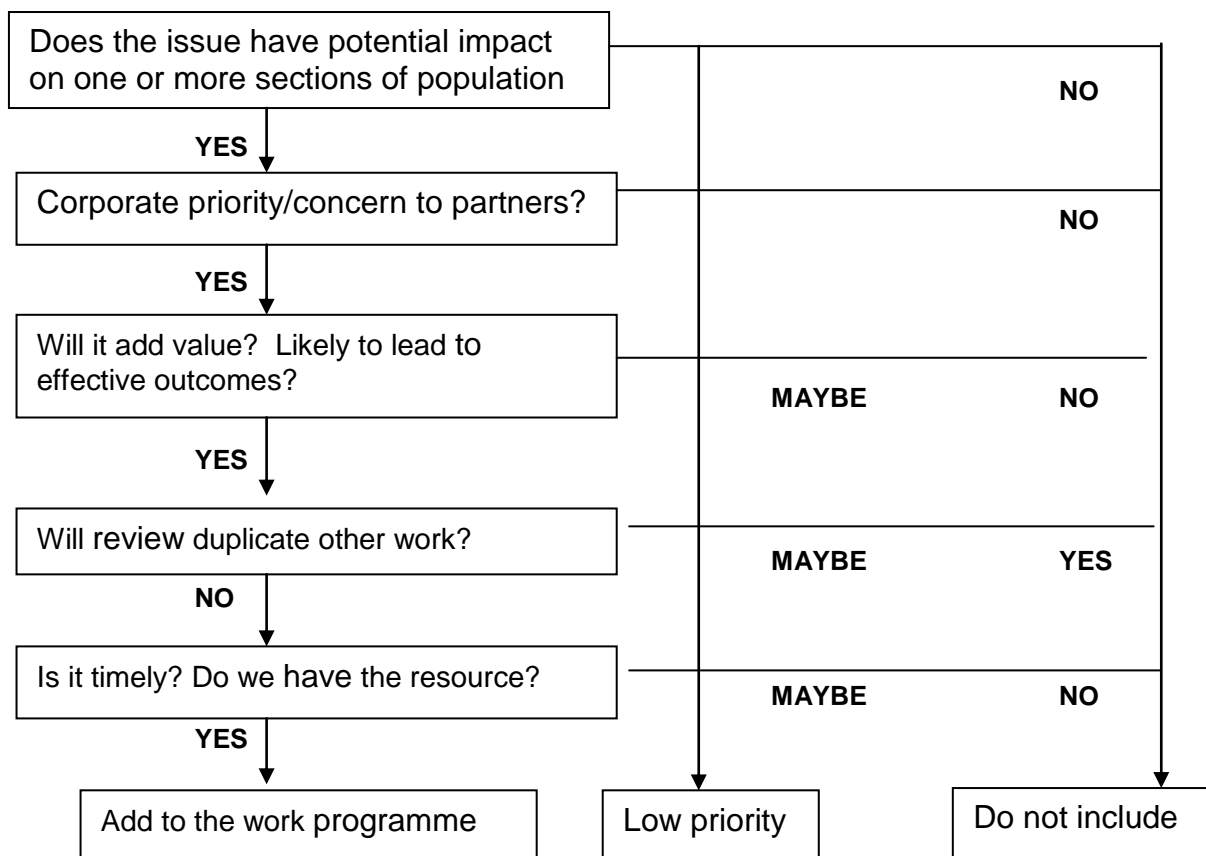
**1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 The Council's Constitution states that each Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for setting its own work programme, which should take into account the wishes of all Members of the Committee.
- 1.2 The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee has within its remit the provision of guidance and leadership on the development and co-ordination of the scrutiny function for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees, including guidance on priorities for scrutiny activities.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 In 2011 the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to exercise a more pro-active role than previously in prioritising the programme of in-depth scrutiny review work. This was in light of a Council decision that a maximum of three in-depth reviews via Task Groups or themed Committee meetings could be undertaken annually. Every effort is made to programme Task Groups to start and conclude their work within 20 weeks although, in practice, the pace is determined by Members and the degree to which evidence can be gathered within that timescale. Typically there is some slippage (and this has been reflected in the indicative timeline for the current programme of Task Group activity outlined in paragraph 3.3 of this report).
- 2.2 Also in 2011 a more systematic and criteria based process was adopted by Members for the selection of review topics. This reflects national best practice and is summarised below:

### Questions to ask when prioritising topics for review



### 3. Recommended scrutiny in-depth review topics for 2018/19

3.1 In line with established practice each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has now discussed options for in-depth reviews in 2018/19 taking into account Medway's adopted selection criteria. A long-list of the following six topics were then discussed at an informal meeting on 31 October to which all Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen, Vice Chairmen and Opposition Spokespersons were invited:

- Complaints Handling (Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee)
- Voluntary sector Capacity (Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees)
- Physical Activity (Health and Social Care, Children and Young People, Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committees)
- Support for Carers ( Health and Adult Social Care/Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committees)
- The Impact of Social Isolation for the Council ( Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

- Town Centres for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Regeneration, Culture and Environment and Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committees)

3.2 Appendix 1 sets out the rationale and a criteria-based assessment for the six topics on the long list. Members who attended the informal meeting on 31 October to discuss next steps unanimously agreed that four of the topics should be recommended for approval by this Committee as Task Groups in the priority order listed below in paragraph 3.3.

3.3 If approved, the indicative timeline for this round of Task Group activity would be as follows, subject to a review just before and after the local elections in May 2019:

Review 1: Social Isolation	March to July 2018
Review 2: Support for Carers	September 2018 to January 2019
Review 3: Physical Activity	February to May 2019
Review 4: Town Centres	July to November 2019

3.4 With regard to the two topics on the long list which were not recommended for Task Group activity the Members who met together on 31 October have suggested further action as follows:

- Complaint Handling – regular review of learning from complaints (excluding social care complaints) at the Member User Group, a cross-party Member Level Group which meets informally on a regular basis to discuss customer experience of Council services
- Capacity of the Voluntary Sector in Medway – an assessment of risk through the next six monthly review of the Council’s Corporate Risk Register and research to establish how other Unitary Councils manage their relationship with the voluntary sector. Further discussion to then take place with this Committee to determine the scope for further scrutiny of particular issues and to consider the option of (and format for) any direct dialogue by Overview and Scrutiny with representatives of the voluntary sector in Medway.

#### 4. Consultation

4.1 Members of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been able to contribute suggestions for topics to be included in the 2018/19 programme of scrutiny in-depth review work.

#### 5. Risk Management

5.1 Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
In-depth scrutiny reviews fail to make an impact	In published guidance on effective work programming for Overview and Scrutiny Committees the Centre for Public Scrutiny says “effective work programming is the bedrock of an effective scrutiny function. Done well, it can help to lay the foundations for targeted, incisive and timely work on issues of local importance, where scrutiny can add value. Done badly, scrutiny can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done is likely to be minimal”	This Committee has agreed a rigorous process for identifying and prioritising topics for inclusion in the in-depth review work programme.

## 6. Financial and Legal Implications

- 6.1 There is a budget of £4000 within Democratic Services to support activity associated with in depth scrutiny review work. This can be used for member level visits, expenses claims from those invited to give evidence, expert advice and support with community engagement and other expenditure.
- 6.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## 7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Committee is asked to agree that the programme of Task Group topics for 2018/19 should be as follows:
- Review 1: The Impact of Social Isolation for the Council (Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee)
- Review 2: Support for Carers (Health and Adult Social Care/Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committees)
- Review 3: Physical Activity (Health and Social Care, Children and Young People, Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committees)
- Review 4: Town Centres for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Regeneration, Culture and Environment and Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committees)
- 7.2 The Committee is asked to agree the following action in relation to the two topics which were not selected for Task Group activity:
- Complaint Handling – regular review of learning from complaints (excluding social care complaints) at the Member User Group, a cross-party Member Level Group which meets informally on a regular basis to discuss customer experience of Council services

- Capacity of the Voluntary Sector in Medway – an assessment of risk through the next six monthly review of the Council’s Corporate Risk Register and research to establish how other Unitary Councils manage their relationship with the voluntary sector. Further discussion to then take place with this Committee to determine the scope for further scrutiny of particular issues and to consider the option of (and format for) any direct dialogue by Overview and Scrutiny with representatives of the voluntary sector in Medway.

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**Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Longlist of in-depth reviews topics suggested by Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2018/19

**Background papers**

A Cunning Plan? Devising a scrutiny work programme – guidance published by Centre for Public Scrutiny