

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 MARCH 2020

WORK PROGRAMME

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Summary

This item advises Members of the current work programme and allows the Committee to adjust it in the light of latest priorities, issues and circumstances. It gives Members the opportunity to shape and direct the Committee's activities over the year.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Under Chapter 4, Part 5 of the Constitution – Overview and Scrutiny Rules, paragraph 21.1 (xv) General terms of reference, each overview and scrutiny Committee has the responsibility for setting its own work programme.

2. Background

- 2.1 Appendix 1 to this report sets out the proposed work programme for the Committee during the current municipal year.

3. Agenda planning meeting

- 3.1 Members will be aware that Overview and Scrutiny Committees hold agenda planning meetings on a regular basis. These give officers guidance on information that Members wish them to provide when scrutinising an issue. An agenda planning meeting took place on 12 February 2020.
- 3.2 At the meeting it was requested that officers circulate a draft of the Annual School Performance Report, ahead of the main despatch, in order to give the Committee Members ample time to fully digest the detail.
- 3.3 At the meeting a number of suggestions were made about the future scrutiny of children's services, which are included in section 5 below.

4. Cabinet Forward Plan

- 4.1 The latest Forward Plan of forthcoming Cabinet decisions was published on 3 February 2020 and can be viewed using the following link:
<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=355&RP=115>
- 4.2 Set out below is a list of items featuring on the Forward Plan that fall within the terms of reference of the Children and Young People (CYP) Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee is asked to identify any items it wishes to consider before the Cabinet decision is taken (where dates permit), other than those already programmed in Appendix 1:

Title of Decision:	Anticipated Cabinet Decision Date:
<p>Council Plan Monitoring and Risk Register 2019/2020 – Quarter 3</p> <p>This report will provide details of Quarter 3 performance for 2019/2020 against the priorities set out in the Council Plan and will bring forward the latest risk management review.</p> <p><i>Scheduled for 5 March 2020 meeting</i></p>	<p>3 March 2020</p>
<p>Youth Justice Plan</p> <p>This report will provide details of the Youth Justice Plan which forms part of the Council's Policy Framework. This report will initially be considered by this Committee and Cabinet will be asked to make recommendations to Council on 23 April 2020 for final consideration and approval.</p> <p><i>Scheduled for 5 March 2020 meeting</i></p>	<p>7 April 2020</p>
<p>Outcome of the Statutory Consultation Period for the Prescribed Alterations at Park Wood Infant and Junior Schools</p> <p>This report will outline outcomes of the statutory consultation period on the proposals to amalgamate Park Wood Infant and Junior Schools and requests Cabinet approval to implement the change.</p> <p>Please note that it will only be necessary to submit a report to Cabinet for consideration and determination if any objections and received during the statutory consultation process.</p> <p>If no objections are received during this period, the Director of People - Children and Adults Services, in consultation with Portfolio Holders for Children's Services (Lead Member) and Education and Schools, will determine whether to approve the proposals in accordance with Cabinet decision no. 7/2020.</p>	<p>12 May 2020</p>

5. Scrutiny of Children's Services

- 5.1 Following an inspection of Children's Services in July 2019, OFSTED commented that whilst governance arrangements in Medway are clearly delineated and the commitment to improving services is apparent, there is insufficient analysis and understanding of underlying complexities and continuing risks to children. In her December 2019 report to the Minister of State for Children and Families, the Commissioner for Children's Social Care in Medway stated that going forward the role of scrutiny needs to be strengthened, and more training provided for the wider group of members on children's issues and their role as ward councillors, if they are to deliver on making a real difference for children.
- 5.2 In response to this feedback work is underway to create a framework for ongoing member development and new ways of working that will maximise the impact of the activities of Councillors involved in overview and scrutiny of Children's Social Care.
- 5.3 As a starting point, guidance produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) on how to effectively scrutinise children's safeguarding and services for looked after children has been circulated to all Members of the Council. In summary the guidance says that in order to provide effective scrutiny of children's social care, overview and scrutiny members should be clear that their fundamental role is to make sense of local performance and to champion the interests of children. The guidance says a good scrutiny function requires members to have knowledge of:
- the principles and practice of safeguarding and child protection (with knowledge about quality of practice as well)
 - how local safeguarding arrangements are managed and structured
 - how to put the child at centre stage in Scrutiny and how to test the extent to which there is a commitment to listening and understanding the experience of children within Children's Services – the experience of the child "shining through" in assessments for example
 - how to navigate complex systems of multiple agencies and organisations
 - how to work collaboratively with partners and stakeholders whilst maintaining critical challenge
- 5.4 A speedy informal review has been undertaken of the arrangements in place for scrutiny of children's social care in nine other local authority areas (including a number of Councils that have recently progressed from an inadequate OFSTED judgement to good or outstanding) to identify any common themes or differences of practice compared to the arrangements in Medway. Whilst there is some variability in the scrutiny arrangements in place in these nine local authorities, there are some common themes including; regular access by scrutiny members to detailed performance information which drives the choice of topics for in-depth scrutiny, regular engagement with young people in both Committee meetings and Task Group work and regular updates to overview and scrutiny on progress with implementation of the improvement action plan in those Council's judged to be inadequate for children's social care.

- 5.5 Drawing on the CfPS guidance, what we have seen working well in other local authority areas and ideas put forward by Medway Members over the last few weeks it is proposed to move forward with new ways of working as set out below with the aim of demonstrating, at pace improved capacity for impact by overview and scrutiny. This will be in addition to the inclusion of a progress report on the implementation of the Medway Children's Services Action Plan at every meeting of the Committee:

Proposed new ways of working	Action	Timeline
Member Development	<p>The Local government Association is developing some bespoke training for Medway Members. In the meantime to start building on the knowledge required to undertake effective scrutiny of children's social care two interactive development sessions have already taken place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 February – Performance data in Children's Services • 11 February – the journey through education of a child who is looked after <p>Further sessions are planned to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Assurance (to include Part 2 of performance data in Children's Services) • The whole system – partners and multi - agency working • Contextual Safeguarding • Child Sexual Exploitation 	<p>Completed (with part 2 to be scheduled) Completed</p> <p>March – May</p>
Performance Information	<p>With the agreement of the Cabinet Member additional performance measures for children's social care have been added to the Council Plan for 2020/21. To strengthen the capacity for effective scrutiny of performance against the Plan in formal Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings it is proposed to provide all Members of the Committee with more in-depth performance data on a monthly basis in between Committee meetings and for the Director to host an informal performance data workshop every 6-8 weeks open to all members of the Committee. This will provide an informal setting in which detailed analysis of the data can be undertaken. The new Independent Scrutineer appointed by the Medway Safeguarding Children's Partnership (who has also recently been</p>	<p>Starting at the end of March 2020</p>

	appointed as the Independent Chair of the Medway Improvement Board) to be invited to each workshop to provide a multi-agency perspective.	
In-depth scrutiny review work	It is proposed to ask the Business Support O and S Committee to agree to delay the next planned Task Group (on Physical Activity) to provide capacity for the next Task Group to focus on a topic which will contribute to the Children's Social Care Improvement journey. In addition it is suggested on a pilot basis that the Committee should plan one of its meetings in 2020/21 to focus solely on a particular theme related to children's social care with evidence from service users, other stakeholders and relevant experts. See paragraph 6 below.	To start in April/May 2020 August 2020
Reality checking – hearing the experiences of children, families and front-line workers	It is proposed to offer ongoing opportunities for Overview and Scrutiny Committee members to engage with the Children in Care Council and social care professionals on a multi-agency basis both in learning and development settings and to listen to their views of what it is happening “on the frontline”. This will include multi-agency training events and other partner engagement events the first of which will be the Medway World Social Work Day event on 17 March 2020.	World Social Work Day event – 17 March 2020

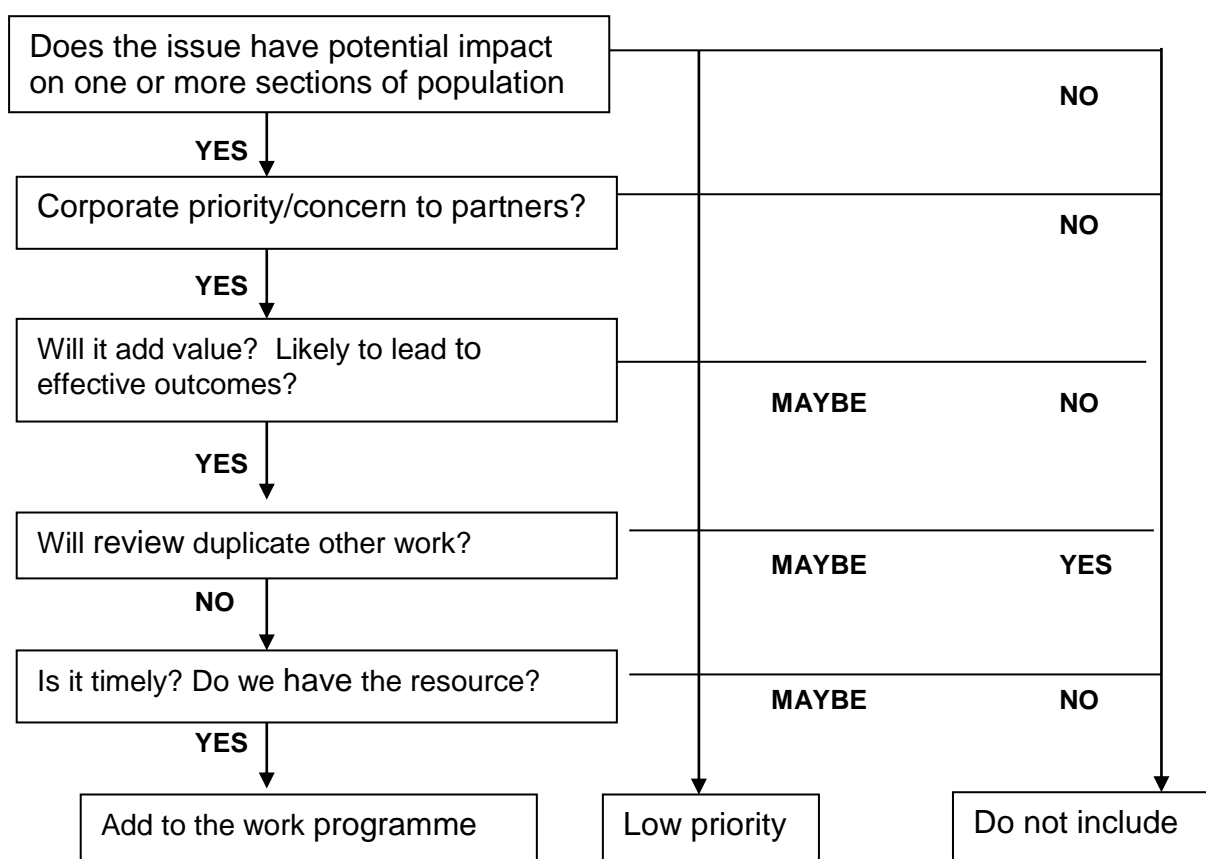
6. Selection of topics for a Task Group and themed meeting(s)

- 6.1 The Council has agreed that up to three in-depth scrutiny Task Groups or themed Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings can be supported in total across all four of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees every year with each review running successively. The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a co-ordinating role, inviting the nomination of topics from each Committee and then prioritising them on the basis of a criteria based selection process which reflects national best practice.
- 6.2 The current round of topics with an indicative timeline is as follows:

Topic	Timeline (approx 20 weeks per review)
Review 1: The Voluntary Sector	November 2019 to March 2020
Review 2: Physical Activity	April 2020 to August 2020
Review 3: Town Centres	September 2020 to January 2021
Review 4: Support for Carers	February 2021 to June 2021

- 6.3 Given that the improvement of children's social care is a priority for the Council during 2020 the Committee is recommended to ask the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee to agree that the next Task Group should focus on a topic related to children's social care and that one of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings should be a themed meeting on a related topic. This would mean delaying the start of a Task Group on Physical Activity until later in the year.
- 6.4 Clearly any in-depth scrutiny review work at this time should compliment rather than duplicate activity already underway to deliver the Medway Children's Services Action Plan. The Committee will want to review options for topics that will add value and contribute to children's services improvement journey.
- 6.5 As a guide the selection criteria used for selecting Scrutiny Task Group topics is as follows:

Questions to ask when prioritising topics for review



- 6.6 There are multiple action points in the Medway Children's Improvement Plan under the five key priorities:
- Quality and effectiveness of Practice
 - Capacity and capability of our workforce
 - Effective leadership and management
 - Quality Assurance and Performance Management and
 - Partnerships and Engagement
- 6.7 Taking into account current progress against the actions in the Improvement Plan and what current performance data is telling us the Director of People has

suggested the Committee might wish to select a task group topic relating to early help. The Council is working with Essex County Council as a Partner in Practice on early help services in Medway. Medway are currently awaiting the outcome of a diagnostic report from Essex County Council on the service.

7. Implications for Looked After Children

- 7.1 Members should ensure they focus on outcomes for looked after children. This includes considering their physical health; their emotional health; their safeguarding; their educational attainment and progress; their hopes and aspirations for their adult lives and how looked after young people have their voices heard. We know that looked after children can be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation so particular attention should be given to this. As a corporate parent, Members should be a champion for looked after children and have the same high expectations of them as they would for their own child, grandchild or niece/ nephew.

8. Financial and legal implications

- 8.1 There are no financial or legal implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 The Committee is asked to agree the work programme as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to accepting the proposed changes, outlined in italic text on Appendix 1.
- 9.2 The Committee is asked to consider and support the new ways of working outlined in Section 5 of the report with a view to strengthening scrutiny impact particularly in performance monitoring.
- 9.3 The Committee is asked to recommend the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee to agree that the next Scrutiny Task Group should have focus on Children's Social Care and that there should be an option of one Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2020/21 being a themed meeting also with a focus on children's social care.
- 9.4 Subject to the agreement of the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, this Committee is asked to agree that a Task Group comprising three Conservative and 2 Labour and Co-operative Group members should be set up to undertake an in-depth scrutiny review.
- 9.5 The Committee is asked to agree that the Task Group should focus on Early Help and that the Head of Democratic Services should be authorised to develop the detailed scope of the review in consultation with the Task Group members once the findings of the diagnostic exercise undertaken by Essex County Council are available, as set out in section 6.7.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Children and Young People O&S Committee Work Programme

Background papers:

None