

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25 NOVEMBER 2021

WORK PROGRAMME

Report from: Bhupinder Gill, Assistant Director, Legal and Governance

Author: Stephen Platt, Democratic Services Officer

Summary

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

1. Budget and Policy Framework
 - 1.1 Under Chapter 4 – 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 The Committee's rolling work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year is attached at Appendix 1. One of the Committee's functions is to provide guidance and leadership on the development and co-ordination of the scrutiny function for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Appendix 2 sets out the work programmes for the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
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 Members wish them to provide when scrutinising an issue. An agenda planning meeting took place on 28 October attended by the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson.
 - 3.2 At the meeting, it was suggested that the report on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2022/2023 be added to the work programme as an item for consideration at the 27 January meeting of the Committee, prior to its consideration at Cabinet on 8 February. The draft work programme at Appendix 1 has been amended accordingly for Members' approval.

- 3.3 Also at the agenda planning meeting, the Assistant Director, Legal and Governance raised the issue of the length of meetings and advised that he would work with officers to identify proposals for more manageable meetings which he would bring to Members in due course for a wider discussion.
- 3.4 Members will note that the Forward Plan lists all items that fall within the Committee's remit and that the list of topics to be scrutinised exceeds capacity. This means that items on the agenda have to be prioritised in order to manage the Committee's business, however despite current arrangements many meetings last until very late into the evening. This is unfair on Members who have to juggle the responsibilities of their office and other calls on their time e.g. employment, caring responsibilities. It also can create transport difficulties for both Members and officers commuting by public transport.
- 3.5 Members are recommended to carefully review future draft agendas balancing more detailed scrutiny but of fewer items. It is suggested that as a rule of thumb it should be assumed each substantive item will take approximately 30 minutes to consider, and thus an agenda should have no more than 4 or 5 substantive items, i.e. plan for a meeting to last between 2 ½ and 3 hours.
- 3.6 The draft work programme at Appendix 1 currently includes 6 substantive items for the meeting scheduled for 27 January 2022 and it is therefore recommended that the Medway Norse Update report be moved to the meeting scheduled for 31 March 2022.

4. Task Groups

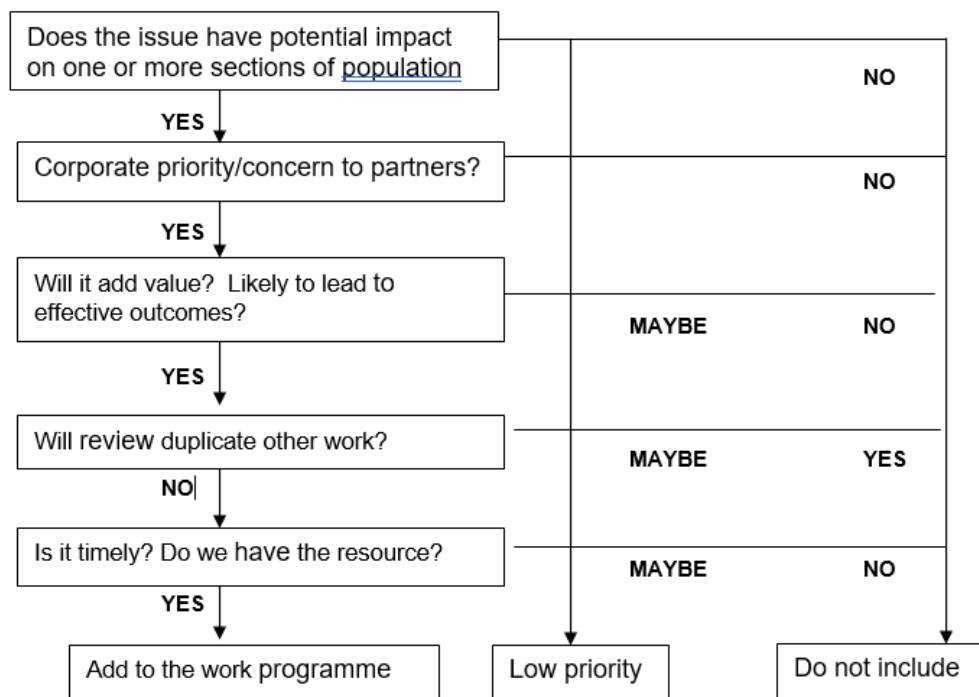
- 4.1 At the last meeting of the Committee held on 21 October, following the discussion under the Climate Change Action Plan item, a Member suggested electric transport as a Task Group review topic. It was agreed that, at this meeting, Members would be updated on the agreed programme of Task Group reviews.
- 4.2 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 length of a review would be dependent on the pace the Task Group wished to take. A process for determining the programme of Task Group themes and activity has been agreed, with the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee having a co-ordinating role. Topics are prioritised on a criteria selection basis reflecting best practice.
- 4.3 The current round of topics that has been agreed is as follows, although it was subsequently agreed that the second review be deferred to enable a review into early help and parenting support, given the improvement of children's social care became a corporate priority for the Council after it was judged inadequate in July 2019. This additional in-depth review took place and concluded earlier this year.

Topic
Review 1: The Voluntary Sector
Review 2: Physical Activity
Review 3: Town Centres
Review 4: Support for Carers

4.4 The next scheduled Task Group is therefore Physical Activity and officers have been doing some preliminary work in preparation for this. However, Business Support, along with the other O&S Committees, may wish to vary the topics given this schedule was agreed in 2019 and has been considerably delayed and disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Children’s Services improvement journey.

4.5 Should any of the Committees wish to consider a new topic, then Members are asked to bear in mind that, when selecting topics for in-depth review, they should use the following tool as a way of selecting and prioritising a topic.

Questions to ask when prioritising topics for review



4.6 Members views on the current Task Group programme are sought.

5. Forward Plan

5.1 The latest Forward Plan of forthcoming Cabinet decisions was published on 15 November 2021.

<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=418&T=4>

- 5.2 The items that are relevant to the Business Support O&S Committee are set out below so that Members have an opportunity to identify any further items they wish to consider as pre-decision scrutiny (where dates permit) other than those already programmed.

Title of Decision	Anticipated Decision Date
<p>Medway Adult Education Business Plan</p> <p>This report will present the Medway Adult Education Business Plan. The Cabinet will be asked to consider and adopt the Plan.</p>	<p>14 December 2022 (on the agenda for this meeting)</p>
<p>Medway Norse Update</p> <p>This report will provide details of a review of the performance of the Joint Venture from the perspective of the Council client since the last report (October 2021). It will be accompanied by an update on the Joint Venture's achievements and financial performance prepared by the Partnership Director.</p>	<p>11 January 2022 (currently on the work programme for 27 January. It is proposed that it be moved to 31 March).</p>
<p>Provisional Local Government Settlement</p> <p>This report will provide Cabinet with details of the provisional local government settlement announced by Government, as part of the budget setting process.</p>	<p>11 January 2022</p>
<p>Capital and Revenue Budgets 2022/23</p> <p>This report will set out the proposals for the 2022/23 capital and revenue budgets, including the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Cabinet will be asked to make recommendations to Council on 24 February 2022 for final consideration and approval.</p>	<p>8 February 2022 (on the work programme for 27 January)</p>
<p>Council Tax Reduction Scheme</p> <p>This report will seek Cabinet's consideration of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2022/2023 prior to final consideration and approval at Full Council on 24 February 2022.</p>	<p>8 February 2022 (on the work programme for 27 January)</p>
<p>Housing Revenue Account Capital and Revenue Budgets 2022/23</p> <p>This report will present the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital and revenue budgets for 2022/23 and</p>	<p>8 February 2022 (on the work programme for 27 January)</p>

Title of Decision	Anticipated Decision Date
<p>provides details of proposed rent and service charges levels for 2022/23, including the comments of the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which is scheduled to consider this report on 27 January 2022. The Cabinet's recommendations on this report will be referred to Council on 24 February 2022 for consideration and final approval.</p>	
<p>Kyndi - Six Monthly Report</p> <p>This report will set out details of performance for the latest monitoring period for Kyndi Ltd.</p>	8 February 2022
<p>Medway Council Plan and Strategy (Refresh)</p> <p>This report will provide details of the Council Strategy and Council Plan for 2022/23. This report will be considered by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 January 2022. The Council Strategy and Council Plan will be referred to Full Council for consideration and decision on 24 February 2022.</p>	8 February 2022 (on the work programme for 27 January)
<p>Risk Management Strategy Annual Review 2022/23</p> <p>This report will provide details of the Council's Risk Strategy. This report will be considered by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 January 2022.</p>	8 February 2022 (on the work programme for 27 January)
<p>Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23</p> <p>This report will provide details of the Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23, following initial consideration by the Audit Committee on 4 January 2022. The Cabinet will be asked to make a recommendation to Council on 24 February 2022 for final consideration and approval.</p>	8 February 2022
<p>Capital Budget Monitoring Round 3 2021/2022</p> <p>This report will set out the latest monitoring position.</p>	8 March 2022 (on the work programme for 31 March 2022)
<p>Council Plan Performance Monitoring and Risk Register Review Quarter 3 2021/2022</p> <p>This report will provide details of Quarter 3 performance for 2021/22 against the priorities set out in the Council</p>	8 March 2022 (on the work programme for 31 March 2022)

Title of Decision	Anticipated Decision Date
Plan and will bring forward the latest risk management review.	
<p>Discretionary Council Tax Relief for Care Leavers</p> <p>This report will set out options in relation to discretionary Council Tax relief for care leavers. Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 grants the billing authority the power to reduce the amount of council tax payable and this may be exercised by determining a class of case in which liability is to be reduced.</p>	8 March 2022
<p>Revenue Budget Monitoring Round 3 2021/2022</p> <p>This report will set out the latest monitoring position.</p>	8 March 2022 (on the work programme for 31 March 2022)

6. The Co-ordinating Role of the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 6.1 Under Medway's Constitution, Chapter 4 – Rules – paragraph 22.2 (xxiii) this Committee has the overall responsibility 'to provide 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'.
- 6.2 To assist the Committee in fulfilling this role, it has been agreed that a regular overview of business discussed by the other overview and scrutiny committees should be presented at these meetings. Whilst each overview and scrutiny committee is able to determine its own work programme, this Committee may wish to comment on common themes and the balance of business being covered by each Committee. The work of overview and scrutiny committees can include:
- items raised by Members
 - work on matters referred for review by the Council
 - pre-decision scrutiny of items on the Cabinet's Forward Plan selected by the Committee for discussion
 - policy review and development pre-budget scrutiny
 - consideration of petitions
 - consideration of called-in Cabinet decisions.

6.3 Appendix 2 to this report sets out the current work programmes of the other three overview and scrutiny committees.

7. Financial and legal implications

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

8. Recommendations

8.1 Members are asked to:

- a) agree to move the Medway Norse Update report from the meeting scheduled for 27 January 2022 to the meeting scheduled for 31 March 2022;
- b) subject to a), agree the Committee's work programme at Appendix 1;
- c) note the work programmes of the other overview and scrutiny committees at Appendix 2; and
- d) comment on the current programme of Task Group reviews.

Lead officer contact:

Stephen Platt, Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 01634 332011 Email: stephen.platt@medway.gov.uk

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Business Support O&S work programme

Appendix 2 - Other O&S Committees' work programmes

Background papers:

None