



Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee

26 October 2023

Work Programme

Report from: Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services

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Summary

This report advises Members of the work programme for 2023/24 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. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Committee is asked to agree the work programme at Appendix 1 to the report.
- 1.2. The Committee is asked to note the work programmes of the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees at Appendix 2
- 1.3. The Committee is asked to agree the priority order of Task Group topics and to agree to the start of the first task group selected with a membership of 5 Councillors (3 Labour, 1 Conservative and 1 Independent Group Member).
- 1.4. The Committee is asked to authorise the Head of Democratic Services to appoint the Members to the first task group once nominations have been received from Group Whips in consultation with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Opposition Spokesperson.

2. Budget and Policy Framework

- 2.1. Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the responsibility for setting its own work programme (Chapter 4 – Rules, paragraph 21.1 (xv) General terms of reference).

3. Background

- 3.1. The Committee's work programme for the 2023/24 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 other Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

4. Agenda Planning Meeting

- 4.1. Members will be aware that Overview and Scrutiny Committees hold agenda planning meetings on a regular basis. An agenda planning meeting took place on 5 October attended by the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and opposition spokesperson.
- 4.2. At the meeting, the work programme attached at Appendix 1 was discussed and it was recommended that the Universal Credit and Welfare Reforms Annual Progress Report be considered on 30 November.
- 4.3. The attendance of Portfolio Holders at the meetings for 30 November, 1 February and 4 April was finalised and is included in the work programme.

5. Forward Plan

- 5.1. The latest Forward Plan of Cabinet decisions was published on 25 September 2023.

<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=466&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
Capital Budget Monitoring 2023/24 - Round 2 This report will set out the latest monitoring position. To be considered by the Business Support and Digital O&S Committee on 30 November.	21 November 2023
Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 - Round 2 This report will set out the latest monitoring position. To be considered by the Business Support and Digital O&S Committee on 30 November.	21 November 2023
Council Plan Performance Monitoring and Risk Register Review Quarter 2 2023/24	21 November 2023

<p>This report will provide details of quarter 2 performance for 2023/24 against the priorities set out in the Council Plan and will bring the latest risk management review.</p> <p>To be considered by the Business Support and Digital O&S Committee on 30 November.</p>	
<p>Draft Capital and Revenue Budgets 2024/25 This report will provide details of the initial budget proposals for 2024/25 prior to consideration by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.</p> <p>To be considered by the Business Support and Digital O&S Committee on 30 November.</p>	21 November 2023
<p>Gateway 1 Procurement Commencement: Insurance Contracts This report will seek Cabinet approval to commence a procurement process for Council insurance contracts.</p>	21 November 2023
<p>Treasury Management Mid-Year Review - 2023 / 2024 This report will set out the mid-year review of the Treasury Management Strategy, in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice.</p> <p>This report will be considered by the Audit Committee which undertakes the scrutiny function of Treasury Management on behalf of the Business Support and Digital O&S Committee.</p>	19 December 2023
<p>Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25 This report will provide Cabinet with details of the provisional local government settlement announced by Government, as part of the budget setting process.</p>	16 January 2024

6. Scrutiny Task Groups

- 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 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.
- 6.2. The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered an update on Task Groups on 13 July 2023. The Committee agreed that each

Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend no more than two topics for future task groups, to be considered at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairpersons, Vice chairpersons and opposition spokespersons where a shortlist of topics would be recommended to the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a final decision.

6.3. A meeting of the Chairpersons, Vice Chairpersons and opposition spokespersons took place on 4 October. Members agreed the following task groups topics should be undertaken subject to agreement by relevant officers that combined topics as outlined below could be achieved.

- Air Quality and Public Transport & Active Travel (combined review)
- Child Mental Health and Education Inequality (combined review)
- Medway 2.0
- New Social Housing Regime.

6.4. Members requested further information from officers in order that the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee make a decision on the appropriate priority order for reviews to take place.

6.5. Subsequent to the meeting, officers advised that a combined Air Quality and Public Transport & Active Travel could be undertaken, however, it would not be possible to complete a combined Child Mental Health and Education Inequality task group due to the limited amount of cross over between the subjects. Assessments are set out in Appendix 3.

6.6. Officers have provided further information regarding the timeliness of reviews.

6.6.1. **Air Quality and Public Transport & Active Travel (combined review)** – The task group should be timed to avoid duplicating the work of the Air Quality Steering Group and the Active Travel Group. It would also be beneficial for the task group to be informed by the results of a number of Defra projects which have recently commenced so it is suggested the task group start at a later stage.

6.6.2. **Child Mental Health** – If the proposal was chosen first there may be an opportunity to make recommendations related to CAMHS services which are currently being reviewed by the ICB.

6.6.3. **Education Inequality** – The Department is currently undergoing a restructure and it may be beneficial for the task group to take place at a later stage so that the necessary capacity is in place prior to the commencement of the review.

6.6.4. **Medway 2.0** – The work on Medway 2.0 has begun so if a task group on this subject was undertaken it is advised to take place as soon as possible to complement. If the work of the Task Group started this year it could review the initial pilot processes to inform priorities for work going forward.

6.6.5. **New Social Housing Regime** - The Council may be inspected in relation to the new social housing regime at any point from April 2024.

6.7. The Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee is therefore asked to make a final decision on the priority order of the following task groups on the basis of the criteria set out in paragraph 6.8:

- Air Quality and Public Transport & Active Travel (combined review)
- Child Mental Health
- Education Inequality
- Medway 2.0
- New Social Housing Regime.

6.8. The Committee is asked to make a final decision on the priority order of task groups based on the outcome of criteria based assessments attached at appendix 3 to the report and the additional information relating to timeliness. Additional information relating to task groups is available at Appendix 4.

- What is the suggested topic?
- What is the reason for the review?
- Is there a potential for the review to impact one or more sections of the population?
- Is this an issue of corporate concern and/or an issue for partners?
- Will it add value/lead to effective outcomes?
- Will the review duplicate other work?
- Is it timely / do we have the resources?
- Will the review provide scope for service improvement?

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

7.1. 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 (Constitution, Chapter 4 – Rules – paragraph 22.2 (xxiii)).

7.2. 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.

7.3. Appendix 2 to this report sets out the current work programmes of the other three Overview and Scrutiny committees.

7.4. As referenced earlier in the report, an informal meeting of the Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons and Opposition Spokespersons took place with Democratic Services staff on 4 October. In addition to a discussion on task group activity, there were also helpful discussions on themed overview and scrutiny meetings and the format and potential changes to the way information in performance monitoring reports is presented to Members.

8. Financial and legal implications

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

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Business Support and Digital O&S work programme

Appendix 2 - Other O&S Committees' work programmes

Appendix 3 - Task Group Proposals

Appendix 4 - Scrutiny Task Group Briefing Note

Background papers:

None