



# **Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**30 November 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 approve a membership of seven Members (4 Labour and Co-operative Group, 2 Conservative Group and 1 Independent Group) for the Air Quality and Public Transport & Active Travel (combined review) Task Group plus one named substitute for each of the Labour and Co-operative and Conservative Groups.

#### **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 9 November attended by the Chairperson and opposition spokesperson.

4.2. At the meeting, the work programme attached at Appendix 1 was discussed and agreed. Following the meeting taking place it was agreed that the Procurement Strategy (annual report) should be considered at a later date due to additional work required to complete the report.

4.3. It was further agreed that the Council Plan and Council Strategy report would be considered at the April rather than February meeting to allow time for the work on the new Plan and Strategy to be completed.

#### 5. Forward Plan

5.1. The latest Forward Plan of Cabinet decisions was published on 20 November 2023.

<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=469&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.

| <b>Title of Decision</b>   | <b>Anticipated Decision Date</b> |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Treasury Management Mid-Year Review - 2023 / 2024</b><br><br>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.<br><br>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. | 19 December 2023                 |
| <b>Advertising and Sponsorship Policy</b>  | 16 January 2024                  |

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| <p>This report will ask the Cabinet to agree a change to the Council's Advertising and Sponsorship Policy.</p>  |                  |
| <p><b>Macmillan Welfare Benefits Expansion</b></p> <p>This report will request that the Cabinet agrees expansion of the Macmillan Welfare Benefits service.</p>   | 16 January 2024  |
| <p><b>Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25</b></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>   | 16 January 2024  |
| <p><b>Annual Review of the Risk Management Strategy</b></p> <p>This report will provide details of the annual review of the Council's Risk Management Strategy and Plan.</p> <p>To be considered by the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 February 2024.</p>  | 13 February 2024 |
| <p><b>Capital and Revenue Budgets 2024 / 2025</b></p> <p>This report will set out the proposals for the 2024/25 capital and revenue budgets, including the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.</p>  | 13 February 2024 |
| <p><b>Capital Budget Monitoring 2023/24 - Round 3</b></p> <p>This report will set out the latest monitoring position.</p> <p>To be considered by the Business Support and Digital O&amp;S Committee on 4 April 2024.</p>  | 13 February 2024 |
| <p><b>Revenue Budget Monitoring Round 3 2023/24</b></p> <p>This report will set out the latest monitoring position.</p>   | 13 February 2024 |
| <p><b>Council Plan Performance Monitoring and Risk Register Review Quarter 3 2023/24</b></p> <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&amp;S Committee on 4 April 2024.</p> | 13 February 2024 |
| <p><b>Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Discretionary Relief</b></p> <p>This report will seek the Cabinet's views on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Discretionary Relief for 2024/2025 prior to final consideration and approval at Full Council on 29 February 2024.</p>  | 13 February 2024 |
| <p><b>Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024 / 2025</b></p>  | 13 February 2024 |

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|---|--|
| <p>This report will provide details of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25.</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&amp;S Committee.</p> |  |

## 6. Scrutiny Task Groups

6.1. The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered an update on task groups on 26 October. The Committee agreed that the order for the tasks groups for the current term should be as follows:

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

6.2. The Committee further agreed that the membership of task groups would be five (3 Labour and Co-operative Group, 1 Conservative Group and 1 Independent Group) for each review save the Air Quality and Public Transport & Active Travel (combined review)

6.3. Members requested further information from officers in order that the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee make a decision on the appropriate size and membership of the Air Quality and Public Transport & Active Travel (combined review).

6.4. Tasks groups have historically been set up on a broadly politically proportionate basis and typically consist of five Members. The small number allows the task group to be flexible and agile, enabling Members to hear all evidence from witnesses and for meetings to be arranged at pace. Members of task groups are required to be incredibly flexible with their availability and based on our professional experience, larger groups cause delays in arranging meetings as it is difficult to find dates suitable for all to attend, resulting in some Members missing out on some of the rich evidence gathering that is so important in carrying out in-depth reviews. This approach also inevitably impacts on a task group concluding its work in a timely manner.

6.5. It had been suggested at the last meeting that both relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees should be equally represented on the task group and whilst the membership could comprise of any scrutiny member, taking account of this view, the majority group has proposed that the Air Quality and Public Transport & Active Travel (combined review) Task Group consists of a

membership of seven (4 Labour and Co-operative Group, 2 Conservative Group and 1 Independent Group). It is also recommended that both the Labour and Co-operative and Conservative groups nominate a named substitute to avoid any delays due to logistical issues identified in 6.4.

6.6. This would allow for two Labour and Co-operative Group Members and one Conservative Group Member to be drawn from each of the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It also remains consistent with Centre for Governance and Scrutiny guidance which states; “as far as possible, membership should loosely reflect the political proportionality of the authority (the only caveat being that attempts are usually made to involve smaller parties where they otherwise would not be entitled to a seat).

6.7. Task Groups in Medway (like in most councils) have always been classed as a working group, which the Council is entitled to do provided it makes its intention clear and there is no attempt to give the working group any delegated powers. As such, the access to information rules and the legal requirement to achieve political balance that apply to committees and sub-committees do not apply to Task Groups. This approach means witnesses are more likely to be candid in what is a more informal environment (meetings are not held in public) and the latter can also help Members when they come to explore options and decide on recommendations.

## 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.

## 8. Financial and legal implications

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

8.2. Whilst the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires that all committees and sub committees of a local authority are politically balanced, this legislation does not apply to the membership of task groups as they are classed as working groups. However, the established practice is to have

regard to political balance, whilst facilitating representation from all political groups.

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**Appendices:**

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

Appendix 2 - Other O&S Committees' work programmes

**Background papers:**

None