

Report for: Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 20 June 2022

Title: Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme

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Ward(s) affected: N/A

**Report for Key/
Non-Key Decision:** N/A

1. Describe the issue under consideration

1.1 This report sets out how the foundations will be laid for targeted, inclusive and timely work on issues of local importance where scrutiny can add value.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Committee agree the overall approach outlined at section 5 for developing a work programme for Overview and Scrutiny for 2022-24 for approval at its meeting on 13 October 2022; and

2.2 That, pending commencement of the finalised work programme, the Committee agree the provisional items for its meetings on 25 July and 13 October as set out in paragraphs 5.10 – 5.13.

3. Reasons for decision

3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) is responsible for developing an overall work plan, including work for its standing scrutiny panels. In putting this together, the Committee will need to have regard to their capacity to deliver the programme and officers' capacity to support them in that task.

4. Describe the issue under consideration

4.1 Following the election, the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the opportunity to develop a work programme for itself and the scrutiny panels that ensures the Council's scrutiny function is used to its best effect. Suggestions for what may constitute a successful work programme are outlined at section 6 below.

4.2 The Council's Cabinet will now be looking to implement their manifesto from the recent election. This gives opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny to consider

both whether it would like to consider how the manifesto commitments can be implemented most effectively and at the greatest benefit to residents – fulfilling the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s role in supporting policy development - as well as how it wishes to monitor the Cabinet’s performance at implementing its manifesto.

- 4.3 In previous years, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has held a “Scrutiny Café” that brings together Council officers and community and stakeholder representatives to discuss which matters they believe would merit further consideration from Overview and Scrutiny, based on the concerns and views of the community and the expected areas of priority for the Council and its partners. This has also been helpful in developing a good level of engagement with key external representatives and cultivating relationships that allow on-going ad hoc communication.
- 4.4 At the start of the last administration and after discussion with the incoming Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, it was agreed that the input of the local community would be enhanced within the work planning process. To this end, an on-line scrutiny survey was developed. This ran through August and early September 2018 and elicited 191 responses. A “Scrutiny Café” event was set up during September 2018 to consider the responses to the survey in detail and other relevant matters. A large number of community and voluntary sector organisations were invited and the event took place at the Selby Centre in Tottenham.
- 4.5 The outcomes of this process were used to put together the Overview and Scrutiny work plan for the first two years of the administration. A second Scrutiny Café took place in March 2021, after the completion of the previous workplan. The process was delayed by lockdown and the pandemic. This was a virtual event, held on MS Teams due to the pandemic. It was informed by a second online survey, which took place just before the start of the pandemic in January 2020 and was responded to by 104 residents.

5. Work Planning Process

- 5.1 A new work planning process will now need to be developed for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Panels. One of the key priorities of the new administration is engaging with the community in a more meaningful way. There is now an expectation that the Council will do things *with* local communities rather than *to* local communities. Community engagement should therefore be central to this process. Careful consideration will need to be given to how best to involve the community to maximise engagement and responses. This should also include listening to their ideas on how consultation might work most effectively. In addition, consideration will also need to be given as to how engagement might best contribute to the development of the work plan.
- 5.2 Much has changed in the past four years and the methods that were used to develop previous work plans may not be as effective if used again. The first Scrutiny Café event took place during the daytime and was in person. This may exclude people who work full time or have caring responsibilities. However,

representatives from community organisations may be in a position to speak on behalf of people unable to attend. A further consideration is that there may well be people in the community who are still reticent about attending large gatherings because of fears of Covid. This would particularly apply to older people and those with underlying health conditions.

- 5.3 A consultative scrutiny Café session is provisionally planned for Friday 9th of September and potential venues are the Sixth Form centre or Cypriot Centre. An additional virtual event may also have the potential to involve more people and is relatively easy to arrange and is also being considered to allow participants that may not be able to attend an in-person session. In addition, a separate consultative session on the work plan is also being taken forward to ensure that scrutiny hears from a wide range of voices.
- 5.4 Previous work planning processes have included an online survey. These can be a very useful way of getting feedback from a wide group of people. They work best in providing quantitative feedback but are less effective on qualitative matters. This is also being considered to provide the scrutiny café session with information on key issues to consider in the scrutiny café session.
- 5.5 Effective engagement with the community is dependent on having the necessary knowledge of what community and voluntary organisations there are and how best to reach them. Work is being taken forward with the consultative team to ensure that effective co-production of the work plan.
- 5.6 Thought also needs to be given to what sort of outputs would be the most useful in developing the workplan. The feedback has been used to decide which issues within the terms of reference of each scrutiny body should be prioritised and which might be suitable for in depth reviews. In addition, there has also been scope for people to highlight less familiar or frequently overlooked matters.
- 5.7 The Committee may also wish to consider *how* its work is undertaken as it has been some time since there was a fundamental review of the Council's Scrutiny function and, in particular, the remits of the Committee and its panels. It is suggested that, as part of its work programme, the Committee include some time for a review of scrutiny procedures.
- 5.8 Given that it is likely that the process for creating a work programme will generate a large number of ideas, it is proposed that it again leads to a two-year work programme. This will provide a broad framework for the Committee and Panels to follow over their first two years, leaving some room for any highly significant matters that may arise. This process can be repeated in 2024, at the mid-point of the current administration.
- 5.9 The proposed work programme will also include the more routine matters, for example budget scrutiny, budget monitoring and performance monitoring, that the Committee and Panels carry out over the year. As usual, the OSC will use the Forward Plan of Key Decisions in identifying matters for consideration on a more immediate timescale.

- 5.10 There are meetings of the Committee and its Panels scheduled to take place before the new work plan for Overview and Scrutiny has been finalised. The final meetings of scrutiny bodies that took place before the local government elections were each asked to identify specific items for the first meetings of the new administration in anticipation of this so they should all therefore have already identified some suitable items. In addition, there are regular and routine items that can be considered. These can have the additional benefit of helping to inform the work planning process.
- 5.11 As its meeting on 17 March, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee identified the following as provisional items for the first meetings of the new administration:
- Fire safety in high rise blocks; and
 - Update on progress with recommendations of Fairness Commission.
- 5.12 In addition, the Leader has been invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee, on 25 July, to report on her priorities for the forthcoming year. It is proposed that the Cabinet Member for Finance and Local Investment be invited to attend the following meeting, which takes place on 13 October. In addition, an update on the Council's financial position is normally provided to the first meeting of the Committee of the autumn.
- 5.13 There may also be pressing issues or other matters that the Committee wishes to add to the agendas for these upcoming meetings. It is proposed that the agenda for these meetings be finalised in consultation with the Chair.

6. Effective Scrutiny Work Programmes

- 6.1 An effective scrutiny work programme should reflect a balance of activities:
- Holding the Executive to account;
 - Policy review and development – reviews to assess the effectiveness of existing policies or to inform the development of new strategies;
 - Performance management – identifying under-performing services, investigating and making recommendations for improvement;
 - External scrutiny – scrutinising and holding to account partners and other local agencies providing key services to the public;
 - Public and community engagement – engaging and involving local communities in scrutiny activities and scrutinising those issues which are of concern to the local community.
- 6.2 Key features of an effective work programme:
- A member led process, short listing and prioritising topics – with support from officers – that;
 - reflects local needs and priorities – issues of community concern as well as Borough Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy priorities
 - prioritises topics for scrutiny that have most impact or benefit
 - involves local stakeholders
 - is flexible enough to respond to new or urgent issues

- 6.3 Depending on the selected topic and planned outcomes, scrutiny work will be carried out in a variety of ways, using various formats. This will include a variety of one-off reports. In accordance with the scrutiny protocol, the OSC and Scrutiny Panels will draw from the following to inform their work:
- Performance Reports;
 - One off reports on matters of national or local interest or concern;
 - Issues arising out of internal and external assessment (e.g. Ofsted, Care Quality Commission);
 - Reports on strategies and policies under development or other issues on which the Cabinet or officers would like scrutiny views or support;
 - Progress reports on implementing previous scrutiny recommendations accepted by the Cabinet or appropriate Executive body.
- 6.4 In addition, in-depth scrutiny work, including task and finish projects, are an important aspect of Overview and Scrutiny and provide opportunities to thoroughly investigate topics and to make improvements. Through the gathering and consideration of evidence from a wider range of sources, this type of work enables more robust and effective challenge as well as an increased likelihood of delivering positive outcomes. In depth reviews should also help engage the public and provide greater transparency and accountability.
- 6.5 It is nevertheless important that there is a balance between depth and breadth of work undertaken so that resources can be used to their greatest effect.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1 The contribution of scrutiny to the corporate priorities will be considered routinely as part of the OSC's work.

8. Statutory Officers comments

Finance and Procurement

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report. Should any of the work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny generate recommendations with financial implications these will be highlighted at that time.

Legal

- 8.2 There are no immediate legal implications arising from the report.
- 8.3 In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the approval of the future scrutiny work programme falls within the remit of the OSC.
- 8.4 Under Section 21 (6) of the Local Government Act 2000, an OSC has the power to appoint one or more sub-committees to discharge any of its functions. In

accordance with the Constitution, the appointment of Scrutiny Panels (to assist the scrutiny function) falls within the remit of the OSC.

- 8.5 Scrutiny Panels are non-decision making bodies and the work programme and any subsequent reports and recommendations that each scrutiny panel produces must be approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such reports can then be referred to Cabinet or Council under agreed protocols.

Equality

- 8.6 The Council has a public sector equality duty under the Equalities Act (2010) to have due regard to:
- Tackle discrimination and victimisation of persons that share the characteristics protected under S4 of the Act. These include the characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (formerly gender) and sexual orientation;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not;
 - Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.
- 8.7 The Committee should ensure that it addresses these duties by considering them within its work plan and those of its panels, as well as individual pieces of work. This should include considering and clearly stating;
- How policy issues impact on different groups within the community, particularly those that share the nine protected characteristics;
 - Whether the impact on particular groups is fair and proportionate;
 - Whether there is equality of access to services and fair representation of all groups within Haringey;
 - Whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people, are being realised.
- 8.8 The Committee should ensure that equalities comments are based on evidence. Wherever possible this should include demographic and service level data and evidence of residents/service-users views gathered through consultation.

9. Use of Appendices

N/A

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

N/A