

Committee: Scrutiny

Agenda Item

Date: 17 November 2015

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Title: Scrutiny work topics

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Summary

1. This report presents the outcome of discussions by the working group established to assess the suggestions for Scrutiny work topics made by councillors.

Recommendations

2. The committee approves the recommended work topics set out in paragraphs 10 to 12 and instructs officers to update the Scrutiny Work Programme accordingly.

Financial Implications

3. None. There are no costs associated with this report.

Background Papers

4. None

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	Several suggested topics include issues around consultation and/or communication
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	Several suggested topics include issues relating to sustainability
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	The majority of suggested topics will have an impact on officer time

Situation

6. At the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 10 September, a working group was established, comprising Cllrs Dean, Barker and Light, to discuss the potential work topics submitted by councillors and recommend which should be taken forward.
7. The task group has met twice and has discussed at length each of the 32 suggestions. The task group has identified a number of topics which it recommends are added to the work programme now or next year. Many other topics will be kept on a long list and can be returned to in the future.
8. Attached as Appendix A is a table listing each of the 32 suggestions. The middle column of the table shows where the identified issue has been looked at by Scrutiny in the last two years, or where there is a CABLE (Cabinet and Portfolio Leads) project already looking at the subject. The right hand column provides notes following discussion by the working group, including extra information requested by the working group during discussions and the outcome of the discussions.
9. Attached as Appendix B is the current version of the Scrutiny Work Programme. If the committee approves the recommendation on this report, agreed topics will be added to the programme by officers.
10. The topics identified by the working group and recommended to be added to the 2015/16 work programme are as follows:
 - i) S106 and CILs. The working group suggests an officer report in March or May 2016.
 - ii) Air Quality Management. The council will be consulting the public on a new Air Quality Management Plan in early 2016. Due to time constraints it has been necessary to bring a report to this meeting.
 - iii) Building Control function . This would need to be looked at by Scrutiny ahead of a Cabinet decision in March about the proposed Building Control Partnership.
 - iv) Enforcement . This was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee at its September meeting. A scoping report is on the agenda of this meeting.
 - v) Reliance on New Homes Bonus. This forms part of the budget papers at this meeting.
11. The topics identified by the working group and recommended to be timetabled for the 2016/17 year are as follows:
 - i) Relationship between UDC and ECC. Although several of the submissions were specifically regarding perceived problems with Highways, the working group discussed wider concepts of how the council interacts with Essex County Council. The working group suggests it would be helpful for the committee to receive a report setting out how relevant officers in the Planning department see the relationship with ECC with regard to education and highways.

ii) Quiet Lanes. The working group suggests a scoping report and background information be prepared about this initiative for a meeting in the 2016/17 year.

12. The topics identified by the working group as being potentially suitable for review in the longer term, but not recommended to be timetabled for now, are as follows:

i) Planning appeals. The working group recommends no action is taken at least until the Secretary of State decision on the Elsenham appeal is known

ii) Affordable housing provision. The working group recommends that the committee waits until the position on the Housing Act is clear.

iii) Evaluation of controls in place regarding information provided by developers.

iv) Methods used to assess sustainability in planning applications

v) The possibility of enhancing the council's recycling and waste collection scheme

vi) The council tax arrears collection process

vii) Community engagement. A sub group of the Constitution Working Group has been established to look at this. The Scrutiny working group suggests the Scrutiny Committee waits until this sub group has done its work before considering this topic.

viii) The effectiveness of the North Essex Parking Partnership. This was an additional suggestion from Cllr Dean at the second working group meeting.

ix) Devolution. This was an additional suggestion from Cllr Light at the second working group meeting. The working group then decided it would best be dealt with as set out in paragraph 14 below.

13. The topics identified by the working group as being unsuitable for review are as follows:

i) Strategic planning systems. The working group decided this was already covered by the Planning Policy Working Group (PPWG).

ii) 5 Year land Supply. The working group noted the Inspector's view that the council's approach was robust. In addition it is an issue discussed by PPWG.

iii) Separate collection of dry recyclable materials. The working group was satisfied that this had already been considered by the Waste Strategy Working Group and Cabinet.

iv) Procedures for ensuring safety of officers and members at Licensing and Planning committees. The working group did not feel this was an appropriate topic for a Scrutiny review. In addition the matter is the subject of a motion at the next meeting of Full Council so all members will have the opportunity to debate it there.

v) The council's capacity to help with regard to the international refugee crisis. The

working group noted that this was already being addressed by another group in the council.

14. In order that the Scrutiny Committee can be kept up to date with latest developments in important areas of council work, an additional standing item has been introduced on the committee agenda – Invited Reports from the Executive. This will give Cabinet Members, at the invitation of the committee, the opportunity to brief them on important work in their areas such as the Local Plan and Devolution.

15. With regard to the suggestion about reviewing the cabinet system, the Chairman of the committee has indicated he will be writing to the Constitution Working Group to ask what plans it has to keep the system under review.

Risk Analysis

16.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The committee is unable to agree topics for the work programme	1 – there is a broad range of suggested topics	3 – the Scrutiny Committee would have a light work programme for forthcoming meetings and bring little benefit to the council	The working group appointed by the committee has considered in detail all suggestions and its recommendations are based on where it believes the committee can add value

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.