

Committee: Scrutiny Committee

Date:

Title: Work Planning

Tuesday, 11 June
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Summary

1. This report sets out matters to consider when formulating a Scrutiny work programme for 2019/20.

Recommendations

2. The Committee endorses the recommended approach to establish a work programme as set out in paragraphs 20 to 22 of this report.

Financial Implications

3. There are no direct costs associated with this report

Background Papers

4. None.

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	It is recommended the work programme is developed in consultation with the Executive
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None

Workforce/Workplace	None
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Situation

6. The Scrutiny Committee needs to establish a work programme for 2019/20 in order to plan its work and decide on which areas it wishes to focus.
7. Attached as Appendix A is the current draft work programme. This contains two items scheduled for the next meeting which have been carried over from the previous Scrutiny Committee, although the new committee is not obliged to continue with these. It also contains budget and Local Council Tax Support-related items which would normally be taken to the Scrutiny Committee ahead of Cabinet and Council decision and the Annual Report which under the Council's Constitution the Chair must present to Full Council.
8. Attached as Appendix B is the Cabinet Forward Plan. This document is normally brought to each Committee meeting as a standing item to give Committee members the opportunity to consider whether any items due to go to Cabinet warrant pre-scrutiny.
9. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's newly-published Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities contains recommendations on work planning. In addition to this, last year the council commissioned a report from the Centre for Public Scrutiny on Uttlesford's scrutiny practices and processes. This report made recommendations which are consistent with the guidance issued by the Ministry, including the need for an effective relationship between Scrutiny and Cabinet.
10. In formulating a work programme, the Scrutiny Committee must have regard to the statutory guidance and the Council's Memorandum of Understanding between Scrutiny and the Cabinet.
11. Key sections of the statutory guidance with regard to work planning include:
12. Paragraph 11b:

Identifying a clear role and focus - authorities should take steps to ensure scrutiny has a clear role and focus within the organisation, ie a niche within which it can clearly demonstrate it adds value. Therefore, prioritisation is necessary to ensure the scrutiny function concentrates on delivering work that is of genuine value and relevance to the work of the wider authority – this is one of the most challenging parts of scrutiny, and a critical element to get right if it is to be recognised as a strategic function of the authority.
13. This section also states the importance of ensuring clear division of responsibilities between the scrutiny function and the audit function.
14. Paragraph 47:

Effective scrutiny should have a defined impact on the ground, with the committee making recommendations that will make a tangible difference to the work of the authority. To have that kind of impact, scrutiny committees need to plan their work programme, i.e. draw up a long-term agenda and consider making it flexible enough to accommodate any urgent, short-term issues that might arise during the year.

15. Paragraph 49:

Being clear about scrutiny's role – Scrutiny works best when it has a clear role and function. This provides focus and direction. While scrutiny has the power to look at anything which affects 'the area, or the area's inhabitants', authorities will often find it difficult to support a scrutiny function that carries out generalised oversight across the wide range of issues experienced by local people, particularly in the context of partnership working. Prioritisation is necessary, which means that here might be things that, despite being important, scrutiny will not be able to look at.

16. The statutory guidance also provides the following advice on shortlisting topics:

17. *Approaches to shortlisting topics should reflect scrutiny's overall role in the authority. This will require the development of bespoke, local solutions, however when considering whether an item should be included in the work programme, the kind of questions a scrutiny committee should consider might include:*

- *Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?*
- *How could we best carry out work on this subject?*
- *What would be the best outcome of this work?*
- *How would this work engage with the activity of the executive and other decision-makers, including partners?*

18. The Memorandum of Understanding places a responsibility on the Scrutiny and Executive functions to "meet regularly to ensure that each is aware of the work and priorities of the other, to discuss and develop the Scrutiny work programme and to facilitate its engagement with the Cabinet as a "critical friend".

19. It is therefore proposed that in order to prepare the work programme, the following steps should be taken:

20. Scrutiny Committee members consider potential topics for consideration (in the knowledge that it may not be possible to meet all requests) and feed their views back to the Chair of the Committee.

21. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee meet the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, along with relevant officers, to discuss Corporate

priorities, the Cabinet forward plan and where the Scrutiny Committee can best add value.

22. The results of the above are collated and reported back to the July Scrutiny Committee meeting, where the work plan will be finalised. An update on progress can be brought to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting at the end of June.

Risk Analysis

23.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The work programme becomes too busy to give proper consideration to items is too broad	2 – individual members will have their own views about the relative importance of certain matters	3 – focusing on too many matters may result in less effective scrutiny	The statutory guidance provides clear information about the importance of prioritising work
The Executive or Scrutiny may not work effectively together	2 – there are members on both sides new to local government	3- this would lead to less effective scrutiny	Training is being provided to all members; the MoU is in place to set out the expectations on both sides

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.