

Committee: Scrutiny

Date:

Title: Work Programme 2021/22

17 June 2021

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Summary

1. This report presents the outcome of the work planning process and the resulting work programme for 2021/22.
2. The committee approved the process earlier this year and all members of the committee have had equal opportunity to feed into it.

Recommendations

3. The committee is asked to approve the work programme.

Financial Implications

4. None – there are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

Background Papers

5. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

Impact

- 6.

Communication/Consultation	Scrutiny Committee members were previously advised they could consult with colleagues over possible topics Cabinet and Corporate Management Team were consulted All committee members were given the opportunity to longlist and shortlist suggestions
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None

Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

7. The Scrutiny Committee did not have a formal work programme in place for 2020/21 due mainly to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on resources as the council had to deal with the emergency response and maintain normal council business as far as possible. The committee managed its business well during this very difficult time, although several work streams were slow to progress.
8. In March 2021, the committee approved a methodology for devising its 2021/22 work plan. It was considered beneficial to have a more structured work programme in place with clearly defined topics, timescales and methods. Such a work programme would ensure sufficient time is spent on matters that the committee considers most important and would prevent meetings from becoming overwhelmed with business. It would also ensure any scrutiny reviews were conducted at a reasonable pace to ensure final reports and recommendations were delivered in a timely manner.
9. The approved approach was based on advice from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) and has been used elsewhere.
10. Members were asked to submit possible scrutiny topics. These were then sent back out with an agreed scoring methodology. There were 19 areas of work on this longlist although one has subsequently been removed due to the work already taking place elsewhere.
11. The scores from those members of the committee who responded have now been collated which makes it possible to build a work programme for this council year. It is attached as Appendix A. This work programme is for the non-Local Plan Scrutiny work. The Local Plan is subject to separate arrangements and additional meetings.
12. It is not possible for the committee to include every topic suggested in its work programme; it is better to do fewer things well. What the shortlisting process allows is that if the top-rated topics are concluded, there is a reserve list of other topics, so the next highest scoring topic can be added to the work programme.
13. The work programme has been built to allow a reasonable amount of time for debate in meetings and a reasonable amount of time for work between meetings to be carried out, where that is relevant.

14. The longlist included all matters that the committee would usually consider during the normal course of business, such as the budget and the corporate plan. This was in order to understand their relative importance compared to other areas of potential work.
15. Each of these “standard” items actually scored quite highly compared to the other topics so all are included in the work programme.
16. The airport fly-parking review, which was agreed pre-pandemic but has gained little traction since, was not scored as a particular priority by committee members (10th out of 19 suggestions) so it is proposed that this work ceases in favour of other work considered more of a priority.
17. One suggestion, although scoring highly, has not been included in the work programme. It was around scrutiny of the council’s current investment portfolio and has not been included for two reasons. Firstly, this is work that is already carried out by the Investment Board through a quarterly report. The suggestion also made reference to considerations regarding future investments; however no further investments are currently planned.
18. With regard to Stansted Airport, which is now a matter separate to the major planning applications task and finish group, this is the subject of a report elsewhere on the agenda. It has not for now been timetabled as it requires a member decision as to whether the committee wishes to proceed. If it does, then reports will be scheduled accordingly on the work programme.
19. The five highest priority areas of work are:

	Title	Description	Officer comment from longlist document
1	Post-Covid economic recovery (CMT suggestion) (Committee member suggestion)	How the council can support businesses during a time of transformation in response to ongoing risks	There is a significant budget attached to this workstream. Scrutiny has previously received updates from the portfolio holder. It is included here to understand its relative importance to the committee compared to other potential areas of work
2	Major planning application processes (Existing workstream)	Are there improvements to the processes for determining major planning applications?	Members are aware of the current restrictions with regard to progressing this,

			including the review from PAS remaining unpublished. As Members have focused on the 2018 planning application for Stansted Airport, this will not be concluded until the appeal has been determined and any challenge has been resolved.
3	Corporate Plan/Delivery Plan (Existing workstream)	Assess what the council's priorities will deliver for the district. Are there achievable, measurable objectives?	This was the subject of two call-ins during 19/20. Scrutiny has already requested to see the mid-year review. It is included here to assess its relative importance against other areas of work.
4	The deliverability of the Climate Change action plan (CMT suggestion) (Committee member suggestion)	This is a priority area of work for the executive. Are there measurable objectives that will deliver the best outcomes for the money spent?	Scrutiny has previously studied the Climate Change Strategy and has requested to see the action plan. A focus of the action plan will be what can be achieved through a review of the objectives for all the council's capital and revenue budgets
5	MTFS/Budget (Existing workstream)	Is the council in a robust financial position? Is it allocating resources appropriately? How well does the budget and MTFS underpin the priorities set out in the	Pre-scrutiny of the budget and MTFS is an established part of the committee's work. It is included here to assess its

		corporate plan?	relative importance against other areas of work.
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20. With regard to the major applications item above, the intention is that this review will look at broad recommendations from the Planning Advisory Service, subject to their agreement that they can produce such recommendations, and work with officers to find the most effective way to implement them in the council.

21. The next five priority areas are below. It is not practical to timetable all of these. For now only the first suggestion on the list has been included in the work programme.

	Title	Description	Officer comment from longlist document
6	EELGA review of the Planning Service (Committee member suggestion)	A review of the recommendations stemming from the review of the planning service, once published.	The review panel's advice is being developed into an action plan by the Director of Public Services. An external consultant is being engaged to support implementation and integration with the Uttlesford Moving Forward programme customer strategy and digitisation workstreams It is important that any scrutiny review does not hold up implementation; it may be useful to schedule some time down the line to assess progress and impact
7	Local Highways Panel (committee member)	Committee member comment: The four District Councillors do not get the chance to put forward projects in	The outcome of the recent county council elections will give the Administration

	<p>suggestion) (Cabinet suggestion)</p>	<p>their Ward as these are dictated by County. This would allow the panel to vote on more urgent/specific to area issues.</p>	<p>greater opportunity to influence the prioritisation of projects in the local highways panel. This will require though the Council to provide funding, which will be matched by ECC up to a maximum of £200K in the current FY and £200K in each of the next two FYs</p>
8	<p>Services provided to residents by other agencies (for example Essex County Council, the Police and Fire Commissioner, West Essex CCG)</p>	<p>Is Uttlesford getting an appropriate level of service</p>	<p>If looking beyond ECC services Scrutiny could, for example, request the PFCC's plan and see how well it responds to issues on Uttlesford. Please be aware that the Community Safety Partnership, on which the Council is represented, exists to agree priorities with the PFCC.</p>
9	<p>Airport Fly-Parking (Existing workstream)</p>	<p>As per agreed terms of reference</p>	<p>Progress has been limited. It would be helpful if Scrutiny could reaffirm commitment to this, or otherwise. Is it of sufficient importance in the context of significantly depressed passenger throughput and airport operator focus on business recovery to take priority over other suggestions?</p>

10	Recycling rates (CMT suggestion)	Our rate of recycling has stayed stubbornly steady; might it be a useful piece of work for scrutiny to see how we move it on?	The government's Waste and Resources Strategy will have significant implications for the council's role as waste collection authority and its interaction with ECC as waste disposal authority. It has set an ambitious time frame for implementation of new national policy in 2023. New Producer responsibility and standardised waste collection proposals will affect the waste streams collected by the council including the recycling rate.
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22. Members should note that half of the items in the remaining four meetings of this year relate to services within a single department (Planning). This will increase should members decide to proceed with the Stansted Airport proposal and is in addition to the regular Local Plan Scrutiny meetings. It is important to consider this when making requests for senior officer time to support this work.

23. It should also be noted that task and finish groups can require considerable officer support. Subject to the decision regarding Stansted Airport, there would be two task and finish groups operating (Stansted and Major Applications) and at least one of these should be concluded before another task and finish group is set up.

24. The remaining eight suggestions from the longlist, which attracted the least support, are not included in this report as it is highly unlikely the committee would get to them this year, but details are available from the report author on request.

Risk Analysis

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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
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The committee does not agree this work programme, leading to an ad hoc approach to work in 2021/22.	1 – the committee has previously acknowledged the need for a work plan and approved the methodology	2 – Scrutiny would be less likely to add value and may not focus on the most important priorities	All members have been given the opportunity to take part in the work planning process.
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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.