

TITLE	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes 2019-20
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 16 January 2019
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director, Governance

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Effective Overview and Scrutiny helps to improve services, holds decision makers to account and engages with local communities. In so doing it helps to demonstrate that the Council and other public service providers are open and transparent and are delivering high quality, value for money services.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is requested to:

- 1) consider potential items for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes for 2019/20;
- 2) agree the process for public consultation on the draft work programmes;
- 3) agree to finalise the work programmes at its meeting on 20 March 2019;
- 4) agree in principle that each Overview and Scrutiny Committee carries out one or more detailed Scrutiny reviews during 2019/20.
- 5) note the update on the Government's statutory guidance on Scrutiny.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Effective work programming is a Member-led process aimed at shortlisting and prioritising issues of community concern together with issues arising out of the Council Plan and major policy or service changes. It aims to:

- reflect local needs and concerns;
- prioritise topics for scrutiny which have the most impact or benefit;
- involve local residents and stakeholders;
- be flexible enough to respond to new or urgent issues.

Each year the Committee approves work programmes for itself and the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The report reviews the issues considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in 2018/19 and sets out potential items for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes for 2019/20. It also considers proposals to build on the progress made by Overview and Scrutiny in recent years.

Background

An effective Overview and Scrutiny function is underpinned by robust work programming. Effective work programming lays the foundations for targeted scrutiny of issues of local importance. It helps to ensure that Overview and Scrutiny adds value and makes a difference. Effective work programming helps to:

- prioritise issues for in-depth work where Overview and Scrutiny can make an impact and add value;
- reduce the need for “information only” reports;
- achieve a balance between pre-decision scrutiny, policy development and performance/budget monitoring;
- contribute at an earlier stage in the decision making process;
- increase public and stakeholder involvement in Overview and Scrutiny;
- retain flexibility in order to respond to urgent issues arising during the year.

At previous meetings the Committee has considered different approaches to work programming adopted by a range of Councils across the country. These include:

- seeking ideas from Members, Officers, Parish and Town Councils and partner organisations;
- engaging with community groups and special interest groups;
- encouraging public views via social media and the Council website;
- carrying out public surveys or use of Citizens’ Panels and focus groups;
- analysing corporate complaints and customer feedback;
- reviewing key corporate documents such as the Council Plan, peer reviews and major service inspection reports.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny has produced a template for developing an annual Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. The key elements and suggested timetable are:

- January/February – initial consultation with Overview and Scrutiny Members, Executive Members, senior Officers and partner organisations. Public engagement with residents, Town and Parish Councils, community groups and partners via the Council’s website and social media;
- March – Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to finalise the work programmes;
- April – publication and implementation of the work programmes;
- November – mid-year review of the work programmes by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Issues considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in 2018/19

During the 2018/19 Municipal Year, to date, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has considered the following issues:

- 21st Century Council programme;
- Select Committee report on Scrutiny in Local Government;
- The new Borough Plan;
- Updates from the Council Leader and Chief Executive;
- School Crossing Patrol service – Call-In;
- Quarterly Council Plan Performance Management Reports;
- Waste and Recycling service;
- Impact of Brexit;
- Scrutiny Member training.

Policy Development and Pre-Decision Scrutiny

Effective Overview and Scrutiny can assist in the development of new policies in support of the Council's priorities. In recent years the Leader of the Council and Executive Members have attended the Committee's meetings to discuss priorities for the year ahead and to identify issues which could benefit from input from Overview and Scrutiny. The discussions indicated a consensus that Overview and Scrutiny could play a larger role in policy development. This could be via pre-decision scrutiny of new policies or in depth reviews of specific issues which could lead to new policy development. Executive Members have been asked to suggest issues for inclusion in the 2019/20 work programmes along with the other stakeholders.

It is also suggested that the new Council Leader and new Chief Executive be invited to attend a Scrutiny meeting to discuss the key strategic issues facing the Council and the role of Scrutiny in supporting policy development and service delivery.

In Depth Scrutiny Reviews

An important strength of Overview and Scrutiny is the capacity to carry out in depth reviews of policies or services provided by the Council or its partners. In depth reviews allow Members to drill down into a particular issue and consider evidence from service users, community groups, experts and other stakeholders. They also enable Members to carry out research and broaden their knowledge of best practice in the public and private sectors.

In 2018 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee carried out an in-depth Scrutiny review of the Council's Grounds Maintenance service, resulting in the submission of detailed recommendations to the Council's Executive in January 2019.

Building on the successful outcome of the review of the grounds maintenance service, it is suggested that each Overview and Scrutiny Committee identifies one or more topics for in depth review during 2018/19, the reviews to be carried out by the Committees themselves or by Task and Finish Groups.

Scrutiny Review Issues

The issues identified for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny should be of interest or concern for local residents and generate public interest and involvement in the Overview and Scrutiny process.

In order to generate ideas and involvement from local residents, community groups and stakeholders, it is suggested that the Council's website and social media be used to publicise the development of the work programme and to invite suggestions inclusion. In considering potential issues for review, Members should take into account the previously agreed selection criteria:

- Whether the issue is of local, and preferably current, concern;
- Whether the undertaking of the review can be linked to the Council's Vision, priorities and underpinning principles or would help achieve these;
- Whether the topic is already being reviewed elsewhere within the Council (e.g. as part of the 21st Century Council programme);
- Is the topic one that is capable of being influenced by one of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
- Is the topic of manageable scope – not too wide-ranging and yet of sufficient size to warrant a scrutiny review;
- Whether sufficient resources are available to support the scrutiny review; If a review is warranted, should it have a high, medium or low priority?
- Whether the review should be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee itself or be delegated to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or a Task and Finish Group.

Scrutiny Issues

As a reminder, the Annex to the report sets out the draft work programme for each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in 2018/19. The work programmes allow flexibility for the consideration of urgent issues and the call-in of decisions made by the Executive. Once approved, the work programme issues will be timetabled into the programme of Overview and Scrutiny meetings during the year. Potential new issues for consideration in 2019/20 include:

- Issues arising out of the Brexit process – O&S Management Committee;
- Briefing from the new Leader and new Chief Executive – Management Committee;
- Scrutinising the Local Enterprise Partnership – Management Committee;
- Impact of Brexit on social care and health – HOSC;
- NHS 10 Year Plan – HOSC;
- Budget Scrutiny – Community and Corporate;
- Town Centre Regeneration Audits – Community and Corporate;
- Narrowing the Gap in Educational attainment – Children's Services.

Government Statutory Guidance on Scrutiny

As Members are aware, following the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee report on Overview and Scrutiny, the Government undertook to produce updated statutory guidance by the end of 2018.

The previous guidance from the Government on Scrutiny was issued in 2006. The role of Scrutiny has changed significantly since then – just as local government has changed. In 2017, the Select Committee stated:

“The role of Scrutiny has evolved since its inception. The 2000 Act empowers Committees to review decisions made by the Executive and to make reports and recommendations for the Executive’s consideration. In the seventeen years since, the way in which Scrutiny Committees perform their function has understandably changed. One such way has been an increase in scrutiny of external bodies, most notably health bodies. Councils have delivered services through increasingly varied partnership arrangements – including contracting to private companies, creating arms-length bodies or working with other public bodies – and Scrutiny has responded by adjusting how it scrutinises the issues that matter to local residents.”

Because of this evolving role, the Select Committee recommended that Government issue revised guidance to councils on how Scrutiny should be supported. In doing so, the Committee highlighted the importance that “organisational culture” (how people act and behave, and their values) has on the success of Scrutiny.

The Government issued a response in early 2018 in which they committed to producing guidance at the end of the year. The Government’s stated view is that each Council is best placed to decide which arrangements best suit its own individual circumstances. With this in mind the key issues include:

- How can the guidance help by making it clear to Council Executives / senior Officers the kind of support that should be given to Scrutiny (in a cultural sense)?
- In a more general sense how might the guidance help Scrutiny to build a positive relationship with the Executive, emphasising the need for scrutiny’s independence?
- Should the guidance highlight the need for a greater profile and respect for Scrutiny by the Executive?
- Should the guidance go into detail on issues around work planning – recommending focus and prioritisation?
- How can the guidance help Scrutiny with access to and use of information?
- Local Councillors are best placed to understand the needs of local people, but how can the guidance help Scrutiny Councillors to ensure that scrutiny is supported to engage with the public in this way?
- How can the guidance help Scrutiny more generally to develop a positive profile for itself at local level?

There are three specific issues where Government is keen that the guidance provides some further detail. These are:

- Scrutiny of “external bodies” (this might be bodies operating under contract, commissioned partners, alternative delivery vehicles, more traditional partners and so on);
- Access to information (access to, and use of, information effectively by Scrutiny having been a challenge for many practitioners);
- Scrutiny of financial resilience and sustainability of Councils (recognising the recent, and continuing, pressures on the sector and scrutiny’s role in helping to understand them).

The guidance will be statutory guidance, issued under section 9 Q(1) of the Local Government Act 2000. This means that Councils will have to “have regard to” the guidance in the way that they work and the decisions they make. The phrase “have regard to” has a particular legal meaning, which is essentially that a body subject to such guidance has to have a clear reason for departing from it.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	0	NA	NA
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

List of Background Papers

None

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Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes 2018/19

1. Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

1.	Development of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes and coordination of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees
2.	Discussion with the Leader, Executive Members and appropriate Officers to identify priorities and monitor performance against key targets
3.	Monitoring of the Council Plan and the Corporate Peer Review Action Plan
4.	Input into new policies through pre-decision scrutiny of draft proposals
5.	Monitoring the quarterly Council Plan Performance Management report
6.	Reviewing implementation of the Council's 21 st Century Council programme
7.	Monitoring Strategic Development Location (SDL) delivery and progress relating to the Local Plan Update
8.	Reviewing the Council's annual Budget Engagement exercise
9.	Monitoring the operation and performance of Council-owned companies
10.	Reviewing the Assets Review Programme and the operation of the Council's Property Portfolio Investment Fund
11.	Monitoring the outcomes delivered by the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership
12.	Reviewing the effectiveness of Planning processes relating to the implementation of planning conditions and tree preservation orders
11.	Monitoring the Council's compliance with the Equality Act 2010
12.	Approval of the annual Overview and Scrutiny report to Council
13.	Call-In review of Executive decisions
14.	Appointing Task and Finish Groups to investigate issues of local interest
15.	Reviewing the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny and the underpinning support and training provided for Members

2. Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.	Monitoring the effective delivery of safeguarding services, including social worker recruitment, retention and training
2.	Reviewing services that contribute to the achievement of the Council's Vision and priorities for children and young people
3.	Reviewing progress in relation to narrowing the gap in educational attainment for children from disadvantaged backgrounds
4.	Reviewing key Children's Services performance indicators and major projects
5.	Reviewing school performance indicators and Ofsted reports
6.	Monitoring the performance of any schools causing concern
7.	Monitoring the impact of the 21 st Century Council change programme on Children's Services
8.	Monitoring key strategic initiatives such as the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and the development of the Wokingham Multi Academy Trust
9.	Considering the annual report of the Corporate Parenting Board
10.	Input into new policies through pre-decision scrutiny of draft proposals relating to Children's Services
11.	Call-In of Executive decisions relating to Children's Services
12.	Appointing Task and Finish Groups as appropriate

3. Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.	Reviewing the work of the Community Safety Partnership and the effectiveness of local policing
2.	Exercising the Council's flood risk management responsibilities by monitoring flood risk activities and partnership working with towns and parishes
3.	Monitoring the Council's Capital and Revenue expenditure
4.	Monitoring the Wokingham Town Centre regeneration project including an evidence session with the Federation of Small Businesses
5.	Reviewing the Council's partnerships with Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary sector
6.	Reviewing highways and transport issues including customer service, car parking and improvements to cycling facilities
7.	Reviewing the proposed development of the Coppid Beech Park and Ride site
8.	Monitoring the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement
9.	Reviewing the process for setting fees and charges in the Public Protection service
10.	Input into new policies through pre-decision scrutiny of draft proposals
11.	Appointing Task and Finish Groups as appropriate

4. Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.	Monitoring health and social care outcomes and the performance of the local NHS Foundation Trusts
2.	Reviewing progress on the integration of health and social care services
3.	Monitoring progress relating to the development of community hubs
4.	Considering reports and updates from Wokingham Healthwatch
5.	Reviewing the provision of community mental health services
6.	Considering updates on the work of the Wokingham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
7.	Reviewing access to primary care services within the Strategic Development Locations
8.	Joining West Berkshire, Reading, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Councils in joint scrutiny of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Sustainability and Transformation Plan
9.	Call-In of Executive decisions relating to adult social care
10.	Input into new policies through pre-decision scrutiny of draft proposals relating to adult social care
11.	Appointing Task and Finish Groups as appropriate