

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 23 MARCH 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.25 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Pauline Helliar-Symons (Chairman), Alison Swaddle (Vice-Chairman), Andy Croy, Paul Fishwick, Jim Frewin, Emma Hobbs, Sarah Kerr, Abdul Loyes, Ken Miall, Andrew Mickleburgh, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey and Malcolm Richards

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Graham Howe

Officers Present

Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist

83. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Guy Grandison.

Graham Howe attended the meeting as a substitute.

84. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 February 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

85. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Ken Miall declared a personal interest in the first Scrutiny request set out in Annex A of Item 87 and did not take part in the discussion or voting on that request.

86. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

87. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

88. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMMES 2021/22

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 13 to 28, which considered the development of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programmes for 2021/22.

The report reminded Members of the importance of effective work programming which allowed Overview and Scrutiny to focus on issues of importance for residents and community stakeholders. Effective work programming:

- reflected local needs and concerns;
- prioritised topics for Scrutiny which had the most impact or benefit;
- involved local residents and stakeholders;
- was flexible enough to respond to new or urgent issues.

The report set out the current work programmes for the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees together with a list of 45 Scrutiny topics submitted by residents, Town and Parish Councils and WBC Members. Members considered each of the suggested topics and decided which items should be included in the work programmes for 2021/22.

Members noted that the work programmes were flexible documents which meant that additional items of importance could be added during the year.

The report also reminded Members of the 2020 Community Vision and Council Delivery Plan. These documents set out the key priorities for the Borough up to 2024 and, as such, provided an important source of potential Scrutiny review items.

Following Members' deliberations, the 2021/22 work programme items would be timetabled into the programme of Overview and Scrutiny meetings during the year. Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee would determine its priorities within the programme and allocate items to specific meetings.

As agreed previously, the work programmes would include discussions with the relevant Executive Members to discuss items which were likely to be considered by the Executive during the year.

The report noted the effectiveness of recent Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups (Climate Emergency, Estate Infrastructure and Grounds Maintenance) and suggested that each Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider setting up one or more Task and Finish Groups during 2021/22.

In relation to the Scrutiny requests in Annex A, Philip Meadowcroft made a statement in support of his request, as follows:

"My request is triggered by the failure of Members and senior Officials to apply the Constitution since May 2019 in respect of the Standards Committee together with the Audit Committee's realisation that budget numbers they approved last November were then altered before they went to the Executive.

I think it would be inappropriate for the review to be investigated by any panel of Members and Officials like the Constitution Review Working Group. Failure for 20 months to "stick to the rules" of the Constitution was made by the decision of the Full Council without any intervention by the Monitoring Officer. For such a panel to act as investigator, judge and jury under such circumstances is clearly not an impartial review.

This is a strategic opportunity for your Committee, Councillor Helliar-Symons, to put the safeguarding of the Constitution at the core of maintaining the integrity of WBC Members and Officers and the trust which residents place on them.

Under such circumstances, when you come to reviewing my request may I ask the Committee to be mindful of seeking the investigation to be undertaken by an external investigator like a retired QC or High Court judge rather than from the go-to panel of investigators which WBC normally use? In doing so, the investigation can be free of any political or administrative bias and thus be genuinely independent. This will be the best way to ensure public confidence that a thoroughly impartial and party-politics free investigation will occur".

Members considered the Scrutiny requests set out in Annex A and made the following points:

- Request number 1 (compliance with the WBC Constitution) be not approved for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Work Programme for 2021/22;
- Request numbers 2 to 16 be supported for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2021/22;
- Scrutiny items on waste and recycling be considered as two issues – strategy and service delivery;
- Scrutiny of the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) contract include consideration of a smooth transition and service impact.
- Scrutiny of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy take place later in 2021/22;
- Request number 17 (Renewable Energy Installations) be referred to the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group for consideration;
- Request numbers 18 to 20 be supported for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2021/22 (with Air Quality to be a joint item with the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee);
- Scrutiny items 6 and 27 be linked to the existing item relating to development of the Council's website and improvements to service delivery channels;
- Scrutiny of the proposed Tree Strategy be not included in the work programmes at this stage, but be reviewed later in 2021/22;
- Scrutiny of the Council's role in protecting existing trees be considered by a Task and Finish Group – to include consideration of the issue raised by Paul Fishwick relating to the the destruction of 400-500 semi mature, mature and veteran trees at Bearwood Park, Sindlesham;
- Request numbers 21 to 23 be not approved for inclusion in the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2021/22 – these requests to be referred to the relevant service for investigation;
- Request number 24 (anti-social behaviour) be considered by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of its annual review of the Community Safety Partnership;
- Request numbers 25 to 31 be approved for inclusion in the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2021/22;
- Request number 32 (Covid-19 outcomes for residents) be approved for inclusion in the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2021/22;
- Request numbers 33 and 34 be approved for inclusion in the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2021/22;

- Request numbers 35 and 36 be approved for inclusion in the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2021/22;
- Request number 37 be considered by the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the wider Scrutiny of the Corporate Parenting Board;
- Request numbers 38 to 40 be approved for inclusion in the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2021/22;
- Request numbers 41 to 45 be approved for inclusion in the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2021/22;

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Scrutiny requests received for 2021/22 (Annex A) be noted;
- 2) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programmes for 2021/22, as amended, be approved and be submitted to the first meeting of each Committee in the 2021/22 Municipal Year;
- 3) each Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor and amend its work programme during the year, as necessary;
- 4) each Overview and Scrutiny Committee endeavour to undertake one or more detailed Scrutiny reviews during 2021/22.

89. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEMBER TRAINING

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 29 to 40, which gave details of a proposed Overview and Scrutiny Member training programme. One of the Committee’s responsibilities was to ensure appropriate training and support for Members to enable them to carry out their Overview and Scrutiny roles.

The report stated that the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny had been approached to provide an indicative training programme for 2021/22. The suggested programme focussed on four topics:

- Scrutiny Essentials: The strategic Role of Scrutiny – developing a clear overview and understanding of the strategic role of Overview and Scrutiny in helping to shape Council policies and plans, acting as the “critical friend”. It was suggested that this training session be delivered virtually on Tuesday 15 June 2021.
- Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny – understanding the role of Scrutiny in helping to make services more effective through better use of data, developing key lines of enquiry and recognising the overlap between areas of Health scrutiny and the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Children’s Services and Safeguarding – understanding the diverse landscape of children’s services, identifying sources of data and the development of effective questioning techniques relating to key partner agencies.

- Chairing and Leading Scrutiny – understanding the role of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman in making Committees effective through clear leadership and inclusive chairing.

The report stated that the suggested programme is indicative and that Members may wish to identify other priority areas. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny had confirmed that it would tailor the programme to meet local needs.

In the ensuing discussion, Members made the following points:

- The Scrutiny Essentials session on 15 June should be held in the evening to enable as many Members as possible to attend.
- The Scrutiny training sessions should be open to all Members.
- All the training sessions should include reference to equality and inter-cultural issues.
- The sessions should be delivered on-line.
- A further training session on Budget Scrutiny should be added to the programme.
- Group leaders should be requested to remind their Members of the importance of the training sessions in order to ensure maximum attendance.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the proposed Overview and Scrutiny Member Training programme for 2021/22, as set out in the report, be approved, with the addition of a session on Budget Scrutiny;
- 2) the first Member training session (Scrutiny Essentials) be held on the evening of 15 June 2021;
- 3) the Member training sessions be open to all Members of the Council;
- 4) the Member training sessions be held on-line;
- 5) Group leaders be asked to support the Member training programme in order to encourage maximum attendance;
- 6) the Member training programme be monitored during the year with the addition of further training sessions as appropriate.

90. CONSIDERATION OF THE CURRENT EXECUTIVE AND IEMD FORWARD PROGRAMMES

The Committee considered a copy of the Executive Forward Programme and the Individual Executive Member Decision Forward Programme as set out on Agenda pages 41 to 50.

RESOLVED: That the Executive and Individual Executive Member Decision Forward Programmes be noted.

91. ACTION TRACKER REPORT

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda page 51, which gave details of progress relating to the Committee decisions made at previous meetings.

The Action Tracker report would be updated following each meeting of the Committee and would, therefore, facilitate more effective progress chasing on outstanding actions.

As this was the final item to be considered by the Committee during the 2020/21 Municipal Year, the Chairman thanked all the Members and officers who had contributed to the Committee's work.

RESOLVED: That the Action Tracker report be noted.