

TITLE	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes for 2021/22
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 20 January 2021
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 2021/22;
- 2) agree the process for public consultation on the draft Work Programmes;
- 3) agree to finalise the Work Programmes at the meeting on 31 March 2021;
- 4) agree in principle that each Overview and Scrutiny Committee carries out one or more detailed Scrutiny reviews during 2021/22.

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 2020/21 and the process for identifying potential items for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes for 2021/22.

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.

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.

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 will be asked to suggest issues for inclusion in the 2021/22 Work Programmes along with the other stakeholders.

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.

Over the past year the Committee has coordinated an in-depth review of the Council's approach to the Covid-19 pandemic. This involved each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees carrying out detailed scrutiny of specific issues such as care homes, health partnerships, mental health, schools and children's services, community response, communications, Test and Trace and the impact on the poorest members of the community. The Committee's final report will be considered by the Executive on 25 February 2021. The review of the Council's response to the pandemic may generate ideas for items to be included in the 2021/22 Work Programmes.

The Committee also established the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group. The Task and Finish Group received evidence from a range of internal and external experts and produced a report with 14 recommendations which was submitted to the Executive in October 2020.

2020/21 also saw the second iteration of Budget Scrutiny, carried out by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee examined draft proposals for growth, savings and Capital investment. Members scrutinised Executive Members and senior managers about Budget options, risk and the longer term financial horizon.

Building on the successful outcome of the Scrutiny process, highlighted above, it is suggested that each Overview and Scrutiny Committee again identify one or more topics for in-depth review during 2021/22, 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 for 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 undertaking 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 Continuous Improvement 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, Annex 1 to the report sets out the Work Programme for each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in 2020/21. 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.

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	NA	NA
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0	NA	NA

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

Cross Council Implications

None

Public Sector Equality Duty

The issues raised during 2021/22 will raise the profile of Overview and Scrutiny across the Borough, including residents with protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act 2010. The aim is to achieve better outcomes and value for money for residents

List of Background Papers

None

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1. Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee – 2020/21

1.	Scrutinising the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic – Recovery; Track and Trace; impact on the poorest, the unemployed and the homeless and maintaining democracy
2.	Development of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes and coordination of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees
3.	Discussions with the Leader, Executive Members and Chief Executive to identify future priorities and monitor performance against targets
4.	Scrutinising the underpinning priorities and KPIs for the Corporate Delivery Plan 2020/24 and the Quarterly Performance Management Reports
5.	Scrutinising the Council's Continuous Improvement Programme
6.	Scrutinising the implications of Climate Emergency for the Borough through the Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group
7.	Scrutinising progress on the Local Plan Update and the Council's Five Year Land Supply
8.	Scrutinising the Council's Economic Development Strategy and the impact of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership
9.	Scrutinising the Council's compliance with its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010
10.	Scrutinising the impact of Brexit on the Borough and Council services
11.	Monitoring progress on the Council's Food Waste collection service and the new Street Cleansing contract
12.	Scrutinising the Council's policies and procedures relating to Unauthorised Traveller Encampments
13.	Scrutinising the Council's Air Quality Management Action Plan
14.	Approving the annual Overview and Scrutiny reports to Council
15.	Undertaking Call-In reviews of Executive decisions as necessary
16.	Appointing Task and Finish Groups as appropriate
17.	Reviewing the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny function and the underpinning support and training provided for Officers and Members

2. Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 2020/21

1.	Scrutinising the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Children's Services – schools; Children's Services and the impact on mental health (with HOSC);
2.	Scrutinising the implementation of the Children's Services action plan aimed at achieving a "Good" Ofsted outcome
3.	Monitoring the effective delivery of safeguarding services, including social worker recruitment, retention and training
4.	Reviewing services that contribute to the achievement of the Council's Vision and priorities for children and young people
5.	Reviewing progress in relation to narrowing the gap in educational attainment for children from disadvantaged backgrounds
6.	Reviewing key Children's Services performance indicators and major projects
7.	Reviewing school performance indicators and Ofsted reports
8.	Scrutinising the performance of any schools causing concern
9.	Scrutinising the allocation of school places across the Borough
10.	Monitoring the impact of the Council's Continuous Improvement Programme on Children's Services
11.	Scrutinising progress of key strategic initiatives such as the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
12.	Considering the annual report of the Corporate Parenting Board
13.	Scrutinising Home to School Transport provision and the appeals process
14.	Reviewing appeals against the service - in terms of number and outcomes
15.	Reviewing the Strategy for children with special educational needs and disabilities
16.	Input into new policies through pre-decision scrutiny of draft proposals relating to Children's Services
17.	Scrutinising the effectiveness of youth services across the Borough
18.	Call-In of Executive decisions relating to Children's Services
19.	Appointing Task and Finish Groups as appropriate

3. Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 2020/21

1.	Scrutinising the Council's response to Covid-19 in relation to: the Council's Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan; support for local businesses; the community response (supporting vulnerable people); community safety and localities; communication and engagement
2.	Reviewing the work of the Community Safety Partnership, the effectiveness of local policing and fire and rescue services
3.	Exercising the Council's flood risk management responsibilities by monitoring flood risk activities and partnership working with Towns and Parishes
4.	Reviewing the Assets Review Programme and the operation of the Council's Property Portfolio Investment Fund
5.	Reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's partnerships with Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary sector
6.	Scrutinising the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Strategy
7.	Scrutinising burial capacity across the Borough and the Council's plans to ensure adequate future capacity
8.	Scrutinising the Council's Localities service and measures to develop closer working relationships with Town and Parish Councils
9.	Scrutinising service and policy developments relating to the Council's public facing services and its in-house support services
10.	Reviewing highways and transport issues including highways contracts, customer service, car parking, Bus Strategy, safe walking and cycling routes to schools, connected cycleways and Traffic Regulation Orders
11.	Scrutinising the Council's emerging Arts and Culture Strategy
12.	Reviewing the Business Case supporting the development of the Coppid Beech Park and Ride site
13.	Scrutinising the implementation and impact of Civil Parking Enforcement across the Borough
14.	Scrutinising the Council's Housing Services to ensure that the needs of local residents and communities are being met
15.	Scrutinising the operation and performance of the Council-owned companies and shared service arrangements
16.	Appointing Task and Finish Groups as appropriate – Task and Finish Group on Green Travel established

4. Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 2020/21

1.	Scrutinising the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on care homes and the effectiveness of health partnerships
2.	Monitoring health and social care outcomes and the performance of the local NHS Foundation Trusts
3.	Reviewing progress on the integration of health and social care services
4.	Monitoring progress relating to the development of Primary Care Networks
5.	Considering reports and updates from Healthwatch Wokingham Borough
6.	Scrutinising the impact of the Council's Continuous Improvement Programme on Adult Social Care
7.	Reviewing the provision of community mental health services
8.	Considering updates on the work of the NHS Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
9.	Scrutinising the Council's plans to improve air quality across the Borough
10.	Reviewing access to primary care services within the Strategic Development Locations
11.	Joining West Berkshire, Reading, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Councils in joint scrutiny of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Sustainability and Transformation Plan
12.	Scrutinising the Planning process in relation to the consideration of health issues
13.	Call-In of Executive decisions relating to adult social care as necessary
14.	Input into new policies through pre-decision scrutiny of draft proposals relating to adult social care
15.	Appointing Task and Finish Groups as appropriate