

## **Overview and Scrutiny 2017/18 Work Programme Setting Chairman's Foreword**

Overview and Scrutiny has made progress this year in fulfilling its responsibilities as one of the most important committees on this Council. The quality of scrutiny and challenging questions has increased. We have enjoyed good debates and discussion on a range of issues, primarily with a focus on infrastructure.

We now need to ensure that we undertake meaningful work that leads to recommendations and outcomes that add value to the work of the Council. This will ensure we assist the Council in improving performance and achieving objectives that improve the quality of life for residents in our Borough, and that improve the experience visitors to Ashford enjoy.

At the last meeting, members of Scrutiny were invited to make suggestions for areas which Scrutiny would work on. A variety of suggestions have been made and Officers have collated them in the tabled report for this meeting. It is important that we examine areas where we can actually make clear and meaningful recommendations for improvement, as opposed to general areas of scrutiny that simply provide information. We must also be careful not to duplicate the work of existing committees and/or Task Groups.

Please consider the tabled paper carefully and think about what specific areas we should investigate and how such scrutiny and investigation will bring added worth to the Council.

With best wishes,

Brendan  
Chairman

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## Overview and Scrutiny 2017/18 Work Programme Setting

To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 25<sup>th</sup> April 2017

By: Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer

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**Summary:** As part of the agreed revisions to its procedures, the Committee previously resolved to adopt an annual work programme for Overview and Scrutiny.

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### Background

1. At the Committee's meeting of 28<sup>th</sup> March Members were asked to consider which topics the Committee could include in its work programme for 2017/18, for determination at this meeting. Evidence and best practice from other authorities show that the most effective work plans focus on three or four key reviews per year.

### Programme setting

2. In order that the Committee could discuss the broadest possible range of topics, the Council's Management Team were also asked to provide suggestions. 21 suggestions were put forward by the Committee and Management Team.
3. Officers have collated these suggestions, removing duplicated ideas and any topics which would replicate work being undertaken elsewhere in the Council. Based on the submissions, key themes have emerged under which the Committee's work for the coming year could be framed.

### 1. The Wellbeing Agenda for Ashford

4. This theme incorporates suggested topics relating to the **Council's response to priority health issues, youth engagement and rented accommodation conditions**; and it is proposed that close working with the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board (AHWB) could inform a part of this work stream.
5. Through work on this theme, the Committee could address how the Council contributes to wider wellbeing and health agendas in the Borough, assessing the actions undertaken across the organisation and recommending improvements in these areas. Recommendations under this work stream could also serve to inform the budget scrutiny process to be undertaken later in the year.
6. The NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plan has not been included as this issue is the subject of ongoing scrutiny by the Health and Wellbeing Board, and Officers will update the Committee when it is next considered by this body.

## 2. Infrastructure: Partner Plans for the Borough's Growth and Development

1. This theme incorporates suggested topics relating to infrastructure provision and planning in the Borough such as **major transport projects, utility provision and forward plans for growth**. The Committee has already conducted a certain amount of investigation into this theme since January 2016 and Members are asked to consider where the Committee's attention should next be focused.
2. The Committee has expressed interest in scrutinising the forward plans for utility providers and Officers have also attended meetings of KCC's Utilities Engagement Scrutiny Sub-Committee. Further scrutiny in this area, particularly with an external focus, may serve to highlight areas where infrastructure planning and provision can be improved to benefit development delivery in the Borough.
3. To assist this, in the first instance Officers will present a report to the next meeting of the Committee summarising the presentations received to date from infrastructure providers operating in the Borough. This report will provide additional information to contextualise the Committee's ongoing work.

## 3. Air Quality

4. At its previous meeting the Committee noted the importance of continuing with a review into Air Quality. The formulation of an Air Quality Strategy is a service plan priority for Health, Parking and Community Safety, and to move this work forward it is proposed that a **Task and Finish group** should be assembled to:
  - Assess the research findings gathered to date;
  - Identify whether any further research or investigation is needed;
  - Work with Officers to formulate an Air Quality Strategy for the Borough for pre-scrutiny by the Committee and submission to the Cabinet.

## Individual Reports and Smaller Items

5. Other items can and will come forward during the year, being captured and monitored through the Overview and Scrutiny Tracker as now. As such, the Committee may wish to consider further scrutiny of any other suggestions. Officers will liaise with colleagues on how best to accommodate them on the tracker, in line with the Committee's agreed approach to topic selection.

## Conclusion

6. Members are asked to consider the above themes and what elements within these they consider to be most deserving of the Committee's attention. In line with the Committee's agreed approach to topic selection, those elements which cannot provide satisfactory answers to the below questions should not be considered suitable for the Committee's attention.

1. Does the topic/element represent a key issue for local people and is it likely to result in improvements for local people?
2. Is the issue strategic and significant?
3. Does the topic/element fall within a corporate priority area (*Enterprising Ashford; Living Ashford; Active and Creative Ashford; Attractive Ashford; Ashford's Underpinning Principles*), or is it of significant community interest?
4. Is scrutiny of this topic/element likely to lead to effective outcomes?
5. Will scrutiny involvement be duplicating some other work?

### **Next steps**

10. The agreed themes will be incorporated into a draft work plan to be agreed and endorsed alongside the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report at the Committee's May meeting.

**The Committee is asked to consider the thematic approach set out in the report and identify specific topics within these areas to be highlighted for further scrutiny.**

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