

## Agenda Item No: 6



Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### **[Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24]**

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The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to;

- i. **Approve the following topics for the work programme;**
    - **Monitoring of the Savings Schedule.**
    - **Consultation and Engagement Recommendations Update.**
    - **Update on future system upgrades with Arcus Global.**
    - **Annual Reports – Overview and Scrutiny, Performance, Sickness, Safeguarding and the Community Safety Partnership, Budget Scrutiny.**
  - ii. **Consider whether the Freedom Leisure Contract item should be subject to scrutiny once the internal audit has been completed.**
  - iii. **Approve the Scrutiny Topic Selection Matrix and suggested scoring.**
  - iv. **Raise any other issues or topics that would benefit from scrutiny, including one topic for in depth review.**
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**Date of O&S meeting:** 13 June 2023

**Chair of O&S Committee:** To be confirmed.

**Relevant Portfolio(s):** Policy and Performance

**Summary:** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews its work programme annually. Members have been asked to consider any topics for the scrutiny programme. Topics have been assessed using the Topic Selection Matrix.

The report details the draft work programme for 2023/24, including any annual reports/updates expected to the Committee at various points in the year.

Members are advised that scrutiny topics can be considered at any point during the year.

**Exempt from  
Publication:**

**NO**

**Background Papers:**

**None.**

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## **Report Title: Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24**

### **Introduction and Background**

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee adopts a new work programme each year. At the recent Scrutiny Essentials training, Members were asked to suggest topics that they think would benefit from scrutiny. No additional topics have been suggested at present, therefore any remaining topics from last year have been assessed by the scrutiny team via the Topic Selection Matrix (Appendix A). Currently there are four topics for consideration by the Committee for the Work Programme (Appendix B). The council's Management Team have also been consulted over the work programme and support the future work of the Committee.
2. Details of suggested topics and any annual reports expected this year are outlined in this report. Members are asked to consider any other topics for the main Committee's work programme that can be brought forward as a presentation or written report. We would expect to undertake one in depth review in addition to budget scrutiny which is yet to be suggested and agreed by the Committee.
3. The Cabinet's Schedule of Key Decisions (Appendix C) is included in addition to this report and will be a standing item on the Overview and Scrutiny agendas. This allows Members to learn of the items that are due to be discussed by the Cabinet several months in advance. This provides the opportunity for Members to conduct pre decision scrutiny by requesting that some items be reviewed by the Committee in advance of being considered by Cabinet.

### **Overview of Topics**

#### **Monitoring of Savings Schedule**

4. During budget scrutiny of the 2023/24 draft budget, it was suggested that the proposed savings schedule for the council was subject to regular monitoring. Members recommended that the delivery of identified savings was reviewed by the Committee on a six monthly basis to monitor the progress.
5. The scrutiny matrix indicates this topic is of key interest to the Members and residents and therefore it is recommended that this should be prioritised during the year.

#### **Freedom Leisure Contract**

6. In 2022, after a year of operations, it was suggested that the new leisure operator at the Stour Centre could be reviewed. Scrutiny of this topic would

examine how the service has been running, the savings made to the council and the levels of customer satisfaction with the service.

7. It was felt that a report would be sufficient to provide the update, as well as inviting a representative from the Leisure operator to attend a future meeting and answer Member queries.
8. However, Members were made aware that an internal audit of the Freedom Leisure contract was underway and it was proposed that a report could be prepared for the Committee, once the audit had been completed. As this topic will likely be covered by the Audit Committee once the audit has been concluded, and does not represent a key issue of concern to stakeholders, this topic ranked a score of 24 on the matrix. This scoring suggests that the topic should be held in abeyance when considering whether to take this forward in to the work programme.

## **Recommendation Updates**

### **Consultation and Engagement**

9. Last year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to review the council's approach to consultation and engagement. Members were particularly interested in how the council consulted with residents regarding current issues, new policies and projects. Members also wanted to understand what the challenges were with engaging hard to reach groups and compare best practice with other local authorities. It was agreed that a Task Group would convene to undertake the review of consultation and this concluded during the 2022/23 municipal year.
10. The following recommendations were made by the Task Group and were approved by Cabinet in November 2022:
  - i. Corporate consultation guidance be produced to provide services with good practice for setting up future consultations. The guidance should include details on the different methods of consultation and set out some minimum standards that need to be complied with before and after a consultation has concluded.
  - ii. Non-conventional methods of consultation should continue to be explored by the council in order to increase levels of engagement from residents such as video and Hello Lamppost.
  - iii. The use of easy-read versions of consultation papers should be considered for all public consultations.
  - iv. An internal advisory group should be formed for Officers to review consultations before they are published. The group would meet informally to test and feedback to services about proposed surveys.

- v. A calendar of consultations is produced to ensure that the council can oversee how many consultations are issued to residents during one period.
  - vi. Work to increase subscribers to ABC publications should continue to be developed by the Council.
  - vii. The council explore options around creating a Citizens Panel to encourage local residents to give their views and opinions on services and issues that affect the Borough.
  - viii. Residents are engaged with the scrutiny work programme each year using the Council's communications channels
11. Members agreed that an update on the recommendations would be received by the Committee after six months to review the progress of them. Therefore, this has been put forward for the 2023/24 scrutiny work programme.

#### **Update on future system upgrades with Arcus Global**

12. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee previously identified that there had been issues with the delivery of the new planning IT system with Arcus Global. It was agreed that a review should be prioritised in the work programme and undertaken by a dedicated Task and Finish Group.
13. The aim for the review was to understand what issues had been experienced during the project and also what lessons could be taken forward in future transformation projects and system rollouts. In particular, Members were aware of plans in 2023 to develop the Arcus Global system further with the Planning and Development Service and also upgrade the system used by the Safety and Wellbeing Service. Therefore, it was important for the Task Group to understand the lessons that could be learnt from the delivery of the planning IT system project. The review concluded at the end of 2022 and eight recommendations were put forward to Cabinet.
14. Following approval of the lessons learnt report and recommendations, it was proposed that Overview and Scrutiny could receive updates on the next phase of system upgrades with Arcus Global in the Planning and Development Service and Safety and Wellbeing Service.

#### **Annual Reports – Overview and Scrutiny, Performance, Sickness, Safeguarding and the Community Safety Partnership, Budget Scrutiny**

15. The Committee will expect to receive six annual reports in the coming year;
- Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report – A summary of all the work carried out by the Committee during the last year, including any agreed recommendations.

- Corporate Performance Reports – These are quarterly reports detailing the council's performance and an annual report is also produced to give an overview of the council's performance and achievements during the last year.
- Annual Sickness Report – A report providing the Committee with annual sickness information for the recent year.
- Safeguarding – This report provides the Committee with the council's annual safeguarding update. The report pays particular regard to the council's obligation to work in partnership to protect children, young people and adults at risk from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development.
- Community Safety Partnership (CSP) - This report provides the Committee with the community safety annual update. The report pays particular regard to the council's statutory obligation to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder, this work being progressed through the Ashford CSP.
- Budget Scrutiny Task Group – The aim of the Task Group will be to review the draft budget for 2024/25 and consider any financial risks. The Task Group will then produce final findings with recommendations to Cabinet prior to Full Council approval of the draft budget.

## **Training and Events**

16. The following scrutiny training sessions are due to be held by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny:
  - Using information and Developing Effective Questioning Skills (4<sup>th</sup> July)
  - Council Finance, Budget and Commercial Scrutiny (26<sup>th</sup> September)
17. Members are encouraged to attend both training sessions which are to be held in person at the Civic Centre, and further details will be provided in due course.
18. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny hosts additional workshops and events throughout the year for scrutiny Councillors across the country, both virtual and in person. Dates for events will be shared with Members by the scrutiny team as and when they are available.

## **Conclusion**

19. The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023/24 so far includes a combination of items previously suggested by the Committee last year and quarterly/annual reporting. Members would be encouraged to make

suggestions for topics far looks to prioritise key topics with the aim of completing at least one task and finish group addition to the wider work programme. There are a number of annual reviews expected to the Committee at various points in the year regarding the council's performance, levels of sickness, and also updates on safeguarding and community safety.

20. This report seeks approval of the work programme for 2023/24 and asks Members to recommend any further topics for consideration in the future. It should be noted that Members are able to make suggestions for scrutiny at any point throughout the year by raising the issue at a meeting or by contacting the Chairman or Policy and Scrutiny Officer.

## **Contact and Email**

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