

Agenda Item No:



Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

[Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24 Update]

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to;

- i. **Approve the following topics for the work programme as outlined in Table 1 of the report.**
 - ii. **Approve the Topic Selection Matrix.**
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Date of O&S meeting: 11 July 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 - Update

Introduction and Background

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee adopts a new work programme each year. At the last meeting, Members made suggestions for topics to consider for the work programme. Seven topics have been suggested at present and have been assessed by the scrutiny team via the Topic Selection Matrix (Appendix A). The council's Management Team have also been consulted over the work programme (Appendix B) and support the future work of the Committee.
2. Details of suggested topics are outlined within Table 1 of this report. We have proposed that one in-depth review is conducted, in addition to budget scrutiny, to explore equality, diversity and inclusion at the council.
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.

Table 1

Topic	Service	Details	Score	Recommendation
<p>Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion</p>	<p>Policy and Performance</p>	<p>The topic of equalities was raised by Members and there was interest over how the council engages with minority groups.</p>	<p>34</p>	<p>Approve to work programme</p> <p>Due to equalities being a wide ranging topic, it has been suggested that the Committee forms a Task Group to undertake an in-depth review of this topic to understand the areas that Members were particularly interested in scrutinising.</p> <p>The council's equalities policy is due for review within the next year and it was suggested that this could form part of the review.</p> <p>Examining the council's new 'Borough Profile' was also suggested as a branch of the review.</p>
<p>Waste Contract Implementation</p>	<p>Environment, Property and Recreation</p>	<p>Members requested information regarding the implementation of the new waste contract. It was also suggested that the Committee could receive an update on the councils recycling rate and goals for this. It was also requested that an update on issues relating to bin stores could be provided additionally.</p>	<p>33</p>	<p>Approve to work programme</p> <p>The topic represents a key corporate priority area for the council.</p> <p>It was expected that a presentation regarding the waste contract would be timely and could be brought to a meeting in the near future.</p>

Housing Delivery and Management Operations	Housing	The Committee requested that they receive information regarding housing delivery and the delivery of units and also management operations within the Housing service	32	<p>Approve to work programme</p> <p>This topic scores highly on the matrix and therefore indicates that this should be included in the Committee’s work plan.</p> <p>It has been suggested that a presentation from the Housing service is brought forward during the year to explore the topics raised.</p>
Leaders Vision for Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028	Chief Executive	Following the local elections and new administration, Members proposed that the new Leader could be invited to a future Committee meeting to discuss his vision for the next Corporate Plan.	31	<p>Defer item to Corporate Plan Working Group.</p> <p>The new Corporate Plan was currently in its early stages of development.</p> <p>It is recommended that a cross party working group is formed for Members of all parties to contribute and discuss the contents of the next Corporate Plan.</p>
Corporate Health Check – Productivity, Staff Morale, Remote Working	HR Customer Services Communications and Digitalisation	The Committee discussed the importance of ensuring resources were utilised efficiently during the current period of financial restraint and pressure. It was suggested that a review of staff motivation in terms of smart working, productivity and remote working could be undertaken.	27	<p>Approve to work programme</p> <p>It has been proposed that a ‘corporate health check’ is undertaken in addition to the annual sickness report to inform the Committee over productivity, staff morale and remote working.</p> <p>It should be noted that the annual sickness report is due to O&S in July and will cover some of these topics briefly.</p>

<p>GP Appointments</p>	<p>Safety and Wellbeing</p>	<p>A Member raised concern over the difficulties relating to GP appointments in the Borough and highlighted that this issue was of key concern to many residents.</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>Defer decision to a future meeting</p> <p>It was noted that KCC predominantly had oversight of health scrutiny for the Borough.</p> <p>Members are encouraged to attend the KCC Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 19 July which will scrutinise the GP Development Plan in place until they launch their Primary Care Strategy.</p> <p>It was suggested that if Members felt that additional scrutiny was required in future, the Committee could look at inviting representatives from relevant Health groups to discuss health issues in the Borough more broadly.</p>
<p>Freedom Leisure at the Stour Centre</p>	<p>Environment, Property and Recreation</p>	<p>It was felt that the general cleanliness and maintenance of the Stour Centre had deteriorated and this should be looked in to by the Committee.</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>Approve to work programme</p> <p>Members considered this topic as part of the work programme for the previous year to look at the Freedom Leisure contract at the Stour Centre.</p> <p>However, Members noted that an internal audit of this contract was currently ongoing and there would be a high likelihood that the Audit Committee would then receive a report following completion of the audit.</p>

				Therefore, it was suggested that the Committee could look to review cleanliness and general maintenance of the Stour Centre as opposed to the contractual exercise.
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Conclusion

4. The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023/24 so far looks to include a range of items raised by Members at the recent Committee meeting. The topics suggested recommend a combination of presentations, reports and one in depth review. There are also 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.
5. 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

6. Abi Sheppard, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
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<u>Scrutiny Topic Selection Matrix</u>	1. Represents a key issue for local people.	2. The issue is strategic and significant.	3. The topic falls within a community or corporate priority area.	4. Scrutiny of the issue will lead to effective outcome.	5. Had the topic been covered elsewhere? <i>(Yes = low score No = high score)</i>	6. Represents an issue of concern to stakeholders and partners.	7. The issue is of community concern or there is a high level of dissatisfaction with one or more services.	8. The scrutiny activity is timely.	Score	Rank	Review Type
Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion	5	5	5	4	5	4	3	3	34	1	TG
Waste Contract Implementation	5	4	5	4	3	4	4	4	33	2	R
Housing Delivery and Management Operations	5	5	5	3	4	4	3	3	32	3	P
Leaders Vision for Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028	5	5	5	4	2	5	2	3	31	4	
Corporate Health Check – Productivity, Staff Morale, Remote Working	3	4	4	3	5	2	2	4	27	5	R
GP Appointments	5	4	4	2	1	3	5	2	26	6	P (KCC Meeting 19.07)
Freedom Leisure at the Stour Centre	4	3	4	3	4	2	2	3	25	7	R

Each of the topics are scored for degree of 'fit', e.g. 1 (low) to 5 (high). The reviews with the best fit achieve the highest score.

1. Represents a key issue for local people.
2. The issue is strategic and significant.
3. The topic falls within a community or corporate priority area.
4. Scrutiny of the issue will lead to effective outcomes.

5. Has the topic been covered elsewhere in other services? (Yes = low score No = high score)
6. Represents an issue of concern to stakeholders and partners
7. The issue is of community concern or there is a high level dissatisfaction with one or more services.
8. The scrutiny activity is timely.

Review Type:

Each topic has an indicated review type: Task Group (TG), One-off report or Presentation (R), Member Briefing (B), Other (O)

Score	What the score means
31 to 40	The issue/item has a high likelihood of entering the Scrutiny Work Programme but should be prioritised according to score
20 to 30	Item/issue has less chance of gaining a place on the Scrutiny Work Programme and should be held in abeyance
Under 20	Item/issue should not normally gain a place on the Scrutiny Work Programme

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Draft Work Programme – July 2023

Current Work Programme			
Report Title	Date due to O&S	Reporting Service	Scope of what is to be scrutinised
Update on Future System Upgrades with Arcus Global	September 2023	Planning and Development	Following approval from Cabinet, it was agreed that the Committee could receive updates on the next phase of system upgrades with Arcus Global in the Planning and Development Service and Safety and Wellbeing Service.
Corporate Performance Report Q1	September 2023	Policy and Performance	Quarterly Performance Report in relation to Quarter 1. Information on what the Council has achieved through its decision making; key performance data and wider contextual information.
Corporate Performance Report Q2	November 2023	Policy and Performance	Quarterly Performance Report in relation to Quarter 2. Information on what the Council has achieved through its decision making; key performance data and wider contextual information.
Budget Scrutiny 2024/25	December 2023 /January 2024	Policy and Performance Finance, IT and Digital	Scrutiny of the draft budget 2024/25 will take place over three or four meetings during December and January. A final report and findings from the annual Budget Scrutiny Task Group will be submitted, including any recommendations for consideration by Cabinet.

Safeguarding Update	February 2024	Safety and Wellbeing	Annual update to the committee on the council's work on safeguarding adults and children at risk.
Community Safety Partnership Update	February 2024	Safety and Wellbeing	A review of the decisions made and action taken in connection with the discharge of crime and disorder functions by the members of the Community Safety Partnership. The Committee operates as the designated Crime and Disorder Committee for the council.
Corporate Performance Report Q3	February 2024	Policy and Performance	Quarterly Performance Report in relation to Quarter 3. Information on what the Council has achieved through its decision making; key performance data and wider contextual information.

**CABINET
SCHEDULE OF KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN**

The following Key Decisions will be taken by Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet on the dates stated.

Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet is made up of: - Councillors Noel Ovenden; Steve Campkin; Bill Barrett; Simon Betty; Linda Harman; Heather Hayward; Dawnie Nilsson; Kate Walder; and Liz Wright.

Copies of the reports and any other relevant documents that are submitted to the Cabinet in connection with a proposed decision will be available for inspection, five clear days before the decision at <https://ashford.moderngov.co.uk>

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
29th June 2023					
Corporate Plan Annual Report 2022/23	<i>To present the Annual Report 2022/23 highlighting performance against the Corporate Plan priorities.</i>	Cllr Ovenden/ Hayward	Tom Swain	Open	4/7/22
Final Outturn 2022/23	<i>Final budget outturn for previous financial year.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	4/7/22
Business Continuity Policy	<i>Approval is required of this reviewed Business Continuity Policy in order to ensure a clear organisational approach and commitment, as well as guide business continuity planning at an overarching and service level.</i>	Cllr Wright	Laurel Niven	Open	27/2/23
Adoption of the Charing Neighbourhood Plan	<i>To report the outcome of the referendum of the Charing Parish Neighbourhood Plan to Cabinet.</i>	Cllr Harman	Claire Marchant	Open	13/4/23

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Purchase of Trafalgar House - Use of Chief Executive's Delegated Authority		Cllr Barrett	Mark James	Open (Exempt Appendix)	13/4/23
Costs Associated with Service Review Savings	<i>Combined report proposing new staffing structures for the affected teams following consultation with staff.</i>	Various	Joy Cross	Open (Exempt Appendix)	2/5/23
27th July 2023					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	30/7/22
Corporate Debt Policy		Cllr Ovenden	Nic Stevens	Open	15/2/23
Update on Levelling Up Funding and Newtown Works Development	<i>To update on the progress in drawing down the Levelling Up Funding, the works undertaken to date, the current programme for the development and the risks for the project.</i>	Cllr Betty	Andrew Osborne	Open	3/2/23
Ashford Parks Foundation	<i>To describe in more detail what a Parks Foundation is, what the benefits of creating one are, and how this will be shaped for Ashford.</i>	Cllr Walder	James Laidlaw	Open	11/4/23

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Parking Charges	<i>To agree an increase in parking charges in operation for our car parks and on-street parking bays to reflect the increased running costs brought about by general inflation, rent increases, maintenance and repair costs.</i>	Cllr Betty	Alison Oates	Open	1/12/22
Ashford Town Centre Business Grants	<i>To set out the Ashford Town Centre Business Support Grants Policy and seek the Council's approval to adopt a renewed policy that will further reduce vacancy rates, and support economic activity in the town centre.</i>	Cllr Betty	Thomas Jenkins	Open	11/5/23
Corporate Enforcement Statement	<i>To present an updated Corporate Enforcement Statement. Setting out how the Council will uphold the 6 principles of the Regulators Code, the stages of enforcement action and the areas where the Council has responsibility to take action against breaches of regulation or legislation.</i>	Various	Natalie Pearce	Open	6/2/23
Anti-Social Behaviour Policy	<i>To approve the reviewed ASB policy in order to ensure a clear organisational approach and commitment to managing and addressing ASB within the borough for private residents and housing tenants. The policy will set out the obligations of all stakeholders including the CSU, Housing, Kent Police and Members.</i>	Cllr Wright	Laurel Niven	Open	14/12/22

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Review of the Statement of Community Involvement	<i>To provide the opportunity to review and update the Council's practice on consultation in line with changes introduced following the introduction of the Arcus system last year and also consider how consultation is expected to take place in advance of the preparation of the review of the Local Plan.</i>	Cllr Harman	Tim Hickling	Open	22/5/23
Community Grants Policy - outcome of consultation		Cllr Hayward	Charlotte Hammersley	Open	22/5/23
31st August 2023					
KEEP CLEAR FOR HOLIDAYS					
28th September 2023					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report (including UK Shared Prosperity Fund Update)	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	30/9/22

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Corporate Performance Report	<i>The report seeks to give Members and the Borough's residents an overview of how the Council is performing. It seeks to do this in a transparent and easily-accessible manner, giving a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr Ovenden/ Hayward	Tom Swain	Open	30/9/22
Broadband and Digital Infrastructure Update	<i>To update on projects and initiatives to improve broadband in the Borough and outline the work that the team suggests can take place in the coming year.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Thomas Jenkins	Open	30/9/22
Parking Strategy		Cllr Betty	Alison Oates	Open	1/12/22
Senior Restructure		Cllr Ovenden	Tracey Kerly	Open	11/4/23
Civic Centre Proposed Move to International House		Cllr Betty	Hannah Clayton-Peck	Open	11/4/23
Covert Surveillance Report		Cllr Walder	Samantha Clarke	Open	11/4/22
Brompton Development	<i>To update of the progress of the discussions with both Brompton and the Developer in bringing forward the proposed development including the setting up a of joint venture company.</i>	Cllr Betty	Paul McKenner	Open	28/7/22

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
26th October 2023					
Medium Term Financial Plan	<i>To ask Cabinet to note the Medium Term Financial Plan ahead of this year's Budget process.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	28/10/22
Corporate Commercial Property Strategy – Annual Report	<i>To advise of the revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the last financial period and to advise of proposals to increase profitability in the coming financial period.</i>	Cllr Betty	Eloise Duffy	Open	28/10/22
Corporate Property Asbestos Policy, Procedure and Plan		Cllr Betty	Victoria Couper-Samways	Open	14/6/23
30th November 2023					
Corporate Performance Report	<i>To give Members and residents an overview of how the council is performing with a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr Ovenden/ Hayward	Tom Swain	Open	28/11/22
Council Tax Base 2023/24	<i>To present for approval the estimated 2023/24 Council tax base calculation for the Borough and each parished area, on which the major preceptors and local Parish Councils will base their requirements.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	28/11/22

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Draft Budget 2024/25	<i>To present the preliminary draft service budget and outline MTFP for the purposes of subsequent formal scrutiny by the O&S Task Group and public consultation.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	28/11/22
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	28/11/22
21st December 2023					
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2023-2053 (including Financing and Affordable Homes Programme)	<i>To detail the financial position in the HRA and ask Members to agree Housing’s priorities for the next year.</i>	Cllr Barrett	Sharon Williams/Mark James	Open (Exempt Appendix)	16/12/22
25th January 2024					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	27/1/23
29th February 2024					
Revenue Budget 2024/25	<i>To present the draft revenue budget for 2024/25 to the Cabinet for recommendation to Council.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	24/2/23

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	24/2/23
Corporate Performance Report	<i>The report seeks to give Members and the Borough’s residents an overview of how the Council is performing. It seeks to do this in a transparent and easily-accessible manner, giving a key performance ‘snapshot’.</i>	Cllr Ovenden/ Hayward	Tom Swain	Open	24/2/23
21st March 2024					
Annual Pay Policy Statement (including Review for 2024/25)	<i>A review of the annual Pay Policy Statement and Ashford Living Wage Allowance.</i>	Cllr Nilsson	Michelle Pecci/ Joy Cross	Open	31/3/23
25th April 2024					
30th May 2024					

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21/6/23