

Guildford Borough Council

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 7 November 2023

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Director: Transformation & Governance

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Report Status: Open

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report and its appendices outlines the future work plan of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) as thus far developed and provides an opportunity for the Committee to formally review and approve its work for the coming months.

2. Recommendations to O&S Committee

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) is asked to consider the overview and scrutiny work programme attached at Appendix 1 and determine its work plan.

3. Reasons for Recommendations:

- 3.1. To enable the Committee to review and agree its work programme for the coming months.

4. Exemption from publication

- 4.1. No part of this report is exempt from publication.

5. Purpose of Report

- 5.1. As approved by Council, the remit of the OSC includes the specific responsibility to approve the overview and scrutiny work programme to ensure that the Committee's time is used effectively and efficiently.
- 5.2. A well-planned overview and scrutiny function will help both officers and members plan their workloads as well as providing a clear picture to the public of planned activity. An effective work programme is the foundation for a successful overview and scrutiny function.
- 5.3. This report sets out the overview and scrutiny work programme as developed thus far for 2023-24.

6. Strategic Priorities

- 6.1. The O&S function strengthens the position of the Council to ensure we are able to deliver our strategic priorities. For example, O&S assists the Council in improving services and ensuring we are open and accountable in our decision-making.

7. Work Programme Meetings

- 7.1. Council has agreed that the OSC is responsible for setting its own work programme in accordance with the following procedure:

The chairmen and vice-chairmen of the OSC and the Executive Advisory Boards and relevant officers shall normally meet at least bi-monthly to exchange, discuss and agree proposed rolling 12-18 month work programmes for submission periodically to the OSC (in respect of the OSC work programme) and to the Executive Advisory Boards (in respect of the EAB work programmes) for approval. The proposed work programme for the OSC will be determined with reference to the P.A.P.E.R. selection tool, attached as Appendix 2 to these procedure rules [and as Appendix 2 to this report].

The chairman and vice-chairman of the OSC will ensure that all councillors are able to submit requests for alterations to the work programme for consideration at each of these work programme meetings.

- 7.2. The next work programme meeting of the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the OSC and the EABs is to be arranged.
- 7.3. Councillors are encouraged to attend a work programme meeting to explain in more detail their proposal, including how it fulfils the criteria outlined in the mnemonic P.A.P.E.R. (Public interest; Ability to change; Performance; Extent; and Replication).
- 7.4. In addition to the work programme meetings in section 7.2 above, Councillors can discuss and submit proposals to the OSC Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.
- 8.2 The Council's governance arrangements review of 2015 led to the introduction of a discretionary budget for overview and

scrutiny, set at £5,000 per annum. It is envisaged that the work programme, as drafted, is achievable within the existing financial resource.

9. Legal Implications

9.1 There are no specific legal implications..

10. Human Resource Implications

10.1 There are no specific human resources implications. It is envisaged that the work programme, as drafted, is achievable within the existing resources.

10.2 Overview and scrutiny will call on relevant officers during the conduct of its reviews. Individual scoping reports will seek to take additional resource requirements into account when drafted.

11. Equality and Diversity Implications

11.1 The Council has a statutory duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 which provides that a public authority must, in exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The relevant protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

11.2 This duty has been considered in the context of this report and it has been concluded that there are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report. Future

overview and scrutiny reviews will consider equality implications on a case-by-case basis.

12. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

12.1 There are no specific climate change / sustainability implications.

13. Summary of Options

13.1 The Committee is asked to consider the issues and topics examined by O&S during 2022-23 and approve the future work programme for O&S as developed thus far. In addition, the Committee is requested to review the operation of provisions relating to call-in and urgency.

13.2 Time-limited decisions made through urgency provisions can diminish perceptions of transparency and accountability. Key decisions should only be made using urgency provisions as a last resort, in genuinely urgent situations. Members may consider that the intention to make a key decision could reasonably be expected to be identified and published by the Council to comply with the 28 day notice period.

13.3 Accordingly, to increase confidence that key decisions are made under the urgency provisions only when there are good reasons for doing so, the Committee could recommend a minor procedural change, that is to say, that the Leader of the Council report to full Council on the use of urgency provisions as decisions arise through the year.

14. Conclusion

14.1 Developing a work programme for the overview and scrutiny function is an essential stage in the scrutiny process. An effective overview and scrutiny work programme identifies the key topics to be considered over the coming months. In addition, it is suggested that a well-developed programme

ensures that the views of councillors, partners, the public, and external organisations are represented effectively in the process.

14.2 The Committee is requested to consider the work programme attached at Appendix 1 and determine its work plan.

14.3 For information, attached at Appendix 3 is the procedure which task and finish groups are expected to operate and report their findings in accordance with.

15. Background Papers

15.1 None.

16. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Overview and scrutiny work programme, October 2023.

Appendix 2 – P.A.P.E.R. selection tool.

Appendix 3 – Task group procedure [Appendix 4 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules within the Council's Constitution].