

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 26 May 2022

Work Programme Planning 2022/23

Recommendation

1. That the Committee consider and agree an initial draft Work Programme for 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Report of the Scrutiny and Support Officer

Summary

2. Staffordshire County Councils Overview and Scrutiny Committee structures have been designed to ensure effective accountability for the delivery of the key outcomes set out in their Strategic Plan 2022-26. According to the Authority's constitution, the Committee are responsible for scrutiny of :-

"achievement against the Council's strategic ambitions for promoting prosperity and economic growth. The committee is also responsible for the scrutiny of highways infrastructure and connectivity. In addition, the committee will be responsible for priorities around education, learning and skills. As such the statutory education co-optees will sit on this committee".

3. Members are therefore asked to identify, provisionally agree and schedule items for the Committee's 2022/23 Work Programme (draft attached at Appendix 2) with a view to reviewing its contents throughout the year to ensure topics and timescales remain relevant to the work of the Authority.

Report

Remit of Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4. In broad terms, the Committee's remit is to scrutinise the work of the Council with regard to the following key Priority Outcomes, as set out in the Strategic Plan:- (i) "have access to more good jobs and share the benefit of economic growth" and; (ii) "live in thriving and sustainable communities".

5. Priority (i) above generally relates to the portfolios of the Cabinet Members for (i) Economy and Skills (Philip White); (ii) Environment Infrastructure and Climate Change (Simon Tagg) and; (iii) Highways and Transport (David Williams), whereas priority (ii) above relates to the Portfolios of the Cabinet Members for Education and SEND (Jonathan Price) and Communities and Culture (Victoria Wilson) (however, there might be instances where potential topics for scrutiny cut across both Strategic Priorities and Portfolios).
6. Therefore, the Committee lead on overview and scrutiny of such matters as:- (i) economic development; (ii) community learning; (iii) waste disposal; (iii) broadband connectivity; (iv) roads and buses; (v) access to education by school age children and young people and; (vi) libraries the arts and archives etc. The Committee are also the County Council's designated body for consideration of flood and water management in Staffordshire.

Developing the Work Programme

7. This meeting provides an opportunity for Members to begin to identify and prioritise what they wish to scrutinise during the current Municipal Year. The relevant Cabinet Members will be present to outline areas they intend focussing on and a copy of Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions covering the period 18 May 2022 to 22 September 2022 is attached at Appendix 1 for information (items relevant to the Committee's Terms of Reference are highlighted).
8. When considering matters for inclusion into their Work Programme, Members are encouraged to ask themselves:-
 - Is the matter of particular concern to local residents as raised in correspondence, during canvassing or at surgeries?
 - Is the matter an identified priority for the County Council?
 - Does the matter relate to a particular service with a trend in weak performance eg as identified by external auditors or inspectors?
 - What difference will scrutiny of the matter make?
 - What are the likely consequences of not scrutinising the matter?

Matters carried over from Last Year's Work Programme

9. The Committee met on nine separate occasions during 2021/22 and undertook an extensive programme of work. However, whilst the following items were included but owing to prioritisation being given to other matters were not scrutinised:-
 - Delivering Housing in Staffordshire;
 - Live Labs.

10. A draft Work Programme is attached at Appendix 2 to the report together with a copy of the completed Work Programme for 2021/22 Municipal Year.

Methods of Scrutiny

13. Once Members have identified the matters they wish to scrutinise, consideration needs to be given to the most appropriate timings and methods of scrutiny for those issues. Members might wish to:-

- Consider an item at a single meeting;
- Consider an item over a series of meetings;
- Allocate the work to a small group of Members for investigation over a period of 2-3 months; or undertake an Inquiry Day
- Undertake joint scrutiny with Members from another Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

14. The choice of method will depend in part on the scope of the matter, capacity and the opportunity for locality working and community engagement in the review. Experience suggests that single issue meetings and small task groups tend to deliver more recommendations and outcomes than heavy agenda at scheduled committee meetings.

Reviewing the Work Programme

15. There will be an opportunity to review the work programme at every Committee meeting. Members are encouraged to raise issues at any point during the year and this can be done by:-

- Completing the proposal form for Work Programme items (on-line or in hard copy). The form can be found at:-
<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Your-council-and-democracy/Scrutiny/Get-involved.aspx>
- Talking to the Chairman/Vice-Chairmen and Scrutiny and Support Team;
- Raising items under the 'Work Programme' item on meeting Agenda.

16. The simplest method is to discuss the issue under the Work Programme item on meeting Agenda. In developing a Work Programme, Members do not need to finalise it for the full year. To prepare reports and for officers/witnesses to attend meetings it is important to plan items for the next two/three meetings. Beyond that it is possible that new issues may arise which need to take priority; hence it is advisable to consider it a dynamic document. That way, the Committee are better able to respond to community concerns as and when they arise.

Link to Strategic Plan

17. The remits of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees link to the strategic priorities set out in the County Council Strategic Plan 2022-26. Work programmes should link to community priorities or strategic outcomes if they are to deliver noticeable outcomes for local communities and the organisation.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

18. Overview and Scrutiny Committees are encouraged to identify whether any of the issues for their Work Programmes are 'cross cutting' and would benefit from joint working.

Equalities and Legal Implications

19. The County Council have a responsibility to undertake adequate Equality Impact Assessments to ensure services do not have a negative impact on any one section of the community and the scrutiny committees have a role in ensuring that this responsibility is fulfilled, particularly in regard to health impact. Scrutiny as a function must also comply with the relevant legislation. When considering Work Programme items, especially when undertaking reviews of policy, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must always consider whether their recommendations might impact differently on various individuals/sections of the community.

20. Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be updated as necessary on any matters affecting their operation that relate to legislation, regulations, and the County Council's Constitution.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

21. Work Programmes which are effectively prioritised will ensure that scrutiny activity is focused where it can be of greatest benefit.

Risk Implications

22. The key aspects of risk management in regard to scrutiny work programmes are:-

- ensuring that there are clear outcomes from the scrutiny process that impact positively upon the people and communities of Staffordshire and link to corporate priorities; and
- that there is adequate capacity for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to complete the work that has been agreed.

Climate Change Implications

23. The Committee will need to consider the implications for climate change of any recommendations it makes in relation to those issues included on the work programme. The Committee should also consider the

implications of the scrutiny methods they decide to employ – for example, travelling for best practice visits.

Contact Officer

Name: Jonathan Lindop, Scrutiny and Support Officer

Telephone No.: 01785 276147

Address/e-mail: jonathan.lindop@staffordshire.gov.uk

Appendices/Background papers

Appendix 1 – Forward Plan of Key Decisions – 18 May 2022 – 21 September 2022

Appendix 2 – draft Work Programme

Appendix 3 – Completed Work Programme for 2021/22 Municipal Year.