

Local Members' Interest

N/a

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee – 25 July 2014

Work Programme Planning 2014-15

Recommendation

1. That the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee consider and agree an initial list of priorities to form the basis of the work programme for 2014-15.

Report of the Scrutiny and Support Manager

Summary

2. The committee structures for this Committee remain unchanged for 2014-15. We welcome to our Committee Councillor Tim Corbett, who replaces Mark Deaville, who has been promoted to the post of Cabinet Support Member for Transport and the Connected County, and Paul Woodhead and Candice Yeomans, our new Parent Governor representatives replacing Neil Taylor and Debbie Kay. We have one vacancy for a co-opted Member. The structures are designed to ensure effective accountability for the delivery against the Council's strategic priorities and commissioning priorities set out in Staffordshire County Council's Strategic Plan 2014-2018. In August 2013 the County Council agreed a new vision and three interconnected priority outcomes:

Vision: A connected Staffordshire, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy.

Our three priority outcomes are what are most important to our residents: The people of Staffordshire will:

- Be able to access more jobs and feel the benefits of economic growth
 - Be healthier and more independent
 - Feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community.
3. The Council has agreed a set of values and behaviours that will guide how we will think and work together on a day-to-day basis to help deliver the vision and a set of operating principles that will guide our thinking and choices over the next four years.
 4. The Council's Business Plan 2014-2017 transforms the three priority outcomes into more detailed plans that describe what we need to do to achieve our vision and how we will go about it. The Council believes that by refocusing on seven key areas of activity we will make the biggest impact on residents' lives and be able to deliver the savings required over the next three years. These areas have been developed into commissioning plans and will

drive the work of the Council over the next three years. These interlinked areas are:

- Great Place to Live
- Living Well
- Resilient Communities
- Best Start
- Ready for Life
- Right for Business
- Enjoying Life

5. The Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee is responsible for scrutiny of:

- Economic growth and prosperity
- Education, learning and skills
- Connectivity and physical infrastructure

The Committee's work is closely aligned to the Right for Business (economic growth and prosperity), Great Place to Live (connectivity and physical infrastructure) and Ready for Life (education, learning and skills) priorities.

6. In developing a work programme the Committee is encouraged to identify issues that are a current priority for local people and communities and/or are a priority for the Council and partners. If a matter is a recurring issue for the people you collectively as Councillors represent then the likelihood is that it is something the Committee should spend time on. The more relevant the issue is to local communities then the greater the likelihood of engaging those communities in the scrutiny process and of producing outcomes that will be visible to those communities. Members are encouraged to raise and discuss issues that should form the basis of the work programme and review these periodically throughout the year to ensure they remain relevant and will add value to what the Council and partners are doing.
7. Members may chose to request a Briefing Note from a Cabinet Member on an issue prior to discussion as to whether they would wish an item to feature as a main Work Programme item. Briefing Notes will be circulated to Members prior to discussion under the Work Programme. Members attention is drawn to the Higher Level Education briefing note that has circulated to Members. At the time of writing, a briefing note on Outdoor Education Centres had been requested. Briefing notes on Staffordshire Local Nature Partnership and Eco system services and Country Parks Review are being requested.
8. The Committee may be asked to consider a petition at its meeting. If a petition has more than 2,500 signatures the relevant scrutiny (Select) committee will be requested to ask the relevant officer to attend to respond to the petition. The local Member for the area and the petitioner will be invited to attend. The scrutiny (Select) committee will make a report on its findings

which may make recommendations for action. The petition scheme is under review but the current scheme is detailed below:

<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50869/Petitions%20Scheme.pdf>

9. There may be occasions when an issue is under consideration that impacts on another Select Committee. On such occasions the Committee may consider working jointly with another Committee.

Report

Remit of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee

10. The Committee will lead on ensuring that there is effective scrutiny of the Council's strategic ambitions for promoting prosperity and economic growth, scrutiny of the commissioning and monitoring arrangements in regard to highways infrastructure and connectivity, education, learning and skills.

Developing the Work Programme

11. Your work programme has been rewritten to link the work of the Committee with the Council's commissioning priorities described above.
12. When agreeing matters for your work programme you are encouraged to ask the following questions:
 - Is the matter of particular concern to local people? You may wish to reflect on topics raised with you by local residents.
 - Is the issue an identified priority outcome for the County Council or partners?
 - Does the issue relate to an area of service with a trend in weak performance? For example has this issue been identified by external auditors or inspectors?
 - What difference could scrutiny make?
 - What would happen if you did not look at this issue?

Matters from Last Year's Work Programme

13. In order to manage the Work Programme last year Members asked for Briefing Notes on some items. These were circulated to Members and at the following Committee meeting I asked Members if they wished the topic to be put onto the Work Programme as a substantive item. With Members agreement this practice will be continued this year.
14. The Working Group on Children Missing from Education has not completed its work but will report its findings to the Committee in due course.

The Committee has previously considered Achieving Excellence: Libraries in a Connected Staffordshire 1 by scrutinising the vision on 19 December 2013 and the methodology to used to assess the library offer on 12 May 2014.

Members may wish to consider responding to the consultation on Achieving Excellence in a Connected Staffordshire 2.

This meeting is an opportunity for the Committee to reflect on the work of the previous year (details attached) and to begin to identify and prioritise what it wishes to scrutinise during the current municipal year. There is a draft Work Programme attached as Appendix 1.

Matters arising on Forward Plan

15. The Forward Plan is published on a monthly basis and summarises Key Decisions to be taken by Council over the coming months. The Plan can be used to identify items that could be considered by the Select Committee prior to a final decision being made.

Recurring Work Programme Items

16. **Strategic Economic Plan** - At our triangulation meeting on 24 April it was proposed by the Director of Place that we have a regular six monthly update on this matter.

Roll out of Broadband - Following consideration of this item on 24 April Members requested a further update in six month's time.

Entrust - following consideration of the Ofsted inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement Members formed a Working Group to consider the existing process. This Working Group reported to the January 2014 meeting. Members requested a meeting to assess what impact the relationship with Entrust had made on school improvement.

Infrastructure+ - the committee will continue to monitor the quality of work delivered through the contract with Amey plc.

Outcomes from inspections. Education, children's services and skills are subject to a programme of announced/unannounced inspections by Ofsted throughout the year. The Committee will be updated on the outcomes from inspections and Members may be required to contribute to them.

Flood risk management. Members have requested an annual update on this matter.

Training and Development

17. Member and Democratic Services ran a number of member development activities last year. The member self appraisal process will provide members with the opportunity to identify any training needs. Members are invited to make any suggestions for development with the Chair, Scrutiny and Support Manager or Julie Roberts, Member Development Officer.

Method of Scrutiny

18. Once Members have identified the matters they wish to scrutinise, consideration needs to be given to the most appropriate timing and method of scrutiny for that issue (proposals for some items may be suggested by the Scrutiny and Support team). Members may 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 to look at over a period of 2-3 months; or undertake an inquiry day;
 - joint scrutiny with members of another Select Committee;
 - visits using semi-structured questionnaires;
 - seek the views of experts in the field of inquiry.
19. 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 better quality recommendations and outcomes than heavy agenda at scheduled committee meetings. Members are encouraged to suggest new ways of working e.g. Call for Evidence.

All Party Member Groups

20. Last year the County Council has agreed to establish All Party Member Groups. These groups will be tasked with supporting the Council's long term policy ambitions putting forward proposals of how public services in Staffordshire could address community issues that will arise over the medium to long term. All Party Member Groups will be chaired by the Cabinet Members or Cabinet Support Members.

Reviewing the Work Programme

21. 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);
 - talking to the Chair/Vice Chair and Scrutiny and Support Team;
 - raising items under the 'Work Programme' item on meeting agenda; or Councillor Call for Action.
22. The simplest method is to discuss the issue at the work programme item on meeting agenda. In developing a work programme, Members do not need to set in stone the work programme for a full year. To prepare reports and for officers/ witnesses to attend meetings it is important to plan items for the next two to three meetings. Beyond that it is possible that new issues may have arisen that will take precedence; hence it is advisable to review the work programme quarterly and treat it as a dynamic document. This way the

Committee will be better able to respond to community concerns as and when they arise.

Link to Strategic Plan

23. The remits of the Council's Select Committees link to the strategic priorities set out in the County Council's Strategic Plan 2014-2018 and commissioning plans set out in the Business Plan 2014-17. 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

24. Select 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

25. The County Council has 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 Select 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, the Select committees must always consider whether their recommendations may impact differently on various individuals/sections of the community.
26. The Select 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

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

Risk Implications

28. The key aspects of risk management 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 select committees to complete the work that has been agreed.

Climate Change Implications

29. 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 it decides to utilise – for example, travelling for best practice visits.

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Appendices/Background papers

Appendix 1 - Draft Work Programme 2014-15

Strategic Plan 2014-18:

<http://www.intra.staffordshire.gov.uk/ppp/planning/stratplan/Strategic-Plan-2014-18.pdf>

Business Plan 2014-17:

[http://www.intra.staffordshire.gov.uk/ppp/planning/74633-connected-county-plan-2014-17-\(FINAL\).pdf](http://www.intra.staffordshire.gov.uk/ppp/planning/74633-connected-county-plan-2014-17-(FINAL).pdf)