

Local Members' Interest
N/a

Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 17 June 2021

Work Programme Planning 2021/22

Recommendation

1. That the Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny Committee consider and agree an initial list of priorities to form the basis of the work programme for 2021/22.

Report of the Scrutiny and Support Officer

Summary

2. The revised scrutiny structures have been designed to ensure effective accountability for the delivery against the Council's key outcomes set out in Staffordshire County Council's Strategic Plan. The Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutiny of:

Children and adults' safeguarding
Community safety
Localism

3. 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.

Report

Remit of the Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny Committee

4. The Committee will lead on ensuring effective accountability of safeguards in place to protect adults and children and young people whilst scrutinising the wider community safety and localism priorities. The Committee is the designated crime and disorder committee. This is distinct from the role of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel, who are responsible for scrutinising the decisions of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, but to whom it may refer matters. Full details of the role of Police, Fire and Crime Panel are available here:

Developing the Work Programme

5. This meeting is an opportunity for the Committee to begin to identify and prioritise what it wishes to scrutinise during the current municipal year. Officers and Cabinet Members will be present at the meeting to outline the County Council's responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, public protection and localism, and highlighting priorities for the Council going forward.
6. 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 when canvassing.
 - Is the issue an identified priority 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 Arising from Last Year's Work Programme

7. The Committee met eight times during the last municipal year, with the majority of meetings held virtually as a result of the Pandemic. A copy of the 2020/21 work programme is attached at Appendix 1 outlining the areas scrutinised during that period, which included:

Progress with the Children's Services Improvement Plan, with this Plan becoming part of the **Children & Families Transformation**. The then Select Committee had previously scrutinised the Transformation programme at Phase 1. Phase 2 had been included on 7 November 2019 agenda, with progress considered on 13 October 2020. The Transformation programme took into account learning from the Serious Case Review. It is an aspirational transformation of children and family services, creating an environment where families are supported to stay together safely and live well within their communities by building upon their strengths. The Programme set out proposed plans for future services, the investment required and recommended a model which would embrace all parts of the existing children and families' system and improve outcomes including educational achievement, emotional wellbeing and stability for our children and families.

Child Sexual Exploitation and Children and Young People Missing from Home or Care have been a key strategic priority for the County Council and its partners since 2014. The Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee had received reports on a six monthly basis to scrutinise this work. Following the OFSTED Inspection and subsequent report and recommendations in March 2019 Staffordshire moved

towards a contextual safeguarding approach. **Contextual Safeguarding** is a theoretical response to safeguarding vulnerable adolescents outside of their family, developed by Bedfordshire University, and this theoretical framework is fast becoming the practice model in safeguarding vulnerable adolescents and is the approach now being developed within Staffordshire. Contextual Safeguarding was scrutinised by the then Select Committee, most recently at their 22 April 2021 meeting. Working Together Revised Guidance December 2020 changed the definition of Contextual Safeguarding to “Abuse outside of the family home”.

Domestic Abuse services across Staffordshire have been jointly commissioned by the County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Staffordshire Commissioners Office. The Service Contract for provision of services for Victims was awarded to Victim Support and the Service Contract for the provision of Domestic Abuse Services for Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse to the Reducing Reoffending Partnership. Both services are provided under the brand name of New Era and the jointly commissioned service began on 1 October 2018. A report had been due for the 28 May 2020 Select Committee agenda. This meeting had been cancelled due to the Pandemic and Members had instead received a briefing note. A report had been requested to update Members on the New Era commissioned service and to highlight the impact of the Pandemic on these service, and in particular whether there had been an increase in Domestic Abuse resulting from the Pandemic. This has been suggested for inclusion on the new Scrutiny Committee’s work programme, for the 6 July agenda.

The **Regional Permanency Partnership** is the Partnership between Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Shropshire Council and Telford and Wrekin Council, fulfilling the statutory requirements of the Education and Adoption Act 2016, and delivering the vision set out by the Government in “Regionalising Adoption” (DfE 2015). In April 2017 these four local authorities established the North Midlands Regional Adoption and Permanency Partnership. The Partnership aimed to improve outcomes for children who entered care and required permanent care away from their families of origin. This included children who were adopted from care, children living with special guardians and kinship carers, and those who required long-term foster care. This was last scrutinised in 2019 and is suggested for inclusion on the 6 July agenda.

Safeguarding adults on the cusp of care is an outstanding item from the 2020/21 work programme. The suggestion had been to consider any gaps in provision between community adult provision for adults on the cusp of care and any safeguarding issues they may present.

A draft 2021/22 Work Programme is attached at Appendix 2 to this report.

Matters arising on Forward Plan of Key Decisions

8. Two key decisions are due to be considered by Cabinet at their 7 July meeting on:
 - “Child Exploitation & Missing Children and Young People Service” – future commissioning and procurement arrangements. (previously scrutinised by the Safe & Strong Communities Select Committee at their 22 April meeting); and
 - “Community Support (including Domiciliary Care) and 1-1 intensive support for Children with Disabilities” (included on the 17 June agenda).

Recurring Work Programme Items

Complaints and Representations Annual Report – Children’s Services. Children’s services are required to submit an annual report on complaints and representations to the relevant County Council Committee. Trends in complaints are used to inform the Scrutiny Committee’s work programme.

Complaints and Representations Annual Report – Adults’ Services. Whilst there is no statutory obligation for Adults’ Services to submit a report to a County Council Committee, the ‘safeguarding’ scrutiny committee has scrutinised this report on an annual basis. Trends in complaints are used to inform the Scrutiny Committee’s work programme.

Annual Report of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults’ Partnership. The Committee has received this report on an annual basis for comment.

Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board. The Committee has previously received the Board’s Annual report for comment.

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

Meeting with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. The Committee has the opportunity to scrutinise the work of the Commissioner specifically in regard to community safety. The Chairman is copied into the agenda and minutes of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel and every effort is made to ensure that the Committee is not duplicating the work of the Panel.

Training and development

9. Member and Democratic Services ran induction sessions on an Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny in May 2021. Further training and development sessions will be run for Members as required. Members are invited to make any suggestions for development to the Chair or the Scrutiny and Support Officer.

Method of Scrutiny

10. 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. 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
 - Undertake joint scrutiny with members of another Scrutiny Committee.
11. 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 recommendations and outcomes, than having a lengthy agenda at scheduled committee meetings. A scoping report will be produced for new items that Members wish to consider. This will contain background research on the matter and will assist Members in deciding how to take the proposal to scrutinise forward.

12. Members can request more information on a subject to assist them in deciding whether or not additional scrutiny is required. A Briefing Note is requested and circulated to Members in advance of the meeting and then Members are asked if they consider additional scrutiny is required.

Reviewing the Work Programme

14. 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:

- talking to the Chair/Vice Chairs and Scrutiny and Support Team;
- raising items under the 'Work Programme' item on the meeting agenda.

15. In developing a work programme, Members do not need to set in stone the work programme for a full year. It is important to plan items for the next two to three meetings. Time needs to be allowed for officers to prepare reports and for the Cabinet Member(s), officers and witnesses to diary their attendance at meetings. It is possible that new issues may arise that need to be given priority and therefore 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

16. The remits of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees link to the strategic priorities set out in the County Council Strategic Plan. 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

17. 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

18. 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 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, the scrutiny committees must always consider whether their recommendations may impact differently on various individuals/sections of the community.

19. The 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

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

Risk Implications

21. 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 Scrutiny Committees to complete the work that has been agreed.

Climate Change Implications

22. 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 – 2020/2021 Safe & Strong Communities Select Committee Work Programme

Appendix 2 - Draft 2021/2022 Work Programme