

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 11 June 2021

Work Programme Planning 2021/22

Recommendation

1. That the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider and agree an initial list of priorities to form the basis of their Work Programme for 2021/22 Municipal Year.

Report of the Scrutiny and Support Officer

Summary

2. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee structures has been designed to ensure effective accountability for the delivery of the County Council's key outcomes set out in Staffordshire County Council's Strategic Plan 2018-22. 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. In developing their Work Programme the Committee are 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 you 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 their partners are doing.

Report

Remit of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4. The Committee will lead on ensuring effective accountability for promoting prosperity and economic growth; for highways, infrastructure and connectivity and education, learning and skills. Under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 Staffordshire is the Lead Local Flood Authority. This Committee is the designated Committee for consideration of flood and water management in the County.

Developing the Work Programme

5. This meeting is an opportunity for the Committee to begin to identify and prioritise what they wish to scrutinise during the current municipal year. Cabinet Members and officers will be present at the meeting to deliver a presentation regarding the County Council's responsibilities in relation to promoting economic prosperity and growth, highways, infrastructure and connectivity, flood and water management and education, learning and skills. The Cabinet Members have also been invited to contribute to the discussion to highlight some of the key priorities they are focussing on this year.
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 carried over from Last Year's Work Programme

7. The Committee met seven times during the 2020/21 Municipal Year and undertook an extensive Work Programme. The following items were included but owing to prioritisation being given to other matters were not scrutinised:-
 - Local Industrial Strategy/Strategic Infrastructure Plan;
 - Delivering Housing in Staffordshire;
 - Future Economy and Enterprise;
 - Live Labs.
 - Cabinet Response to All Party Member Working Group on - Future Economy and Enterprise
8. In addition, the Committee agreed to hold an Inquiry Day regarding Community Transport and the Supported Bus Network and to monitor the impact of the removal of bus subsidies going forward.
9. A draft Work Programme is attached at Appendix 2 to the report together with a copy of the Work Programme considered at the meeting on 15 April 2021.

Matters Included on Forward Plan of Key Decisions

10. The Forward Plan of Key Decisions includes a list of key decisions to be considered by the County Council's Cabinet over the course of a four-month rolling period. The Plan covering the period 19 June to 20 October includes the following items on which the Committee might wish to seek further information on with a view to contributing either 'pre-decision' scrutiny or assisting in the monitoring of outcomes etc:-

- National Bus Strategy - Enhanced Partnership;
- Retender for Disposal of Sweepings;
- Framework Agreement for the Provision of Asbestos Removal and Encapsulation Services;
- Household Waste Recycling Centre Update.

Recurring Work Programme Items

11. The Committee have previously agreed to receive regular updates on:- (i) progress with regard to HS2 and its impact on Staffordshire and; (ii) Economic Recovery, Renewal and Transformation, both of which are included in the draft Work Programme as Standing Items.

Training and development

12. Member and Democratic Services ran three induction sessions on an Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny on 25 May (am and pm) and 27 May 2021. Further training and development sessions will be run for Members as required and Members are invited to make any suggestions for development with the Chairman or Scrutiny and Support Officer.

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 investigate at 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 2018-22. 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.

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Appendices/Background papers

Appendix 1 – Draft Work Programme

Appendix 2 – Work Programme considered at the meeting on 15 April 2021.