

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board



12th July 2021

Report of: Director, Legal and Democratic Services

Title: Scrutiny Work Programme Setting 21/22

Ward: N/A

Officer Presenting Report: Lucy Fleming, Head of Democratic Engagement

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Recommendations:

The Board is asked to;

A – Consider and comment on the proposed key principles for Scrutiny Ways of Working

B - Agree the details of scrutiny activity for the period July to September 21

C - Approve the proposed approach to the event where the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year will be set.

The Significant Issues in the Report

As set out in the report.



Policy

1. N/A

Consultation

2. The proposals for the Work Programme setting have been prepared in conjunction with the OSMB 'Lead' Members, consisting of the Chair and Vice Chair of OSMB; the Chairs of each Scrutiny Commission; and the Chair of the Health Sub Committee of the People Scrutiny Commission.

Context

3. Following the election in May 21, a number of new Members have been appointed to sit on Scrutiny. The Member Development Steering Group have commissioned a comprehensive induction programme, which is being delivered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, to train Members on best practice approaches.
4. Scrutiny Members have indicated a preference for setting the full Work Programme for the 21/22 Municipal Year in September 21 to give the new cohort of Members time to consider the areas they wish to prioritise. In view of this, a short-term Work Programme of Scrutiny activity to cover the period from July to September 21 needs to be agreed. This could include a Task Group or formal Commission meeting.

Key Principles

5. The Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government produced statutory guidance regarding Scrutiny in Local Government and Combined Authorities in May 19 which can be found at Appendix B.
6. Following discussion with Councillor Denyer, the OSMB Chair, the following key principles for ways of working are proposed for adoption by the Board.

Role of the Chairs;

- To lead the Commission/Task Group/Inquiry Day to achieve its objectives.
- To promote collaborative working.
- To ensure best use of resources.

Membership and Attendance;

- Names nominated by the Whips in accordance with political proportionality.
- Cabinet Members and officers are to be asked to attend meetings as/when appropriate.
- Expert witnesses or other stakeholders may also be invited to participate.

Work Programme;

- There is one Scrutiny Work Programme which is managed and overseen by OSMB.
- Topics are to be carefully selected to align with strategic priorities, reduce duplication and ensure the best outcomes.

Formal Meetings - Dates and Frequency;

- For formal meetings, dates and times are set as soon as possible at the start of the Municipal Year with suggested frequency of 3 per Scrutiny Commission and 6 for OSMB. The recommended duration of meetings is 2 to 3 hours.

Task Groups and Inquiry Days;

- These should be short term with a clear objective, which will be set out in the relevant terms of reference.
- All meetings are to be arranged in conjunction with the Scrutiny team and will be informal (not public) unless otherwise agreed by Members of the group, therefore they will not have formally published papers or minutes.

Planning Meetings;

To take place before each formal Commission meeting. Purpose is to;

- Plan future agenda items.
- Consider key lines of inquiry to improve the quality of questioning.
- Confirm desired outcomes for each item.
- Agree senior officer and/or Cabinet Member involvement.

Agendas;

- Planned well-in-advance.
- Themed where possible.
- Recommend no more than 4 substantive items per meeting.

Briefings;

- Briefings should not duplicate other Scrutiny activity and be open to all Members where possible.

Proposal

7. The proposal from each of the Scrutiny Chairs for the short-term Work Programme to cover the period from July to September 21 is set out at Appendix A. OSMB are asked to consider and approve the draft short-term Work Programme, subject to any amendments.
8. Regarding the full Work Programme setting event in September, Members are asked to confirm that this will be a conference style format, with attendees to include all Scrutiny Members, the Executive, senior officers and a representative from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. Following the event, the Work Programme will be adopted at formal meeting of OSMB.

Other Options Considered

9. N/A

Risk Assessment

10. N/A

Public Sector Equality Duties

11. Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
 - ii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

Members will wish to ensure that the Scrutiny Work Programme upholds the Public Sector Equalities duties, as set out.

Legal and Resource Implications

12. N/A

Appendices:

Appendix A - Scrutiny short term Work Programme – July to September 21 – *TO FOLLOW*

Appendix B - The Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government’s statutory guidance regarding Scrutiny in Local Government and Combined Authorities

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None