

To: **Overview & Scrutiny Commission**
27 May 2020

Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme Progress
Statutory Scrutiny Officer

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report updates the Overview & Scrutiny Commission on work programme progress, notes the impact of the national health pandemic upon the four-year work programme and proposes amendments for the Overview & Scrutiny Commission's meetings programme.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Commission considers the proposed changes to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission meetings programme; and
- 2.2 That the Statutory Scrutiny Officer works with Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen and relevant senior officers to identify a realistic timeframe for recovery of the work programme.

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 To make sure that the programme of meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission reflects and responds to the impact that the pandemic has had on service delivery objectives.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 None.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 In March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic presented Members with an unprecedented situation. Members, officers and the whole Council focused on business-critical issues and supporting their communities through the difficult time. Social distancing measures imposed by the Government prevented the Council from conducting meetings as all large and small gatherings in public spaces had to be avoided. Therefore the Commission could not meet in April 2020.
- 5.2 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 ('the Regulations') came into force on 4 April 2020. These Regulations make provisions for remote access to local authority meetings held before 7 May 2021 by Members of the authority and the press and public. This report asks the Commission to review its meeting programme in this report in the light of the Covid-19 emergency.
- 5.3 Overview and Scrutiny activity has been paused in recognition that partners and key officers focus would be on responding to the Covid-19 emergency. The Statutory Scrutiny Officer will work with Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen and relevant senior officers to identify a realistic timeframe for recovery of the work programme. It

is anticipated that by September the Council's recovery from the crisis will be clearer and it would then be timely to review the programme of activity based on these feasibility discussions. A progress report is attached at Appendix A provides an overview to the Commission of what the position was as of March 2020.

- 5.4 Commission meetings are scheduled for 9 July, 12 August, 13 October, 11 November, 2 December 2020 and 6 January 2021.
- 5.5 Commission members have an opportunity to revisit the activities planned for these meetings to ensure that the overview and scrutiny function is discharged for example providing critical assurance for the community whilst contributing effectively to the Council Plan objectives as it adjusts to the impact of the pandemic.
- 5.6 When considering what the focus of upcoming Commission meetings could be Members should consider whether proposals are proportionate, challenging but follow a supportive approach. As such it is important that consideration is given to whether:
- previously identified priorities are still relevant;
 - scheduled activities would have an adverse operational impact;
 - departmental teams will have capacity to support proposed activities; and
 - partner organisations will have capacity to contribute.
- 5.7 The following meetings are currently scheduled:

Scheduled meeting date	Proposal
9 July 2020	Digital Access workshop
12 August 2020	That this meeting is cancelled
13 October 2020	Review of four-year work programme
11 November 2020	Crime & Disorder Panel
2 December 2020	That the focus of this meeting be agreed at a future meeting
6 January 2021	Climate Change Workshop

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 These are included in this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Not required for this report.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 Effective scrutiny is important to the successful functioning of local democracy by securing the efficient delivery of Council services and driving improvements. A robust work programme is essential in order to ensure that overview and scrutiny activity contributes successfully to the work of the Council. Poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership and/or service failure.

Background Papers

None

Appendices

Appendix A – Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme Progress report

Contact for further information

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