

TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
29 February 2024

Development of Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-2027
(Statutory Scrutiny Officer)

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks agreement for inclusion and scheduling of topics in the Commission's work programme for 2024-27.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That topics be agreed from the proposed list of topics which have been prioritised by members of the Panel as set out in paragraph 5.4; and**
- 2.2 **That the draft schedule be agreed.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Commission and its Panels have previously developed a work programme to respond and support the Council's strategic plans in order to focus on what matters for Bracknell Forest and carry out its five broad functions:
- Holding the Council's Executive and its statutory partners to account in the public interest.
 - Supporting the development of effective policies and initiatives which have a beneficial impact on the community through policy review and development.
 - Contributing to continuous improvement in services through performance monitoring.
 - Having a positive impact on the work and outcomes of external agencies and providers of public services.
 - Aiding Councillors in engaging with their communities and playing their role of community representatives and leaders.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Commission and its Panels could decide not to develop a work programme which could lead to unfocused activity and make planning support for the Commission and its Panels challenging.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 During 2019-2023 the Overview and Scrutiny team supported a total of 12 scrutiny reviews. A well-developed work programme was key to progressing this number of reviews as officers were able to ensure officer availability. Due to the significant change in administration following the local election in 2023 a training programme

took up a significant amount of time to assist Councillors in their new roles. There was also a change in the team supporting overview and scrutiny and the Council Plan was being developed, which all impacted on the ability of the team and Councillors to carry out Panel reviews. However, it should be noted the Environment and Communities O&S Panel has undertaken a review into Thames Water during this period. The following parameters for the 2024-2027 work programme are suggested:

- Budget scrutiny to be included in each Panel's programme
- All Panel reviews to be concluded by the beginning of January 2027 to enable recommendations to be referred to the Executive as required before the run up to the election
- All Panel reviews since 2019 to be reviewed to evaluate their impact, assess whether recommendations were implemented and follow up investigations as appropriate

5.2 Panel reviews will continue to be varied in methodology, including one day reviews, workshops, public consultation, collaborating with other local authorities or partners, as well as the longer research based approach.

5.3 Members are asked to bear in mind the principal power of a scrutiny committee **is to influence** the policies and decisions made by the council and other organisations involved in delivering public services. The scrutiny committee **gathers evidence** on issues affecting local people and makes recommendations based on its findings. Scrutiny can investigate any issue which affects the local area or the area's inhabitants. However, effective scrutiny work relies on **scrutiny's 'soft' influencing power**, as it has no formal power to compel anyone to make changes. Therefore, it is important to think about not only scrutiny's legal powers but also **about how to build a positive working relationship** with those who are the subject of scrutiny's recommendations. This ensures a much higher chance of scrutiny's recommendations being implemented.

5.4 In order to put together the work programme Panel members and relevant Executive Directors were asked to propose topics for inclusion on the programme which are set out further below and need to be considered against the Council's priorities.

5.5 The three Council priorities are:



Engaged and healthy communities

Our role is to help create opportunities where people can succeed, be happy and feel safe.

[Explore our community priorities](#)



Thriving and connected economy

The local economy includes many different aspects, such as businesses, jobs, skills, accommodation, and services.

[Explore our economic priorities](#)
























Green and sustainable environment

Our environment includes everything around us, our parks, our cycleways and our road networks.

[Explore our environmental priorities](#)

5.6 Suggested Panel review topics are set out below:

Topic	Panel	Strategic theme	Approx length of time to carry out review
Transition – how do the Council, and partners, plan for transition from Children's to Adult's Services in order to personalise plans and ensure timely sharing of information?	ES&G		Long - 6 month review
Recruitment and Retention – what are the barriers to recruiting and retaining Council staff with the required skillset and how can they be overcome?	ES&G		Long - 6 month review
Looked After Children (LAC) – how does the Council enhance the aspirations of children in care?	ES&G		Short – one month review
Skills gap – is there a skills gap in the borough and, if so, what can be done to address it?	ES&G		Medium-3 month review
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) – how are the Council, and its partners, holding each other to account to address issues identified in the SEND Action Plan and Safety Value Programme?	ES&G		Continuous
Sexual health – how is the delivery of sexual health information/services to young people in the borough being delivered and does it meet their needs?	H&C		Medium- 3 month review
Mobile Library Service – what options are available to deliver the service given funding will cease in April 2025?	ES&G		Short – one month review
Dentistry – what powers does the Council have to make a difference to availability of dentists in the borough?	H&C		Short – one month review
Sufficiency and availability of adult social care marketplace – what is the availability of domestic care providers in the borough, and can they provide the care required by residents?	H&C		Long – 6 month review
Adult safeguarding – what assurance mechanisms are in place to safeguard adults in the borough and are they sufficient?	H&C		Medium – 3 month review
Third sector provision (voluntary sector commissioning) – do we have the correct model for commissioning third sector provision in the borough in order to achieve value for money?	H&C		Medium – 3 month review
Brant's Bridge – what is the availability of 'urgent' care services for residents in the borough and is it sufficient?	H&C		Short – one month review
Planning and health – how do planning decisions take into account the impact on the health needs of residents?	H&C		Medium – 3 month review

Topic cont'd	Panel responsible	Strategic theme	Approx length of time to carry out review
JHOSC (Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee) – how will the new Frimley Park Hospital meet the needs of Bracknell Forest residents?	H&C		Continuous
Housing – empty properties/quality of social housing stock – how many empty properties are there in Bracknell and what is the quality of that stock? Or, is social housing fit for purpose?	E&C	  	Long – 6 month review
Cars idling outside schools – what is the impact on health qualities and the environment of people 'idling their cars' outside schools?	E&C	 	Short – one month review
Parking – residential and/or public – is there sufficient parking in the borough and how does it fit with the Council's climate change agenda?	E&C		Long – 6 month review
Waste – does the waste and recycling system meet the needs of residents and how does it fit with the Council's climate change agenda?	E&C		Medium – 3 month review

5.7 In addition, it is important the Overview and Scrutiny Commission reviews the work conducted by the previous administration which has not been reviewed already. Space needs to be left to review the implementation of recommendations resulting from newly commissioned reviews, as well as space for urgent issues that arise.

5.8 At the start of this municipal year the following reviews were yet to be reviewed to ensure the recommendations had been carried out. It is important to note the Executive did not accept the recommendations of one review, the 'Isolation and Loneliness' review so this is not on the list as it is not anticipated they were implemented. A review of the recommendations from the 'Care Leavers Review', 'Blue Badges Review' have already been conducted.

5.9 2019-2023 Panel review recommendations to be reviewed:

Review name	Panel responsible	Date completed
Community Infrastructure Levy	Education, Skills and Growth	October 2021
Integrated Enforcement	Environment and Communities	September 2022
Enforcement Strategy	Environment and Communities	October 2023
Mental Health (adults)	Health and Care	March 2022

Unrestricted

SEND	Education, Skills and Growth	November 2022
Apprenticeships	Education, Skills and Growth	March 2021
Burial Choices	Environment and Communities	February 2021
Child Criminal Exploitation	Education, Skills and Growth	October 2023
Registered Social Landlords	Environment and Communities	March 2021
Food waste in flats	Environment and Communities	August 2021

6. Borough Solicitor's comments

Part 2 of the Council's Constitution states that the Commission is required to 'Develop a four-year strategic work programme aligned to the Council Plan following input from scrutiny members, the Executive, Corporate Management Team, partners and the public, ensuring that it is flexible enough to accommodate urgent short-term issues.' A four-year work programme will provide the legal basis for carrying out scrutiny reviews.

7. Borough Treasurer's comments

Any proposals would need to be delivered within existing budgets.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment

None.

9. Strategic Risk Management Issues

The Overview and Scrutiny work programme should be set against the Council's strategic objectives in order to effectively deliver the five key priorities of Overview and Scrutiny.

10. Background Papers

None.

11. Contact for further information

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