



PART A:	MATTERS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS
REPORT TO:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	28 JULY 2021
REPORT OF THE:	HEAD OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE SIMON COPLEY
TITLE OF REPORT:	SCRUTINY REVIEWS – SCOPING REPORTS
WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Overview and Scrutiny committee on the scoping work undertaken for finalising the agreed subjects and order of the Scrutiny Review topics.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that:
- (i) The committee note the scoping reports prepared on the shortlisted scrutiny review topics
 - (ii) Following the initial scoping work, progress the scrutiny review into affordable housing first, followed by the review of civil enforcement and then performance appraisals
 - (iii) Members of the Overview and Scrutiny committee indicate if they would like to be involved in the first scrutiny review topic working group

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 To provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to feed in views on the scoping reports prepared and consider the implications of conducting the three topics listed and the order of the scrutiny reviews prior to a decision by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS

- 4.1 None

5.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The shortlisted scrutiny review topics link into the Council Plan 2020-2024 under the following strategic priorities:

Affordable Housing – Our Economy – Quality homes people can afford
Civil Enforcement – Our Communities and Our Environment – A safe place to live,
Clean and attractive streets
Performance Appraisals – Our Organisation – A great place to work

REPORT

6.0 REPORT DETAILS

What is a Scrutiny Review?

- 6.1 Overview and scrutiny committees play an important role in monitoring council performance and delivering effective accountability. At every meeting of the committee, members consider the work programme for forthcoming meeting dates. In addition to this, usually at the start of a new municipal year, the committee has selected a topic to conduct a scrutiny review into.
- 6.2 Scrutiny reviews are set up to examine a specific issue in detail, such as to evaluate service provision or the impact of a particular policy or process. It is recommended that any topic chosen has a narrow focus, to make sure that it can get into enough detail on a topic but avoid it becoming too broad.
- 6.3 Through the scrutiny review, a set of recommendations can be made by elected members as a ‘critical friend’ to help improve council services for the benefit of citizens in the district. Scrutiny reviews should examine strategic impacts, not just procedures and process.

How to scope a Scrutiny Review Topic

- 6.4 The Local Government Association has produced ‘A councillor’s workbook on scrutiny’, setting out a criteria for how to select topics that would be suitable for scrutiny reviews. These include:
- Topics where scrutiny could have an impact and add value
 - The topic is of high local importance and reflects the concerns of local people
 - The issue is one that the committee can realistically influence
 - The issue is related to an area where the council, or one of its partners, is not performing well
 - The issue is relevant to all or large parts of the local area
 - The review would be in the council’s interests

The guide also suggests topics that may not be suitable for a scrutiny review, such as:

- The issue is already being addressed elsewhere and change is imminent
- Scrutiny involvement would have limited or no impact upon outcomes
- The topic is too broad to make a review realistic
- New legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected within the next year

What is the Scrutiny Review process?

- 6.5 Following the selection of a topic by the Overview and Scrutiny committee, the first scrutiny review working group will initially meet to create a terms of reference for the review, to fully define the purpose and scope of the scrutiny review. This will then be brought back to a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval.

- 6.6 Scrutiny reviews are usually carried out by a small group of Overview and Scrutiny Committee members (usually no more than four), with meetings held outside of the formal meeting dates to progress the reviews in a timely manner. These working groups could be held virtually or in-person, depending on the circumstances of the members involved.
- 6.7 In the past, the committee has undertaken scrutiny reviews into a wide range of topics, such as council meeting start times and management of meetings, the council's role in flood management, asset management and a review of fuel poverty & affordable warmth.
- 6.8 In July 2019, the committee agreed to set up scrutiny reviews into the topics of equalities, the impact of universal credit and climate change. Although the scrutiny review into equalities produced an interim report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2019, the other scrutiny reviews did not progress beyond the research stage and initial working group meetings. In order to agree new topics for members of the committee to 'own' and progress over the next twelve months, it is not proposed to pick up these topics again.
- 6.9 At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on June 10, 2021, members asked for scoping reports on the following topics:
- Affordable Housing
 - Review of Enforcement
 - Performance Appraisals

Since the committee meeting, officers have worked up scoping reports on each of the shortlisted topics through meeting with the service managers to discuss potential areas that could be explored as part of a scrutiny review. This is to assist elected members in making a decision on a) whether the initial topics identified are worth further consideration through a scrutiny review and b) in what order these should be considered. The scoping reports are attached at Appendix A.

- 6.10 Members of the Corporate Governance team have attended meetings with the Audit Manager from Veritau to make sure that any overlap with the internal audit work programme for 2021/22 is kept to a minimum with the work of the scrutiny reviews. There is not expected to be any overlap based on the proposed internal audit 2022/23 plan and the scrutiny review topics shortlisted by elected members in June.
- 6.11 As a result of the work undertaken, the recommendation is that the Affordable Housing scrutiny review is progressed first. This is because the topic is key to delivering the strategic priority in the Council Plan of 'Quality homes people can afford', the ongoing work of the Housing Development Programme and the national focus on the topic at the current time. This is expected to take place from August to November 2021. Following the conclusion of this scrutiny review, it is proposed the Review of Enforcement scrutiny review takes place from December 2021 to February 2022, followed by the Performance Appraisals from March 2022, but these timescales are subject to change.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The following implications have been identified:
- a) Financial
None identified

- b) Legal
None identified

- c) Other (Equalities, Staffing, Planning, Health & Safety, Environmental, Crime & Disorder)
Input from staff in the relevant service areas will be needed to support the scrutiny review process during the course of the information gathering and provide technical advice/support to the task groups as required.

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Background Papers:

None.

Background Papers are available for inspection at:

N/a