

Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	5 June 2023
Title:	Annual Work Programme
Report of:	Deputy Chief Executive
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To consider the Council's priorities and those of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and agree a Work Programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.
Officer Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That the Committee set its Work Programme for the new Council year.

Introduction

1. In accordance with the Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) will:

approve an annual OSC Work Programme, including the programme of any formal sub-committees and informal task and finish working groups it appoints so as to ensure that the Committee and sub-committees' / working groups' time is effectively and efficiently utilised [Part 4-5, paragraph 1(c)(i)].
2. The Work Programme attached at Appendix A was agreed at the Committee's last meeting held in previous civic year (24 April). As the make-up of the Committee has changed significantly following the local elections in May, it will be for the new Committee to consider and agree its work programme going forward.
3. In order to manage the Committee's workload and ensure that there is sufficient time to fully consider the issues arising, it is recommended that priorities are set. These priorities should take account of the time and resources each work item will require and the importance of that item to the Council's priorities.

Other Considerations

4. In establishing its Work Programme, the OSC needs to consider the terms of reference for each scrutiny or review item, who it wishes to involve and consult with and which key partners or expert witnesses it may wish to involve.
5. In all of these considerations the most important one that the OSC should bear in mind is how the outcome of the Committee's deliberations will have a positive effect on the well-being of residents and businesses of the area. The OSC also

needs to consider how scrutiny can be used to engage with the community either directly or by giving a high profile to matters of concern to residents.

6. Members will need to consider these issues in tandem with the Cabinet's Priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan 2020-27 when setting the Work Programme.

Issues on the Doorstep

7. At the Member's Induction Day held on 11 May 2023, Members reported a number of issues that had been raised by constituents on the doorstep whilst Members had been canvassing. The main comments received referred to car parking, planning, communications by the Council, Rye leisure pool and enforcement of litter.
8. Attached at Appendix B is an abbreviated version that indicates which issues are currently being addressed and those which Members could feed into the OSC's Work Programme, should Members so choose.

Sub-Committees and Task and Finish Groups

9. In accordance with the Constitution, the OSC may appoint such formal sub-committees and informal task and finish groups (T&FG) as it considers to be necessary from time to time and for so long as considered necessary, subject to there being no more than four active sub-committees / groups at any one time and the same service officers not being involved in more than one active group at any one time.
10. For clarity, informal T&FGs are not usually open to the general public and are not subject to the same time constraints in terms of agenda publication / access to information regulations. This allows for in-depth scrutiny of a particular area in an informal, relaxed setting, with key officers and Members formulating their views and gathering evidence in an informal way; this approach has been very successful in fostering good working relationships between officers and Members and has produced some excellent work. Whereas formal sub-committee meetings are held in the public domain and are subject to access to information regulations; this can sometimes have a detrimental effect on the workings of the sub-committee as a more formal style of meeting protocol dictates.
11. In setting and agreeing the Work Programme, Members should consider whether to maintain the existing Groups or establish new sub-committees or T&FGs and, if so, to make appointments to them.
12. During the last municipal year, the OSC established two new T&FGs: the Health and Well-Being T&FG and the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area T&FG. The Off-Street Car Parks T&FG was still on-going until it was dissolved in March 2023 and the Anti-Poverty T&FG was reconvened in January 2023 for a one-off meeting.

Health and Well-Being Task and Finish Group (HWBT&FG)

13. The HWBT&FG was established in September 2022, to examine the role that the Council took, through its policies, strategies, and operations support to promote the health and well-being of its residents. The desired outcomes of the group were to achieve a comprehensive understanding and analysis of health and well-being issues in the Rother district and present a forward looking and solution-focused report to Cabinet, incorporating innovative ways of addressing health and well-being issues. The Group comprised of Councillors J. Barnes, S.J. Coleman, Mrs V. Cook (Chair), C.A. Madeley, G.F. Stevens and R.B. Thomas whilst undertaking its Terms of Reference.
14. The HWBT&FG met five times between November 2022 and February 2023 and reported back to the OSC in March 2023 with various recommendations for onward recommendation to Cabinet, and recommended that it be disbanded as its Terms of Reference had been met. The OSC agreed with the HWBT&FG's recommendations; Cabinet agreed to amend one of the recommendations for clarification purposes and was happy to support all others. It was noted that the OSC would review progress against the recommendations in years one and three.

Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area Task and Finish Group (BTCCAT&FG)

15. The BTCCAT&G was established in November 2022 and met once in February 2023 to consider national legislation regarding conservation areas, the information and guidance to developers and decision-makers provided in the draft Technical Advice Note concerning planning applications for alterations to, or replacement of, windows within the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area and what could be done to support business and investment in the Bexhill town centre without damaging or devaluing the conservation area. The Group comprised of Councillors Courtel, Mrs Earl-Williams, Langlands, Madeley and Stevens.
16. The BTCCAT&FG reported back to OSC in March 2023 with various recommendations for onward recommendation to Cabinet, which were essentially not to publish the Technical Advice Note for windows in the Bexhill Town Centre Conservation Area and that the Conservation Area status be retained. The BTCCAT&FG also recommended that it be disbanded as its Terms of Reference had been met. The OSC agreed with the BTCCAT&FG's recommendations; Cabinet was happy to support most, but amended one.

Crime and Disorder Committee

17. In 2009, the Scrutiny Committee was designated as the Council's 'Crime and Disorder Committee' under section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006. This is not a separate working or steering group; it simply means that on an annual basis, as part of their regular Scrutiny business, the OSC reviews the work of the Safer Rother Partnership (SRP) as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee.

18. The Committee receives an annual report from the SRP. Members of the OSC can then decide whether there are any specific decisions or actions of the SRP that they believe require further scrutiny.

Conclusion

19. Members need to consider, set and agree the Committee's Work Programme for the year, taking into account the various issues set out within the report. The Work Programme should be flexible to accommodate any changes in priorities and circumstances, which may emerge during the year.

Risk Management

20. Failure to set a realistic and achievable Work Programme which supports the Council's Aims and Cabinet's Priorities may result in the Council losing opportunities for the development of an effective overview and scrutiny function.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	Yes	Exempt from publication	No

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Appendices:	A Current Work Programme B Issues on the Doorstep
Relevant previous Minutes:	None
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2023 – 2024		
DATE OF MEETING	SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM IN BOLD	Cabinet Portfolio Holder
05.06.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role and Functions and Recommendations of the Scrutiny Improvement Review • Performance Report: Fourth Quarter 2022/23 • Annual Work Programme • Housing Allocations Policy 	Jeeawon McCourt
10.07.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Outturn 2022/23 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 1 2023/24 	Jeeawon
11.09.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Report: First Quarter 2023/24 	Jeeawon
16.10.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2028/29 	Jeeawon
20.11.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Report: Second Quarter 2023/24 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 2 2023/24 	Jeeawon
22.01.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Revenue Budget Proposals 2024/25 • Key Performance Targets 2024/25 	Jeeawon
18.03.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime and Disorder Committee: to receive a report from the Community Safety Partnership • Performance Report: Third Quarter 2023/24 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 3 2024/24 	Field Jeeawon
22.04.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in and Urgency Procedures • Draft Annual Report to Council 	
ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration inc. Leisure Centre, Fountains, Skate Park and Accessibility of Green Spaces across the district • Review of the Economic Regeneration Strategy • Draft Corporate Customer Services Strategy Proposals • Litter Strategy • Review of the Tourism Strategy and the impact of Airbnbs • Impact of Airbnb and second homes in Rye/Winchelsea/Camber • Effectiveness of 'MyAlerts' • Corporate Plan review – to be referred back by Cabinet • Review of the Financial Stability Programme • Update report from the Local Strategic Partnership • Update report from the Health and Well-Being Board • Review of progress against the recommendations of the Health and Wellbeing Task and Finish Group (Years 1 and 3) 		

Induction Day – 11 May 2023

Points noted

Issues currently being addressed

- Northeye
- Appointment of new Chief Executive
- Devolution of protected discretionary services
- Bathing water quality
- Levelling-up Partnership
- Local Plan Reg 18 – consultation Autumn 2023
- Blackfriars Housing Development
- Carbon net zero 2030
- Town Hall decision
- Biffa waste contract ending March 2026 (commence food waste collection 2025)
- Freedom Leisure contract ending April 2024 (Rye 2026)
- Idverde contract ending April 2024
- SHS cleaning contract ending March 2024

Issues on the Doorstep April / May 2023

Rother District Council related matters:

- Car Park charges – some should be free, others have time extensions
- Planning Enforcement
- Lack of communication by RDC concerning the Blackfriars housing development – updates are not being posted to the noticeboard
- Rye Leisure Pool
- The district needs social housing not just affordable housing
- Communications should be informative and more proactive e.g. informing residents when not safe to swim in the sea via social media not just paper notices on the seafront
- Private renting stock is poor and very expensive
- Unfair litter fines / Issues with National Enforcement Solutions officers resulting in loss of reputation for the Council
- Purchasing of woods that are then sold off an acre at a time
- 10-acre site in Robertsbridge with permission for up to 100 houses but remains empty
- Spoil from building sites being tipped onto AONB sites – ask developers when considering planning applications where the spoil will go?
- Long period of time between granting of planning permission to sites going ahead
- Site viability should be established at outline planning stage
- Sewage
- Issues with Southern Housing in Sidley
- NHS ID card not recognised as valid form of ID for voting purposes
- Provision of more housing to enable local residents to remain in the area
- How to keep the high streets busy
- Residents should be provided with more information regarding the roles of the Council and the County Council and in particular concerning Climate Change.

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) related matters:

- Parking issues in Rye
- Poor condition of Station Road, Robertsbridge
- Traffic, particularly large vehicles, increasingly using Bexhill Old Town as a cut through to/from the link road – signage?
- Disparity of parking charges between Rother District Council and Wealden District Council and between Battle and Bexhill