

4 June 2024

Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Owen Howell ☎ 282518
Title	Work Programme 2024-25		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The following summary is taken from the revised (April 2024) Statutory Guidance for Overview and Scrutiny Committees:
- 1.2 *Overview and scrutiny committees were introduced in 2000 as part of new executive governance arrangements to ensure that members of a local authority who were not part of the executive could hold the executive to account for the decisions and actions that affect their communities.*
- 1.3 *Overview and scrutiny committees have statutory powers to scrutinise decisions the executive is planning to take, those it plans to implement, and those that have already been taken/implemented. Recommendations following scrutiny enable improvements to be made to policies and how they are implemented. Overview and scrutiny committees can also play a valuable role in developing policy.*
- 1.4 *Effective overview and scrutiny should:*
- *provide constructive ‘critical friend’ challenge.*
 - *amplify the voices and concerns of the public.*
 - *be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role.*
 - *drive improvement in public services and strategic decision-making.*

Authorities should take steps to ensure scrutiny has a clear role and focus within the organisation, i.e. a niche within which it can clearly add value. Therefore, prioritisation is necessary to ensure the scrutiny function concentrates on delivering work that is of genuine value and relevance to the work of the wider authority – this is one of the most challenging parts of scrutiny, and a critical element to get right if it is to be recognised as a strategic function of the authority.

- 1.5 To achieve its aims the workplan of scrutiny committee is important. The guidance also tells us that *we need to take steps to ensure scrutiny has a clear role and focus i.e. a niche within which it can clearly add value. Therefore, prioritisation is necessary to ensure the scrutiny function concentrates on delivering work that is of genuine value and relevance to the work of the wider authority – this is one of the most challenging parts of scrutiny, and a critical element to get right if it is to be recognised as a strategic function of the authority.*

- 1.6 With that in mind this report invites the panel to consider both the current Work Programme for 2024-2025 for the Scrutiny Panel and any changes or additions to that programme.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to consider and approve the contents of the Work Programme for 2024-2025, or request amendments, additions and/or deletions.
- 2.2 The Panel is asked to identify any additional specific issues, matters or areas of Council operations which it wishes to scrutinise during the 2024-25 municipal year, and to provisionally schedule these items, subject to feedback from relevant officers on any issues which may affect reporting timescales.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 The Panel's work programme evolves as the Municipal Year progresses and items of business are commenced and concluded. At each meeting the opportunity is taken for the work programme to be reviewed and, if necessary, amended according to current circumstances. The draft work programme for 2024-25 is appended to this report. This contains the items which are reviewed each year by the Panel.
- 3.2 The Forward Plan of Key Decisions is included as part of the work programme for the Scrutiny Panel, and this is included an **Appendix A**.
- 3.3 A number of items have already been requested to come before the Scrutiny Panel at earliest opportunity. These were requested by the Panel during 2023-24, and the Scrutiny Panel may choose to remove or amend these items, if it wishes.
- 3.4 Community 360
The Panel wished to examine the situation regarding Community 360, and certain stories which had been published regarding its use of finances. Michelle Tarbun, Head of Health Partnerships & Wellbeing, has explained that progress made may make it possible for a formal report to be given to Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 9 July 2024. Panel members had received confidential briefings on ongoing progress, during 2023-24.
- 3.5 Middle Mill Weir
Fiona Shipp, Parks, Countryside & Greening Operations Manager, has explained that the Council had not been able to procure the required survey work as quickly as it would have wished. Without this, the Council has been unable to draw up the plans to get a potential replacement weir priced.

This is a vital pricing that will be required to make the decision regarding potential replacement of the weir, and so the item has been scheduled for 9 July 2024, by which time the necessary information should be available. An update report will be provided, and the Panel can decide at that time if it feels an item on the future workplan is desired.

- 3.6 Use of Council assets by community groups
This request for the work programme item came about following a request by Councillor Willetts, and a brief consideration of the issue at the Panel's meeting on 13 February 2024, curtailed due to a lack of time at that meeting. An agreement on use of the bandstand has been reached and an update can be provided. A more strategic look at use of public space in relation to the Council's new Assets Strategy is underway and,

should this result in a new policy or approach, Scrutiny Panel may choose to include that on its work programme.

4. Standard References

4.1 There are no particular references to publicity or consultation considerations, or financial, equality, diversity, human rights, community safety, health and safety, environmental and sustainability or risk management implications.

5. Strategic Plan References

5.1 Scrutiny and challenge is integral to the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2023-2026 priorities and direction for the area as set out under the strategic themes of:

- Respond to the climate emergency;
- Deliver modern services for a modern city;
- Improve health, wellbeing and happiness;
- Deliver homes for those most in need;
- Grow our economy so everyone benefits;
- Celebrate our City, heritage and culture.

5.2 The Council recognises that effective local government relies on establishing and maintaining the public's confidence, and that setting high standards of self-governance provides a clear and demonstrable lead. Effective governance underpins the implementation and application of all aspects of the Council's work.

Appendices

Appendix A – Scrutiny Panel Work Programme, 2024-25

Appendix B – Forward Plan of Key Decisions - 1 June 2024 – 30 September 2024

Work Programme for 2024-25

Scrutiny Panel meeting – 4 June 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s briefing – 30 May 2024
1. Work Programme 2024-25
Scrutiny Panel meeting – 9 July 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s briefing – 8 July 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Year End 2023/24 Performance Report and Strategic Plan Action Plan 2. New Waste Strategy for Colchester (to confirm timing with HOS) 3. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Waste, Neighbourhood Services and Leisure] 4. Middle Mill Weir – Update or pre-decision scrutiny, depending on information available. 5. Bandstand charging – Update. 6. Community 360 [To be confirmed] 7. Work Programme 2024-25
Scrutiny Panel (Crime and Disorder Committee) - 17 September 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s briefing – 12 September 2024
1. Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee)
Scrutiny Panel – 8 October 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s Briefing – 3 October 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Housing] 2. Housing Revenue Account Review 3. Work Programme 2024-25
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 12 November 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s briefing – 7 November 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Leader of the Council/Strategy] 2. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Economic Growth and Transformation] 3. Budget Strategy for 2025-26 4. Work Programme 2024-25
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 10 December 2024
Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s briefing – 4 December 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Planning, Environment and Sustainability] 2. Half Year 2024-25 Performance Report 3. Key Performance Indicators Benchmarking Report 4. Strategic Plan Action Plan progress 5. Work Programme 2024-25
Scrutiny Panel meeting - 28 January 2025
Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s briefing – 23 January 2025

1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Resources]
2. 2025-26 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, Medium Term Financial Forecast, Treasury Management Investment Strategy, Housing Revenue Accounts Estimate and Housing Investment Programme
3. Work Programme 2024-25

Scrutiny Panel - 11 February 2025

Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 6 February 2025

1. Portfolio Holder Briefing [Communities, Heritage and Public Protection]
2. Corporate Key Performance Indicator Targets for 2024-25.
3. Update on progress of Town Deal and Levelling Up Funding delivery
4. Work Programme 2024-25

Scrutiny Panel (Crime and Disorder Committee) – 11 March 2025

Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 6 March 2025

1. Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee)

Items still to schedule, when possible:

- Previous Council negotiations with Alumno [Monitoring Officer advice is that this will only be able to be scrutinised in open session once the current ongoing legal situation is resolved regarding the Queen Street site]