

9 December 2025

Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Owen Howell ☎ 282518
Title	Work Programme 2025-26		
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 The workplan of the Scrutiny Panel 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 2025-2026 for the Scrutiny Panel and any changes or additions to that programme.
- 1.7 For reference, the statutory powers of the Scrutiny Panel can be found listed in the Local Government Act 2000, Part 1A, Chapter 2, Section 9F:  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/22/part/1A/chapter/2/crossheading/overview-and-scrutiny-committees>

## 2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to consider and approve the contents of the Work Programme for 2025-2026, 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 2025-26 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 2025-26 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**.

## 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, 2025-26

Appendix B – Forward Plan of Key Decisions

### Appendix A

#### Work Programme for 2025-26

<b>Scrutiny Panel meeting – 3 June 2025</b>
<b>Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s briefing – 27 May 2025</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. End of Year [2024-25] Performance Report</li><li>2. Work Programme 2025-26</li></ol>
<b>Scrutiny Panel meeting – 19 June 2025</b>
<b>Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s briefing – 18 June 2025</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Northern Gateway Leisure</li></ol>
<b>Scrutiny Panel meeting – 8 July 2025</b>
<b>Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s briefing – 1 July 2025</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Portfolio Holder briefing (Deputy Leader of the Council and Housing)</li><li>2. HRA Review</li><li>3. Work Programme 2025-26</li></ol>
<b>Scrutiny Panel - 10 September 2025</b>
<b>Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s briefing – 2 September 2025</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Portfolio Holder briefing (Waste, Neighbourhoods and Leisure)</li><li>2. <del>Waste Strategy update</del> – <b>To be rescheduled</b></li><li>3. Report on call-in resolved at mediation stage</li><li>4. Community 360</li><li>5. Work Programme 2025-26</li></ol>
<b>Scrutiny Panel – 7 October 2025</b>
<b>Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s Briefing – 2 October 2025</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Portfolio Holder briefing (Culture, Heritage and Environment)</li><li>2. Fit for the Future – Street care, greening and grounds maintenance service business case</li><li>3. Strategic Plan Delivery Plan refresh</li><li>4. Work Programme 2025-26</li></ol>
<b>Scrutiny Panel meeting - 11 November 2025</b>
<b>Scrutiny Panel Chairman’s briefing – 6 November 2025</b>

1. Portfolio Holder briefing and Update on Local Government Reorganisation (Leader of the Council and Strategy)
2. Half Year Performance Report 2025-26 including KPI benchmarking
3. Local Council Tax Scheme 2026-27
4. Middle Mill Weir
5. Trinity House, Trinity Street, Colchester
6. Work Programme 2025-26

**Scrutiny Panel meeting - 13 November 2025**

**Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 10 November 2025**

1. Draft Digital Strategy
2. Draft Customer Strategy
3. Heart of Greenstead

**Scrutiny Panel meeting - 9 December 2025**

**Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 3 December 2025**

1. Portfolio Holder Briefing (Resources)
2. 2026/27 Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (including HRA and Capital Programme)
3. Sale of commercial investment site known as C3 (Moved from 27 January 2026)
4. ~~Moot Hall Roof, including mechanical, electrical, and power considerations~~
5. Work Programme 2025-26

**Scrutiny Panel meeting - 27 January 2026**

**Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 22 January 2026**

1. Portfolio Holder briefing (Economic Growth and Transformation)
2. Proposed Key Performance Indicators 2026-27
3. Moot Hall Roof, including mechanical, electrical, and power considerations (moved from 9 December 2025)
4. Commercial Investment disposals programme/strategy approval with request for delegated approval authority for Councillor Cory as portfolio holder for individual asset sales, and appendix on decision for 'Sale of commercial investment sites known as R1 & R2'
5. 3rd Party Procurement for asset management delivery functions - request for delegated approval authority for Councillor Cory as portfolio holder to approve the tender award/contractor appointment
6. ~~Play Parks programme of works approval~~
7. Community Asset Fund
8. Work Programme 2025-26

**Scrutiny Panel (Crime and Disorder Committee) - 17 February 2026**

**Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 12 February 2026**

1. Renewal of Public Space Protection Order
2. Safer Colchester Partnership (Crime and Disorder Committee)

**Scrutiny Panel – 24 March 2026**

**Scrutiny Panel Chairman's briefing – 19 March 2026**

1. Portfolio Holder briefing (Planning and Sustainable Development)
2. Portfolio Holder briefing (Communities and Public Protection)
3. Update on progress of Town Deal and Levelling Up Funding delivery
4. Arts Organisations which receive Council funding

**Items still to schedule, when possible:**

Review of the process for the introduction of additional cyber security measures.  
Negotiations between the Council and Alumno.