Herefordshire Council

Title of report: Work programme 2024-25

Meeting: Scrutiny Management Board

Meeting date: 26 March 2025

Report by: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All Wards

Purpose

To consider the draft work programme for Herefordshire Council's scrutiny committees for the municipal year 2024/25.

Recommendation(s)

That:

a) The committee agree the draft work programme for Scrutiny Management Board contained in the work programme report attached as appendix 1, which will be subject to monthly review, as the basis of their primary focus for the remainder of the municipal year.

b) The committee note the work programme for the other scrutiny committees and identify any opportunities for collaboration or alignment of work.

Alternative options

1. The committee could decline to agree a work programme for its future committee meetings. This would likely result in unstructured and purposeless meetings.

2. The committee could also decline to identify areas of potential collaboration or alignment of work with other committees. This could result in duplication or overlap of work.

Key considerations

3. A fundamental part of good scrutiny is planning and agreeing a programme of work for the committee to undertake. A well-considered work programme:

a. identifies priorities for the committee's work that align with corporate and partnership priorities, as well as reflecting community concern;

b. ensures that each identified topic has clear objectives that focus the committee's work;

c. creates a timetable for the committee's programme of work so that the committee carry out its work at the optimal time; and

d. provides officers and partners with requirements for evidence that will support the committee in providing evidence-based scrutiny

4. To prepare this work programme, the committee chairs have met with officers of the council to identify potential priority areas of work for the committee. These priority areas have been scheduled within the work programme to ensure the committee considers topics when it is most useful to do so. A draft of this work programme has then been circulated to the council's corporate leadership team and other key senior directors, alongside committee chairs, for further comment and refinement.

5. As agreed by Scrutiny Management Board, I have replaced individual work programme reports, updated in time for each committee meeting, with a single combined work programme, published at the beginning of each month. This makes it easier for committees to plan work on topics that straddle the remit of more than one committee. It also facilitates planning for specific items on the work programme from corporate directors. The most recent work programme was published in March 2025 and is attached as Appendix 1.

6. Attached as Appendix 2 to this report is the council's most recently published forward plan of key decisions.

Community impact

7. Effective scrutiny enables the committee to reflect community concern, one of the four purposes of scrutiny as outlined by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

Environmental impact

8. This report contains no direct environmental impacts. However the work that the committee will undertake resulting from agreeing this work programme may have direct impacts. Reports arising from or supporting this work will outline their potential environmental impact.

Equality duty

9. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. This report contains no direct equality impacts. However the reports and issues that the committee will consider may have direct impacts. Reports arising from or supporting this work will outline the any associated equality impacts for committee consideration.

Resource implications

10. This report constitutes part of the typical function of this committee. Similarly, a programme of work undertaken by committee is an integral part of the council's 'business as usual'. There is no resource implication in setting or agreeing a work programme. However agreed topics in the work programme, in particular any requests for bespoke research or the involvement of outside experts or community groups, may incur resource costs. These will be contained in any reporting or planning of agreed topics within this work programme.

Legal implications

11. The remit of the scrutiny committee is set out in part 3 section 4 of the constitution and the role of the scrutiny committee is set out in part 2 article 6 of the constitution.

12. The Local Government Act 2000 requires the council to deliver the scrutiny function.

Risk management

13. There are no risks identified in the committee agreeing an effective and timely programme of work. However there is a risk to the council's reputation if committees fail to set a work programme, or set a programme of work that does not address local authority, partnership or community priorities.

Consultees

14. In drafting this work programme, consideration has been given to:

    a. The previous work of scrutiny committees;

    b. Priorities suggested by members of the committee; and

    c. Work with Herefordshire Council officers to develop topics and agree optimum timings to bring items for consideration.

15. This work programme is subject to ongoing review, which may involve additional consultees.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny work programme 2024/25 March 2025
Appendix 2 – Herefordshire Council Forward Plan March 2025

Background papers

None