

Meeting:	General scrutiny committee
Meeting date:	Friday 15 January 2021
Title of report:	Work programme
Report by:	Democratic Services Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To review the committee's work programme.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) the draft work programme as set out at appendix 1 to the report be approved subject to any amendments the committee wishes to make; and
- (b) the committee determines any other matter in relation to the appointment of task and finish groups, their chairmanship and any special responsibility allowance or the undertaking of a spotlight review.

Alternative options

1. It is for the committee to determine its work programme to reflect the priorities facing Herefordshire. The committee needs to be selective and ensure that the work programme is focused, realistic and deliverable within existing resources.

Key considerations

2. The work programme needs to focus on the key issues of local concern and be manageable. It must also be ready to accommodate urgent items or matters that have been called-in.
3. Should committee members become aware of any issue they think should be considered by the Committee they are invited to discuss the matter with the chairperson, vice-chairperson and the statutory scrutiny officer.
4. The draft work programme is attached at appendix 1. A number of suggestions were made at an informal scrutiny work planning session on 20 November. The Committee has addressed some of these. The remainder are set out for consideration in the appendix.
5. The Committee on 23 July 2019 authorised the statutory scrutiny officer, following consultation with the chairperson and vice-chairperson, to add items to the work programme where it is necessary to ensure their timely consideration where there is no scheduled meeting to approve their inclusion.

Constitutional Matters

Task and Finish Groups

6. A scrutiny committee may appoint a task and finish group for any scrutiny activity within the committee's agreed work programme. A committee may determine to undertake a task and finish activity itself as a spotlight review where such an activity may be undertaken in a single session; the procedure rules relating to task and finish groups will apply in these circumstances.
7. The relevant scrutiny committee will approve the scope of the activity to be undertaken, the membership, chairperson, timeframe, desired outcomes and what will not be included in the work. A task and finish group will be composed of a least 2 members of the committee, other councillors (nominees to be sought from group leaders with un-affiliated members also invited to express their interest in sitting on the group). This may include, as appropriate, co-opted people with specialist knowledge or expertise to support the task. In appointing a chairman of a task and finish group the committee will also determine, having regard to the advice of the council's monitoring officer and statutory scrutiny officer, whether the scope of the activity is such as to attract a special responsibility allowance.
8. The Committee is asked to determine any matters relating to the appointment of a task and finish group and the chairperson and any special responsibility allowance or undertaking a spotlight review including co-option.

Task and finish group – update

9. A task and finish group on the climate emergency was established in January 2020. This group is aiming to report to the committee on 25 January 2021.

Suggestions for scrutiny

11. Suggestions for scrutiny are invited from members of the public through the council's website, accessible through the link below.

Tracking of recommendations made by the committee

12. A schedule of recommendations and action in response is attached at appendix 2.

Forward plan

13. The constitution states that scrutiny committees should consider the forward plan as the chief source of information regarding forthcoming key decisions. Forthcoming decisions can be viewed under the forthcoming decisions link on the council's website:

<http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgdelegateddecisions.aspx?XXR=0&DAYS=28&RP=0&K=0&DM=0&HD=0&DS=1&META=mgdelegateddecisions&V=0>

14. An extract from the plan containing items within the remit of this Committee to consider is attached at appendix 3.

Community impact

15. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts and encourages constructive challenge and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review. Topics selected for scrutiny should have regard to what matters to residents.

Environmental Impact

15. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
16. The topics selected for scrutiny will take environmental impact into account.

Equality duty

17. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

18. 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. As this report concerns the administrative function of the committee, it is not considered that it will have an impact on the equality duty.
19. The topics selected for scrutiny need to have regard to equality and human rights issues.

Resource implications

20. The costs of the work of the committee will have to be met within existing resources. It should be noted the costs of running scrutiny can be subject to an assessment to support appropriate processes.

Legal implications

21. The council is required to deliver an overview and scrutiny function. The development of a work programme that is focused and reflects priorities facing Herefordshire will assist the committee and the council to deliver the scrutiny function.

Risk management

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
There is a reputational risk to the council if the overview and scrutiny function does not operate effectively.	The arrangements for the development of the work programme should help to mitigate this risk.

Consultees

22. The work programme is reviewed at every committee meeting. The Chairperson Vice-Chairperson and statutory scrutiny officer also review the work programme.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – draft work programme

Appendix 2 – schedule of recommendations made and response

Appendix 3 – Extract from the Forward Plan

Background papers

- None identified