



# Title of report: Work programme 2024/5

**Meeting: Scrutiny Management Board**

**Meeting date: Tuesday 1 July 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 note the changes to, and agree the draft work programme for Scrutiny Management Board contained in the work programme report attached as appendix 1,.**
- 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. In May 2025, the annual council meeting agreed the statutory scrutiny officers review of scrutiny effectiveness at Herefordshire Council.

The scrutiny review argued a strong and coherent case to encourage scrutiny committees to consider and develop the full breadth of constitutional provisions available to it. In a well evidence review – it identified that 'other' ways of working, outside of the more traditional committee meeting setting should be developed. Notably encouraging more "spotlight" reviews; task and finish group activity; standing panels – where complex topics can be considered over longer periods of time. Historically, scrutiny has not used these formal mechanisms frequently to carry out its work. For example, there is no evidence that in the last ten years scrutiny has set up any standing panels.

The review also proposed that all of the scrutiny committees review their work programmes – giving refreshed focus on the Council Plan and the executive's forward plan of forthcoming decisions. Further, the scrutiny committees be given the opportunity to consider how best to carry out that work; diversifying work programmes to include options for large scale, cross-cutting topics, through for example, task and finish group activity.

It was argued that scrutiny management board has focus, principally, on corporate matters such as budget and financial strategy, council workforce and transformation.

This is the first Scrutiny Management Board meeting since the annual council meeting which considered and agreed in May. SMB is invited to review its current work programme commitments and to consider, in light of the scrutiny review's findings, whether any changes to its current agreed work programme are required.

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

## **Community impact**

6. Effective scrutiny enables the committee to reflect community concern. Overview and scrutiny is a key part of the council's governance arrangements and provides accountability and assurance, as well as a vehicle for elected councillors to contribute to policy development and review. Scrutiny committees have the overall aim of driving improvement to services to the local community.
7. As well as scrutinising the council's own services, scrutiny committees have the power to look into the provision of local health services and issues which affect the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the county.
8. The proposed work programme reflects – as widely as possible – key local priorities within this context.

## **Environmental impact**

9. 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**

10. 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**

11. 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**

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

## **Risk management**

14. 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**

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

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25 July 2025

Appendix 2 – Herefordshire Council Forward Plan 20 June 2025 onwards

**Background papers**

None