

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Monday, 3 April 2017 at 10.00 am in the Bridges Room - Civic Centre

From the Chief Executive, Sheena Ramsey

Item	Business
1	Apologies
2	Minutes (Pages 3 - 6) The Committee is asked to approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2017.
3	Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework (Pages 7 - 12) Report of the Strategic Director, Communities and Environment
4	Freedom of Information - Annual Report (Pages 13 - 22) Report of the Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance
5	Annual Work Programme (Pages 23 - 30) Report of the Chief Executive and Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance.

Contact: Neil Porteous - Email: Neilporteous@gateshead.gov.uk, Tel: (0191) 433 2149,
Date: Friday, 24 March 2017

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GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 27 February 2017

PRESENT: Councillor John Eagle (Chair)

Councillor(s): P Foy, J Wallace, D Bradford, M Charlton, P Dillon, T Graham, J Green, S Green, M Hall, B Oliphant and N Weatherley

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): L Caffrey, M Henry, M Ord and A Thompson

CR34 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2017 be approved as a correct record.

CR35 CASE STUDY - WELFARE REFORM UPDATE AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT IN GATESHEAD

The Committee received an update report on the implementation of Universal Credit (UC) within Gateshead and other changes arising from: the Welfare Reform Act 2012; the Chancellors Autumn Statement 2015; and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016.

It was noted that UC will be made via an online application and will be a single household payment, paid monthly in arrears.

It was reported that to date, UC has been implemented in Gateshead, Blaydon and Felling Job Centre areas (as of 15 June 2015) for a limited client group. Birtley, Chopwell and Rowlands Gill were included from September 2015, followed by parts of Leam Lane and Wrekenton from November 2015.

To support the implementation of UC, the Council agreed a Delivery Partnership Agreement with DWP. As part of this agreement the Council provides support to clients and this was summarised in the report.

The Committee was informed that, to date, there have been 361 UC claimants within Gateshead, who were previously in receipt of Housing Benefit. A further 384 UC claimants have been assessed for Local Council Tax Support.

The report and a presentation outlined the actions taken by the Council and The Gateshead Housing Company (TGHC) as a result of this initial implementation of UC.

The report also provided updates on: under occupation; UC Full Service implementation; Local Housing Allowance; and benefit capping.

A number of case studies were provided in the presentation to illustrate the impact of the changes on claimants with varied circumstances.

It was queried why there is difficulty letting flats when there is a waiting list. It was reported that the waiting list has reduced from 11,000 to 6,000 since the introduction of housing benefit reductions for under-occupation. There has also been an increase in potential tenants choosing to rent properties in the private rental sector. The growth of the private rental sector is having an impact on demand for social housing.

It was noted that it is often necessary for TGHC to re-advertise vacant flats, however houses remain popular and in demand. Of the 500 vacant properties over 300 of them are flats.

The Committee was satisfied that the £400k of funds from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was effectively used as it sustained tenancies which, had they ceased, would have resulted in rental income loss.

It was queried whether TGHC could actively market the flats to young professionals and/or students. It was reported that it is an option to market to college and university students however the range of choices available within this market makes it difficult.

It was commented that there are examples of exploitation within the student rental market and that marketing properties to this group may help to address that wider issue. It was also commented that a venturesome approach to marketing the properties is now required.

It was requested that costs to the Council of the support it provides (as part of the Delivery Partnership Agreement with DWP) be identified and provided to the Committee. It was reported that TGHC has so far managed the changes within existing resources but that pressures could increase.

It was queried whether the vacant properties are suitable for young people who are leaving care and are in need of housing. It was confirmed that the properties are suitable and that vacancies exist across Gateshead. It was also reported that a longer-term solution is currently being devised for the accommodation of young people leaving care.

There were concerns that the DWP is not able to assist with early interventions for the most vulnerable.

- RESOLVED:
- i. That the issues arising from the implementation of Universal Credit were noted.
 - ii. That the actions taken by the Council and The Gateshead Housing Company were noted.

The Committee received a report on arrangements for Information Governance across the Council, including the annual reporting of data breaches. The report also provided details of the Council's use of covert surveillance and compliance with the requirements of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

Information Governance

This was the second annual report to the Committee regarding the Council's Information Governance framework, which forms an important part of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny framework. The report outlined the legislative context (within which, the Council manages a range of sensitive information and personal data) and details the Council's performance in this area over a 12 month period.

Effective and secure exchange and management of information is vital for both good service delivery, and for compliance with a legislative framework at both a national and European level.

The Council's approach to Information Governance is based on the guidelines produced in 2010 and revised in 2014, by the Local Government Association.

It was reported that the Council has an Information Charter and an Information Strategy.

Details of the data breach reporting process were included in the report along with information on breaches within the last twelve months. Overall, the Committee was satisfied with the actions taken.

The Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

In accordance with the codes of conduct produced by the Office of the Surveillance Commissioner, the Committee received the second annual report in relation to the Council's use of RIPA.

The two types of covert surveillance that the Council can use are 'directed' (this involves observing, following or watching a subject of surveillance) and 'CHIS' (this involves using volunteer adults or children to attempt to make test purchases).

Typically, this Council uses RIPA in relation to benefit or Council Tax fraud when information is received that a claimant has someone living with them or is working and claiming benefits.

The Council uses CHIS when it receives information that, for example, a housebuilder is selling illegal tobacco or a shop is selling age restricted products to children.

It was reported that the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 amended RIPA to restrict when Councils can use the powers it provides. Authorisation can only be made by

Councils now if certain conditions are met, these were outlined in the report.

Statistics were provided in relation to the use of RIPA by the Council during the years 2013 – 2016.

- RESOLVED:
- i. That the Committee noted the information in the annual report.
 - ii. That the Committee was satisfied that the Information Governance is operating satisfactorily and that the Council uses the powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act appropriately.

Chair.....

TITLE OF REPORT: Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework

REPORT OF: Paul Dowling, Strategic Director – Communities and Environment

SUMMARY

To provide the Committee with an update on the progress over the last six months in relation to the Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework.

Background

1. As a reminder for members, the Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework was produced to continue the work undertaken from the previous Resilience Strategy and to provide the future focus and direction based on four themed areas.
2. The key focus over the last six months for Resilience and Emergency Planning has been to continue to work in collaboration with our local, regional, partners and communities; assess and mitigate risk; increase our capacity and capability to respond; train and exercise councillors and new volunteers; and strengthen community resilience.

Update on Progress

3. Updates from the Themed Areas from the last six months include:

Building resilient and stronger communities - working with businesses, the voluntary sector, partner agencies, communities and individuals to ensure they are better prepared for and able to recover from emergencies:

- The Council's Resilience Team is a member of the Metrocentre Steering Group, which, in partnership with Metrocentre Management Team and the emergency services, produces, reviews and validates the centre's Incident Management and Evacuation Plan. The plan is currently being reviewed to ensure all arrangements are current and in line with national resilience and security arrangements, designed to facilitate the most effective incident response and evacuation arrangements for a range of incident types, including malicious attacks such as terrorism.
- Gateshead is taking a more active role within the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum and now is regionally leading on the Communities and Training and Exercising Group themes, as well as taking on the Vice Chair role of the Tactical Business Management Group.

Assessing Risk – identifying new hazards and threats that may affect Gateshead implementing measures that may prevent an emergency or incident occurring:

- Following the publication of the National Risk Assessment and Resilience Planning Assumptions, Gateshead has been involved in the development of the Local Resilience Forum Planning Assumptions. This exercise has identified a number of priority work areas and recommendations both regionally and locally to progress forward with over the next 12 to 18 months.
- In conjunction with this, the National Capabilities Survey conducted by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat in the Cabinet Office is about to be launched. The survey is completed on a bi-annual basis and seeks to assess the UK's capability to respond to risks determined by the National Risk Assessment. This is completed at a local level and will assess and review Gateshead's capability to respond.
- The Corporate Risk and Resilience Group has been re-established with key representatives from all Council services. The overall aim of the group is to promote and support risk management and resilience, to ensure compliance with statutory requirements of the Council's Financial Regulations and the Civil Contingencies Act.
- Exercise Swan took place in October 2016 and was developed to test response arrangements to an Influenza pandemic risk across the Northumbria, Durham and Darlington and Cleveland Local Resilience Forum areas. The exercise took place over the six weeks up to 13th October. Over the six weeks there was a gradual escalation period of a pandemic, with a focus on the considerations each agency would make to prepare as the situation worsened. An internal working group was established with the Director of Public Health overseeing the actions, and then attending the final session on behalf of Gateshead Council. A number of internal issues have been identified to be addressed and work is ongoing including:
 - A full review of the current Pandemic Influenza Plan is required
 - A refresh of the Council's business continuity arrangements
 - Agreeing of appropriate Attendance at Multi-Agency Command and Control
 - Identification of appropriate Internal Management of an Influenza Pandemic
 - Increasing the Voluntary Sector Involvement
 - Refreshing the Communications plan
 - Reviewing of Body Storage Issues
- In February 2017, the Director of Public Health published the Annual Health Protection Assurance Report for 2015/16. This report describes those activities and arrangements that protect the population from risks to health arising from biological, environmental, chemical and radiological hazards. It includes schemes to prevent the incidence of diseases (i.e. screening, immunisation and vaccination); surveillance systems to identify incidents of certain infections; the control and management of individual cases of certain diseases to reduce the risk of spread; and the communication of messages and risks during urgent and

emergency situations. The Director of Public Health role is to provide assurance that arrangements to protect the health of the communities that they serve are robust and is implemented appropriately to local health needs. The report confirms that the arrangements in place are suitable and sufficient for this purpose. The report identifies an issue regarding the unavailability and/or timeliness of data at the Gateshead level for certain screening programmes. In these circumstances, assurance for Gateshead is limited to the overall assurance available in respect of the programme or the period for which data is available

Enhancing our partnership arrangements to respond and recover – the effective response and co-ordination of arrangements in the event of an emergency or incident occurring and achieving a rapid return to normality:

- The newly recruited Incident Controllers from the Emergency Response Team undertook some exercising during August, September and October 2016. *'Exercise Impact'* was a table-top exercise designed to test officers in a simulated scenario identifying and documenting any actions and decisions. Feedback from the exercises has been very positive.
- In September 2016, the North East Counter Terrorism Unit provided Leadership Team with an overview of Protect and Prepare, part of the Government's Contest Strategy. The aim of the session was to understand the threat from terrorism; guide individuals on what to do if they find themselves involved in a terrorist incident or event; and provide the ability to recognise and report suspicious activity. A similar session for councillors is scheduled to take place in April 2017.
- Following the recruitment of new volunteers to the Emergency Response Team, the Resilience Team undertook further *'Strategic Incident Controller training'* in November 2016 with Leadership Team with a mixture of both Strategic and Service Directors from the Council. This will enable this cohort of directors to act as Incident Controllers as required and add further resilience to the Emergency Response Team. Some further table-top exercising will take place during May 2017.
- The Sandbag Policy for Gateshead has now been fully implemented after being agreed by Cabinet and approved by Council in September 2016. In summary, sandbags will now not be provided to individual residents and businesses to use on their own properties. However the Council will hold a stock of sandbags primarily to assist the response in managing surface water on and from the public highway, and assist with the response in known 'at risk' flooding areas when appropriate. A full communications plan has been undertaken to inform residents, officers and councillors of this policy change, including an article in council news, Gateshead Now email and social media posts. The Council website has been fully updated with advice and guidance of how to become more resilient and proactively protect properties from flooding. A flooding leaflet *'How to prepare and what to do in a flooding emergency'* has also been developed from a range of sources with the onus focussed on residents strengthening their own community resilience.

- The Council has now procured a new Emergency Management Digital Logging System. This ensures all local key actions; decisions and information are logged during an incident or emergency on one system. It is envisaged that the new provider will implement their system from April 2017.
- Resilience Direct is a Cabinet Office secure web-based platform for the resilience community to share information amongst all emergency responders and agencies for planning, response and recovery. A mapping facility allows responders to produce and share real time maps showing cordon areas, locations of reception centres and addresses affected. The system provides a secure information-sharing platform. Work has been completed in Gateshead to ensure the necessary officers are trained to use this in a response mode.

Strengthening Communication and Community Engagement – communication is essential before, during and after an emergency or incident. A resilient community is well informed and aware of the assistance and advice available to them so they can help themselves. Updates include:

- A Members' Seminar with Councillors was held in December 2016 that provided councillors with an overview of the Emergency Response Guidance for Councillors. The session included an interactive table top exercise which took councillors through a scenario that had happened in Gateshead and were asked how they would respond and what their role would be in this situation. Feedback was positive from the session and this is to be an annual event within the Members' Calendar.
- The Resilience Team have been working on a draft Community Resilience Plan for the community of Blackhall Mill. The aim of the plan is to inform Blackhall Mill residents of the potential risks they face; promote self-resilience and opportunities to volunteer; provide advice on who to contact for assistance or make aware of specific incidents and inform residents of the roles of others and opportunities to work together. Consultation with residents; councillors and volunteers within the area has begun. This area is a pilot and it is envisaged that this approach will be rolled out across other areas within Gateshead.

Incident Management and Response

4. The Emergency Response Team has been involved in the planning and responding to a number of incidents and pre-planned operations over the last six months. This has included:
 - *Operation Jessop – October 2016*
In October 2016, Northumbria Police contacted Gateshead Council to request assistance in dealing with a suspected large quantity of chemicals being stored within a residential property in Gateshead. The chemicals had been bought on-line and had triggered concerns due to the quantities bought and the potential volatility if used or stored incorrectly. An operation took place and was coordinated successfully without causing tensions or issues within the community. The chemicals turned out to have been bought legitimately but due to unsafe storage conditions were removed and safely disposed by professional contractors.

- *Operation Border – October 2016*
On Tuesday 18 October 2016 in response to intelligence from within Operation Sanctuary, Northumbria Police undertook a series of raids in properties within Newcastle, Gateshead and County Durham areas as part of an ongoing operation to tackle and disrupt offences of Modern Slavery which was called 'Operation Border'. This was part of a UK wide response to identify and arrest those responsible for human trafficking and slavery, and was locally publicised at the time. The impact was minimal within the Gateshead area as no offenders or victims were identified. The operation was pre-planned and led by Northumbria Police which was undertaken in conjunction with multi-agency partner organisations.
- *Severe Weather Issues – November 2016*
Gateshead experienced a number of weather issues over the 21 and 22 November. This resulted in some issues with surface water flooding in a numbers of areas and major roads and issues with rising river levels including Blackhall Mill. As a consequence a Tactical Command Room was activated by Northumbria Police on the morning of the 22 November to deal and respond with the issues on the roads during the rush hour period. One learning point was in relation to communication and further improvements in the use of social media.

Recommendations

5. Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:
 - Consider and comment on the progress report
 - Indicate whether it is satisfied with the progress achieved within the last six months
 - Agree to receive a further report in September 2017.

Contact: Anthony Alder

Ext: 3880

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TITLE OF REPORT: Annual Report –Freedom of Information Act Procedure 2016

REPORT OF: Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

Summary

This report details the number of requests for information received by the Council under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016. The report provides a background to the Act highlights the number of requests received and provides information resulting from analyses of the requests.

Background

1. Cabinet has referred the report to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the performance management process, in order to ensure that the process is operating satisfactorily.
2. This is the 11th annual report relating to requests received under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and covers the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016. The request handling procedure was developed in response to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which placed legal obligations on public authorities to deal with written requests for information held by them, in recorded form, at the time a request is made.

Procedure

3. The procedure has three steps, the first of which is 'providing the information' requested within the statutory timescale of 20 working days. There is an electronic tracking system in which to log requests. This tracking system provides a full audit trail of how the request has been handled and provides template response letters, which fulfill the statutory requirements of the Act.
4. The first stage relies on quickly providing the information requested, subject to the application of any exemption and payment of any necessary fee. The second stage requires the Council to have an internal review process so that, if a requester is dissatisfied, they have an avenue of complaint, which is separate

from the corporate complaints process. The review stage involves the requester writing to the Strategic Director Corporate Services and Governance within 40 days of receiving a response, to request an independent review of the matter.

5. The third stage gives the requester a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner if he/she is still dissatisfied, following the internal review.
6. Over the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016 the number of requests received was 1200, which represents a 0.58% decrease on requests received in the previous year and a 450.95% increase since the implementation of the Act in 2005. Most Councils experiencing a decrease might be due to increased transparency.
7. Of the requests received 94.25% were dealt with within the 20 day timescale. This represents a decrease of less than 0.1% in performance on the 2016 figure of 94.84%.
8. Four requests were subject to internal review. The original decision maker's decision was upheld in all four cases.
9. Two requesters have exercised his right of appeal to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner has not yet made a decision about the appeals.
10. The table below details how many requests have been received by Gateshead Council and its neighboring authorities in 2015:-

Local Authority	2015	2016	% increase/decrease
Gateshead	1206	1200	0.58% decrease
Redcar & Cleveland	995	1459	31.8% increase
North Tyneside	1323	1251	5.44% decrease
Northumberland	1399	1397	0.14% decrease
Sunderland	1320	1420	7.58% increase
Newcastle	1371	1360	0.8% decrease
Darlington		1217	No comparative data

South Tyneside	1133	1118	1.34% decrease
Hartlepool	1084	1051	3.04% decrease
Stockton	1043	1133	8.63% increase
Newcastle University	316	373	18.4% increase

Issues

11. The burden of dealing with requests has affected some groups more than others.

Service	
Care Wellbeing and Learning	275
Corporate Resources	226
Communities and Environment	334
GHC	41
Corporate Services and Governance	324

12. Requests for information vary considerably and are difficult to categorise. Requests are becoming increasingly more complex with requesters asking for a lot of cross cutting information as part of a single request.
13. Requests have varied. A lot of requests have sought information about Council contracts, particularly in relation to ICT contracts and contracts pertaining to services we offer as traded services.
14. In 2016 most of our requests appeared to be from individuals or from companies wanting contractual information rather than from the press, interns or campaign groups. However, it is not always possible to identify the source of a request as the requester need only give a name and return address.
15. As a result of reducing resources and in an effort to continue to improve the timeliness of responses and minimise the impact of any increase in requests the following measures have been taken:-
- Services are now proactively publishing more information online, as information published on line is exempt from disclosure under the Act as it is 'information easily accessible by other means', all staff have to do is send the requester a link to where they can obtain the information. An example of where this has diminished the number of FOI requests is in finance where they now publish data about outstanding business rates on a monthly basis.
 - Published data as required by the 'Transparency Agenda'.

- c. Identified more information champions to replace staff who have left.
- d. Re-established the Information Rights Working Party.

Recommendation

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to endorse the information in the annual report attached as appendix one, and satisfy themselves that the Freedom of Information Act procedure is operating satisfactorily.

Contact: Tanya Rossington

EXT: 2192

TITLE OF REPORT: **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ANNUAL REPORT 2016**

REPORT OF: **Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance**

Purpose of the Report

1. The report details the number of requests received by the Council under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016. The report provides an analysis of the requests received during the year and details how the Council has complied with its statutory obligations under the Act.

Background

2. The Freedom of Information Act came into force on 1 January 2005. The Act places statutory obligations on local authorities to deal with requests for information within 20 working days of receipt. It provides members of the public with access to information held by public authorities, which they previously had no right of access to.

Proposal

3. To agree the annual report and refer it to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 April 2017 for consideration.

Recommendations

4. Cabinet is asked to
 - (i) Agree the Freedom of Information Annual Report for 2016 as set out in Appendix 1
 - (ii) Agree that the report is referred to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 April 2017 for consideration.

For the following reason(s)

- (i) To have an effective and timely system for dealing with requests for information which ensures the Council is compliant with the relevant legislation.

Policy Context

1. The Freedom of Information Act (FOI) procedures support the principles set out in Vision 2030, the Council Plan and the Government's transparency agenda.

Background

2. The FOI procedures were introduced in January 2005 to ensure that the Council could meet its legal obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
3. To meet our e-government targets, FOI applications can be made online and payments, where required, can also be made by a variety of methods to increase customer options and satisfaction.
4. The procedures support the Government's transparency agenda, which aims to make councils more open about activities they undertake. Regulations came into force in October 2014 which made it mandatory for local authorities to publish transparency data either quarterly or annually depending on the type of data. Each set of data has differing publication requirements. A transparency page has been established on the Council's website so that the information required to be published can be accessed by members of the public from one site.
5. To ensure that expertise in information handling is available across the Council there are 55 trained information champions. This represents a decrease of 8 from last year due to officers leaving the Council. Two more information champions are due to leave by the end of March so training is in the process of being arranged for new information champion nominees.
6. There are 20 interactive training modules available for employees to use. These modules are accessed via the intranet and provide staff with training on Freedom of Information, Data Protection, Human Rights and Records Management.
7. Training materials for information champions and a detailed guidance manual for service directors are also available on the intranet.
8. Requests for information are logged on an electronic tracking system. This provides a full auditable trail of how to deal with requests and provides information champions with standard letter templates and management reports.
9. A separate appeals process, as required by the Act, is in place. Requesters can ask in writing for a review by the Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance. Following internal review there is a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner.

Number of requests for information

10. During the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016, the Council received 1199 requests for information. This represents a 0.58% decrease on requests received the previous year and a 450.95% increase since the implementation of the Act in 2005.

11. The table below shows how Gateshead Council compares with other public authorities in the region.

Local Authority	2015	2016	% increase/decrease
Gateshead	1206	1200	0.58% decrease
Redcar & Cleveland	995	1459	31.8% increase
North Tyneside	1323	1251	5.44% decrease
Northumberland	1399	1397	0.14% decrease
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Hartlepool	1084	1051	3.04% decrease
Stockton	1043	1133	8.63% increase
Newcastle University	316	373	18.4% increase

Category of requests

12. The subject matter of requests varies considerably. Requesters often ask multiple questions which fall under more than one category of request, hence the difference in numbers of requests received and categories of request:-

Policy		29	
EIR		6	
Personal		1	
Councillor		0	
Staff		113	
Contracts		85	
Other		1041	

13. Requests are increasingly more complex with requesters often asking for a lot of information as part of a single request as well as the requesting information covering all three access to information regimes (FOI, Environmental Information Regulations and the Data Protection). Since January 2016 a lot of requests have

been focussed on traded services, particularly ICT services, services to schools, school meal provision and trading companies. The information requested about the Council's traded services, is around unit costs and the number of employees etc. performing the contracts.

14. The volume of requests we used to get in relation to business rates have decreased significantly because we now publish that information online.

Method of receipt of requests

E- Mail	1179
Letter	20

15. Most recipients prefer responses by e-mail. The FOI tracking system caters for that by allowing documents to be imported into the system in "read only" format, so that a full record of responses can be maintained. To comply with the Government's transparency agenda responses cannot be provided in PDF format. They must be provided in an open format which allows reuse.

Category of requester

16. Our data suggests that in 2016 most requests were from individuals or companies wanting contractual information, mainly in relation to traded services; rather than from the press, interns or campaign groups. It is not; however, always possible to identify the source of a request as the requester need only give a name and a return address, which can be an e-mail address.

Reviewed requests

17. If a requester is dissatisfied with a decision in relation to a request, they have a right to an internal review by the Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance. Four requesters have exercised this right in 2016. The original decision maker's decision was upheld in all four cases.
18. Following the internal review, if still unhappy, the requester has a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner. Two requesters exercised that right; no decisions have been made by the Information Commissioner.

Resolution of requests within target timescales

19. The Council has a statutory target timescale of 20 working days to respond to requests for information. Of the requests received in 2016 94.25% were dealt with within the 20 day timescale. This is less than a 0.1% decrease on last year's figure of 94.84%.

Actions to maintain performance

20. Services are now proactively publishing more information on the Council's website. If the information is published on the website it is exempt from disclosure under the Act as it is "information easily accessible by other means". Information champions are only required to send a requester the web page link to where the

information is held. It is further hoped that the information on the transparency pages will decrease the volume of requests coming in.

Consultation

21. No consultation has taken place on the preparation of this report.

Alternative Options

22. There are no alternative options – this activity is prescribed by statute.

Resources

- (a) **Financial implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that the costs arising from providing responses to FOI requests is accommodated from within existing resources. Most of the costs are associated with officer time in collecting the information and co-ordinating responses. Current regulations only allow for charging for photocopying and disbursements such as postage and packing. Currently no charge is made for requests where this cost would be less than £10. Legislation does not require requests to be complied with if they exceed the cost limit of £450. In order to determine whether a request would cost more than £450 the Fees Regulations permit us to use an hourly rate of £25 per hour which equates to 18 hours of officer time. Cabinet determined in 2005 that, given the resource implications, no requests costing more than £450 would be processed. Assistance is, however, given to requesters to reformulate their request so that it falls under the costs limit.
- (b) **Human Resource Implications** – The Council must ensure that sufficient information champions are trained in each service to respond to requests within timescales. This has been achieved from within existing resources.
- (c) **Property Implications** – There are no property implications arising out of this report
23. **Risk Management Implications** – There are now 55 information champions trained to deal with requests as well as support provided centrally from the Information Rights Officer.
24. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - The FOI procedure contributes to the implementation of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
25. **Crime and Disorder Implications** - There are no crime and disorder implications arising out of this report.
26. **Health Implications** - There are no health implications arising out of this report.
27. **Sustainability Implications** - There are no sustainability implications arising out of this report.
28. **Human Rights Implications** - There may be human rights implications in releasing certain information in response to requests. Therefore, having a

formalised procedure for dealing with requests and comprehensive guidance manuals for employees to refer to will assist the Council to carry out its duties under the Human Rights Act 1998.

29. **Area and Ward Implications** - There are no ward implications arising out of this report.

Background Information

30. Not applicable.

CONTACT: Tanya Rossington

extension: 2192

PLAN REF:

TITLE OF REPORT:	Annual Work Programme
REPORT OF:	Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance

Summary

The report details proposals for the development of the work programme for Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) and sets out the provisional work programme for the Corporate Resources OSC for the municipal year 2017-18.

Background

1. Every year each Overview and Scrutiny Committee draws up a work programme based on the Council's policy framework which is then agreed by the Council as part of the policy planning process.
2. The Committee's work programme is a rolling programme which sets the agenda for its six weekly meetings. It is the means by which it can address the interests of the local community, focus on improving services and seek to reduce inequalities in service provision and access to services.
3. Under the Council's constitution the issues which will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees come from a number of sources:
 - During the year the Committee may choose to scrutinise decisions made by the Cabinet to ensure decisions are taken properly;
 - The Committee may be requested by the Cabinet to carry out reviews of particular issues in accordance with the Council's policy priorities;
 - The Committee will receive six-monthly reports on performance for comment to Cabinet;
 - The Committee will receive reports on relevant service improvement reviews at key stages of development to confirm to Cabinet that reviews are progressing appropriately;
 - Section 119 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Section 126 of the Police and Criminal Justice Act 2006 enable any member of the Council to refer to a relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee any local government matter and any crime and disorder matter which affects their ward or constituents (Councillor Call for Action - CCfA).
 - Members of the Committee may identify particular issues for consideration;
 - Members may also examine issues in the Council's Forward Plan; and
 - In addition, where the Committee has reasonable concerns about a particular executive decision the call-in mechanism is available.

Proposals

4. The Council has consulted partner organisations on the emerging themes for each OSC for 2017-18.
5. Partners have been supportive of the emerging themes and the views outlined will be key in assisting the Committee in identifying the right priority areas to take forward and shape the initial focus of specific areas of work. Details of the emerging issues for potential review / case study topics and the feedback from partners are set out at Appendix 2.
6. The work programmes will continue to be subject to a formal review. At this stage, feedback will be provided to the OSCs on the outcomes generated by the OSCs' reviews and information provided on how it is proposed to measure the resulting impact on local people.
7. The attached provisional work programme (Appendix 1) has therefore taken account of the following:-
 - Six-monthly performance reporting
 - Vision 2030, the Council Plan and partnership work generally
 - Current issues referred to Committees
 - Details of potential review topics
 - Proposed case studies
 - Legislative provisions and guidance on the Councillor Call for Action
8. The work programme remains provisional as:
 - Cabinet has not had the opportunity to fully review its work programme and it may wish to refer further issues to Overview and Scrutiny Committees for further consideration;
 - It does not take account of new policy issues which may be identified during the year, which Cabinet may refer to Overview and Scrutiny; and
 - It does not include issues identified by members of committees on an ongoing basis during the year as a result of scrutiny of decisions, call – in and councillor call for action.

Recommendations

9. The Committee is asked to:-
 - a) Agree the case studies for 2017-18, having considered the proposals outlined at Appendix 2.
 - b) Endorse the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's provisional work programme for 2017 -18 attached at Appendix 1, and refer it to Council on 8 June 2017 for agreement.
 - c) Note that further reports will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional issues which the Committee may be asked to consider.

Contact: Angela Frisby

Ext: 2138

DRAFT Corporate Resources OSC 2017/2018	
26 June 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution/role/remit • The Council Plan – Year End Assessment and Performance Delivery 2016-17 • Sickness Absence / Health of the Workforce Update • Five Year Target Setting 2017-18 • Gateshead Fund Update • Freedom of Information – Annual Report 2017
4 September 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework - Progress Update • Case Study – Procurement of Goods and Services from Local Suppliers • Annual Report on Outcomes from the Change Programme
16 October 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Impact Assessments and the Council Plan – Progress Update • Implementation of Gateshead Volunteers Plan – Annual Report • Support to Voluntary and Community Sector – Progress Update • Implementation of Workforce Strategy – Progress Update
27 November 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council Plan – Six Monthly Assessment of Performance and Delivery 2017-18 • Corporate Asset Management – Delivery and Performance Report • Corporate Complaints Procedure - Annual Report 2016-17 • Annual Health and Safety Performance Report • Sickness Absence / Health of the Workforce
22 January 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateshead Communities Together Annual Update • Support to Voluntary and Community Sector – Progress Update
26 February 18 (5.30pm meeting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Governance Report • Case Study – Welfare Reform
16 April 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework - Progress Update • Freedom of Information - Annual Report 2017 • OSC Work Programme Review

Issues to Slot in

- **PSP Performance Monitoring**

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Care, Health and Wellbeing OSC

Review Topic- Work to address harms caused by Tobacco

Links to

Vision 2030

Council Plan 2015-20

Director of Public Health Annual Report 2015-16

Case Study 1 – Health and Social Care System Wide Work Force Issues (to cover an overview of the current workforce position in Gateshead across the health and social care sector, along with details of system wide actions being undertaken to address the issues and an outline of the areas of risk / mitigation)

Links to

Vision 2030

Council Plan 2015-20

Case Study 2 - Hospital Admissions arising from Alcohol related Harm

Links to

Vision 2030

Council Plan 2015-20

Performance Issue – Target LW13 – Rate in Gateshead significantly higher than NE average and the England rate and provisional data indicates a rise in 2015-16 from 2014-15.

Partner Feedback

NHS Newcastle Gateshead CCG

The focus on alcohol, smoking and workforce is welcome, all of which are a huge area of concern for us all and we look forward supporting these areas with our local authority partners.

Tyne and Wear Fire Service

The Service is fully supportive of the emerging themes and priority issues identified and is able to provide information / evidence on the following areas:-

- What the Service can do to help “address harms caused by tobacco” and reduce “ hospital admissions arising from alcohol related harm”.
- How the Fire Service can become a “ health asset” as the Service is planning on developing its risk assessments to incorporate a total “ health and wellbeing assessment”

Corporate Resources OSC

It is proposed that this OSC focus on two Case Studies within its 2017-18 work programme as follows:-

Case Study 1 – Procurement of Goods and Services from Local Suppliers (to focus on how the Council procures locally)

Links to:-

Vision 2030

Council Plan 2015-20

Case Study 2 – Impact of Welfare Reform (in light of ongoing implementation of reforms and roll out of key areas such as Universal Credits)

Links to:-

Vision 2030

Council Plan 2015-20

Partner Feedback

NHS Newcastle Gateshead CCG

We support the OSC scrutinising the impact of Welfare Reform as this is an area which will / is having an impact on healthcare and its delivery.

DWP/ Job Centre Plus

Support the focus on the themes identified. May be able to contribute to the case study on welfare reform and would be pleased to be contacted to see if they can support this work.

CVS Newcastle

Overall the work programmes for the OSCs look comprehensive. On a specific note the issue of welfare reform is having a huge impact on the voluntary and community sector and the people that they support. They held an Open Forum last week on the issue with an excellent presentation from Alison Dunn, Citizens Advice. They could provide notes and information from this event to support consideration of this issue.

Economy, Environment and Culture Board

Supportive of the OSC scrutinising the impact of Welfare Reform.

Families OSC

Review Topic – Children on the Edge of Care (to focus on the needs of this group (toxic trio);evidence of the impact of neglect on life chances ;what the council and partners are currently doing; what the gaps are; what we need / are planning to do.)

Links to:-

Vision 2030

Council Plan 2015-20

Case Study 1 - Best Start in Life Outcome of Pilot Self -Assessment

Links to:-

Vision 2030

Council Plan 2015-20

Case Study 2– Early Help Strategy / Outcomes Framework / Performance Indicators

Links to:-

Vision 2030

Council Plan 2015-20

Communities and Place OSC

Review Topic – The Council and Partner’s Approach to Roads and Highways – to include:-

- road safety / road traffic accidents
- road and pavement repairs / funding
- bus lanes
- traffic congestion

(to focus on current position / challenges/ areas for future action)

Links to

Vision 2030

Council Plan 2015 – 20

Referral from Council – 22 Sept 2017 – Council asked Communities and Place as part of its work programme to review the work of all relevant agencies holding road safety responsibilities due to recent loss of life in road traffic accidents in Gateshead.

No Case study this year – Replaced with four progress update reports on:-

- Development and Extension of the Quality Bus Partnership
- Environmental Enforcement
- Future Direction of Leisure Services
- Housing Growth

Community Safety Sub OSC

Case Study – Impact of Alcohol on Community Safety

Links to:-

Vision 2030

Council Plan 2015-20

Partner Feedback

NHS Newcastle Gateshead CCG

The CCG is pleased to see the impact of alcohol in the community safety OSC work programme as this allows consideration of the influence of alcohol on the wider determinants of health.

Tyne and Wear Fire Service

The Service is fully supportive of the emerging themes and priority issues identified and is able to provide information / evidence on the following areas:-

- How the Fire Service can become a “health asset” as the Service is planning on developing its risk assessments to incorporate a total “health and wellbeing assessment”
- The Service is also heavily involved in tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). A good example is a project called the Phoenix Project which is a bespoke course which has been reintroduced within Gateshead to tackle specific ASB problems.

The Service would like the OSC to consider including scrutiny of “deliberate fires” as a priority issue for its work programme going forwards.

Corporate Parenting Sub OSC

Case Study – Performance / Planning / Safeguarding of Care Leavers

Links to:-

Vision 2030

Council Plan 2015-20

LSCB Annual Report and Plans