

**TITLE OF REPORT: Review of Annual Work Programme**

**REPORT OF: Mike Barker, Acting Chief Executive**

---

### **Summary**

The report updates and seeks the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's views on the current position with regard to the annual work programme.

---

### **Background**

1. At its meeting on 11 April 2016, the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed its work programme based on the Council's policy framework. This work programme was then agreed by the Council as part of the policy planning process.
2. In line with the process agreed by all OSCs this OSC selected its case studies using a process designed to help make linkages between potential topics and the Council's policy framework.

### **Proposals**

#### **OSC Review Topics for 2017/18**

3. In advance of the OSC agreeing its work programme for 2017-18, members of the OSC have been invited to identify any issues which may potentially be appropriate for a detailed review by 14 December 2016. Any issues put forward by members have been added to the list of potential review topics for consideration by the OSC at the start of the municipal year, unless the issue was already being, or would more appropriately be, dealt with through other processes within the Council. Members have been notified if this is the case and advised as to how their issue has been dealt with.

### **Case Studies**

4. Case studies have been included within OSC work programmes to provide an additional means of examining specific issues of concern or carrying out more detailed work on a particular topic.
5. The case studies for 2016/17 are :

- Workforce Strategy (Oct 2016)
  - Implementation and Roll out of Universal Credit (27 February 2017)
6. Each OSC has identified specific issues to be considered through the case study method and it was agreed that in view of the timing of case studies within the 2015-16 work programmes that feedback on their effectiveness be sought during its work programme review in 2016/17.
7. During 2015/16 the OSC considered the following case studies :-

- **Implementation of Universal Credit (30 November 2015)**

The OSC focused on:-

- the main findings of the pilots in the North West and the progress made towards implementation in Gateshead.
- The impact of Universal Credit on Gateshead residents.
- Action taken to mitigate the impact of Universal Credit on Gateshead residents.
- Three separate case studies highlighting the impact of Universal Credit on individuals.

Having examined the issues the OSC :

- raised concerns about sanctions, in particular the sanctioning of claimants who were on DWP training courses and the 55% success rate of appeals against decisions to sanction claimants, suggesting that sanctions were unfairly imposed
- raised concerns about the demand on Council resources to help those affected by Universal Credit and
- requested that the cost to the Council be measured. The OSC noted that the Council's Partnership arrangement with the DWP secures a small amount of funding but this might cease in April 2016.

In light of the above the Committee:-

- requested that their serious concerns about the rollout of Universal Credit be recorded and invited the Minister for Work and Pensions to attend the February 2016 meeting of the OSC.

- **Council's use of powers under Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (29 February 2016)**

The OSC focused on :-

- The types of covert surveillance the Council can use and the types of circumstances in which it might be used / restrictions on usage.
- specific case studies and outcomes.

Having examined the issues the OSC indicated that it was satisfied that the Council's use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act has been appropriate.

## **Recommendations**

8. The Committee is asked to

- (i) Note that any issues identified by members of the OSC as potential review topics by 14 December 2016 have been included in the list of review topics to be considered by the OSC at the start of the municipal year unless such issues are being or would more appropriately be dealt with via other Council processes.
- (ii) Give its views on the review monitoring process carried out so far.
- (iii) Give its views on the effectiveness of the case studies carried out in 2015/16.