Gateshead Council

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Monday, 15 April 2024 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 4th March 2024.
3	**Information Governance Annual Update** (Pages 7 - 14) Report of the Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance.
4	**Corporate Asset Management Plan** (Pages 15 - 20) Report of the Strategic Director, Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities.
5	**Work Programme 2024-25** (Pages 21 - 24) Report of the Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance.
6	**Work Programme** (Pages 25 - 28) Report of the Chief Executive and the Strategic Director Corporate Services and Governance

Contact: Kate Lowes, Tel: 0191 433 4244,
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GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 4 March 2024

PRESENT: Councillor J Eagle (Chair)

Councillor(s): R Beadle, D Burnett, D Duggan, T Graham, S Green, M Hall, I Patterson, J Turner, J Wallace, D Weatherley and K Wood

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): C Buckley, D Bradford, B Clelland, J Green and J Simpson

CR26   MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 22nd January 2024 were approved as a correct record.

CR27   REVIEW OF THE BUDGET MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The Committee were presented with a presentation of the Budget Management process of the Council.

The Committee were shown a breakdown of the Expenditure and Income of the Council for each directorate.

Each directorate is assigned a budget holder which is usually the service director however they can delegate these responsibilities down the structure. Gateshead currently have 94 budget holders.

Budget holders will meet with their assigned Finance Business Partner to review all their income and expenditure before quarterly performances are produced. Budgets are monitored on a risk basis based on size and volatility. Budgets such as Children's and Adult's services are monitored more regular due to the volatility of the service.

The budget management process is a key system within the Council; therefore, it is audited on an annual basis by Internal Audit and subject to external audit by Mazars. Over the last five years the results have been Operating Well with one year being Satisfactory. Mazars consider the effectiveness of the Council's budget management systems as part of the Value for Money assessment. No negative assessment has been given.

The Committee were shown the below breakdown of the quarterly performances over the last three financial years.

It was highlighted in 22/23 and overspend of £5.4m was recognised and was

deemed unacceptable, a review exercise was carried out, led by the Deputy Chief Executive and actions were taken to help reduced expenditure, which was successful as in quarter 3 the overspend had changed to a £0.87m underspend.

At the start of the financial year, it is more likely to capture known cost pressures and known income losses leading to a more pessimistic position. Such as;
- Staffing costs – vacancies are projected in full however there may be delays in the recruitment.
- Projections will be more accurate throughout the year.
- One-off unbudgeted income streams and additional grants are received through the year.

There are always way to improve and make financial monitoring processes more robust and ever more important with increasing financial challenges it is vital to be accurate. The following improvements have been identified for the new budget.

- As of 2023/24 the presentation of the monitoring has been reviewed to reflect the value of specific management actions taken to address budget variations.
- Work is ongoing to reinforce the ordering process across the Council this will ensure all financial commitments in relation to orders can be captured accurately within the monitoring.
- Overall financial awareness and training will continue to be rolled out to Services.

RESOLVED:
  i) The Committee noted the presentation.

CR28   DIGITAL AND ONLINE SERVICES

The Committee received a presentation on Digital Inclusion.

The Council have declared a digital declaration which is:

Putting users first: Our services will be tailored to fit our users' needs, prioritising users above professionals and the organisation.

Creating technology that connects: Our IT systems will join up effectively, using simpler and more reliable software with open standards to give our data a common structure.

Building trust in data practices: We will only ever share information safely and securely, building trust among our partners and users, and better supporting the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Leading digital transformation: We will demonstrate digital leadership, creating the conditions for organisational transformation, and ensuring all those we work with embrace this Digital Declaration.

Fostering open and collaborative working: We will champion an open working culture that helps every colleague to succeed with working digitally, through sharing our plans and experience, working collaboratively with other organisations, and reusing good practice.

Gateshead Council current digital services available can assist and support the community by increasing digital skills for residents and employees.

In our workforce there is two dedicated IT trainers to support our training programs. Since April 2020 there has been 1,816 training sessions to employees and Councillors. Training is available through the Learning Hub, training documentation such as videos and FAQ's on iTrent. Also, IT offer be-spoke training sessions, one-to-one sessions, face to face and virtual training.

Gateshead currently have an ongoing project: Gateshead Digital Inclusion Project. The project started looking at the initial priorities of the workforce and the public such as; networks, connecting across different organisations, funding, influencing good practise and looking at new technology.

The Inclusion Project is now working with 20 micro, small and medium VCSE organisations with annual income under £300,000 and are based in Gateshead. The results have shown improved access to the organisations facilities and amenities. Grants of up to £3,450 each and including ongoing support and free training opportunities. The project will continue till March 2025.

Gateshead Libraries have been working on a 'Digital Inclusion Offer' which helps support members of the public gaining access to technology.

In Gateshead there is currently;
- 8 libraries comprise the Council's statutory service.
- Additional 6 libraries run by volunteer associations.
- Good geographic spread.
- Range of opening hours including evenings and weekends.
- Delivery from our Digital team in other community venues also.

Libraries across the borough provide free access to computers, secure and up to date software, free Wi-Fi, access to printers, charging points for laptops and device and data gifting.

There is a wide range of support available across the libraries which includes trained library staff, links to other services, group skill sessions i.e., jobseeker support and basic computer skills. There are also drop-in sessions for a variety of settings.

The library is an essential service to the public as it has helped a wide range of users ever more with the cost of living.

To make the Committee aware there will be a digital switchover, where the public switched telephone network (PSTN) will be retired by December 2025 and a new digital technology called Voice over Internet Protocol using a broadband connect. Once the PSTN is switched off, customers who wish to continue having a landline

phone, and do not already have broadband, will generally need to have a suitable connection – this is the case even if they don't use a broadband service. We expect that providers will have a range of options for people in this situation, so customers should not be forced to take out a high-speed broadband package if they do not want to.

RESOLVED:
  i)   The Committee noted the presentation.

CR29   WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee reviewed the work programme and noted the following changes;

Review of Community Wealth Buildings – Six Monthly Monitoring Report and Review of Regent Funeral Services will be added to future meetings.

Capturing of wider regeneration benefits of Gateshead Quays will be taken to a Corporate Advisory Group.

RESOLVED:
  i)   The Committee noted the proposed amended programme.
  ii)   The Committee noted the work will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional policy issues, which the Committee may be asked to consider.

Chair………..………………..

Gateshead Council

CORPORATE RESOURCES

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TITLE OF REPORT: Annual Report – Information Governance

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

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Summary
The report provides an overview of Information Governance arrangements within the Council and the work of the Information Governance Team in the last 12 months.

Background

1. Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee requires confidence in the way in which the Council manages Information Governance as part of the performance management process.

2. This annual report provides an update on Information Governance arrangements alongside data relating to Freedom of Information requests and data breaches.

Service update

3. In 2021 an internal audit of Information Governance took place and confirmed there were areas which needed improvement, finding that there were significant weaknesses overall in Information Governance. This audit consolidated the recommendations of the previous audits with one high priority, 5 medium priorities and 2 best practice recommendations.

4. To ensure priority could be given to the recommendations, resources were realigned to create the Information Governance Team in April 2022, dedicated to ensuring the Council is able to meet its Information Governance obligations.

5. In 2023, Natalie Baldwin was appointed as Data Protection Officer for the Council, taking over from Angela Simmons Mather. Hannah Hales was appointed as the Deputy Data Protection Officer. The Information Governance team now consists of –

   - the Council's Data Protection Officer
   - the Deputy Data Protection Officer
   - a Senior Business Support Officer
   - an Information Rights Officer; and
   - a Subject Access Request Officer

6. The team can also draw some limited support from the newly created role of the Governance Support Officer; and is in the process of recruiting an Information Governance & Complaints Assistant. The team is managed by the Governance Manager, Tim Briton.

Work undertaken by the Team

7. There has been an enormous amount of work undertaken by the team in the last 12 months in addition to daily operational work. This includes:
   (a) Data Breach procedure reviewed, updated and published
   (b) Data Protection Impact Assessment – template document and procedure reviewed, updated and published, including introducing a new DPIA referencing system and new DPIA forms for specific circumstances such as Teams / Share point requests.
   (c) Continuing the Information Asset Register / Record of Processing Activity project (see below)
   (d) Continuance of the Corporate Data Protection Group (see below)
   (e) Commencement of the Retentions project (see below)
   (f) Completion of the Privacy Notice review project
   (g) Trial of switching-off 'autocomplete' in Outlook

8. The Information Asset Register / Record of Processing Activity project as a high priority recommendation from the 2021 internal audit. It has involved the team liaising directly with every service in the Council and relies up on services completing the template documentation, with help from the team where required. The project is near completion, with only two services still to complete their documentation. An escalation process has been developed and implemented by the team to ensure that the Service Director for those remaining services who have not completed their documentation are now involved so that the project can be brought to completion.

9. A further recommendation of the internal audit was for the Information Rights Working Group to be reconvened. This was renamed the Corporate Data Protection Group and the first meeting of the group took place on 1 February 2023, with the group convening monthly from this date. At the last meeting in February 2024, it was agreed that meetings will take place every 6 weeks rather than every month going forward, and new terms of reference were agreed.

10. The attendees of the group represent each service across the Council and are known as Information Asset Assistants (IAA). The meetings allow the team to cascade important messages throughout the council via the IAAs and, where necessary, allow the team to task the IAAs with projects or tasks in their own service to ensure the Council continues to meet its data protection obligations.

11. The team have led on the trial switching-off of 'autocomplete' within Outlook. The trial has now reached its review point and the team are currently reviewing the impact that this has had on lowering the number of email-related data breaches across the Council.

12. In the last 12 months, the largest undertaking for the team has been in relation to the final recommendation of the 2021 internal audit; reviewing the Council's retention periods. This has been a very resource-intensive piece of work as each team within the Council has needed to work with the Information Governance team to consider each information asset they hold and how long they need to keep that information to ensure retention periods are acceptable and documented.

13. This work has also led to various other record management related projects, such as the work completed on introducing 'autodelete' within Outlook and work carried out to determine which information is stored in the Council's GOSS and CEM systems.

14. These additional projects have delayed the completion of the overall retentions project as it has not been possible to implement retention periods until these additional projects have been completed. It is envisaged that the team will be able to develop an overarching corporate retentions policy by the end of September 2024.

15. It is intended that there will be an annual, rolling program of work to ensure documents, policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated. There will also be further projects, such as a review of CCTV across Council buildings and improving active publication of transparency data.

16. Despite further changes to the structure of the team resulting in less resources in the team, the team is continuing to work well and raise the profile of Information Governance across the Council, evidenced by teams actively seeking advice on data protection / IG when planning new projects.

Freedom of Information

Summary of Procedure

17. The procedure has three stages:

(a) The first stage is to provide the information sought within the statutory timescale of 20 working days, unless there is an exemption to the disclosure as set out in the Freedom of Information Act 2000. 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. This first stage relies on the Information Champion within each service to prepare the response in line with provisions of the Act.

(b) 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 procedure. The review stage involves the requester writing to

request an independent review of the matter within 40 working days of receiving their initial response. The internal review, ordinarily, will be undertaken by the Strategic Director of Corporate Services & Governance and a formal response provided to the requestor within 20 working days.

(c) The third stage gives the requester a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner if they are still dissatisfied, following the internal review.

Data

18. The following data covers the period since the last FOI annual report:

Year	Number of requests	Percentage dealt with in the statutory timeframe
2020	1006	90.35%
2021	1135	93.39%
2022	1162	90.79%
2023	1277	91.00%
2024 (so far)	334	

19. The number of internal reviews has remained steady since 2021;

Year	Number of Requests
2020	11
2021	16
2022	14
2023	16
2024 (so far)	4

20. The majority of internal reviews have upheld the position taken in the Council's initial response. A small number have upheld the decision "in part".

21. Where requestors have remained unhappy with the Council's response, it is open to them to make a formal complaint to the ICO:

Year	Number of Complaints to ICO	Outcome
2020	2	1 – required to disclose information 1 – agreed to disclose information
2021	1	1 – required to disclose partial information
2022	2	2 – no further action required
2023	3	2 – no further action 1 – partially upheld
2024 (so far)	0	

22. Requests for information vary considerably and are difficult to categorise. We receive regular requests around contracts, what hardware / software is used, when contracts are up for renewal and what our unit costs are.

23. The Council is required to publish certain information, for example senior officers' salaries, and a transparency page is available on the Council's website so that members of the public can access the information covered by the Publication Scheme from a single access point. It has always been hoped that proactively publishing information would reduce the number of FOI requests received, however there is little evidence to suggest that is the case.

Data Breaches

24. Officers are required to complete the data breach reporting form with as much detail about the breach as possible. The form must be completed as soon as the breach is discovered, as the Council has only 72 hours in which to report the matter to the ICO should that be required. It is therefore important to include all of the information sought in the form to allow the IG Team to determine whether the matter needs to be reported.

25. The Council is required to keep a record of all data breaches:

Year	Number of Data Breaches
2020	30
2021	64
2022	98
2023	157

2024 (so far)	55

26. From analysis, the increase in reported data breaches is believed to be a result of awareness methods implemented by the Corporate Data Protection Group and direct work with services from the Information Governance Team. Stronger reporting leads to a more accurate picture of data breaches, allowing the development of more precise mitigations to data breach risks.

27. The criteria for reporting a data breach to the ICO is where the breach is likely to result in a risk of adversely affecting individuals' rights and freedoms. Breaches reported to the ICO:

Year	Number of Data Breaches reported to ICO (percentage of overall total)	Outcome
2020	2 (6.7%)	2 – No further action
2021	1 (1.6%)	Advice given – no further action
2022	5 (5.1%)	5 – No further action
2023	15 (9.55%)	15 – No further action
2024 (so far)	6 (10.91%)	3 – No further action 3 – awaiting outcome

28. Whilst it may appear that the increasing numbers are a concern, a cautious approach is taken to reporting matters to ensure the Council is being transparent with regards to data breaches. Where the Council has reported a data breach to the ICO, no action has been taken by the Regulator.

29. Breaches reported to the ICO in 2023 included:
- Test data on the Councils GOSS system accidentally being made 'live' and visible on certain council operated websites.
- Social work and / or Occupational Health data being posted to an out of date address.

30. The most common cause of data breaches is human error – using the wrong email address, attaching the wrong document, sending letters to the wrong property. Advice is always provided to the service when the IG Team respond to data breaches, usually it is to reinforce the need to be vigilant when handling personal data. More detailed advice and training can be provided depending upon the nature of the breach.

31. As a result of advice from the Information Governance Team and the ICO, the Council trialed switching off 'autocomplete' in Outlook to determine whether this reduced the number of the email related data breaches. The Information Governance Team are currently reviewing the results of the trial.

32. All staff are required to undertake annual data protection training which is provided via the Learning Hub.

Recommendation

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

     a) note the information in the annual report, and

     b) satisfy themselves that the Freedom of Information and data breach procedures are operating satisfactorily.

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Gateshead Council

TITLE OF REPORT: **Corporate Asset Management – Annual Progress Report**

REPORT OF: **Kevin Scarlett, Strategic Director, Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities**

Summary

This report provides the progress of the review, management and optimisation of Corporate Assets. The Committee is asked to provide feedback and comment.

Background

1. The Council has adopted a 'corporate landlord' approach which brings together the management of both capital budgets for activities such as building rationalisation, statutory maintenance and planned maintenance enhancement projects and revenue budgets for property running costs of the operational portfolio.

2. Key Objectives:

    *   Facilitate New Ways of Working within our Communities
    *   Enable a 'one front door' for use of our assets
    *   Improved customer focus
    *   Improved consistent management arrangements
    *   Optimise financial income
    *   Legally complaint portfolio
    *   Improved focused investment
    *   Increased opportunities for disinvestment
    *   Opportunities to optimise retained assets through multi-agency and locality working

3. This has already led to £970k savings being made and consideration is being given to how greater efficiencies can be achieved to drive further savings. In addition, having taken the management of the Tenanted Non-Residential Portfolio in house the council will also be undertaking outstanding lease renewals and rent reviews as a priority to maximise the income to the council from this portfolio.

4. This is a part of the Councils main themes to drive change across the Council's asset portfolio; to support the achieved of corporate priorities including locality working, new service delivery embedding Smart Working and achieve budget efficiencies and Thrive outcomes.

Current Position - Operational Portfolio

Civic Centre

5. There are 2,250 desks within the Civic Centre. Post covid, we set an arbitrary target of 50% reduction in desk space through consolidation and rationalisation of workspace as a result of hybrid working.

6. To date almost 500 spaces have been released. This includes the relocation of into the building from the Dryden Centre.

7. The next phase of the project forward will be to work with the remaining Groups and Services to improve ways of working and release additional space to be let out. We will also be reviewing the effectiveness of the first phase of moves.

8. This is a 40 year old building with life cycle replacement costs over the next 20 years (roofs, windows, fire safety systems etc). However, it has excellent transport links and ample parking which has attracted significant interest from public sector partners and community groups. To date we have interest for over 1,000 equivalent desk spaces from other organisations.

9. Running costs for 23/34 is £1.2m. This is currently offset by external income of £580k. Additional income from any 3rd party tenant will be determined by many factors including the space required, whether modifications to the building are required, operating hours and access and market forces. It is anticipated that each floor of a pavilion has the potential to generate an annual income of £250k - £300k. Whilst negotiation with prospective tenants are progressing we have included a target of £350k in increased income for 25/26. This is subject to increase once we have progressed the rationalisation project to accommodate prospective tenants.

Depots

10. The main depots are at Park Road, Shearlegs Road, Cowen Road, Penshaw Way and Colgate. The current services delivered from the depots are:
    - Construction
    - Highways
    - Street Scene and Grounds Maintenance
    - Waste transfer station and refuse collection.
    - Minewater harvesting and battery storage
    - Stores
    - CCTV operations
    - Salt storage

11. There are smaller ancillary depots at Garden House Cemetery, Southend Road, Dunston Park, Derwent Park, Saltwell Cemetery, Blackthorn Close and Chopwell Park used primarily for grounds maintenance vehicle storage and welfare facilities. In addition, there is further salt storage at Follingsby.

12. Relative to other comparative Councils there is a lot of depot space. Sites are spread out, poorly laid out and inefficiently utilised.

13. There are significant condition backlog maintenance issues (particular at Park Road). In addition, recent storm damage and recent asbestos incidents have affected staff welfare and frontline operational delivery.

14. There is a proposal to relocate non-operational staff from depots to the Civic Centre and consolidate transport, grounds and winter maintenance, highways, fleet and waste operations onto the Shearlegs Road site with vehicle storage and management being contained on the Park Road. Scheme designs are being developed which will also enable the release of Penshaw Depot, Colegate depot and Follingsby site.

15. Improved efficiencies of frontline service delivery is the main driver for the project and the mitigation of the increasing risks to those services operating out of the existing sites. Whilst there is no target savings for this project until the business case is complete, we are aiming for £200-300k per annum savings based on the closure of Park Road and Penshaw running costs/rental.

Other Operational Assets (Libraries, Family Hubs etc.)

16. The corporate landlord approach is maximising the performance of operational estate through oversight of day to day management and making sensible and targeted investment decisions. There are effective controls over building safety and legislative requirements in maintaining our assets.

17. The Dryden Centre is no longer required as an operational asset with the remaining council services vacating in December 23. Cabinet will consider a surplus declaration and proposal on its future use. This will deliver a further £100k of savings in 2024/25 predicated on retaining the income across the estate.

18. Spaces in our buildings need to support locality working, but also need to be considered alongside the Council's need to reduce costs. There is potential to consider cost savings by working with partners to review the whole public sector estate in Gateshead.

19. At an operational level, colocation of services has commenced throughout the borough with a range of services now operating from the Family Hubs, Birtley Library, Leam Lane, Wrekenton Hub and Blaydon Library. These include the locality teams, housing, Police, Citizens Advice, Mental Health Social Prescribers and a range of VCS partners.

20. The Council is carrying out a zero based budgeting exercise to determine the actual costs of operating a building and ensure letting arrangements are consistent and are maximising the rental income.

21. To date £1.2 m of external income (including HRA) is received in letting of operational space. There is significant interest from public and voluntary sector partners in occupying space within our outlying assets and a conservative target of an additional £50k in income has been targets to offset general fund costs in running our assets.

22. A further financial driver for locality working is early intervention and prevention leading to less costly intervention in service delivery. Equally there are potential efficiencies through promoting greater customer focused 'self-serve' opportunities and a different approach to customer contact for ''transactional' service requirements. Both locality working and customer contact need to be considered as potentially complementary to the review of assets.

23. Gateshead outperforms other Councils with our Community Asset Transfers however there is a need to review the effectiveness of the existing CATs and whether they are delivering on outcomes originally agreed.

24. The Service will evolve the 'One Front Door' for use of council assets, additional resource (currently within the budget) will provide a more timely and co-ordinated response for internal/external enquiries for use of council assets.

Current position – Non-Operational Portfolio

Tenanted Non-Residential Portfolio (TNRP)

25. In 2022, the management of the Tenanted Non-Residential Properties (factories shops etc.) was brought back in house from an outsourced management arrangement.

26. There are 55 main sites covering 1,937 individual assets. There is a gross income target of approx. -£3.8m. The net surplus target for 23/24 is -£1.2m.

27. The Council is reviewing all non-operational assets to review low yields/rate of return. The primary aim will be to reach the income target and setting an initial target of a prudent net £50k per annum increase in income.

Surplus Estate / Development

28. The surplus estate is any site that is not used by the Council to provide services (operational) or is not being held as part of the TNRP to primarily generate an income.

29. The Council has the following buildings which have been declared surplus to requirements (together with the relevant service who responsible for their future use: -

- Former Hallgarth Depot (Residential Growth)
- Former Brandling Hall Community Centre (Major Projects/JV)
- Former Whickham Front Street Primary (Residential Growth)
- Former Prince Consort Road Offices (Property & Assets)
- Dryden Centre (Property & Assets)
- Former Felling Park Depot (Residential Growth)
- Former Tynedale PIC (Residential Growth)
- Birtley Leisure Centre (Public Health)
- Gateshead Leisure Centre (Public Health)

30. Whilst the actual number of surplus buildings are relatively small, the Council has a register of surplus land (which includes potential development sites) with development responsibility across a number of service areas including Property, Assets and Traded Services, Residential Growth, and Major Projects. In addition, there are a number of town centre properties acquired as part of the Town Centre regeneration.

31. The Council is currently reviewing how it manages surplus, regeneration, and development sites. A reassessment of these sites will determine further opportunities for disposal to raise capital receipts.

Financial Implications – Savings / Growth in Income

	Year	Description of Saving	Saving £,000's	RAG
1	2021-22	Staff saving	160	
		Savings in R&M spend	250	
			410	
2	2023-24	Savings in premises costs	250	
		Savings in business rates	160	
		Savings in surplus property holding costs (PCR)	80	
		Savings in Building Cleaning		
			75	
			564	
4	2024-25	Further savings in R&M spend following closure of Dryden	100	

		Total Savings included in MTFS	*1,074*	
5	*2025-26*	*Savings in running costs for Civic Centre*	*350*	
		Increase yield in rental income from partners in operational estate	*50*	
			50	
		Savings in Building Cleaning		
			140	
6	*2026-27*	*Increase yield in rental income from TNRP*	*50*	
		Savings in surplus property budget	*50*	
		Total Potential Future Savings	*790*	

Gateshead Council

TITLE OF REPORT: Development of Work Programme for 2024-25

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

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Summary

This report details the Overview and Scrutiny work programme setting process for 2024-25 and a list of suggested topics for inclusion in the work programme, relevant to the remit of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC).

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1. A key component to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny function is work programme planning that seeks input from a wide variety of sources and identifies priority areas where scrutiny can seek to add the most value.

2. Ideas for topics for scrutiny to consider can be gathered from a wide range of sources including:

    -   Elected Members
    -   Senior Officers
    -   Partner Organisations
    -   Corporate Plans and Strategies
    -   Complaints system and Ombudsman
    -   Evidence from Councillors on issues affecting neighbourhoods

3. Elected Members and relevant officers were invited to submit suggestions for inclusion in the work programme between 20th February 2024 and 5th March 2024.

4. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the Corporate Resources OSC perform the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following functions:

    - the management of the Council's financial, human and physical resources
    - support for the democratic process
    - the involvement of the people and communities of Gateshead in the work of the Council
    - capacity building in communities, volunteering and resilience
    - social inclusion, equalities and diversity
    - the Council's arrangements for securing efficiency and value for money; and the development and operation of the Council's procurement strategy

5. A list of suggestions received relevant to the remit of Corporate Resources OSC is appended to the report.

Role of Overview and Scrutiny

1. As per the Council's Constitution, the following principles govern the Overview and Scrutiny Function:

   • It will be an integral part of the Council's framework, working within it not outside or against it
   • It will be a constructive process which is open and accountable
   • It will work alongside the other parts of the Council's structure in making a contribution to policy
   • It will enhance rather than duplicate activity
   • It will look outwards to broader issues affecting local people rather than just internal Council issues

2. This is underpinned by the four fundamental principles of good scrutiny set out by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny:

   • provide constructive "critical friend" challenge;
   • amplify the voice and concerns of the public
   • be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
   • drive improvement in public services.

3. Members of the Committee are invited to highlight any additional topics they wish to put forward for consideration for inclusion in the work programme. Work will then be undertaken, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, to allocate topics to the Committee's meeting schedule in a timely manner and scope the content of reports. A further work programme report will then be submitted for approval at the first meeting of the 2024/25 municipal year.

4. It is acknowledged that, whilst the majority of the work of overview and scrutiny will be planned in a structured way, there will be flexibility within work programmes for committees to respond to any issues that arise throughout the year.

Recommendations

1. The Committee is asked to:-
   a) Comment on the emerging issues for this OSC's 2024-25 work programme and highlight any additional issues for consideration.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme development 2024/25 - Corporate Resources OSC

Remit:

1. the management of the Council's financial, human and physical resources

2. support for the democratic process

3. the involvement of the people and communities of Gateshead in the work of the Council

4. capacity building in communities, volunteering and resilience

5. social inclusion, equalities and diversity

6. the Council's arrangements for securing efficiency and value for money; and the development and operation of the Council's procurement strategy.

Suggestions:

- 12 month progress report on the Review of Community Wealth Building

- Review of Regent Funeral Services

- Food Poverty

- Fuel Poverty

- House building – implications of vacant sites in relation to new homes bonus and council tax on new homes and capital receipts.

- Resilience and Emergency Planning Annual Update

- Annual report on implementation of the Workforce Strategy (including an update on the Council's appraisal process)

- Health and Safety Performance Annual Report

- Budget Review

- Information Governance Annual Report

- Complaints annual report

- Performance Management and Improvement Framework – 6 monthly updates

- Corporate Asset Management Plan Annual Update (to incorporate assets that are no longer in use)

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Gateshead Council

TITLE OF REPORT: **Annual Work Programme**

REPORT OF: **Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive
Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services
and Governance**

Summary

The report sets out the provisional work programme for the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

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1. The Committee's provisional work programme was endorsed at the meeting held on 20 July 2023.

2. At its meeting on 16 October 2023, Councillors agreed to amend the work programme to enable that meeting to focus solely on the evidence gathering process for the OSC review of leisure and further amendments have been made to balance up the workplan and to incorporate reports requested by the Committee.

3. It was agreed at the last meeting on 4 March 2024 that the report on **Capturing wider regeneration benefits of Gateshead Quays** would be undertaken jointly with the Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities OSC. It was then agreed with the Chairs of both OSC that an Advisory Group meeting would take place on 11th April to consider this topic in more detail.

4. Appendix 1 sets out the current workplan as agreed by Councillors at its last meeting on 4 March 2024.

Recommendations

5. The Committee is asked to:

   a. Note the proposed amended programme;

Contact: Andrea Tickner   **Ext: 5995**

Corporate Resources OSC Work Programme 2023-2024	
12 June 2023	• **Performance Management and Improvement Framework – Year End Performance 2022-23 –** Lindsay Murray • **Resilience and Emergency Planning Annual Update –** Michael Reynard *(including focus on strength/robustness of our response to emergencies caused by climate change, including the power network, thinking about high winds damaging power lines, felling trees, flood risks during heavy rainfall)* • **Work Programme –** Andrea Tickner
4 September 2023	• **Health and Safety Performance – Annual report –** Stephen Foggin / Michelle Brown • **Update on voluntary sector resilience** – Alison Dunn *(to focus on how voluntary sector is surviving in challenging financial times)* • **Scoping Report – Leisure Services Review** – Andrea Tickner • **Work Programme –** Andrea Tickner
16 October 2023	• **Evidence Gathering – Review of Leisure Services –** Alice Wiseman, Lindsay Murray, Michael Lamb, John Shiel, Andrea Tickner plus external guests.
27 November 2023	• **Performance Management and Improvement Framework 2023-24 – Six Month Update** Lindsay Murray/Richard Hall • **Annual report on implementation of the Workforce Strategy –** Michelle Brown • **Annual Budget Review including savings delivery** – John Shiel • **Interim Report on Review of Leisure –** Andrea Tickner • **Work Programme –** Andrea Tickner
22 January 2023	• **(Impacts of World Events (**including Brexit, legacy of Covid, Conflict in Ulkraine etc)) – Removed from the workplan - Committee agreed at its November meeting that this report was no longer required . • **Final Report on Review of Leisure –** Andrea Tickner • **Implementation of the Council's Fuel Poverty Action Plan –** Alison Dunn

	• **Review of Community Wealth Building – Six Monthly Monitoring Report** – Janine Copeland • **Work Programme** – Andrea Tickner
4 March 2024	• **Review of Budget Management Process –** Presentation by John Shiel • **Digital and Online Services –** Marisa Jobling (moved from January 2024 to balance up work plan) • **Work Programme – Andrea Tickner**
15 April 2024	• **Information Governance Annual Update** – Angela Simmonds-Mather • **Corporate Asset Management Plan Annual Update –** *(Potential to focus on use of assets in terms of efficiency and/or safety, use of the Civic Centre – whether there are plans to actively market the vacant space)* - Sandra Watson Propose to move from March Committee • **Proposed work programme for next municipal year** • **Work Programme –** Andrea Tickner

To be added to a future meeting:

- **Review of Community Wealth Building – Six Monthly Monitoring Report (Jan 25)**
- **Review of Regent Funeral Services**

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