

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

Summary

This report is set out in two parts. The first part highlights how this Committee has influenced / shaped the development of policy /decision making during 2017-18 and the second part 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 2018-19.

Background

1. On 18 July 2017 Cabinet agreed to pilot a number of changes to Overview and Scrutiny in Gateshead aimed at ensuring that Overview and Scrutiny in Gateshead:-
 - is first and foremost member led.
 - enhances the leadership role of OSC Chairs and Vice Chairs in driving forward, directing and shaping individual OSC work.
 - enhances engagement and involvement with OSC members in shaping the focus of the work of specific OSCs.
 - creates stronger relationships/linkages with the Executive.
 - enables Overview and Scrutiny to better understand and track how it is influencing Cabinet Policy / Decision making going forwards.

Annual Review

2. The pilot changes to Overview and Scrutiny commenced in September 2017 and this is the first review of the work programme following those changes.
3. During 2017-18 the OSC has sought to influence and shape policy development / decision making via the following routes.
4. During this period the OSC, at its meeting on 27 November 2017, considered the DCLG Consultation on disqualification criteria for Mayors and Councillors and provided Cabinet with it's views on a proposed response. Cabinet agreed its response to the consultation on 19 December 2017 and the OSC's views formed the basis of the agreed response.
5. The OSC, at its meeting on 22 January 2018, also considered a proposal for a Corporate Social Responsibility Pledge which the Council could adopt and implement within the Council's procurement activity. The aim of the Pledge is to help the supply chain to implement the five pledges under the Thrive Agenda by providing more detailed statements for suppliers to sign up to. The OSC's

comments were subsequently incorporated into the final version of the pledge which Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 20 March 2018.

6. The OSC has also considered a case study on work being progressed by the Council in relation to the procurement of goods and services from local suppliers at its meeting on 4 September 2017 and as a result the OSC supported further work within the Council to:-
 - identify barriers to local spend.
 - roll out a Community Wealth Building Model.
 - develop and implement an action plan with targets to increase local spend.
 - develop closer working between Economic Development and Procurement.

7. The OSC has also considered a case study on the implementation of Universal Credit at its meeting on 26 February 2018. At that time, whilst the OSC noted the good work being progressed by the Council and The Gateshead Housing Company to support individuals, the OSC raised the following areas which they asked relevant service areas to have regard to when progressing work in this area / liaising with relevant partners:-
 - it was considered that the costs of additional resources to support people through the process should be identified as the scheme is meant to be saving money.
 - it was suggested a letter was sent to DWP highlighting the OSC's concerns about DWP processes
 - it was queried whether further monitoring of DWP processes could take place with a view to identifying any trends.
 - concerns were raised that the level of support provided is not consistent throughout the borough and it was considered that there were issues in the west of the borough in this regard. The OSC asked whether consideration could be given to support on an outreach basis in the west.

8. The OSC has monitored Council performance generally, in those areas falling within its remit, at its meetings on 26 June 2017 and 27 November 2017 and Cabinet has had regard to the OSC's views when considering Council performance overall.

9. The OSC has also monitored progress in relation to the following specific areas of performance and the OSC's comments have been fed into the improvement work progressed by relevant service areas and fed back to partners in the voluntary sector
 - Sickness Absence / Health of the Workforce
 - Implementation of Workforce Strategy
 - Corporate Asset Management
 - Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework
 - Annual Health and Safety Performance
 - Information Governance and Use of RIPA
 - Corporate Complaints Procedure
 - Volunteers Plan Progress
 - Progress on Support to Voluntary and Community Sector

10. The OSC has also been consulted, at its meeting on 22 January 2018, on the development of a web based volunteers system as part of the Gateshead

Volunteers Project 2018 and subsequently the OSC's views have been taken into account in taking this project forward.

Development of 2018-19 Work Programme

11. 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.
12. 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.
13. 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.
 - 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

14. This year the changes piloted included enhanced engagement and involvement with OSC members in shaping the focus of the work of specific OSCs via a specific work programme event held on 9 February 2018. At that event councillors had regard to the key issues/challenges/legislative changes affecting the work of the Council within the forthcoming twelve months which fall within the specific remits of each OSC and the 5 pledges under the Thrive agenda:-
 - Put people and families at the heart of everything that we do
 - Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance
 - Support our communities to support themselves and each other
 - Invest in our economy to provide sustainable opportunities for employment, innovation and growth across the borough.
 - Work together and fight for a better future for Gateshead
15. Subsequently, the Council has consulted partner organisations on the emerging themes for each OSC for 2018-19.

16. Details of the emerging issues / areas for potential review and the feedback from partners are set out at Appendix 2.

17. The attached provisional work programme (Appendix 1) has therefore taken account of the following:-

- Six-monthly performance reporting
- The Thrive agenda and the Council Plan and partnership work generally
- Current issues referred to Committees
- Details of potential review topics/case studies
- Legislative provisions and guidance on the Councillor Call for Action

18. 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.

Next Steps

19. The OSC Co - ordinator will carry out further work with OSC lead officers across all of the OSCs to consider what future improvements can be made to the process of tracking how OSCs are influencing policy development and decision making with a view to strengthening the annual review process going forwards.

Recommendations

20. The Committee is asked to:-

- a) Note the information contained in the annual review and provide any comments.
- b) Agree the emerging issues for 2018-19, having considered the proposals outlined at Appendix 2.
- c) Endorse the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's provisional work programme for 2018 -19 attached at Appendix 1, and refer it to Council on 24 May 2018 for agreement.
- d) Note that further reports will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional issues which the Committee may be asked to consider.

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