

TITLE OF REPORT:	Annual Work Programme 2021-22
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 the work of this Committee has helped influence / shape the development of decision making / performance improvement work during 2020-21 and the second part details the development of the work programme for Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) and sets out the provisional work programme for the Housing, Environment & Healthier Communities OSC for the municipal year 2021-22.

Annual Review

1. During 2020-21 the huge challenges arising from the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic led to a more flexible approach to scrutiny which recognised the demands on services and the Council as a whole but, at the same time, ensured that we met our statutory obligations to provide an effective scrutiny function. As such scrutiny concentrated on key priority areas alongside a small number of topics already being progressed elsewhere which would deliver work that was of genuine value and relevance to the work of the wider Council during this period.
2. This involved the OSC monitoring progress on the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic throughout the year and the lessons learned and how this affected the way the work of the Council is progressed in the longer term. It also involved the OSC scrutinising end of year performance for 2019-20 as it relates to those areas covered in the remit of this Committee and helping to shape the ongoing development of the Council's new Performance Framework.

Development of 2021-22 Work Programme

3. 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.
4. The Committee's work programme is a rolling programme which sets the agenda for its 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.
5. This year, due to the ongoing uncertainties relating to the Covid 19 pandemic and the lack of clarity on the outlook for local government finance it has been acknowledged

that the approach to developing the OSC work programmes for 2021-22 was likely to have to be similarly flexible.

6. It was also noted that a continued focus on the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic in some form or another would be likely to be a major area of focus for the OSCs at key points during 2021-22 as would the development of the Council's new performance framework.
7. With this in mind, OSC members have been involved in shaping the focus of the work of specific OSCs via email and provided with an opportunity to comment on the emerging themes at the scheduled March / April 2021 OSC meetings. The emerging themes have taken account of the need to support the Council's Thrive agenda and add value, taking account of the five priority areas outlined in the budget consultation; the development of the Council's new Performance Framework; the Gateshead Strategic Needs Assessment and the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
8. Subsequently, in line with usual practice, partner organisations have been consulted on the themes and have indicated that they are supportive of the emerging themes.
9. The attached provisional work programme (Appendix 1) has therefore taken account of the following:-
 - The New Performance Framework
 - The Thrive agenda and partnership work generally
 - The Gateshead Strategic Needs Assessment
 - The Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy
 - The five priority areas outlined in the budget consultation
 - Current issues referred to Committees
10. 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 wish to 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 decisions, call in and councillor call for action.

Recommendations

11. The Committee is asked to:-
 - a) Note the information contained in the annual review and provide any comments.
 - b) Endorse the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's provisional work programme for 2021-22 attached at Appendix 1 and refer it to Council on 22 July 2021 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