

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Annual Work Programme 2022-23

**REPORT OF:** Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive  
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& Governance

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## 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 2021-22 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 Families OSC for the municipal year 2022 -23.

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## Annual Review

1. As a result of the continued uncertainties arising in relation to the Covid -19 pandemic, along with the pressures on services that this brought and having regard to the Council's approach to the development of a new performance framework, a more flexible approach continued to be adopted for scrutiny during 2021-22.
2. This approach recognised the demands on services and the Council as a whole but, at the same time ensured that we have been meeting our statutory obligations to provide an effective scrutiny function and scrutiny has concentrated on delivering work that is of genuine value and relevance to the work of the wider Council.
3. During 2021-22 the work of this OSC was refocused on the current Covid-19 related priorities and the impacts of that alongside a small number of other priority issues for the Council / partners. This involved the OSC providing feedback to Gateshead Health NHS FT on the work being progressed in relation to children with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. It also involved OSC considering the positive outcome of the Ofsted Focused Visit and sharing its views on the progress being made in relation to the small number of areas for improvement identified in the subsequent Ofsted action plan.
4. In addition, the OSC has examined and given its views on the support provided to families eligible for free school meals during the pandemic and the impact of the pandemic on the free school meals service/ relaunch plans and free school meals benefit entitlement leading to OSC requesting the Council's Data Protection Officer to explore whether there would be any GDPR constraints if the Council wished to lobby government for automatic registration of free school meals.
5. The OSC has also shared its views with the Chair of the South Tyneside and Gateshead Local Dental Committee and NHS England/NHS Improvement on the pressures and challenges dentistry is facing in relation to delivering dental services for

children and young people and the situation in terms of access and the progress being made to safely restore access to services post pandemic

6. The OSC has also considered how Gateshead is meeting the needs of children and young people with SEN and agreed that along with implementing the expected recommendations of the Green Paper the Council should review readiness for the next LA SEND Inspection pending the publication of the new framework expected by April 2022 and review Secondary ARMS provision during 2022-23. In addition, OSC agreed that the Council should step up the monitoring role to reduce further increases in requests for top-ups as well as continuing to support the engagement of parents/ carers and children and young people in strategic SEND Developments.
7. During this period, the OSC has also been involved in examining / sharing its views on the performance and activity of the Adopt NE Regional Adoption Agency; the impact of Covid on new mothers and babies and the work being undertaken to reduce permanent exclusions from school in Gateshead / ensure appropriate support is in place.
8. The OSC has also been involved in scrutinising end of year performance for 2021-22 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 2022-23 Work Programme**

9. 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.
10. 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.
11. This year, given the Government's position in relation to the easing of restrictions nationally with regard to the Covid 19 pandemic and the ongoing move from a pandemic to an endemic situation it is proposed to move back to "business as usual" for the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees and a full programme of meetings for each OSC for 2022-23.
12. 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 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.
13. 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 overall. Partners have also put forward some suggested areas for scrutiny for specific OSCs as set out in Appendix 2 to the report

14. 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

15. 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**

16. 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 2022 -23 attached at Appendix 1, subject to any amendments arising from consideration of Appendix 2, and refer it to Council on 21 July 2022 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.

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