

## Overview & Scrutiny Panel Chairman's Report to Council

<b>Council</b>	03 June 2021
<b>Report Author</b>	Committee Service Manager
<b>Status</b>	For Information
<b>Classification:</b>	Unrestricted
<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Ward:</b>	Thanet Wide

### Executive Summary:

This report sets out a framework for activities of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel for 2021/22 which were considered by the Panel on 25 May 2021 for adoption as the work programme for the year.

### Recommendation(s):

Members are being asked to comment on and note the report.

### Corporate Implications

#### Financial and Value for Money

There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. The report provides a briefing to Full Council about the current work activities of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

#### Legal

There are no legal implications directly arising from this report. A presentation of the Panel Chairman's report to Full Council enables the Chairman to fulfil their duty as is required by the Council's Constitution.

#### Corporate

There are no corporate risks associated with this report. The report enables discussion by Members at Full Council on the activities of the Finance Scrutiny Panel.

The debate on the Panel Chairman's report contributes to open communication across the council. A strong scrutiny function contributes to an open democratic process for decision making and delivery of value for money services as council decisions are interrogated by Members before they are implemented. In instances where such decisions are interrogated after implementation, there will be lessons to learn for future policy development.

## **Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty**

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -  
(Delete as appropriate)

1. To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
2. To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
3. To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

No implications arise directly but the Council needs to retain a strong focus and understanding on issues of diversity amongst the local community and ensure service delivery matches these.

It was important to be aware of the Council's responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and show evidence that due consideration has been given to the equalities impact that may be brought upon communities by the decisions made by Council.

## **CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

This report relates to Communities.

### **1.0 Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 At each ordinary Full Council meeting, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel presents a progress update report on the activities of the Panel since the last Council meeting.
- 1.2 Such a report would be subject to comment or debate by Members. This is in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.1 of Part 4 of the Council Constitution.
- 1.3 This report updates the Council on the work of the Panel since the last Council meeting and allows for discussion of the work undertaken, therefore strengthening the Council's scrutiny function.

- 1.4 This report follows on from the Annual report that was presented at Full Council on 23 March 2021. This report is the first of the new municipal year and highlights the work activities that the Panel would like to carry out during 2021/22.

## 2.0 The Current Situation

### Scrutiny Review Topics

- 2.1 In 2019/20 through to 2020/21, the Panel started working through the list of scrutiny review topics and agreed a prioritised list using the matrix that was established and agreed upon by Members. Whilst some of the topics would be considered through conducting reviews, others would be expedited through one off reports (where appropriate).

### Memorial plaques and Monuments

- 2.2 The reviewing of memorial plaques and monuments in the district was one such topic. This was given priority in order to expedite the review process and contribute to the establishment of the policy by Cabinet. However due to imminent new legislation which included new guidance on how the councils could address the issue of monuments and plaques in the district, it was not possible to continue with this work stream. On 20 April 2021, the Panel decided to temporarily halt and therefore keep in abeyance the work of the Memorial Working Party until an appropriate time.

### Planning Enforcement Review

- 2.3 Planning Enforcement Review: On 20 April 2021, the Panel set up the Planning Enforcement Working Party to hold one meeting and report back to the Panel on how best Scrutiny could contribute to the current review of the Planning Enforcement protocol for Thanet. reviewed the Planning Enforcement in the district at the February meeting. A meeting is being arranged by officers to take place in June leading to a report back by the working party at the 29 July Panel meeting. The Panel could at this point then decide how best to feed into the review of the planning enforcement function.

### Review of the Council's Community response during the pandemic: The Community Hub and engagement with the voluntary sector

- 2.4 An exploratory report would be considered by the Panel during 2021/22, after which Members would decide whether to conduct a more indepth review of the issue or take no further action. This topic arose out of a presentation by the Chief Executive on the impact of covid on businesses and communities in Thanet. During the presentation the Panel was offered to explore further any of the following topics:
- a. OPTION 1 - The Panel could receive a presentation on 'Our Response to COVID' March 2020 - March 2021.
  - b. OPTION 2 - The Panel could undertake a 'How did we do' review of TDC initial response to the first lockdown March 2020 - June 2020 including continuation of service delivery and our engagement with Kent Resilience Forum as part of the emergency response.

- c. OPTION 3 - The Panel could review how the council managed the government's COVID funding streams including Business Grants; Safely Opening High Streets; CEV funds.
  - d. OPTION 4 – The Panel could review the council's Community response during the pandemic, specifically the work of the Community Hub and engagement with the voluntary sector.
- 2.5 Although Members agreed to explore Option 4, they also indicated an interest in pursuing the other options once they completed examining Option 4 topic.
- 2.6 Annex 1 details the current work programme before any new work has been added. All the scrutiny review topics that the Panel identified as ongoing work streams that would spill over into multiple municipal year periods are detailed in the Annex 2 to the report.
- Cabinet Presentations at OSP Meetings**
- 2.7 The Panel may opt to identify specific topics that Members would wish were responded to by Portfolio Holders through Cabinet Member presentations during 2021/22.
- 2.8 The rest of the work programme would be made up of items which would have been referred to the Panel by Cabinet. These are the items which are part of the Council Budget and Planning Framework and are on the forward Plan or items which may have a significant public interest, where the Panel may feel that their contributions would enhance the decision making process..

### **3.0 Options**

- 3.1 Members may opt to offer suggestions for consideration by the Panel;  
*or*
- 3.2 Members may wish to comment on and note the report.

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#### **Annex List**

Annex 1: Overview & Scrutiny Panel Work Programme for 2021/22  
Annex 2: Scrutiny Review Topics with the Scoring Matrix

#### **Background Papers**

None

#### **Corporate Consultation**

**Finance:** *Chris Blundell (Director of Finance)*

**Legal:** *Estelle Culligan, Director of Law and Democracy*