

Overview & Scrutiny Panel Chair's Report to Council

Council	11 July 2024
By	Ingrid Brown, Head of Legal and Democracy & MO
Status	For Information
Decision classification	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	Thanet Wide

Purpose of the Report

This report summarises activities of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel for 2024/25 and asks the Council to comment, make suggestions and note the OSP work programme.

Recommendation(s):

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

1. Summary of Reasons

- 1.1 The Panel's work programme helps the committee to deliver effective scrutiny of executive decision before, and at times after, implementation. The programme assists the Panel to come up with realistic workload as measured against existing resources. Feedback from Full Council would assist the Panel to its work programme and provide it with some steer on issues of interest to members of the Council.

2. Background

- 1.1 At each ordinary 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. This is in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.1 of Part 4 of the Council Constitution. The report is subject to comment or debate by members.
- 1.2 This is an update to Full Council on the work of the Panel since the last Council meeting and allows for discussion of the Panel's planned activities, which hopefully strengthens the Council's scrutiny function.
- 1.3 This report is the first for the 2024/25 municipal year and follows on from the update report that was presented at Council on 28 March 2024. It also comes after the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's first meeting of the municipal year held on 21 May, when the Panel established its work programme for the new year.
- 1.4 The current statutory guidance for the scrutiny function says, effective overview and scrutiny should:

- Provide constructive ‘critical friend’ challenge;
- Amplify the voices and concerns of the public;
- Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role; and
- Drive improvement in public services

1.5 With this in mind, Members may wish to comment on and offer suggestions regarding the Panel’s work programme for the year.

3. The Work Programme

3.1 At its first meeting for the 2024/25 municipal year, the Panel agreed its work programme as detailed in Annex 1 to the report and further agreed to progress the scrutiny review work that was not completed in the previous year (2023/24). That meant the work of the External Grant Funding Review Working Party would proceed during this year.

3.2 The Panel agreed to increase the membership size of this working party to seven members who are as follows:

Councillor Austin (Chair)
 Councillor Davis
 Councillor Fellows
 Councillor Pope
 Councillor Manners
 Councillor Edwards
 Councillor Will Scobie

3.3 The Panel further agreed the terms of reference for this programme. At their June meeting the Panel also approved the work programme for the working party. They received a progress update report that reflected that the working party held a session with Thanet District Council officers from Finance, Regeneration and Community to gather information as part of their investigation to answer the key question, “How can we maximise small-scale grant funding coming into Thanet?”

Scrutiny Review Topics

3.4 These review topics would normally be progressed through review projects carried out by a working party set by the Panel. However in other instances Members may choose to commission a one-off officer report which would address the issues raised by Members.

3.5 Annex 2 is the scoring table, which details progress updates for current review projects as well as indication of the next topics to be investigated by the Panel.

Cabinet Presentations at OSP Meetings

- 3.6 The Panel agreed that a request for a Cabinet Member presentation be made to the Leader of Council to present on “ How the Council has made progress as measured against the five new Corporate Priorities.” This presentation would be made on either 13 August or 17 September. This lead time will provide for more reporting time on the performance of the corporate priorities. They further agreed to invite the Cabinet Member for Parking to the 15 October or 19 November Panel meetings. All these dates will be confirmed nearer the time.
- 3.7 Panel members were also encouraged to identify subject items for presentations from the Forward Plan or any emerging topical issues which may have a significant public interest, where the Panel may feel that their contributions would enhance the decision making process.
- 3.9 The Panel requested Democratic Services to draft a protocol for setting up working parties that the committee could use each time a new working party is being set up and assigned a project task. This was in order to come with a consistent and more predictable approach for setting up scrutiny sub groups. This protocol was adopted at the meeting on 18 June 2024. A copy is attached as Annex 3 to the report.
- 3.10 Annex 4 highlights the distribution of the Panel’s work activities between pre-decision and post decision scrutiny, work programming activities as well as work related to how the Panel engages Cabinet through Cabinet Member presentations. This table is not as detailed as it would normally be from the mid-year point as it is early into the new municipal year.

4. Watching Brief

- 4.1 The Panel is keeping a watching brief on progress regarding its recommendations from scrutiny reviews that were forwarded to Cabinet over the last few months.

Tourism Review Working Party

- 4.2 The Panel forwarded a number of recommendations to Cabinet and these were considered at the Cabinet meeting on 25 April 2024. Cabinet agreed to study the Scrutiny Review report and bring it back for decision at a meeting in the third quarter of 2024. More detail on the report and Cabinet minutes are in minute item 115 in this link [Cabinet Agenda and Minutes - 25 April 2024](#)

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Members of the Council are being asked to comment, offer suggestions for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and note the report; or
- 4.2 Members of the Council could just comment and note the report.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 No consultation has been undertaken because it is not required for this report.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Finance and Resources

- 6.1.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report, but elements of the suggested work programme may have financial and resource implications that would need to be managed within existing resources, or alternatively compensating savings found.

6.2 Legal and Constitutional

- 6.2.1 This report is for Councillors to note and as such there are no particular legal implications arising.

- 6.2.2 The role of scrutiny is set out in section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000. Paragraph 2 of that executive arrangements of a Local Authority must ensure that its overview and scrutiny committee has the power to:

- a) to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive,
- b) to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive,
- c) to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive,
- d) to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive,
- e) to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.

- 6.2.3 The council must also have regard to the statutory guidance on Overview and Scrutiny from the ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government when exercising its functions. In relation to the planning of work, paragraph 6 of the statutory guidance provides the following:

- a) Effective scrutiny should have a defined impact on the ground, with the committee making recommendations that will make a tangible difference to the work of the authority.

- 6.2.4 To have this kind of impact, scrutiny committees need to plan their work programme. The drawing up of a long term agenda with enough flexibility to accommodate any urgent, short-term issues that might arise during the year supports effective scrutiny.

6.3 Council Policies and Priorities

- 6.3.1 This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- To work efficiently for you

6.4 Risk

6.4.1 There are risks arising directly from this report.

6.5 Climate Change and Biodiversity

6.5.1 There are no climate change and biodiversity implications arising directly from this report.

7. Equality, Equity and Diversity Implications

7.1 This report is not for decision but is for noting and comment. As such no equalities 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.

7.2 It is 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 all decisions made by Council.

8. Crime and Disorder Implications and Community impact

8.1 There are no crime and disorder and community impact implications arising directly from this report. However, Full Council could advise the Scrutiny Panel on issues to consider as part of the committee's duty to act as a Crime and Disorder Committee to review any community safety matters affecting the local communities and submit any recommendations on any corrective action that should be considered by the Council.

9.0 Subject History

9.1 Historically, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel presents a report on the activities of the Panel at each ordinary Full Council meeting.

Appendices

Annex 1 - OSP Work Programme 2024/25

Annex 2 - Scrutiny Review Topics Scoring table

Annex 3 - Protocol for establishing a working party

Annex 4 - OSP Pre and Post Decision Reviews 2024/25

Background Papers

None

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Report Sign Off

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