

Review of Scrutiny Topics Scoring Matrix

Overview and Scrutiny Panel 16 July 2024

By	Charles Hungwe (Deputy Committee Services Manager)
Cabinet Portfolio	Councillor Yates, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
Key Decision	No
Decision classification	Unrestricted
Ward:	Thanet Wide

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to consider adopting a revised scoring matrix for prioritising scrutiny reviews.

Recommendation(s):

The Panel is asked to review the revised scoring matrix, suggest changes and agree the matrix as the framework for prioritising scrutiny topics.

1. Summary of Reasons

- 1.1 The Panel asked officers to come up with a report for reviewing the scoring matrix for prioritising scrutiny review topics.

2. Background

- 2.1 At a meeting on 27 August 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel adopted a new matrix for prioritising review projects. This had not yet been updated until the current Panel requested officers to review the approach.

3. Relevant Issues

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is required as part of its terms of reference “to perform all Overview and Scrutiny functions on behalf of the Council.” The Panel may also “hold inquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development.”
- 3.2 In undertaking its work the Panel “may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations. They may ask witnesses to attend to address them on any matter under consideration.

- 3.3 For the Panel to work more efficiently and effectively in carrying out its role as defined above, there is a need to identify a framework for planning its scrutiny project activities. An agreed approach for prioritising review work helps manage competing requests that may be placed on the committee by Panel members, non Panel councillors and residents. The scoring matrix provides that framework for prioritising these scrutiny reviews.
- 3.4 The proposed framework contains four criteria that would be used to determine a score against each proposed topic. Democratic Services working with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel will then score the topic on each of these criteria out of 20, giving a total score out of 80. The four criteria are as follows:
1. Is the topic related to a priority or value within the Council's Corporate Plan?
 2. Is the topic of high public concern?
 3. Is the topic currently underperforming as per the Council's performance monitoring?
 4. Will the topic result in recommendations that save that Council money or generate income?
- 3.5 Responses to a question for each criterion will be categorised as either a **"yes,"** **"maybe"** or **"no"** and each response would be designated a value of either twenty, ten or zero as proposed in the notes detailed in Annex 1 to the report. Once scores have been worked out, the scoring table is then forwarded to the Corporate Management Team for approval and to assist with planning of resource allocation to support the scrutiny work.
- 3.6 Each proposed topic would then be added to the scoring matrix table with their score totals. The higher the score the higher up the priority table that topic will be and the sooner that topic will be undertaken. Each time a topic is added or removed the scores will be rechecked by Democratic Services. The table will be updated, to also reflect progress of any ongoing scrutiny projects and will be an annex to the work programme report.
- 3.7 In order for Panel members, non Panel councillors to put forward suggestions for review topics a form is available to complete and submit to Democratic Services. The form provides an opportunity for councillors to provide some background information on the topics they would be suggesting and this information provides the rationale for the suggested topic. A copy of the form is attached as Annex 3 to the report.
- 3.8 It is worth noting that a councillor or residents through their ward councillor could also put forward topics on "any local government matter or any crime and disorder matter which affects their ward" for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to investigate through the Councillor Call for Action. This protocol is set out in the Council Constitution under Part 4, Rules of Procedure, Councillor Call for Action (CCFA) Protocol. More detail is in the constitution via the link below.

<https://democracy.thanet.gov.uk/documents/s85947/Part4RulesofProcedureGoogleDocs.pdf>

3.9 Annex 4 is the form template that councillors can use to submit a topic under CCFA.

4. Alternative Options

4.1 The Panel could agree to adopt the reviewed scoring matrix as proposed in the notes Annex 1 and table Annex 2 to the report.

4.2 The Panel could come up with a different approach for prioritising scrutiny topics.

5. Consultation

5.1 There was no public consultation carried out for this issue as it is for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to agree how they are going to organise and prioritise their review project work.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Finance and Resources

6.1.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However when the Panel is in the process of identifying topics for review, it would be important to bear in mind the resource implications for undertaking that work.

6.2 Legal and Constitutional

6.2.1 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.

6.2.2 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.

6.2.3 To have this kind of impact, scrutiny committees need to plan their work programme, i.e. draw up a long term agenda and consider making it flexible enough to accommodate any urgent, short-term issues that might arise during the year'.

6.3 Council Policies and Priorities

6.3.1 This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- To keep our district safe and clean
- To deliver the housing we need
- To protect our environment
- To create a thriving place
- To work efficiently for you

6.4 Risk

6.4.1 There are no 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 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.

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 the decisions made by Council.

8. Crime and Disorder Implications and Community impact

8.1 The Scrutiny Panel has a 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. In drafting its work programme the Panel ought to consider including crime and disorder items as part of its work activities during any municipal year.

9.0 Subject History

9.1 As part of its work programme, the Panel identifies review topics during each year and sets up working parties, one at a time to carry out an in-depth investigation of the matter and report back to the Panel, usually within 3 months. As a result of the limited

resources the Panel can only undertake one scrutiny review at a time before moving to the next topic on the priority list as discussed in the report.

Annexes

Annex 1 - Scoring Matrix Notes

Annex 2 - Scoring Matrix table

Annex 3 - Form for submitting an item on the OSP agenda

Annex 4 - CCFA form

Background Papers

None

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Report Sign Off

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