

Overview & Scrutiny Panel Chair's Report to Council

Council	10 October 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

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 This report is the second for the 2024/25 municipal year and follows on from the update report that was presented at Council on 11 July 2024.
- 2.4 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

2.5 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

External Grant Funding Review Working Party

3.1 The External Grant Funding Review Working Party met on 9 September 2024 to get feedback from infrastructure bodies and local community voluntary organisations that attended the 22 July and 29 July meetings on the main ideas for the review report. The working party was now drafting the report based on its findings and this will be presented to the Panel on 15 October 2024.

Scrutiny Review Topics

3.2 The Panel agreed that two more topics on "Youth Services in the Thanet" and "Improving Biodiversity" added to the scoring matrix for prioritising scrutiny topics. A review of the Youth Services in Thanet would focus on assessing what remains following KCC budget cuts and what is provided by other organisations across Thanet. It was hoped that this would identify where gaps and opportunities for improvement are.

3.3 The other topic on increasing biodiversity across the district would involve conducting an assessment of biodiversity across Thanet and what can be done to increase it. These items will then be ranked on the scoring matrix to determine their position on the priority list.

3.4 The Panel also agreed to score the following topics for consideration as scrutiny review topics:

- a. Poverty in Thanet and the extent of mitigation measures that exist currently;
- b. The potential benefits and challenges to TDC of contemporary business practices such as hot desking, working from home, customer relationship management and artificial intelligence;
- c. Combating littering, improving recycling, especially during holiday periods and festivals;
- d. Events, what TDC can do to improve its service to voluntary events organisers.

3.5 Annex 1 is the current work programme for 2024/25 and current scrutiny topics together with update notes on work in progress and recently completed tasks are detailed in Annex 2 to the report.

Cabinet Presentations at OSP Meetings

- 3.6 The Leader of Council made a presentation to the 17 September Panel on “How the Council has made progress as measured against the five new Corporate Priorities.” This was well received and the Panel had a detailed discussion on the presentation.
- 3.7 The Cabinet Member for Environment would be making a presentation on How TDC can improve recycling in the district at the Panel meeting on 15 October. This would be followed by a presentation by the Cabinet Member for Parking on the new Parking Strategy at the 19 November Panel. The Cabinet Member for Community was invited to make a presentation on Neighbourhoods at the 10 December meeting.
- 3.8 Annex 3 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.

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 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 - OSP Pre and Post Decision Reviews 2024/25

Background Papers

None

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Report Sign Off

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