

Review the Overview & Scrutiny Panel Work Programme for 2024-25

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| Overview and Scrutiny Panel | 10 December 2024 |
| By | Ingrid Brown, Head of Legal and Democracy & MO |
| Cabinet Portfolio Member | Councillor Yates, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services |
| Key Decision | no |
| Decision classification | unrestricted |
| Call in status | n/a |
| Ward: | Thanet Wide |

Purpose of the Report

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

Recommendation(s):

1. Members are requested to review the Overview & Scrutiny Panel work programme for 2024/25;
2. Members are further being asked to approve the draft terms of reference of the Youth Services Provision Review Working Party attached at Annex 4 of 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.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report allows the Panel to review the work programme for the period 2024/25. The work programme helps provide a framework for reporting progress regarding the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and would also provide officers with a reference point for planning appropriate levels of support for the Panel. This report follows on from the one that was considered by Members on 18 June 2024.
- 2.2 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

2.3 With this in mind, Members may wish to ensure that the Panel work programme for the year provides opportunities for critical but constructive challenge to the Executive, articulate any concerns about matters that are the business of the council and strive for improved service delivery by the Council and other public agencies working in Thanet. Members could also consider including in the work programme matters they would like to investigate on any matter that they feel affects the welfare of the local communities

3. The Work Programme

External Grant Funding Review Working Party

3.1 The External Grant Funding Review Working Party meeting met on 9 September 2024 to consider the feedback from infrastructure bodies and local community voluntary organisations that attended the 22 July and 29 July meetings on the main ideas for the report. The working party finalised its report which is detailed elsewhere on the agenda for the November meeting.

Scrutiny Review Topics

3.2 Currently the Panel is undertaking a review on Youth Services in Thanet.” This piece of work started in November and the working party hoped to conclude its work in January 2025 with a report scheduled to be presented to the Panel in February 2025. The review would also 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. The working party met for the first time on 21 November and drafted some terms of reference (TORs) attached at Annex 4 of the report. The Panel is being asked to approve these TORs.

3.3 The next in line for review is a topic on increasing biodiversity across the district. This 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 Chair and Vice Chair were working with Democratic Services to score the new topics against the set criteria for prioritising review topics. These are as detailed below:

- 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.

Watching Brief for Scrutiny Recommendations Forwarded to Cabinet

Tourism Review Report

- 3.5 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](#). This report was considered for the second time by Cabinet on 28 November 2024 and Cabinet agreed a good number of the recommendations from this review report. The Panel will keep a watching brief to monitor implementation of these recommendations by Cabinet.

External Grant Funding Review Report

- 3.6 The Panel adopted the external grant funding review report on 19 November and forwarded it to cabinet for consideration and decision. [The report was considered by Cabinet on 28 November and most of the recommendations from the review report were agreed by Cabinet. The Panel will keep a watching brief to monitor implementation of these recommendations by the Executive.

Cabinet Presentations at OSP Meetings

- 3.7 The Cabinet Member for Parking will attend the Panel on 10 December for a presentation on Parking.
- 3.8 The Cabinet Member for Community will be invited back to the meeting on 21 January 2025 for another presentation on “Poverty in Thanet and the extent of mitigation measures that exist currently.”
- 3.9 This will be followed by a presentation on a date to be confirmed on “the potential benefits and challenges to TDC of contemporary business practices such as hot desking, working from home, customer relationship management and artificial intelligence.”
- 3.10 Members can refer to the Forward Plan that is detailed elsewhere on the agenda to identify items that they could request for an officer report.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Panel could comment, and note the work programme report.
- 4.2 Members may also choose to make updates to the work programme for 2024/25.

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, which would need to be managed within existing resources, or alternatively compensating savings found.

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 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 The Panel implements all its activities as defined in the work programme that was established at the May meeting and reviews progress as measured against that work programme.

Appendices

Annex 1 - OSP Work Programme 2024/25

Annex 2 - Scrutiny Review Topics Scoring table

Annex 3 - OSP Pre and Post Decision Reviews

Annex 4 - Youth Services Provision Review Working Party

Background Papers

None

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Report Sign Off

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