

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	1 October 2020
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Title	Scrutiny Work Programme

1. What is the report about?

The report seeks the Performance Scrutiny Committee to review its draft forward work programme to reflect the implications of the focus on business critical operations during the emergency phase of the COVID -19 pandemic and the programmes of work underway or being planned under the recovery phase.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To seek the Committee to review and agree on its programme of future work, and to update members on relevant issues.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Committee

- 3.1 having considered the information provided during the meeting, including any issues identified during consideration of the recovery priority delivery plans and those topics listed on the 'holding list' (Appendix 1b) determines the contents of its forward work programme;
- 3.2 appoints a representative to serve on the Council's Strategic Investment Group (SIG); and

3.3 identifies key messages and themes from the current meeting which it wishes to publicise via the press and/or social media.

4. Report details

4.1 Section 7 of Denbighshire County Council's Constitution sets out each Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference, functions and membership, as well as the rules of procedure and debate.

4.2 The Constitution stipulates that the Council's scrutiny committees must set, and regularly review, a programme for their future work. By reviewing and prioritising issues, members are able to ensure that the work programme delivers a member-led agenda.

4.3 For a number of years it has been an adopted practice in Denbighshire for scrutiny committees to limit the number of reports considered at any one meeting to a maximum of four plus the Committee's own work programme report. The aim of this approach is to facilitate detailed and effective debate on each topic.

4.4 In recent years the Welsh Government (WG) and Audit Wales (AW) have highlighted the need to strengthen scrutiny's role across local government and public services in Wales, including utilising scrutiny as a means of engaging with residents and service-users. From now on scrutiny will be expected to engage better and more frequently with the public with a view to securing better decisions which ultimately lead to better outcomes for citizens. AW will measure scrutiny's effectiveness in fulfilling these expectations.

4.5 Having regard to the national vision for scrutiny whilst at the same time focussing on local priorities, the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) recommended that the Council's scrutiny committees should, when deciding on their work programmes, focus on the following key areas:

- budget savings;
- achievement of the Corporate Plan objectives (with particular emphasis on the their deliverability during a period of financial austerity);

- any other items agreed by the Scrutiny Committee (or the SCVCG) as high priority (based on the PAPER test criteria – see reverse side of the ‘Member Proposal Form’ at Appendix 2);
- Urgent, unforeseen or high priority issues; and
- Supporting the Council’s recovery work in relation to the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on Council services, the local economy and the county’s communities

4.6 Scrutiny Proposal Forms

As mentioned in paragraph 4.2 above the Council’s Constitution requires scrutiny committees to prepare and keep under review a programme for their future work. To assist the process of prioritising reports, if officers are of the view that a subject merits time for discussion on the Committee’s business agenda they have to formally request the Committee to consider receiving a report on that topic. This is done via the submission of a ‘proposal form’ which clarifies the purpose, importance and potential outcomes of suggested subjects. No officer proposal forms have been received for consideration at the current meeting.

4.7 With a view to making better use of scrutiny’s time by focussing committees’ resources on detailed examination of subjects, adding value through the decision-making process and securing better outcomes for residents, the SCVCG decided that members, as well as officers, should complete ‘scrutiny proposal forms’ outlining the reasons why they think a particular subject would benefit from scrutiny’s input. A copy of the ‘member’s proposal form’ can be seen at Appendix 2. The reverse side of this form contains a flowchart listing questions which members should consider when proposing an item for scrutiny, and which committees should ask when determining a topic’s suitability for inclusion on a scrutiny forward work programme. If, having followed this process, a topic is not deemed suitable for formal examination by a scrutiny committee, alternative channels for sharing the information or examining the matter can be considered e.g. the provision of an ‘information report’, or if the matter is of a very local nature examination by the relevant Member Area Group (MAG). No items should be included on a forward work programme without a ‘scrutiny proposal form’ being completed and accepted for inclusion by the Committee or the SCVCG. Assistance with their completion is available from the Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

Cabinet Forward Work Programme

- 4.8 When determining their programme of future work it is useful for scrutiny committees to have regard to Cabinet's scheduled programme of work. For this purpose a copy of the Cabinet's forward work programme is attached at Appendix 3.

Progress on Committee Resolutions

- 4.9 A table summarising recent Committee resolutions and advising members on progress with their implementation is attached at Appendix 4 to this report.

5. Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group

- 5.1 During the lockdown period Cabinet and Lead Members only took business critical decisions. The Council is now resuming many other day to day services as well as undertaking work to support Council services, local businesses and communities to recover from responding to the crisis and to emerge from it.
- 5.2 Under the Council's scrutiny arrangements the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) performs the role of a coordinating committee. The Group met by video conference in June and July 2020 to consider how best to restart the scrutiny committees' work following the emergency period of the COVID-19 crisis.
- 5.3 The three committees' forward work programmes were already well populated prior to the coronavirus outbreak. The Group needed to consider a Scrutiny-wide approach to the scrutiny of the important recovery plans and how the committees could manage the incorporation into the new forward work programmes of those items which Scrutiny deemed to be important before the pandemic.
- 5.4 To facilitate this the Group agreed that all committees work programmes should be cleared of all outstanding items, with these topics being placed on a 'holding list' whilst enquiries were made in relation to whether the issues were still current, related to the Council's recovery work and when officers realistically expected to be in a position to report on them to the committees. Adopting this approach would free-up the committees at their first meetings since the lockdown to focus on the draft delivery plans for the Council's COVID-19 Recovery Priorities. Scrutiny will, for the

remainder of this Council's term of office, have a crucial role to play in supporting the Council's recovery from responding to the pandemic and identifying the lessons learnt from it to help shape future service delivery models and plans to respond to any similar incidents that may lie ahead. Hence the reason why the Committee is today focussing its work on the draft delivery plans shown on the agenda.

- 5.5 Items held over from the Committee's original forward work programme and placed on the 'holding list' can be seen at Appendix 1(b) and the Committee is asked to consider which of these items merit being included on the revised forward work programme and the timing of their rescheduling.
- 5.6 The next meeting of the Scrutiny Chair and Vice- Chairs Group is scheduled for the 12 October 2020.
- 5.7 With a view to raising Scrutiny's profile and encouraging public engagement the Group recently decided that all three scrutiny committees should, for a trial period, identify key themes or messages arising from their meetings for publication via the Authority's social media pages and the local press. The Committee is therefore asked to identify which themes or messages it wishes to highlight from the current meeting.

6. Strategic Investment Group (SIG)

- 6.1 The Council's Strategic Investment Group (SIG) is an elected member and officer group which considers and evaluates applications for capital expenditure. It also has delegated authority to approve capital investment bids up to the value of £1m. its memberships comprises of three cabinet members, including the Leader and the Lead Member with responsibility for Finance, as well as a representative from each of the scrutiny committees. This Group also acts as the gate-keeper to ensure that no unauthorised or unfinanced capital expenditure occurs. A copy of the Group's terms of reference is attached at Appendix 5 for information.
- 6.2 This Committee's Chair, the late Councillor Huw LI Jones, was the Committee's representative on this Group. Following his untimely passing the Committee is asked to appoint a new representative to serve on the Strategic Investment Group (SIG).

7. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Effective scrutiny will assist the Council to deliver its corporate priorities in line with community needs and residents' wishes. Continual development and review of a coordinated work programme will assist the Council to deliver its corporate priorities, improve outcomes for residents whilst also managing austere budget cuts.

8. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

Services may need to allocate officer time to assist the Committee with the activities identified in the forward work programme, and with any actions that may result following consideration of those items.

9. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

A Well-being Impact Assessment has not been undertaken in relation to the purpose or contents of this report. However, Scrutiny's through it work in examining service delivery, policies, procedures and proposals will consider their impact or potential impact on the sustainable development principle and the well-being goals stipulated in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

10. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

None required for this report. However, the report itself and the consideration of the forward work programme represent a consultation process with the Committee with respect to its programme of future work.

11. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

No risks have been identified with respect to the consideration of the Committee's forward work programme. However, by regularly reviewing its forward work programme the Committee can ensure that areas of risk are considered and examined as and when they are identified, and recommendations are made with a view to addressing those risks.

12. Power to make the decision

Section 7.11 of the Council's Constitution stipulates that scrutiny committees and/or the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group will be responsible for setting their own work programmes, taking into account the wishes of Members of the Committee who are not members of the largest political group on the Council.

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