

# WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**19 JUNE 2023**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Children, Education and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24</b>
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### List of Appendices

**Appendix A – Scrutiny topics identified by the former People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Appendix B – Draft Committee Work Programme 2023/24**

**Appendix C – Updated draft plan for a scrutiny review of support for children with SEND**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1. The report is intended to enable the Children, Education and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and agree its work programme for 2023/24.

#### **2. Executive Summary**

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- 2.1. The report invites the Children, Education and Housing Overview and Scrutiny to consider and agree its work programme for 2023/24. The report presents a draft work programme resulting from discussion at the Committee pre-meeting on 25 May 2023, together with information relating to prospective scrutiny reviews. The Committee in formal session should confirm the items of business to be included in its work programme.

### 3. Recommendations

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- 3.1 It is recommended that the Children, Education and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
- a) Agrees the topics to be included in its work programme for 2023/24 and the timing and working methods to be used for addressing them; and
  - b) Agrees the updated plan for the scrutiny review of support for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.

### 4. Reasons for Recommendations

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- 4.1 The recommendations are intended to support the effective operation of the Committee and assist it in carrying out productive scrutiny work during 2023/24.

### 5. Report Background

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- 5.1 West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has established the Children, Education and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2023/24 with a remit consisting of the following areas:
- Children’s social care
  - Early Years and Family Support
  - Education
  - Child Mental Health
  - Housing

- 5.2 The work of the Committee should reflect and support the mission statement set out in the WNC Overview and Scrutiny Framework: *“Effective scrutiny supports the work of the Council in achieving its objectives and priorities through constructive challenge and the promotion of best practice. It makes a positive contribution to the lives of citizens in West Northamptonshire.”*

- 5.3 The WNC Constitution specifies that Overview and Scrutiny committees will draw up a work programme, which should be informed by consultation with other parts of the Council, including the Cabinet, as appropriate and should also take account of the resources, both officer and financial, available to support it. The WNC Overview and Scrutiny Framework sets out the following requirements relating to the development of work programmes:

*“It is vital that each committee sets a work programme in order that it can prioritise its work and ensure there is a clear emphasis on key issues. Work programmes must be focussed as there is strong evidence that when scrutiny focuses on fewer things of greater importance, more is achieved.*

*“Work planning ensures scrutiny stays focussed on strategic issues where it can make an impact, whilst making the best use of time and resources. Work planning is not a one-off activity. Although a workshop at the beginning of the year may be helpful in identifying priorities and providing structure, each work programme will need to retain flexibility, which means each committee should set aside time to review its work programme to ensure it remains relevant.*

*“In agreeing items for their work programmes, Overview and Scrutiny Committees should take account of suggestions from members, as well as partners and the public but must also be directed by the Council’s corporate plan, plans for policy development and risks and challenges identified through corporate performance reporting. Work planning should be a committee-based activity but must also be forward-looking and strategic in nature.”*

## **6. Issues and Choices**

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### Draft work programme

- 6.1 Committee members were able to give initial consideration to possible topics for scrutiny in 2023/24 at the Committee pre-meeting on 25 May 2023. Discussion took account of relevant topics in the work programme of the former People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which is included with this report (at Appendix A); topics suggested by Committee members; and topics suggested at the Triangulation meeting on 22 May 2023 involving Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs, Cabinet Members and the Executive Leadership Team. A draft work programme intended to reflect the outcomes of the Committee pre-meeting is included with this report (at Appendix B). This is presented to the current meeting for the Committee to consider and discuss, in order to agree its work programme. It is intended that the resulting work programme will then be reported to each regular Committee meeting so that it can be monitored and updated as necessary.

### Scrutiny review of support for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

- 6.2 The former People Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up a task and finish panel during 2022/23 to carry out a scrutiny review of support for children with SEND, which had just started its work by the end of the municipal year. This area is now part of the remit of the Children, Education and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, meaning that the Committee must decide whether it wants the scrutiny review to continue. This was supported at the Committee pre-meeting on 25 May 2023 but needs to be confirmed formally by the Committee. An updated version of the scope for the scrutiny review, incorporating some necessary changes to the membership of the task and finish panel and to the timescale, is included with this report (at Appendix C).

### Scrutiny review of fostering services

- 6.3 The Committee pre-meeting on 25 May 2023 identified fostering services as a potential topic for a scrutiny review in 2023/24. In accordance with the process set out in the WNC Overview and Scrutiny Framework, a Scrutiny Review Proposal form for this work will be completed and presented to the Committee for consideration. If the Committee approves the topic for provisional inclusion in its work programme a further planning exercise will then be undertaken to produce the final plan for the scrutiny review.

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1 Resources and Financial**

7.1.1 There are no specific resources or financial implications associated with this report. The Committee should set a work programme that is realistically deliverable within the resources available to support it.

### **7.2 Legal**

7.2.1 Overview and Scrutiny operates within the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the National Health Service Act 2006 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. It has had specific powers relating to health services since 2001 and crime and disorder since 2006.

7.2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements in Part 7.1 of the WNC Constitution state: *“The Overview and Scrutiny function will develop a work plan as well as supporting policy development, providing pre-decision scrutiny where appropriate, holding decision-makers to account and exercising the formal call-in of executive decisions to review any concerns about the making of the decision.”*

7.2.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in Part 7.2 of the WNC Constitution state:

*1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny committees will consult with other parts of the Council as appropriate, including the Cabinet, on the preparation of any work programme.*

*1.3 The Overview and Scrutiny committees will take into account any views expressed following consultation under Rule 1.2 above in drawing-up any work programme. They should also take into account the resources, both officer and financial, available to support its proposals.*

*1.4 An Overview and Scrutiny Triangulation Group, composed of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny committees, members of the Cabinet and Directors, shall be responsible for supporting the work of the scrutiny function and ensuring scrutiny has the opportunity to input into matters of strategic importance.*

### **7.3 Risk**

7.3.1 The Committee should ensure that its work programme enables it to carry out effective scrutiny work that produces worthwhile outcomes. Risks that could affect this could include setting a work programme that included too much work to be realistically deliverable or that focussed on topics that were not sufficiently strategic. These risks should be mitigated by the Committee giving appropriate regard to the priorities and requirements set out in the WNC Overview and Scrutiny Framework when developing its work programme and using the tools that the Framework provides for planning scrutiny reviews.

## **8. Background Papers**

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