

**WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

**COORDINATING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY GROUP**

**6 SEPTEMBER 2021**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Work Programming Consultation Process</b>
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**List of Appendices**

**Appendix A – Draft Work Programming Consultation documents**

**1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1 The remit of the Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group (the Group) includes the responsibility for approving the Work Programmes for the three Scrutiny Committees – Corporate, Place and People.
- 1.2 The relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall consider any matter referred to it by the Leader/Cabinet in accordance with those procedures and, having considered the matter, shall report to the Leader/Cabinet with comments and/or proposals. In the case of cross-cutting matters, the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group may recommend a particular Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers such matters.
- 1.3 At its meeting on 21 July 2021, the Group considered the short-term work programmes work for the three Scrutiny Committees and it was requested that the Group approves the consultation process for work programming.

## **2. Executive Summary**

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- 2.1 Effective work programming establishes directed scrutiny of issues of local importance and ensures that Scrutiny adds value and makes a difference.
- 2.2 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) states that an effective work programme is - central to effective scrutiny. Therefore, a good Scrutiny Work Programme ensures that the Committees are focussing on priority issues, making best use of both time and resources. The designing of a Work Programme for Scrutiny can promote public participation, transparency and demonstrate good governance.
- 2.3 Work Programming is the planning stage. Potential topics for scrutiny are identified for the year. These will be investigated either at a Committee meeting or through time limited Task and Finish Groups. It is typical for a long list to be drawn up initially that is reduced to a short list before a final work programme is approved.
- 2.4 At its meeting on 17 June 2021 the Group agreed that each Scrutiny Committee would hold an individual Work Programming event to put together its Work Programme for 2021/2022. The Work Programmes will then be presented to the Group for consideration and approval.

## **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1 It is recommended that:
  - 3.1.1 The Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group considers, for comment and approval, the draft consultation process for the Overview and Scrutiny work programming process.
- 3.2 ***Reason for Recommendations***
  - 3.2.1 One of Overview and Scrutiny's key roles is to undertake focussed work programming in order that it is ensured that Scrutiny contributes actively to the Council's objectives.
  - 3.2.2 Each of the three Scrutiny Committees should have a Work Programme for the year, every year. Each Scrutiny Committee has a short term Work Programme in place, ahead of the work programme event that will agree a longer term work programme.
  - 3.2.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group is asked to confirm the consultation process that would be used for receiving suggestions for scrutiny reviews and activity.

## **4 Report Background**

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### **4.1 Work Programming Event**

- 4.1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group, at its meeting on 17 June 2021 considered various options for potential work programming for Overview and Scrutiny. The Group agreed that each Scrutiny Committee should hold individual work programming events, rather than

one single work programming event. Each Scrutiny Committee will confirm the date for its Work Programme event which is likely to be held during October 2021.

## **4.2 Draft Work Programming Event – Consultation process**

- 4.2.1 The Centre for Public Scrutiny and Governance advocates that scrutiny committees should agree a work programme at the start of each Municipal year; in order that issues can be scheduled for consideration and reports produced in a timely manner.
- 4.2.2 Each Scrutiny Committee – Corporate, Place and People has set a short-term work programme for 2021/22 that has been approved by the Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group.
- 4.2.3 The Council’s constitution states that 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.
- 4.2.4 It is proposed that prior to the work programming events, the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees could make contact with various organisations and groups inviting them to make suggestions of what Overview and Scrutiny could investigate over the next 12 months. An online survey could also be produced, using *Survey Monkey* and shared by the Communications Team through the Council’s various social media sites and press releases. This would encourage public participation in the Overview and Scrutiny work programming process. This process has been used by a previous Local Authority, within the West Northants area, and it did gain public interest and participation. Any suggestions received could then be summarised in a table format for consideration at each Work Programming event.

Attached at Appendix A for the Group’s consideration and comment is:

- Proposed list of groups and organisations to contact for suggestions for future scrutiny review, work and activity
  - Draft email
  - Draft questionnaire question
- 4.2.5 Cabinet Members could be invited to attend the beginning of the events and each Cabinet Member would speak of their priorities for the year. From this, ideas for pre-decision scrutiny could be proposed for inclusion within the work programmes of each Scrutiny Committee. Pre-decision is an important part of the Scrutiny function as it investigates a planned decision shortly before it is to be made by Cabinet; or it can carry out pre-decision scrutiny of one of the planned decisions several months before it is considered by Cabinet. Pre-decision scrutiny is recognised as an effective means of scrutiny. Non-executives would have the opportunity to ask questions of the Cabinet Members at the event. Following Cabinet’s presentations, they would leave the event, taking no part in the further discussions being held by non-Executives regarding the drawing together of potential work programmes.

- 4.2.6 Executive Directors and Assistant Directors could be invited to attend the events and could offer advice on suggestions for potential scrutiny review, for example, whether the issue was already being looked at within the service area, such information is important as to avoid duplication.
- 4.2.7 The Scrutiny Committees could invite other non-Executives, not members of the Scrutiny Committees to also attend the events and provide their input and suggestions for future scrutiny work.

## **5 Issues and Choices**

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- 5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group, at its meeting on 17 June 2021, agreed the Work Programming process for each Scrutiny Committee to follow, as detailed in section 4 of this report. This report is asking the Group to confirm the consultation process for the Work programming process. Draft consultation documents are attached at Appendix A for the Group's consideration.
- 5.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Scrutiny Group is responsible for approving the work programmes of the Scrutiny Committees.

## **6 Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **6.2 Resources and Financial**

- 6.2.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from the proposals.

### **6.3 Legal**

- 6.3.1 Overview and Scrutiny operates within the provisions as set out in the Local Government Act 2000, the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. It has had specific powers relating to health services since 2001 and the crime and disorder since 2006.
- 6.3.2 As set out in Part 7, paragraph 7.1.3 of the constitution "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."
- 6.3.3 Part 7.2 of the Overview and Scrutiny procedure rules states:
  - 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 take into account the resources, both Officer and financial, available to support its proposals.

## **6.4 Risk**

6.4.1 To comply with the requirements of the Council's Constitution, the work programmes of the three Scrutiny Committees must be formally approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Scrutiny Group.

6.4.2 Scrutiny is essential to good governance and enables the voice and concerns of residents and communities to be heard and provides challenge and accountability.

## **6.5 Consultation**

6.5.1 Various options for work programming were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group at its meeting on 17 June 2021 and each Scrutiny Committee was informed of the preferred option.

6.5.2 The agreed work programming process includes the opportunity for non-Executives, Cabinet, the public and officers to be involved in the Work Programme process.

6.5.3 At the inaugural meetings of each Scrutiny Committees, a short-term work programme was considered and drafted for consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group. Each Scrutiny Committee has a lead Executive Director assigned to it and they provided information and assistance to inform the short-term work programme. The Executive Director consulted the relevant Assistant Directors on the proposed Scrutiny topics in terms of timings and the proposed focus of the reviews. All comments received have been included within the work programmes. When the short-term work programmes are approved, Cabinet Members will receive a copy. Cabinet Members will be further involved in the work programming process for Overview and Scrutiny by being invited to attend the work programming events and inform non-Executives of their priorities for the year. This could then inform any pre-decision scrutiny items and future scrutiny reviews.

## **6.6 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

6.6.1 The Scrutiny Committees developed short-term Work Programme 2021/2022 which have been approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group.

## **6.7 Climate Impact**

6.7.1 There are no immediate climate impact implications arising from the proposals.

## **6.8 Community Impact**

**6.8.1** Scrutiny work will need to assess the implications of any recommendations made, including equalities and community cohesion implications.

## **7 Background Papers**

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Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group – 17 June 2021 and 21 July 2021

Report to the Place Scrutiny Committee - 22 June 2021

Report to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee - 6 July 2021

Report to the People Scrutiny Committee - 20 July 2021

## Appendix A

### **Proposed list of groups and organisations to contact for suggestions for future scrutiny review, work and activity**

Parish Councils  
Community Groups  
Voluntary Groups  
Community Forums  
Residents Associations  
Communications Team to put information out on twitter/face book etc  
Press release from the three Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees  
Paper copy of the questionnaire in the receptions of the area offices

### **Draft email to various groups and organisations**

Dear all,

### **West Northamptonshire Council**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes – Suggestions for Review**

West Northamptonshire Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees are asking for people to submit their ideas about what the Committees should investigate over the next twelve months. The Council has three Overview and Scrutiny Committees: Corporate Scrutiny Committee which scrutinises strategic priorities, the budget and customer services; People Scrutiny Committee which scrutinises social care, health and wellbeing, education, housing and communities; and Place Scrutiny Committee which scrutinises the environment, transport and highways, the local economy and community safety. The Committees can look into any issue affecting residents or the area of West Northamptonshire, and ideas do not need to be related to Council services.

Overview and Scrutiny Councillors welcome and encourage members of the public who live or work in the West Northamptonshire to get involved in Scrutiny. To take part : click [here](#), visit <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/WNCscrutiny> or [email us](#) by 5pm on Monday 27 September 2021.

Any topics that the Committees decide to include in their work programmes might be subject to an investigation, called a 'scrutiny review'. The outcome of any review will be contained in a final report with recommendations for the appropriate organisation(s).

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Issues that Overview and Scrutiny within West Northamptonshire have previously looked include:

- Broadband
- Health provisions in relation to Section 106 Agreement

- Transport in relation to Section 106 Agreement
- Western Power
- The external perception of delegated authority to refuse planning permission
- Protecting Daventry's vision
- The Council's response to Covid-19
- Food Poverty
- Gangs and Knife Crime
- Homelessness
- Development and delivery of the Council budget
- Children's social worker recruitment and retention
- Operation of highway services

Suggestions for review must meet the following criteria:

- Affect a group or community of people (Scrutiny will not usually look at individual service complaints)
- Relate to a service, event or issue in which the Council has a significant stake
- Not be an issue which Overview and Scrutiny has considered during the last 12 months. However, West Northamptonshire Council was newly formed on 1 April 2021 therefore, for the inaugural Work Programmes this does not apply
- Not be a planning issue or other matter dealt with by another Council Committee, except where the issue relates to a process.

Overview and Scrutiny supports the Council's priorities and underpinning commitments and a lot of scrutiny work is developed around these priorities. The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Task and Finish Groups have no decision making powers but make recommendations for consideration by Cabinet or full Council. Their work means that they:-

- Contribute to policy development and help develop major plans and strategies for Northampton
- Hold the Cabinet to account for its decisions
- Examine matters of wider public interest
- Conduct reviews of public bodies that are external to the Council
- Review services of the Council
- Ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council
- Carry out joint work with partners during the same review process

If you have any queries or need any help, please contact Democratic Services [democraticservices.westnorthant.gov.uk](http://democraticservices.westnorthant.gov.uk).

We very much look forward to receiving your suggestions for topics for the Scrutiny Committees to consider including within their Work Programmes.

We can confirm that you will be notified of what the Work Programmes consist of when they are finalised.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Dermot Bambridge  
**Chair, Place Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Rosie Herring  
**Chair, People Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Danielle Stone  
**Chair, Corporate Scrutiny**

## Draft online questionnaire

### Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

Please submit your ideas about what the Committee should investigate over the next twelve months.

West Northamptonshire Council has three Overview and Scrutiny Committees: Corporate Scrutiny Committee which scrutinises strategic priorities, the budget and customer services; People Scrutiny Committee which scrutinises social care, health and wellbeing, education, housing and communities; and Place Scrutiny Committee which scrutinises the environment, transport and highways, the local economy and community safety.

The Committees can look into any issue affecting residents or the area of West Northamptonshire Council area, and ideas do not need to be related to Council services.

Overview and Scrutiny cannot help in the following areas:

- Individual complaints about specific issues. These should be taken up through West Northamptonshire Council's Customer Care Procedure.
- Proper accounting for money of the Council - this is the responsibility of the Audit Committee
- The conduct or behaviour of a councillor or officer - this is the responsibility of the Standards Committee.

For information on any of these, contact 0300 88060.

It cannot be guaranteed that items raised in this way will actually be considered by Overview and Scrutiny.

Any issues that the Committee decides to look into will be investigated. The outcome of any Review will be contained in a final report with recommendations for the appropriate organisation(s).

**1. I would like the Committee to look at the following issue:**

**2. Please give us your personal details so that we can communicate with you.**

Name:

Company:

Address 1:

Address 2:

City/Town:

Postal Code:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Done