

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME – PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Contact Officer: Kevin Toogood, Monitoring Officer kevin.toogood@midsussex.gov.uk
Wards Affected: All
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for People and Communities
24 January 2024

Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to set out the matters which the Scrutiny Committee for People and Communities has agreed to scrutinise for the municipal year 2023-24 and beyond, noting these can be amended and refreshed as appropriate by the committee.

Recommendation

- 1. The Committee is recommended to confirm the work programme for the municipal year 2023/24 and beyond.**

Background

2. Scrutiny committees are established under the Local Government Act 2000 to act as a “critical friend” to Cabinet. They act as part of the system of checks and balances on the exercise of the Council’s functions and can make recommendations to Cabinet and Council on policies and actions pursued (or proposed) by the authority.
3. In particular, scrutiny committees have the power to look into any matter which affects the District, and which is relevant to the work of the Council. Recent examples of this include the previous Council inviting the water companies to attend the scrutiny committee to discuss the water outages which affected the District during the Winter in 2022.
4. The committee has 4 scheduled meetings in the municipal year 2023/24 (16 meetings across the municipal cycle). The work themes for the Scrutiny Committee for People and Communities are:
 - The budget and policy framework (excluding plan-making)
 - Corporate and Financial Planning
 - Strategic Partnerships
 - Communities
 - Grants
 - Environmental Health
 - Safeguarding
 - Equalities
 - Waste
 - Customer Services
 - Housing Options
 - Housing Enabling
 - Revenues and Benefits.

Work Programming

5. The committee sets its own work programme. The Constitution requires that in doing so it must take account of (but does not have to agree to):
 - The views of members of minority parties sitting on the committee
 - Requests from a member of the committee to consider a matter relevant to the functions of another committee upon which that member sits (for example a member of Licensing committee who is also a member of this committee could request that the committee considers a proposed licensing policy)
 - Requests from any member of the Council for the committee to consider a local government matter, subject to taking note of any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
6. Certain matters are excluded from the work of scrutiny committees by law:
 - Crime and disorder
 - Planning decisions
 - Licensing decisions
 - Any matter where a right of review or appeal exists
 - Any matter which is vexatious, discriminatory, or unreasonable to include on an agenda.
7. Scrutiny activities do not necessarily need to take place in scrutiny committee, and, throughout the municipal cycle, there may be a need to convene working groups and “task and finish” groups drawn from the committee to look at specific matters in further detail. It is also valuable for members of the committee to be able to speak to each other outside of meetings and to prepare as much as possible in advance to get the most out of formal meetings. This should be borne in mind when setting the work programme for the formally scheduled meetings of the committee.
8. The forward plan sets out the programme under which Cabinet proposes to make Key Decisions – decisions likely to have a “significant” effect in the District and this can be useful to inform the work programme of this committee. Additionally, officers will suggest potential significant projects which may benefit from scrutiny input.

People and Communities Work Programme 2023/2024

Item	Meeting Date
NHS/ICB – GP Provision	17 th April 2024/Next Meeting of Municipal Year
Work with social housing partners (e.g., Clarion)	17 th April 2024/Next Meeting of Municipal Year
Review of Council Tax Support Scheme	TBC – October 2024
Equalities Annual Review	TBC

Financial Implications

9. The committee can utilise resources such as expert witnesses to inform its work where this is considered necessary and, in this case, there will be a cost to bringing in that external expertise.

Other Material Implications

10. In setting its work programme the committee should consider the general resource implication for the authority of facilitating an effective discussion. Where possible the committee should try to give advance indication of likely avenues of discussion or questions for officers or Cabinet members to enable a properly informed discussion to take place. The resource needs of the committee must be balanced against the general operational needs of the Council, its resources, and the ability of its officers to carry out their tasks in supporting the operation of the authority as a whole.

Risk Implications

11. The work programme of the committee does not carry an inherent risk, but if the committee is unable to agree upon a programme there is a risk that it will not be able to function as effectively as it could because appropriate preparatory work would not be able to be carried out in a focussed and programmed fashion.

Sustainability Implications

12. None.

Equalities and Customer Service Implications

13. None.

Background Papers

Scrutiny Review Topic Request Form