

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

19 June 2020



Refresh of the Work Programme 2020/21 for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Report of John Hewitt, Corporate Director of Resources

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) with the updated work programme for 2020/21.

Executive summary

- 2 Overview and Scrutiny work programmes are designed to be flexible to accommodate items which may arise throughout the year. For 2020/21 this flexibility is essential to enable the scrutiny function to respond to the changing landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3 The proposed COSMB work programme has been framed around COVID-19 and in the context of the new shared County Durham Vision 2035 based on the three strategic ambitions – ‘more and better jobs’, ‘long and independent lives’ and ‘connected communities’.
- 4 The work programme has been developed to reflect new powers which enable local government meetings to be held remotely during this period. Holding virtual meetings has prompted us to consider how best to carry out the scrutiny role in these new and challenging circumstances.

Recommendation(s)

- 5 COSMB is recommended to:
 - (a) Receive and comment on the proposed COSMB work programme for 2020/21.
 - (b) Agree the work programme for 2020/21 as attached and the flexibility it offers to respond to emerging issues.

Background

- 6 COSMB has a strong focus on the MTFP and the Transformation Programme and this will continue in 2020/21. The Council's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery process will be reflected in these reports to COSMB.
- 7 Scrutiny has adapted to the unprecedented situation of a global pandemic with a flexible and pragmatic approach to the 2020/21 work programme. New regulations enable committee meetings to be held remotely and formal scrutiny meetings will be held virtually for the foreseeable future.
- 8 To assist with the new approach to meetings we propose to keep agendas short to ensure virtual meeting time is focussed on those matters which are the highest priority. Where agreed by the Committee, regular overview reports will instead be circulated separately via email for comment and information. We hope that by doing so, we can help make the process of moving meetings on-line as smooth as possible and manage our workload efficiently and effectively.
- 9 As we all become more familiar with holding remote meetings, we will review our agendas and work programmes with the Chair/Vice Chair, and make any necessary changes in consultation with the Committee.
- 10 This prioritisation of the work programme will enable the scrutiny function to operate flexibly and take into consideration any changing national, regional or local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 11 The scrutiny work programmes are informed by:
 - County Durham Vision 2035
 - Council Plan
 - Cabinet's Notice of Key Decisions
 - Sustainable Community Strategy
 - Partnership plans and strategies
 - Performance and budgetary control data
 - Changes in government legislation
 - Key questions for improving performance.
- 12 In addition, they focus on the four priorities of the Council's Transformation Programme:
 - Redesign our services to better meet the customer's needs at reduced cost to the Council
 - Help communities become more resilient and self-reliant
 - To move our partnership working from good to great

- To become renowned for our skilled and flexible workforce and our employee engagement.

COSMB Work Programme

- 13 During 2019/20, Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has undertaken budgetary and performance monitoring, scrutiny reviews and considered overview presentations.
- 14 Scrutiny review work included:
- Scrutiny of the Council's MTFP process and Budget;
 - Update on review of Attendance Management.
- 15 Areas of overview activity:
- Scrutiny input into the County Durham Vision 2035
 - Digital Strategy and ICT and digital developments
 - New statutory scrutiny guidance
 - Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
 - Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Reports
 - Overview of performance based on the priorities in the Council Plan
 - Overview of partnership work including the County Durham Partnership and Area Action Partnerships
 - Transformation Programme.
- 16 Budgetary and performance monitoring:
- Quarterly budgetary monitoring for Resources and the former Transformation and Partnerships Directorate.
 - Quarterly corporate performance monitoring overview for the whole Council.

Areas for consideration in the COSMB Work Programme

- 17 COSMB are asked to agree the proposed work programme for next year in the context of the challenges the Council faces primarily the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing austerity, the shared County Durham Vision 2035 and the Council's Transformation Programme.

- 18 The work programme includes an indication of those reports which will be considered by COSMB at a remote meeting and those which will be circulated to members. The dates when reports are taken to COSMB or circulated may flex with the additional demands on and capacity of services during the COVID-19 response period.
- 19 COSMB may also wish to give particular consideration to issues raised in previous meetings.

Background papers

- None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None

Finance

None

Consultation

None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None

Climate Change

None

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

The Overview and Scrutiny work programme is an important element of the Council's governance and risk management arrangements.

Procurement

None