

**Environment and Sustainable  
Communities Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee**



**3 September 2020**

**Refresh of the Work Programme  
2020/21 for Environment and  
Sustainable Communities OSC**

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**Report of John Hewitt, Corporate Director of Resources**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ESC OSC) with an 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 ESC OSC work programme has been framed around COVID-19 and in the context of the new shared County Durham vision 2035 which has been developed with partners around three strategic ambitions – ‘more and better jobs’, ‘long and independent lives’ and ‘connected communities.
- 4 ESC OSC 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.

## Recommendations

- 5 Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to:
- a) Receive and comment on the proposed work programme for 2020/21.
  - b) Agree the work programme for 2020/21 as attached at appendix 2 and the flexibility it offers to respond to emerging issues.

## Background

- 6 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.
- 7 To assist with the new approach to meetings we propose to keep agendas short to ensure 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 by doing so, we can help make progress of moving meetings on-line as smooth as possible and manage our workload efficiently and effectively.
- 8 As we all become more familiar with holding remote meetings, we will review our agendas and work programmes with the Chair and Vice Chair and make any necessary changes in consultation with the Committee.
- 9 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 COVID-19 pandemic.
- 10 The overview and scrutiny committee's work programmes are informed by:
- County Durham Vision 2035
  - Council Plan
  - Cabinet's Notice of Key Decisions
  - Partnership Plans and Strategies
  - Performance and Budgetary control data
  - Changes in government legislation
  - Key questions for improving performance.
- 11 In addition, scrutiny work programmes are informed by the four priorities of Inspire, the Council's Transformation Programme:

- Redesign our services to better meet the customer's need 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.

## **ESC OSC Work Programme**

12 During 2019/20 the ESC OSC has undertaken budgetary and performance monitoring, review activity, responded to consultations and considered overview and progress monitoring reports and presentations in relation to the following:

- Review activity
  - Durham County Council's Proposed Allotment Policy
- Consultations
  - Climate Emergency Response Plan
- Areas of overview and monitoring activity
  - Strategic Walking and Cycling Plan
  - Single Use Plastics
  - Fly Tipping in the county
  - Operation Spruce Up
  - Street Lighting Overview
  - Woodland Management
  - Air Quality Management in the county
  - DCC's Fleet Management
  - Business Energy Efficiency Project (BEEP 2)
  - Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham
  - Leisure Centres Transformation
  - Gala Theatre
  - External Low Carbon Funding
  - Fuel Poverty in the county
  - Carbon Management Plan
  - Climate Emergency Response Plan
  - Highways Maintenance
  - Heritage Coast and Tourism
  - Heritage Assets

13 Budgetary and performance monitoring:

- Quarterly budgetary monitoring for the Regeneration and Local Services (Neighbourhoods and Climate Change) Service Grouping.
- Quarterly corporate performance monitoring for the Regeneration and Local Services (Neighbourhoods and Climate Change) Service Grouping.

### **Areas for Consideration in the ESC OSC Work Programme**

- 14 Members of the ESC OSC are asked to agree the proposed work programme for 2020/21 that has been prepared and is attached at appendix two. The work programme is very comprehensive drawing on topical areas across the remit of the committee and it should be noted that it is also flexible.
- 15 The work programme includes an indication of those reports which will be considered by ESC OSC at a remote meeting and those which will be circulated to members. The dates when reports are taken to ESC OSC or circulated may flex with the additional demands on and the capacity of services during the COVID-19 response period.

### **Conclusion**

- 16 The work programme identifies areas of work that fall within the remit of ESC OSC and is flexible in its delivery.

### **Background papers**

- None

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Not applicable

### **Finance**

Not applicable

### **Consultation**

Not applicable

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Not applicable

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable

### **Climate Change**

Not applicable

### **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable

### **Staffing**

Not applicable

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable

### **Risk**

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

### **Procurement**

Not applicable