

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

18 June 2021

Refresh of the Work Programme 2021/22 for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board



Report of Paul Darby Corporate Director of Resources (Interim)

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) with the updated work programme for 2021/2022.

Executive summary

- 2 COSMB review their work programme each year to reflect the objectives and associated outcomes and actions identified within the Council Plan and in the context of the County Durham Vision 2035.
- 3 The proposed COSMB work programme has been framed around the shared County Durham Vision 2035 based on the three strategic ambitions of 'more and better jobs', 'long and independent lives' and 'connected communities'. COSMB's work programme also reflects the fourth ambition which captures our organisational transformation agenda and the ambition to be an excellent council.
- 4 Overview and scrutiny work programmes are designed to be flexible to accommodate items which may arise throughout the year. This flexibility is particularly important as we make our way along the government's roadmap out of lockdown. We will consider how best to enable the scrutiny function to respond in these times of continuing uncertainty.

Recommendations

- 5 COSMB is recommended to:

- a) Receive and comment on the proposed COSMB work programme for 2021/22
- b) Agree the COSMB work programme for 2021/2022 and the flexibility it offers to respond to emerging issues.

Background

- 6 Scrutiny committee meetings have recently returned to meeting in person following the use of remote arrangements under COVID-19 emergency regulations. During the lockdown period work programmes were reviewed to enable remote meetings to focus on matters of the highest priority. As a result, regular overview reports were circulated to members via email for comment.
- 7 The number of meetings in the corporate calendar available to overview and scrutiny have also been substantially reduced since March 2020 due to staff capacity to support virtual meetings. At this point we are unsure how many meetings we will be allocated for 2021/22 and will reprioritise work programmes if circumstances change. Any review of work programmes will take place with the chair and vice chair and in consultation with the committee.
- 8 COSMB has a strong focus on the MTFP and service improvement and this will continue in 2021/22. The Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery and restoration process will be reflected in these reports to COSMB.
- 9 The current overview and scrutiny committees work programmes are informed by:
 - Council Plan
 - Cabinet's Notice of Key Decisions
 - County Durham Vision for 2035
 - Partnership plans and strategies
 - Performance and budgetary control data
 - Changes in government legislation
 - Local priorities
- 10 The County Durham Partnership agreed a Vision for County Durham 2035 based on a strategic assessment of need using our intelligence platform Durham Insight and developed following extensive consultation with the public. This sets out our strategic direction and what we would like to achieve over the next 15 years and is written around three broad ambitions for the people of County Durham:

- More and better jobs
- People live long and independent lives
- Connected communities

- 11 These remain the strategic ambitions in our response to the COVID-19 crisis, where key impacts relate to employment, health and wellbeing, and communities. They will also remain key as restrictions ease and we move along the roadmap from national lockdown and we continue with our restoration and recovery.
- 12 Scrutiny work programmes also focus on the four priorities of the Council's transformational projects:
- 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.

Council Plan 2020 - 2023

- 13 The Council Plan is the primary corporate planning document for the county council and details Durham County Council's contribution towards achieving the objectives set out in the Vision for County Durham 2035 together with its own change agenda. It aims to provide a readable and accessible summary for members, partners and the public of our priorities for the county and the main programmes of work that we will undertake over the coming three years to help achieve these priorities.
- 14 Both the Vision for County Durham and the Council Plan are structured around the three ambitions which are mentioned above. An additional ambition of an excellent council has been developed for the Council Plan to capture the corporate initiatives that the council has identified and wants to undertake to transform its operations and enable achievement of the ambitions within the vision.

An excellent council

- a) Our resources will be managed effectively
- b) We will create a workforce for the future
- c) We will design our services with service users
- d) We will use data and technology more effectively

e) We will actively performance manage our services

Current Work Programme

15 During 2020/2021, COSMB prioritised items to be considered at a reduced number of formal meetings due to the coronavirus pandemic. Reports on other items were circulated via email to members. However, although there was a reduced number of formal meetings the committee has undertaken budgetary and performance monitoring, scrutiny review work and overview presentations.

In depth and light touch scrutiny reviews including updates were:

- Budget and MTFP process

16 Overview Activity

- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Reports
- Overview of partnership work including the County Durham Partnership and Area Action Partnerships
- Transformation
 - Digital Strategy and Current ICT and Digital Developments
 - Integrated Customer Service Programme
 - Workplace Transformation: Enabling Smarter Working

17 Budgetary and performance monitoring:

- Quarterly budgetary monitoring for Resources and the former Transformation and Partnerships service grouping.
- Quarterly corporate performance monitoring overview for the whole Council.

18 COSMB also considered a comprehensive COVID-19 planning and response report summarising the actions the council had taken working with partners to respond to the pandemic and its framework for recovery planning.

Areas for consideration in the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board Work Programme

- 19 COSMB are asked to agree the proposed work programme for next year. This is set in the context of the challenges the Council faces:
- The recovery and restoration following the COVID-19 pandemic and the government's roadmap out of lockdown restrictions
 - Ongoing austerity
 - The shared County Durham Vision 2035
 - The Council's transformational projects
- 20 Paragraph 14 of this report identifies the activity undertaken by the committee during 2020/21. The committee is asked to consider areas for further progress updates and review topics to be included in the work programme for 2021/2022 in light of the current Council Plan and the Vision for County Durham 2035. Appendix 2 of this report sets out a draft work programme for consideration.

Background papers

- [Council Plan 2020 - 2023](#)
- [A Vision for County Durham 2035](#)

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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

Appendix 2: COSMB Work Programme
