

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



16 July 2021

**Refresh of the Work Programme
2021/22 for Environment and
Sustainable Communities OSC**

Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources (Interim)

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 draft work programme for 2021/22.

Executive summary

- 2 ESC OSC 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 ESC OSC work programme has been framed around the shared County Durham vision 2035 based on the three strategic ambitions – ‘more and better jobs’, ‘long and independent lives’ and ‘connected communities’.
- 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 The ESC OSC is recommended to:
 - a) Receive and comment on the proposed work programme for 2021/22.

- b) Agree the ESC OSC work programme for 2021/22 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 The current overview and scrutiny committees 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
 - Local priorities
- 9 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
- 10 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.

Council Plan 2020-2023

- 11 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.
- 12 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.

More and Better Jobs

- a) How well do tourism and cultural events contribute to our local economy

Long and Independent lives

- a) Are our services improving the health of our residents

Connected Communities

- a) How clean and tidy is my local environment
- b) Are we reducing carbon emissions and adapting to Climate Change
- c) How effective and sustainable is our collection and disposal of waste

Current Work programme

- 13 During 2020/21 the ESC OSC 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, responded to

consultations and considered overview and progress monitoring reports and presentations in relation to the following:

- Consultations
 - Minerals and Waste Development Plan Document and the Parking and Accessibility Supplementary Planning Document
- Areas of overview and monitoring activity
 - Impact of COVID 19 on the Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Service Grouping
 - Strategic Walking and Cycling Plan
 - Single Use Plastics
 - Fly tipping in the county
 - Bereavement Services
 - Woodland Management
 - Air Quality Management in the county
 - DCC's Fleet Management
 - Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham
 - Leisure Centres Programme
 - Gala Theatre
 - Museums and Libraries
 - Stockton and Darlington Bicentennial Celebrations
 - External Low Carbon Funding
 - Fuel Poverty in the county
 - National Fuel Poverty Strategy
 - Carbon Management Plan
 - Climate Emergency Response Plan
 - Community Action Team
 - Highways, Bridge and Footpath Maintenance
 - Heritage Coast and Tourism
 - Heritage Assets
- Budgetary and performance monitoring:
 - Quarterly budgetary monitoring for the Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Service Grouping.
 - Quarterly corporate performance monitoring for the Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Service Grouping.

14 In addition, the ESC OSC has also considered the following areas which cut across objectives in the Council Plan or cut across the remit of other Overview and Scrutiny Committees including:

- Impact of COVID 19 on the Regeneration, Economy and Growth Service Grouping
- Visit County Durham and the Tourism offer

- Town and Village Centres Programme
- Transport activity regional and local

Areas for Consideration in the ESC OSC Work Programme

- 15 Members of the ESC OSC are asked to agree the proposed work programme for 2021/22 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.
- 16 Paragraph 13 of the report identifies the activity undertaken by the committee during 2020/21. The committee is asked to consider areas for inclusion in the work programme for 2021/22 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.

Conclusion

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

Background papers

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

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Appendix 1: Implications

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