

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



22 July 2022

**Refresh of the Work Programme
2022/23 for Environment and
Sustainable Communities OSC**

Report of Paul Darby, 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 draft work programme for 2022/23.

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 have an extensive work programme and we must ensure we are able to accommodate issues that may arise during the term of the work programme.

Recommendations

- 5 The ESC OSC is recommended to:
 - a) Receive and comment on the proposed work programme for 2022/23.

- b) Agree the ESC OSC work programme for 2022/23 and the flexibility it offers to respond to emerging issues.
- c) Identify a topic for in-depth or light touch review activity

Background

- 6 Scrutiny committees adapted to the change during the pandemic and some of these adaptations have become a part of business as usual for the committee such as briefing reports being used to provide information to members of the committee. The ESCOSC work programme is refreshed annually and takes into consideration the priorities of the Committee and areas identified by the service.

- 7 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

- 8 The County Durham Partnership agreed a Vision for County Durham 2035 which 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

- 9 Each ambition contains a number of objectives together with some council specific objectives. Following the refresh of the Council Plan in April 2022, it is now structured around five objectives which capture the three ambitions:
 - Our Economy
 - Our People
 - Our Communities
 - Our Environment

- Our Council

Council Plan 2022-2026

- 10 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.
- 11 Both the Vision for County Durham and the Council Plan are structured around the three ambitions which are mentioned above and below are the relevant objectives which apply to the ESC OSC.

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

- 12 The Council Plan has been structured around five objectives: Our Economy; Our People; Our Communities; Our Environment and Our Council. The key Council Plan objective for ESC OSC is Our Environment: – capturing the council's priorities around the climate emergency and our zero carbon ambitions for the county and the council together with our role in waste, pollution and the natural environment. This ambition makes it easier for the reader to check out our agenda for the environment and our plans to take forward:
- Our climate emergency action plan;
 - The development of an action plan to address the ecological emergency that Cabinet declared on 6 April 2022 following work by ESCOSC;
 - Our plans for managing waste disposal in future and for reducing waste and increasing re-use and recycling; and
 - Our actions around enhancing the natural environment

Current Work programme

13 During 2021/22 the ESC OSC prioritised items to be considered at formal meetings of the committee due to the size of the work programme. Reports on other items were circulated via email to members. 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:

- **Scrutiny Review Activity**
 - Consideration of an Ecological Emergency
- **Consultations**
 - Leisure Transformation Programme and the Draft Physical Activity Strategic Delivery Framework.

- **Areas of overview and monitoring activity**
 - Key areas of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change (NCC) Service Grouping and Impact of COVID-19
 - Environment and Climate Change Partnership
 - Renewable Energy
 - Winter maintenance
 - Environmental Campaigns
 - DCC Fleet
 - Strategic Walking and Cycling Plan
 - Single Use Plastics
 - Fly tipping in the county
 - Bereavement Services
 - Woodland Management
 - Strategic Waste Management
 - Air Quality Management in the county
 - Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham
 - External Low Carbon Funding
 - Fuel Poverty in the county
 - Carbon Management Plan
 - Climate Emergency Response Plan
 - Community Action Team
 - Highways, Bridge and Footpath Maintenance
 - Heritage Coast and Tourism

- **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:
- Leisure Transformation Programme
 - Physical Activity Strategic Delivery Framework
 - Transport
 - Highways, Footways and bridge Maintenance
 - Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project

Areas for Consideration in the ESC OSC Work Programme

- 15 Members of the ESC OSC are asked to agree the proposed work programme for 2022/23 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 2021/22. The committee is asked to consider areas for inclusion in the work programme for 2022/23 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.
- 17 Members are encouraged to identify areas of scrutiny investigation (in depth and light touch reviews) from the work programme. However, it is anticipated that input from the thematic OSCs will be required into the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 13 development and beyond. This might include more detailed examination of budgets against the context of ongoing financial pressures faced by the Council and the need to identify further efficiencies or areas of income generation. This would impact on the committee's intention to carry out review activity in other areas for this work programme.
- 18 In relation to consideration of the involvement of the committee in the examination of budgets members will find appended to this report at appendix 3 a power point presentation which will be given to members by the Principal Accountant to provide more information.

Conclusion

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

Background papers

- [County Durham Vision 2035](#)
- [Council Plan 2022 - 2026](#)

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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