



## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 8 October 2015

### CURRENT POSITION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME (REP1307)

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. At its meeting on 11 June 2015 the Committee approved its work programme for 2015/16. The work programme shows proposed timings for the individual reports planned for the year.
2. When approving the work programme Members noted that it was a live document and would be subject to change over the coming year, to take account of changing circumstances and priorities.
3. At the Committee's meeting on 10 September 2015 Members expressed concern at the length of recent Committee agendas, and the Chairman has asked that the current position of the Committee's work programme be provided at each meeting, in order for it to be continually reviewed by the Committee.
4. Additionally, the Chairman and the Democratic Services Officer have met to discuss ways in which the Committee's Work Programme can be made more focused, and how exceedingly long agendas might be avoided in future. The work programme as it currently stands is set out at Appendix A to this report.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Councillor S Barker Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee
<b>Supporting Officer:</b>	Adriana Stapleton Democratic Services Officer Tel: 01502 523614 Email: <a href="mailto:adriana.stapleton@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">adriana.stapleton@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on 11 June 2015 the Committee approved its work programme for 2015/16. The work programme shows proposed timings for the individual reports planned for the year. When approving the work programme Members noted that it was a live document and would be subject to change over the coming year, to take account of changing circumstances and priorities.
- 1.2 Overview & Scrutiny within Waveney is based on the principle of being Member-led, thereby making the best use of the local knowledge and expertise that Councillors possess. There are some standard items included within the Scrutiny Work Programme which are mentioned later in the report, and additionally some reviews from 2014/15 are ongoing into 2015/16. In some instances, scrutiny is undertaken in conjunction with the Audit & Governance Committee as the two Committees have complementary functions.
- 1.3 At the Committee's meeting on 10 September 2015 Members expressed concern at the length of recent Committee agendas, and the Chairman has asked that the current position of the Committee's work programme be provided at each meeting, in order for it to be continually reviewed by the Committee.
- 1.4 Additionally, the Chairman and the Democratic Services Officer have met to discuss ways in which the Committee's Work Programme can be made more focused, and how exceedingly long agendas might be avoided in future. The work programme as it currently stands is set out at Appendix A to this report.

## 2 ISSUES RAISED

- 2.1 At the last meeting of the Committee Members expressed concern at the length of the agenda and the size of the Committee's Work Programme in general. The Chairman explained that the Committee now met monthly in order to better programme its workload, however this had not had the effect of reducing agenda size. The Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer advised that the Committee should not be afraid to decline requests to carry out reviews by Cabinet or Council, and should bear in mind its already programmed reviews before adding more to the work programme.
- 2.2 The Chairman has met with the Democratic Services Officer to discuss how to make the Committee's workload more manageable, and the two Strategic Directors will discuss ways to make reports more focused, to make it clearer what Members were being asked to do, and to provide reports earlier to Members where possible.
- 2.3 Other suggestions included information bulletins instead of agenda items where Members were not required to make formal recommendations, monitoring of the Work Programme at each meeting, and Members emailing detailed questions to lead officers in advance of meetings.

## 3 PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- 3.1 The Chairman of the Committee would like to put forward the following points as potential solutions to the issues raised, and would like Members' thoughts on them:
  - 3.1.1 I would suggest that the forward Work Programme for the Committee be considered at each meeting in order that Members can see what reports and reviews are programmed for the coming months. This will help to ensure a balanced agenda and also give advance notice to Members of future reports. **Question: Are Members in agreement with this proposal?**
  - 3.1.2 Certain items of business are required to be brought annually to the Committee, for example legislation requires at least an annual discussion of Crime & Disorder issues, Full Council has resolved that the Committee annually review the Joint Food and Health & Safety Service Plan, and the Committee has requested an annual report from the Waveney Youth Council. It is also good practice for annual reports from partner organisations to be scrutinised by the Committee. Finally, some reviews from 2014/15 have run on into 2015/16 (eg Car Parks, Environmental Enforcement, The Living Wage and Flood Recovery Report). All these categories of report form the skeleton of the Committee's Work Programme to which

additional items are added throughout the year, such as requests from Cabinet and Full Council, and suggestions from the Committee and from individual Members.

- 3.1.3 In future as part of the scoping process, both the Chairman and officers will carefully look at any items that come forward to be added to an agenda at late notice as at times items have been submitted which did not require a recommendation from the Committee and which could have been circulated to Members by email for information or for views.
- 3.1.4 Key questions to be borne in mind when considering any requests for additions to the Work Programme include: will consideration by Scrutiny add value? Are items just to note/for information/to tick a box? Will this duplicate existing work? Is a recommendation to Cabinet from the Committee required? **Question: Are there are any other criteria which Members would like the Chairman to bear in mind before agreeing to add an item to an agenda?**
- 3.1.5 Due to an increase in the referral of items to the Committee from both Full Council and officers over the last eighteen months a decision was taken to increase the capacity of the Committee by programming in monthly meetings; this was also done to avoid the high number of Extraordinary Meetings which were being seen. Therefore since May 2015 monthly Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings have been built into Waveney's Calendar of Meetings.
- 3.1.6 This has not, however, had the effect of reducing agenda size. I have agreed that going forward there should be no more than two significant pieces of work on each agenda, and therefore, when an urgent and important piece of work is put forward for scrutiny, in order to avoid 3-4 hour long meetings, **Question: Are Members willing to attend Extraordinary Meetings at short notice, even though this might mean 3 meetings in a 4 or 5 week period?**
- 3.1.7 Finally, should an agenda run on, I have agreed that there should be a 5 minute 'comfort break' after two hours.

#### **4 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Local authorities are able to establish arrangements for scrutiny activity under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000. Other relevant areas of legislation are Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 and Sections 19 and 20 of the Police & Justice Act 2006. Additionally the Crime & Disorder (Overview & Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 complement the provision under Section 19 of the Police & Justice Act 2006.
- 5.4 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee exercises overall responsibility for the finances made available to it. For 2015/16, there is £4,000 earmarked in the scrutiny budget, which can be used, for example, to engage specialist assistance, obtain evidence, carry out site visits, or to pay for meeting accommodation, training and development.
- 5.5 Any scrutiny activity needs to add value and so it needs to be clear from the outset which issues Members want to look at, the reasons why the matter would benefit from scrutiny and what positive outcomes could be generated from scrutiny activity.

#### **5 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 It is good practice for the Committee to be involved in the setting of its annual work programme, and to keep it under review, and therefore the option of not having a work programme to guide the Committee's annual programme of work was not considered.

#### **6 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 To provide the Committee with an opportunity to review its work programme for 2015/16, and to consider ways to avoid overly long agendas going forward.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the current position of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for 2015/16, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted and reviewed if necessary.
2. That Members comment on the suggested ways to avoid overly-long agendas suggested by the Chairman of the Committee as set out at Section 3 of the report.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Current Work Programme 2015/16.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

# OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2015/16

<b>Thursday 11 June 2015</b> Year End Community Safety Update (REP1210) Scrutiny Annual Report (REP1212) Scrutiny Arrangements and 2015/16 Work Programme (REP1213) Appointments to Outside Scrutiny Bodies (REP1214)	<b>A&amp;G – Monday 22 June 2015</b> O&S Members join Meeting of Audit & Governance Committee to discuss Draft Annual Governance Statement
<b>Wednesday 8 July 2015</b> Waveney Youth Council – Update (REP1242) Joint Food and Health and Safety Service Plan (REP1228) Car Parks Update – Progress Report (Exempt) (REP1211)	<b>Thursday 6 August 2015</b> Car Parks Update – Progress Report (EXEMPT) (REP1211)
<b>Thursday 10 September 2015</b> Public Conveniences (REP1170) Environmental Enforcement (REP1243) East Suffolk Business Plan (REP1285) Draft East Suffolk Enabling Communities Strategy (REP1286)	<b>Thursday 8 October 2015</b> Joint consideration with Audit & Governance Committee of Medium Term Financial Strategy (REP1234) Public Conveniences (REP1306) Current Position of the Work Programme (REP1307)
<b>Tuesday 3 November 2015</b> Sentinel Leisure Trust Annual Report (REP1245) Suffolk County Council – Ofsted inspection report on SCC arrangements for supporting school improvement in Suffolk (REP1282)	<b>Thursday 3 December 2015</b> Waveney Norse Annual Progress Report (REP1246) Living Wage (REP1298)
<b>Thursday 7 January 2016</b> Future of Asset Management Service (Exempt) (REP1208)	<b>A&amp;G – Thursday 14 January 2016</b> O&S Members join Meeting of Audit & Governance Committee to discuss Housing Revenue Account Budget and Capital Programme
<b>Thursday 11 February 2016</b> Joint consideration with Audit & Governance Committee of Draft General Fund Budget 2016/17 (REP1240) Marina Theatre Annual Report (REP1249) Further report on the implementation of the recommendations within the Flood Recovery Report (REP1247)	<b>Thursday 10 March 2016</b> Additional meeting scheduled if required (Note: should this meeting remain free, nearer the date we can enquire as to whether either Marina Theatre or Flood Recovery would be willing to move to March in order to achieve a more balanced February agenda. However, going on past experience, it is likely that the Work Programme will have changed by that date, either from deferrals or additions).
<b>Wednesday 13 April 2016</b> Car Parks Update – Progress Report (REP1244)	