

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 7 February 2019

CURRENT POSITION OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME (REP1820)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The current position of the Committee's Work Programme is provided at each meeting, in order for it to be continually reviewed by the Committee.
2. The Committee has a "rolling" work programme, with suggestions for scrutiny identified by Members throughout the year.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
Wards Affected:	All Wards in the District
Lead Member:	Councillor Alison Cackett Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Supporting Officer:	Sarah Davis Democratic Services Officer Tel: 01502 523614 Email: sarah.davis@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee operates a “rolling” work programme, with agendas planned 2-3 meetings in advance and leaving space to be reactive to changing needs. The work programme shows proposed timings for individual reports planned, but is a live document and is subject to change, to take account of changing circumstances and priorities.
- 1.2 The current position of the Committee’s Work Programme is provided at each meeting, in order for it to be continually reviewed by the Committee. The work programme as it currently stands is set out at Appendix A to this report.

2 WORK PROGRAMME

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 Certain items of business are required to be brought annually to the Committee, and it is also good practice for annual reports from partner organisations to be scrutinised by the Committee. In some instances, scrutiny is undertaken in conjunction with the Audit & Governance Committee as the two Committees have complementary functions. Additionally, some reviews take more than one year to complete.
- 2.3 All of these categories of the 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 via scoping forms. The most important element of the scoping form is to set out exactly what the Committee hopes to achieve through any piece of scrutiny. Issues which are unlikely to be able to be influenced, or which are already being dealt with in another arena, are not appropriate for scrutiny. Members should also bear in mind their own, and officers’ capacity to deliver any particular review.
- 2.4 Further to the discussion at the last meeting, Members are asked to note that confirmation has now been received that it is not possible for a Suffolk County Council Highways representative to attend the Committee’s 14 March 2019 meeting, however, a written response has been received to the points detailed in the Scoping Form and this is attached at Appendix B.

3 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 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.

4 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

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

5 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 To provide the Committee with an opportunity to review its work programme.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the current position of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme, as set out in Appendix A to this report, be noted.

APPENDICES

Appendix A	Overview & Scrutiny Committee Current Work Programme
Appendix B	Suffolk County Council Highway's response to the Scoping Form re the Issue of Permits for Road Closures

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

Meeting Date: Thursday, 7 February 2019 (previously O&S Joint meeting with A&G)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwold Harbour (REP1980) • Littering (REP1981) • Current Position of the Work Programme (REP1820) 	<p>Andy Jarvis/Kerry Blair Kerry Blair</p> <p>Sarah Davis</p>
Meeting Date: Thursday, 14 March 2019	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Implementation update of the closure of Tourist Information Centres and replacement of Visitor Information Points (REP1763) • Current Position of the Work Programme (REP1821) • Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2018-19 (REP1960) 	<p>Jason Berry</p> <p>Sarah Davis Sarah Davis</p>



SCRUTINY SCOPING FORM

Suggestion From	Cllr Caroline Topping
Title of the Review	Suffolk County Highways
<p>1. Purpose of the Review</p> <p>TO LOOK AT THE PROCESS OF HOW PERMITS ARE ISSUED TO CLOSE ROADS, CARRY OUT REPAIRS TO ROADS</p> <p><i>Suffolk County Council's Network Assurance Team does not use a 'permit scheme' approach to the management of roadworks but follows the procedures laid out in the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 to control the activities of:</i></p> <p><i>Suffolk Highways, in its maintenance and improvement of the highway network;</i></p> <p><i>the public utilities in their maintenance and improvement of their underground and overground mains, cables and services to properties; and</i></p> <p><i>other contracted organisations undertaking legitimate work within the public highway</i></p> <p><i>All organisations working in the public highway must follow the 'Safety at Street Works and Road Works' code of practice (of October 2013), in conjunction with Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual. By ensuring that these statutory and regulatory requirements are met, the Network Assurance Team ensures that the County Council properly discharges the network management function set out in the Traffic Management Act 2004.</i></p>	
<p>2. What are the main issues and concerns to be considered?</p> <p>WE HAVE HAD A PERFECT EXAMPLE IN BECCLES RECENTLY WHERE THE MAIN ARTERY INTO THE TOWN WAS CLOSED FOR FOUR WEEKS.</p> <p><i>A new pedestrian crossing for the safer public passage across George Westwood Way was being installed by Suffolk Highways under a 4-week closure, covering the whole of November 2018. These works were postponed from the summer holidays because work during that period would have taken far longer.</i></p> <p>A 9 DAY CLOSURE WAS ADDED TO THIS ON THE VERY NEXT ROAD (ALSO PART OF THE MAIN ARTERY INTO TOWN). WHILST AT THE SAME TIME THE TOWN HAD BEEN CLOSED DOWN FOR THE EVENING FOR THE CHRISTMAS LIGHT SWITCH ON. WHY WAS THE MAIN ROAD INTO TOWN CLOSED SO CLOSE TO CHRISTMAS AND WHY DID ONE CLOSURE THEN MORPH INTO A SECOND CLOSURE WHICH MEANT THE ARTERY WAS CLOSED FOR 6 WEEKS WHEN NO VISIBLE ROADWORKS HAVE EVEN BEEN CARRIED OUT ON THE SECOND ROAD TO DATE AND WE ARE NOW FOUR DAYS INTO THAT CLOSURE.</p> <p><i>The additional 9-day closure was on Gosford Road at its junction with Station Rd. Cadent needed to carry out some gas works so the Network Assurance Team tried to get these carried out whilst George Westwood Way was closed because this had reduced traffic volume. However, because of where Cadent started their works, the Network Assurance Team had to keep road closed with a set of 5-way lights on that road, rather than removing the closure and running a 6-way set with the new pedestrian crossing. The diversion route was the same for both sets of works and, whilst any solution at this point would have been disruptive, the Network Assurance Team determined it was less disruptive and confusing to run a continuous closure than to clear the closure and then reintroduce it.</i></p>	

ANOTHER CLOSURE IN SMALLGATE WAS THEN DUE TO START WHEN THE ABOVE HAD BEEN REOPENED.

The works on Smallgate was planned to follow the Suffolk Highways works but was pulled to reduce disruption whilst the gas works were going on. UK Power Networks have now postponed these works.

3. What are the desired outcomes of this review?

PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO ISSUES WHICH HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO LEAD TO REAL IMPROVEMENTS, AND DO NOT DUPLICATE EXISTING WORK. IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT A HOLISTIC LOOK AT THE WHOLE TOWN AND TIME OF YEAR WAS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. IT IS NOT IDEAL THAT THE TOWN HAS BEEN LARGELY CUT OFF FROM TRAFFIC IN THE RUN UP TO CHRISTMAS AND EVEN LESS IDEAL THAT THE ROAD (STATION ROAD) THAT COULD HAVE BEEN OPENED AND UNDER TRAFFIC LIGHT CONTROL WAS NOT OPENED, ESPECIALLY SINCE FOUR DAYS INTO THE CLOSURE NO WORKS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT AND THERE IS JUST A BARRIER ACROSS THE ROAD AND A CONVENIENT PARKING SPACE FOR THE WORKMEN TO PARK. THIS ROAD COULD HAVE BEEN OPENED UNDER TRAFFIC LIGHT CONTROL UNTIL IT WAS NECESSARY TO CLOSE IT.

As explained above, the disruption and confusion involved in removing a road closure and all associated diversion signs and then replacing with a totally inappropriate temporary light set-up was not considered to be safe, convenient or worth the minimal gains perceived to be had. As the closure had been in place for a period of time, people knew and were using the diversion route provided. Whilst businesses and events are always considered in the coordination of works, the Network Assurance Team is ultimately trying to satisfy a far wider range of organisations and individuals, all of whom have conflicting interests. The Network Assurance Team will therefore make decisions on the basis of experience, area knowledge, knowledge of the law, the signing and guarding of works in accordance with Chapter 8 and associated codes of practice. The Network Assurance Team will always prioritise safety over the scale of disruption to a larger group of people - in this case, the highway users.

4. What issues should be disregarded as not relevant to this review?

5. Who is responsible for providing this service, or tackling the issue in question?

SUFFOLK HIGHWAYS, THE PERSON WHO ISSUES PERMITS ON BEHALF OF SCC.

As explained above, Suffolk County Council's Network Assurance Team fulfils the network management function, not Suffolk Highways.

Have you spoken to them, and if so, what was the response?

NO I HAVE NOT PERSONALLY SPOKEN TO THEM, BUT KNOW OF ANOTHER COUNCILLOR WHO HAS. SUFFOLK HIGHWAYS SAID THEY WOULD NOT OPEN THE ROAD BECAUSE IT WOULD CAUSE CONFUSION TO THE PUBLIC AS THEY KNEW GEORGE WESTWOOD WAY WAS CLOSED, IF THEY OPENED IT AFTER THE WORK FINISHED, BUT CLOSED STATION ROAD THE FOLLOWING DAY THE PUBLIC WOULD BE CONFUSED, BUT GEORGE WESTWOOD WAY WAS OPENED THE FOLLOWING DAY AND IT AND GOSFORD ROAD ARE UNDER TRAFFIC LIGHT CONTROL. JUST NEEDED ANOTHER PORTABLE TRAFFIC LIGHT IN PLACE FOR STATION ROAD, UNTIL THE ACTUAL ROAD NEEDS TO BE CLOSED FOR DIGGING UP. RATHER THAN TOTALLY CLOSING IT. I KNOW THIS IS A SPECIFIC ISSUE TO BECCLES, BUT THE PROCEDURE FOR CLOSING ROADS ACROSS THE DISTRICT NEEDS LOOKING AT.

The Network Assurance Team has a huge amount of hands-on experience and understanding of legal requirements needed to regulate, approve and monitor situations such as these. Whilst it may appear to the general public and councillors that inconvenience could be avoided by a seemingly straightforward, simple alternative that could be employed, that is rarely ever the case. The Network Assurance Team are also road users but, equally, must deal with tens of thousands of requests to work on the highway every year.

6. What is the Cabinet Member's view on this issue? NOT SURE WE HAVE A CABINET MEMBER FOR SCC HIGHWAYS ISSUES			
7. Estimated Committee, officer and resource implications (for example review group, one-off report, dedicated meeting) <i>ONE OFF DEDICATED MEETING.</i> <i>This written response has explained what has occurred in Beccles. An independent review of the network management function was undertaken during the autumn of 2018 at the request of the Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Rural Affairs. The preliminary recommendations of that review focus on some areas where communication could be improved, rather than identifying any changes to the way in which the service is delivered. That conclusion was consistent with the findings of the Suffolk County Council Audit Committee review on 31st January 2018 of the Network Assurance Team.</i>			
8. Suggested witnesses, documentation and consultation			
9. Timescale (including estimated start and finish date)			
10. Will this review contribute to one or more of the Critical Success Factors outlined in the East Suffolk Business Plan? If so, which (please tick) (Further guidance on these Critical Success Factors can be found overleaf)			
Economic Development & Tourism	x	Customers	
Leisure	x	Communities	x
Planning		Community Health	
Housing		Green Environment	x
Benefits		Resources	

Would you like to be involved in the review?			
Yes	x	No	
Date of request: 4/12/18		Signed Caroline Topping	

Please return this form to:

Democratic Services, Waveney District Council, Riverside, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 0EQ

Email: democratic.services.wdc@eastsoffolk.gov.uk