

Overview and Scrutiny – Outcomes of the Training and Work Prioritisation Session

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Joe Baker
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services
Report Author Claire Felton	Job Title: Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services Contact email: c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	An Effective and Sustainable Council
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to RESOLVE to:-

- 1) To determine whether to add items arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Training and Work Prioritisation Session to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s Work Programme for the 2024/25 municipal year; and**
- 2) To update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s Work Programme as per Member requests.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 An Overview and Scrutiny Training and Work Prioritisation Session was held on Monday 3rd June 2024. All non-executive Members were invited to attend. In total 9 Members participated in the session.
- 2.2 This report details the outcomes of this training and invites Members to consider whether to add subjects suggested for scrutiny during the session to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s Work Programme for 2024/25.
- 2.3 The section below provides a summary of the items and topics proposed for scrutiny during the Overview and Scrutiny Training and Work Prioritisation Session.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Introduction

- 3.1 During the event introductory training was provided in respect of the role of Overview and Scrutiny in the democratic process and the different types of scrutiny activity that can be undertaken.
- 3.2 Members were also invited to consider the different ways in which Overview and Scrutiny Members could investigate matters. This included:
- Receiving an overview of a subject at a meeting of the Committee. This could involve the presentation of a report to a single meeting of the Committee for information.
 - Undertaking Task Group or Short Sharp Reviews of a subject. This review work involves Members working in small groups to investigate a subject in detail over a period of usually a number of months.
 - Pre-decision scrutiny, whereby Overview and Scrutiny Members investigate a matter in detail before the Executive Committee makes a decision on the subject. Where sufficient notice is provided in the work programme this may involve undertaking a Short Sharp Review.
 - Members carrying out independent research on behalf of the Committee and reporting back in respect of their findings.
- 3.3 Following an overview of the various approaches that could be adopted to scrutiny, Members were invited to participate in an interactive session to consider items that Members felt would benefit from investigation by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the 2024/25 municipal year.
- 3.4 The activity focused on doorstep issues that had been raised by residents with Members over the previous months. New Members were invited to suggest items that had consistently been raised with them by residents in the build up to the local elections. Members were invited to consider whether they felt that the issues identified would be suitable for further scrutiny and, if so, in what way these matters should be investigated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Subjects Suggested for Scrutiny

- 3.5 During the interactive session, Members considered information shared during the training as well as the current work programme, the Executive Committee Work Programme and other suggestions submitted by Members.

3.6 Based on these discussions, the following subjects were suggested as items that could be considered at main meetings of Overview and Scrutiny during the year:

- Modelling financial implications of various decisions relating to Redditch Library
- Pension fund investments – strategies for divestment from carbon-intensive investments (invitation to Worcestershire Pension Fund)
- Decarbonisation of the Council's Capital Programme
- Consideration of planning volume for solar / battery farms
- Parking Enforcement – Management of Contract
- Housing development in specific areas of the Borough
- Arrow Valley – looking at water quality and suitability for holding water events (e.g. wild swimming) at Arrow Valley Lake
- Electric Vehicles (EV) Chargers
- Operation of various tier authorities in Redditch Borough (a two-tier local government region)
- Play and Parks Provision
- Review of health inequalities (starting with a revisit of the outcomes of a previous review of health inequalities to assess progress and whether further investigation is required)

3.7 In addition, topics were suggested that were deemed most suitable for consideration by Task Groups and / or Working Groups of Overview and Scrutiny. Topics thus referred were:

- Road maintenance and cleanliness (Performance Scrutiny Working Group)
- Upkeep of verges (Performance Scrutiny Working Group)
- River Arrow – consideration of state of the river (Performance Scrutiny Working Group)
- Aspirations / future for young people including job provision and recreational activities (to be included as part of Post-16 Education Task Group)

A dedicated Budget Scrutiny Working Group is in place to consider finance reports.

Ongoing Commitments

3.8 Currently, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have the Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group, which is ongoing having been launched in the 2023-24 municipal year, and the Post-16 Education Task Group, where the Committee needs to agree on the Terms of Reference before it can commence with the investigation.

- 3.9 In addition, there are also two permanent sub-groups of the Committee, the Budget Scrutiny Working Group and the Performance Scrutiny Working Group. Subject to both Task Groups above being undertaken, there is currently little capacity for an additional Task Group.
- 3.10 Members are asked to note that it is not intended that the Overview and Scrutiny Training Session should be the only opportunity for Members to suggest items for scrutiny. Members are encouraged to continue to suggest items for scrutiny, including pre-decision scrutiny, throughout the year as and when they feel that this would be appropriate.
- 3.11 It should also be noted that existing Task Group investigations might be discontinued should Overview and Scrutiny Members feel they are no longer necessary.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All scrutiny activities can have some financial implications, for example in respect of the costs of issuing paperwork for Committee meetings. It is therefore important to ensure that Members select subjects to scrutinise that will achieve best value for money for local residents.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no specific legal implications at this point.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 6.1 A review of the items that are due to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, scrutiny Task Groups, and scrutiny Working Groups during the year should enable Members to make best use of the resources available. This supports the Council's strategic purpose to be an effective and sustainable Council.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.2 There are some climate change implications, for example in terms of the amount of paperwork that is issued for Committee meetings and any Task Group reviews and Working Groups. Members are asked to consider climate change implications of their work, for example viewing agendas and minutes in electronic format wherever possible. The topics suggested for scrutiny include areas directly relating to climate change.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.3 There are no specific equalities and diversity implications.

- 6.4 However, Members may consider issues relating to equalities and diversity matters and should have regard to the equalities implications of proposals put forward through the overview and scrutiny process during the year.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There is a risk that if the Overview and Scrutiny Committee tries to scrutinise too many items at meetings Members may not achieve constructive outcomes from scrutiny. The advice provided at the training was that a focus on a small number of substantive items at meetings can result in better quality overview and scrutiny than consideration of lots of subjects in a shorter period of time.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Appendix 1 – Draft Updated Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme – based on Member suggestions from the Overview and Scrutiny Training Event.