

Housing Select Committee			
Title	Select Committee Work Programme		
Contributor	Scrutiny Manager	Item	7
Class	Part 1 (Open)	Date	5 March 2014

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide Members of the Select Committee with an overview of the work programme.

2. Summary

- 2.1 At the beginning of the municipal year each select committee is required to draw up a work programme for submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel. The Panel considers the suggested work programmes and coordinates activities between select committees in order to maximise the use of scrutiny resources and avoid duplication.
- 2.2 The meeting on 5 March is the last scheduled meeting of the Housing Select Committee in the 2013-14 municipal year, as well as the last meeting of the 2010-14 Council administration. This report provides a brief overview of the Committee's work in the 2010-14 administration in preparation for the development of the 2014-15 Committee work programme.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Select Committee is asked to:
- note the completed work programme attached at **Appendix B**;
 - consider the core issues covered in the 2010-14 administration;
 - consider any matters arising that it may wish to suggest for future scrutiny.

4. Housing Select Committee 2010-2014

- 4.1 The Housing Select Committee has had an important role to play in the oversight and development of the Council's housing policies over the last 4 years. The Committee has carried out three in depth reviews, contributed to the cross-cutting Emergency Services Review and made a number of recommendations for improvement, via referrals to Mayor and Cabinet. The work of the Committee, and the recommendations it has made, has fed into the development of both policy and service delivery in a number of areas. Below are some examples of the Committee's work:

4.2 The Decent Homes Programme and Housing Matters

Oversight of the Decent Homes programme was the primary focus of the Committee in the first part of the administration. The Committee made a series of site visits to meet residents and consider the progress being made in bringing homes up to the 'Decent Homes Standard'. Housing providers were held to account in terms of the extent to which they had kept to the promises made in their Offer Documents to residents. In the latter part of the administration the delivery of the Housing Matters Programme has been a key focus for the Committee, in particular how to ensure that 'affordable' housing is truly affordable. Members have considered the full range of new investment and delivery approaches being considered by the Council to achieve agreed housing objectives and the Committee's views have shaped the direction of the Programme going forward.

4.3 Damp and Mould

The Committee was concerned about the impact of damp and mould in social housing on residents and assessed the adequacy of the action being taken to deal with the problem. In addition to taking evidence from social housing providers, technical evidence was taken from a damp specialist; and focus groups with residents experiencing problems with damp and mould were held. The Committee suggested a range of temporary and permanent solutions to the borough's housing providers and made recommendations to improve the provision of information and preventative advice to residents, all of which were implemented.

4.4 Private Rented Sector

The Committee investigated the provision of private rented accommodation in Lewisham, focussing on access to the sector, the quality of housing provided and the security of tenancies. The Committee also reviewed how the Council used the private rented sector and how it worked with private landlords and tenants. The recommendations implemented as a result of the review improved the Council's regulatory and information provision processes and structures. As a direct outcome of the review, the Council set up its own private sector housing agency.

4.5 Low Cost Home ownership

The Committee investigated various options for facilitating low cost home ownership including the Right To Buy scheme, shared ownership schemes, self-build schemes and the community land trust movement. Members made a series of recommendations on (a) making information on each option, in particular the relative advantages and disadvantages, clearer to residents; (b) gauging interest in Self Build; and (c) ensuring that any investment of resources, whether land, capital or officer time, into low cost home ownership was justified in terms of meeting local housing needs. Since the review, the Council has pursued a self-build option for the Church Grove site and Members have kept a watching brief on this development, to make sure that, if the scheme goes ahead, the land and the new homes are subject to a form of 'lock' whereby any subsidy or increase in land value is recycled and not used for individual profit; there is a mix of affordable home ownership and social rent properties; and the scheme is creative and risk taking.

4.6 Joint working with the Sustainable Development Select Committee

Four of the five strategic sites identified as central to the delivery of the Council's Core Strategy are located in the north of the borough. Given the importance of the delivery of these sites, the Housing and Sustainable Development Select Committees met jointly to assess whether the Council's strategic aims were being met in terms of housing and regeneration in this part of the borough. As a result of the meeting, a series of recommendations were made relating to the Council's submission to the GLA on the Convoys Wharf development; together with recommendations relating to the presentation of London wide affordable housing statistics; and funding models for developments on publically owned land.

5. Planning for the next administration

5.1 A work programme report will be put forward at the first Housing Select Committee meeting of the 2014-15 administration. The report will take account of the committee's previous work, and will draw on a range of sources for suggestions, as set out in the following section.

5.3 As with the development of all new work programmes, suggestions will be incorporated by drawing on:

- matters arising as a result of previous scrutiny;
- issues that the committee is required to consider by virtue of its terms of reference;
- items requiring follow up from committee reviews and recommendations;
- issues suggested by members of the public;
- issues suggested by members of the committee;
- petitions;
- standard reviews of policy implementation or performance, which is based on a regular schedule;
- items that senior council officers feel are important for the committee to scrutinise;
- suggestions from officers;
- decisions due to be made by Mayor and Cabinet.

5.4 The Lewisham Future Programme

Through the Lewisham Future Programme the Council must save a further £95m from its £285m budget in the four years from 2014-15 to 2017-18. In order to achieve the savings, the Council has embarked on a series of thematic and cross-cutting reviews to fundamentally review the way it delivers services. This will mean that savings will be delivered over longer time periods and will need to be agreed and taken as and when they are identified. Officers have committed to regular interactions with Members in order to facilitate scrutiny of the specific savings proposals arising from the major change programmes. The Select Committees will need to retain capacity in its work programme to consider these as is necessary.

5.5 At the beginning of the new administration the Committee will be asked to agree a provisional work programme for the coming year for submission to Business Panel. Members are asked to review the completed work programme for 2013-14

and put forward any matters arising that they think should be considered as part of the 2014-15 work programme.

6. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7. Legal Implications

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, all scrutiny select committees must devise and submit a work programme to the Business Panel at the start of each municipal year.

8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1 The Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. The Act included a new public sector equality duty, replacing the separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. The duty came into force on 6 April 2011. It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 8.2 The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 8.3 There may be equalities implications arising from items on the work programme and all activities undertaken by the Select Committee will need to give due consideration to this.

Background Documents

Lewisham Council's Constitution

Centre for Public Scrutiny: the Good Scrutiny Guide

Scrutiny work programme – prioritisation process

