Public Accounts Select Committee

Report title: Select Committee work programme report

Date: 24 September 2020

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1 (open)

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributor: Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager)

Outline and recommendations

To ask members to discuss the Committee's priorities for the 2020-21 municipal year and to agree an annual work programme.

The Committee is asked to:

- Discuss the Committee's priorities and agree a work programme for 2020-21.

- Consider the themes set out in the draft work programme at **appendix F**.

- Consider opportunities for public engagement throughout the work programme.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

The meeting dates below were agreed at the Council AGM on 15 July 2020:

- Thursday 24 September 2020

- Thursday 3 December 2020

- Tuesday 2 February 2021

- Wednesday 17 March 2021

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1. Summary

1.1. This report asks members to discuss and agree priorities for the Committee's work programme for the year ahead and it describes the process for approval by the business panel as well as ongoing monitoring by the Committee.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Committee is asked to:
- Discuss the Committee's priorities and agree a work programme for 2020-21.
- Consider the themes set out in the draft work programme at **appendix F**.
- Consider opportunities for public engagement throughout the work programme.

3. The role of the Select Committee

3.1. The Committee's job is to consider how the Council manages and uses its financial resources.

3.2. It can:
- Review the way Council managers make decisions about spending money
- Challenge the Council to use the most effective means of managing money
- Examine and challenge the development of the Council's budget
- Recommend ways to improve the Council's processes for buying goods and services (and for managing services to get the best value)
- Receive reports from - and review the work of - the Council's Audit Panel.

3.3. The Committee's full terms of reference are set out in appendix A.

4. Agreeing the committee's work programme

4.1. A draft work programme is attached at appendix F. It currently includes:

- issues arising as a result of previous scrutiny
- suggestions from Council officers

(Further detail is set out in sections below).

4.2. It is for the Committee to set its own work programme and agree any other priority issues it would like to include – the Committee does not have to look into everything officers, the public or other members suggest.

4.3. When deciding on issues to include in the work programme, the Committee should consider the key services and programmes within the Committee's remit and the criteria for selecting and prioritising topics (see the flowchart below).

4.4. The Committee should also take into account local assembly priorities (appendix D). Bearing in mind that all local assembly meetings have been cancelled until further notice due to Covid-19, the previously agreed priorities for each ward remain relevant and may assist the Committee in prioritising and focusing its work programme. The Committee should also take into account upcoming Mayor and Cabinet decisions (appendix E); and avoid duplicating the work of any agreed task and finish groups (although, at present, no task and finsish groups have yet been approved).

4.5. Items within the work programme should also be linked to the priorities of the Council's Corporate Strategy for 2018-2022 (appendix B):

4.6. The Committee is advised to schedule two substantive items per meeting, leaving space available for Mayor and Cabinet responses and other urgent business as the need arises throughout the year. If further items are added to the work programme,
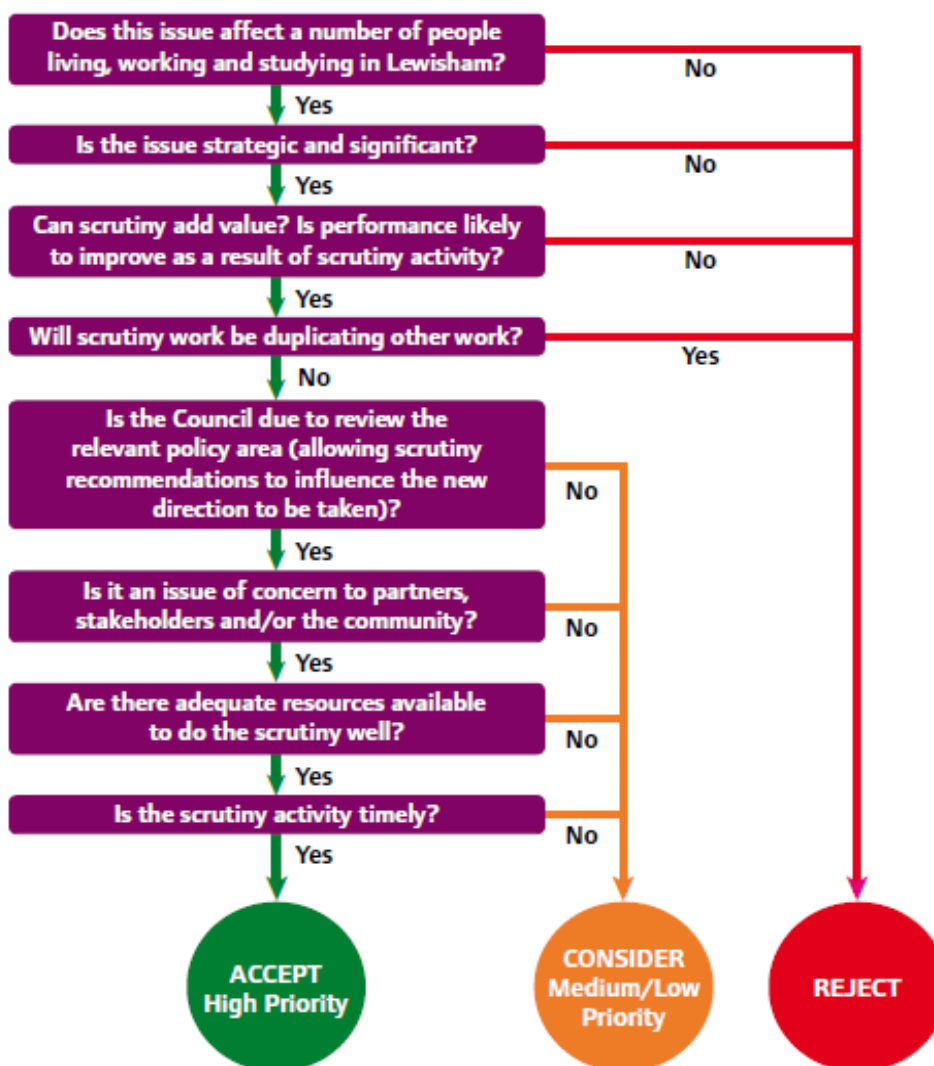
existing items may need to be removed or become information items, circulated by email.

4.7. Provision is made for meetings to last for up to two and a half hours, but the Committee should aim to **manage its business within two hours**. In exceptional cases, the Committee may decide to suspend standing orders and extend the meeting for a further 30 minutes to conclude any urgent business.

4.8. The Committee should specify the information it would like for each item to ensure that officer reports and other evidence meets its needs. This should be done during the work programme item at every meeting.

Scrutiny work programme – prioritisation process

Does this issue affect a number of people living, working and studying in Lewisham? → No

↓ Yes

Is the issue strategic and significant? → No

↓ Yes

Can scrutiny add value? Is performance likely to improve as a result of scrutiny activity? → No

↓ Yes

Will scrutiny work be duplicating other work? → Yes

↓ No

Is the Council due to review the relevant policy area (allowing scrutiny recommendations to influence the new direction to be taken)? → No

↓ Yes

Is it an issue of concern to partners, stakeholders and/or the community? → No

↓ Yes

Are there adequate resources available to do the scrutiny well? → No

↓ Yes

Is the scrutiny activity timely? → No

↓ Yes

ACCEPT High Priority

CONSIDER Medium/Low Priority

REJECT

4.9. There is no provision at Committee for the discussion of information items (reports 'to note'). If required, they will be circulated to members by email with questions put to the report author for a written response.

4.10. Two of the regular reports that falls under the Committee's remit, which are usually presented as a reports to note and are therefore likely to be circulated by email in the first instance, include:

- Annual complaints report
- Audit Panel update

4.11. It's the Chair's responsibility to keep abreast of other developments within the Committee's remit and escalate any issues that require action by the committee to the work programme as appropriate.

4.12. Previously, the Committee regularly considered the Council's financial forecasts in order to monitor performance against the budget and review emerging pressures. It is proposed that that in future, when the financial forecasts are published on the Committee agenda, members should highlight any issues for consideration and notify the Chair, who will consider how best scrutiiny of the forecasts should be focused.

4.13. Suggestions made by the Committee at the last meeting of 2019-20

- The Committee meeting scheduled for March 2020 did not take place.

4.14. Suggestions from officers in view of forthcoming developments

- The stabilisaiton budget (incorporating the medium term financial strategy)
- Budget cuts

4.15. Issues arising as a result of previous scrutiny

- Income generation and commercialisation
- Children's social care
- Cost pressures in the environment division

4.16. These items have all been added to the draft work programme – which only leaves space for urgent or high priority items.

5. Different types of scrutiny

5.1. It is important to think early on about the most effective way to scrutinise each item on the work programme. Some issues may only require an initial briefing for information, some may require site visits and public engagment, and others may require detailed questioning at a formal Committee meeting and input from stakeholders

5.2. The Effiective Scrutiny Guidelines at appendix C sets out 5 key principles to take into account when carrying out scrutiny: Prioritise; Be independent; Work Collectively; Engage; make SMART recommnedations. This will help the committee decide on the most appropriate approach for the issue at hand.

5.3. Members should also note the comments in the Local Democracy Review about how scrutiny can be even more effective, participative and open. Suggestions included:

- Focusing on fewer issues more closely linked to council priorities
- More engagement with the public outside of formal meetings
- Individual scrutiny members leading on defined topic areas
- Contributing to new policy proposals at an early stage

5.4. Some of the most common scrutiny methods are described below, but members are encouraged to try new ways of gathering evidence and engaging the public.

5.5. Standard items

5.6. The majority of work programme items tend to be 'standard items', where scrutiny is carried out as part of a single meeting with members:

- agreeing in advance the information and analysis needed

- receiving an officer report presenting the relevant information
- gathering additional evidence from activity outside of meetings
- asking questions of the presenting officers or expert guests
- agreeing recommendations to Mayor and Cabinet and partners.

5.7.   Policy development

5.8.   When the council is due to renew a policy the Committee may be asked to consider the options available and officer recommendations before a decision by Mayor and Cabinet. Select committees should be engaged at an early enough stage to be able to influence and contribute to the new policy.

5.9.   Performance monitoring

5.10. Scrutiny can request a wide range of performance information to examine the effectiveness of Council services. This includes monitoring data on key performance indicators and outcomes and assessing the delivery of particular programme or projects against set targets or timescales.

5.11. Task and finish groups

5.12. For issues that require more extensive evidence gathering, members may put forward a proposal for a task and finish group (TFG). The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will agree which TFGs should be established, their membership, terms of reference and duration. TFGs are independent of select committees and make recommendations directly to Mayor and Cabinet.

5.13. Information items

5.14. Some low-priority items may only require a briefing report to be circulated to Committee members by email, with questions put to the report author for written response. There is no provision for discussion of information items at Committee meetings.

6.   Approval and ongoing monitoring of the work programme

6.1.   Each select committee is required to submit its work programme to the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel for approval. This is to ensure a coordinated overview and scrutiny work programme across select committees that avoids duplication of effort and supports effective scrutiny. The Business Panel will meet on 29 September 2020.

6.2.   The Committee's work programme can be reviewed at each meeting to allow urgent items to be added and lower priority issues to be removed. Any potential items should be considered against the priority criteria outlined earlier in this report. If a high-priority item is included, a lower-priority item should be removed. The committee's work programme must be achievable in the time available.

7.   Financial implications

7.1.   There are no direct financial implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Items on the Committee's work programme will have financial implications and these will need to be considered as part of the reports on those items.

8.   Legal implications

8.1.   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.

9. Equalities implications

9.1. Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. The Act includes a public sector equality duty, which replaced the separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. 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.

9.2. 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.

9.3. As has been reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel, that there is emerging evidence that suggests a disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on groups with protected characteristics. National research shows there are significant health inequalities affecting Black African and Caribbean communities, which are perpetuated by inequalities in the wider determinants of health such as housing, employment and education. These have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and may underpin some of the excess deaths in these populations.

9.4. Lewisham Council and Birmingham City Council are partnering to conduct a review gather insights on health inequalities within Black African and Caribbean communities in Birmingham and Lewisham asking 'how do we break the cycle of inequality?'. The Council has also submitted evidence to the Women and Equalities Committee about the different and disproportionate impact that the Coronavirus – and measures to tackle it – is having on people with the protected characteristics under the Equality Act.

9.5. The Council plans to supplement this work with an extensive impact assessment of COVID-19 on the borough, with a focus on those with protected characteristics.

9.6. There are llikely to 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.

9.7. Further reading and analysis of the data is available from Public Health England: link to Public Health England document (on inequalities across protected groups) and as well as the Independent Scientific Advisory Group: link to report by the Independent SAGE (on the different outcomes for ethnic groups).

10. Climate change and environmental implications

10.1. There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. However, in February 2019 Lewisham Council declared a Climate Emergency and proposed a target to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030. Items on the Committee's work programme may well have (directly referenced or implicit) climate change implications and these will need to be considered as part of the reports on those items.

11. Crime and disorder implications

11.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Items on the Committee's work programme may

have crime and disorder implications and these will need to be considered as part of the reports on those items.

12. Health and wellbeing implications

12.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Items on the Committee's work programme may have health and wellbeing implications and these will need to be considered as part of the reports on those items.

13. Report author and contact

13.1. If you have any questions about this report please contact: Timothy Andrew (timothy.andrew@lewisham.gov.uk)

Appendix A – Committee terms of reference

Appendix B – Council corporate priorities

Appendix C – Effective scrutiny guidelines

Appendix D – Local assembly priorities

Appendix E – Notice of forthcoming executive decisions

Appendix F – draft 2020-21 work programme

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Appendix A: committee terms of reference

The following roles are common to all select committees and Business Panel.

(a) General functions

- To review and scrutinise decisions made and actions taken in relation to executive and non-executive functions

- To make reports and recommendations to the Council or the executive, arising out of such review and scrutiny in relation to any executive or non-executive function

- To make reports or recommendations to the Council and/or Executive in relation to matters affecting the area or its residents

- The right to require the attendance of members and officers to answer questions includes a right to require a member to attend to answer questions on up and coming decisions

- To consider matters referred to it in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme

(b) Policy development

- To assist the executive in matters of policy development by in depth analysis of strategic policy issues facing the Council for report and/or recommendation to the Executive or Council or committee as appropriate

- To conduct research, community and/or other consultation in the analysis of policy options available to the Council

- To liaise with other public organisations operating in the borough – both national, regional and local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working in policy development wherever possible

(c) Scrutiny

- To scrutinise the decisions made by and the performance of the Executive and other committees and Council officers both in relation to individual decisions made and over time

- To scrutinise previous performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives/performance targets and/or particular service areas

- To question members of the Executive or appropriate committees and executive directors personally about decisions

- To question members of the Executive or appropriate committees and executive directors in relation to previous performance whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over time or in relation to particular initiatives which have been implemented

- To scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the borough and to invite them to make reports to and/or address the select committee/Business Panel and local people about their activities and performance

- To question and gather evidence from any person outside the Council (with their consent where the law does not require them to attend).

- To make recommendations to the Executive or appropriate committee and/or Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process

(d) Community representation

- To promote and put into effect closer links between overview and scrutiny members and the local community

- To encourage and stimulate an enhanced community representative role for overview and scrutiny members including enhanced methods of consultation with local people

- To liaise with the Council's ward assemblies and/or Positive Ageing Council so that the local community might participate in the democratic process and where it considers it appropriate to seek the views of the ward assemblies and/or Positive Ageing Council on matters that affect or are likely to affect the local areas, including accepting items for the agenda of the appropriate select committee from ward assemblies and the Positive Ageing Council.

- To keep the Council's local ward assemblies and Positive Ageing Council under review and to make recommendations to the Executive and/or Council as to how participation in the democratic process by local people can be enhanced.

- To receive petitions, deputations and representations from local people and other stakeholders about areas of concern within their overview and scrutiny remit and to refer them to the Executive, appropriate committee or officer for action, with a recommendation or report if the committee considers that necessary

- To consider any referral within their remit referred to it by a member under the Councillor Call for Action (Part IV E 10), and if they consider it appropriate to scrutinise decisions and/or actions taken in relation to that matter, and/or make recommendations/report to the Executive (for executive matters) or the Council (non-executive matters)

(e) Finance

- To exercise overall responsibility for finances made available to it for use in the performance of its overview and scrutiny function.

(f) Work programme

- As far as possible to draw up a draft annual work programme in each municipal year for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel. Once approved by the Business Panel, the relevant select committee will implement the programme during that municipal year. Nothing in this arrangement inhibits the right of every member of a select committee (or the Business Panel) to place an item on the agenda of that select committee (or Business Panel respectively) for discussion.

- The Council and the Executive will also be able to request that an overview and scrutiny select committee research and/or report on matters of concern and the select committee will consider whether the work can be carried out as requested. If it can be accommodated, the select committee will perform it. If the committee has reservations about performing the requested work, it will refer the matter to the Business Panel for decision.

Public Accounts Select Committee's specific terms of reference

In addition to the general terms of reference outlined above, the Public Accounts Select Committee has the following specific terms of reference:

- To make reports and recommendations to the Council or the Executive which promote the better custodianship of the Council's finances and to make recommendations for best financial practice across the authority.

- To investigate the possibilities for improving the Council's financial management practice and to make reports and recommendations to Executive or Council as appropriate.

- To encourage the highest standards of financial custodianship where necessary overseeing training activity for all members in this area.

- To consult on and to comment on and make recommendations to the Executive in respect of the actual and proposed contents of the Council's budget and without limiting the general remit of the committee, to hold the Executive to account for its performance in respect of all budgetary matters.

- To receive reports as appropriate from the Audit Panel in respect of their overview of contract procedure rules and financial regulations.

- To make recommendations and reports for consideration by the Executive or Council to improve procurement practice.

- To scrutinise the effectiveness of the Audit Panel.

Appendix B: Council corporate priorities

The Committee should also consider how each item on its agenda links to the priorities set out in the Corporate Strategy for 2018-2022:

- Open Lewisham - Lewisham is a welcoming place of safety for all, where we celebrate the diversity that strengthens us.

- Tackling the housing crisis - Everyone has a decent home that is secure and affordable.

- Giving children and young people the best start in life - Every child has access to an outstanding and inspiring education, and is given the support they need to keep them safe, well and able to achieve their full potential.

- Building an inclusive local economy - Everyone can access high-quality job opportunities, with decent pay and security in our thriving and inclusive local economy.

- Delivering and defending: health, social care and support - Ensuring everyone receives the health, mental health, social care and support services they need.

- Making Lewisham greener - Everyone enjoys our green spaces, and benefits from a healthy environment as we work to protect and improve our local environment.

- Building safer communities - Every resident feels safe and secure living here as we work together towards a borough free from the fear of crime.

Appendix C: Effective Scrutiny Guidelines

At Lewisham we:

1. Prioritise

It is more effective to look at a small number of key issues in an in-depth way, than skim the surface of everything falling within scrutiny's remit. We try to focus on issues of concern to the community and/or matters that are linked to our corporate priorities. We only add items to the work programme if we are certain our consideration of the matter will make a real and tangible difference.

2. Are independent

Scrutiny is led by Scrutiny Members. Scrutiny Members are in charge of the work programme and, for every item, we specify what evidence we require and what information we would like to see in any officer reports that are prepared. We are not whipped by our political party or unduly influenced by the Cabinet or senior officers.

3. Work collectively

If we collectively agree in advance what we want to achieve in relation to each item under consideration, including what the key lines of enquiry should be, we can work as a team to question witnesses and ensure that all the required evidence is gathered. Scrutiny is impartial and the scrutiny process should be free from political point scoring and not used to further party political objectives.

4. Engage

Involving residents helps scrutiny access a wider range of ideas and knowledge, listen to a broader range of voices and better understand the opinions of residents and service users. Engagement helps ensure that recommendations result in residents' wants and needs being more effectively met.

5. Make SMART evidence-based recommendations

We make recommendations that are based on solid, triangulated evidence – where a variety of sources of evidence point to a change in practice that will positively alter outcomes. We recognise that recommendations are more powerful if they are:
- Specific (simple, sensible, significant).
- Measurable (meaningful, motivating).
- Achievable (agreed, attainable).
- Relevant (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based).
- Time bound (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive).

Appendix D: Local assembly priorities

Bellingham

The top priorities for Bellingham Assembly are:

- children and young people
- older people's issues
- community events and festivals.
- the promotion and development of Bellingham as a community.

Blackheath

- Environment and Community.
- Provision for Older people, Young People and Children
- Parking, Streets and Waste.
- Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Brockley

- Connecting communities – bringing Brockley residents together, fostering a sense of community spirit, mutual understanding and respect through community projects, events and activities. These could be art, music, drama or sports based. We are also keen to open up the criteria to include ideas around exciting intergenerational projects
- Creating a high-quality living environment – helping improve our local living environment and making Brockley a safer, cleaner and greener place to live, work and learn
- Creating development opportunities for Brockley residents
- Connecting communities – bringing Brockley residents together, fostering a sense of community spirit, mutual understanding and respect through community projects, events and activities. These could be art, music, drama or sports based. We are also keen to open up the

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criteria to include ideas around exciting intergenerational projects.

[Catford South](#)

Improving the Catford South Environment
Parking, Idling and CPZs

- Improving Cycling Provision

- General traffic issues in Catford South

- Supporting Local Air Quality Campaign

Improving Catford South for Residents

- Fly-tipping, Litter and Bins

- Greening through planting trees and flowers

- Noise nuisance

- Street cleaning

Developing more activities for Children and You People in Catford South

- Activity for Teenagers

- Activity for Young Adults

- Developing activity for under 5s

- Activity for Children aged 6-12 years

Improving the Cultural offer in Catford South

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- Developing Community Events

- Access to Theatre and Music

- Night time offer for adults better

- Access the Visual Arts Film

Increasing opportunities for Older People Catford South Community

- Providing activities and events for older people

- Dementia Friendly Community Work

- Improving the health of Older People

- Maintaining the Independence of older people

General things that matter to Catford South Residents

- Volunteering Opportunities

- Crime and Safety

- Supporting Local Business

- Employment and Training

[Crofton Park](#)

- Activities for older people
- Activities for younger people
- The environment
- Health and wellbeing
- Supporting community cohesion

[Downham](#)

- Children and young people
- Older people and intergenerational projects
- Creating a high quality living environment

[Evelyn](#)

- Provision for young people and children
- Provision for older people, people with disabilities and intergenerational activities
- Skills development and access to local employment opportunities
- Community support on anti-social behaviour, crime and drug issues
- Housing/development and improving the built environment
- Community capacity building, cohesion and events

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[Forest Hill](#)

- Youth engagement and provision
- Making Forest Hill more attractive and healthy
- Community events
- Supporting local traders

[Grove Park](#)

- Improving the town centre
- Crime and antisocial behaviour
- Neighbourliness, community activities, events and cohesion
- Community facilities
- Parking, road safety & traffic calming

[Ladywell](#)

- improving air quality and pollution
- campaigning for the inclusion of genuinely affordable housing in future development
- better provision for youth – including apprenticeships linked to local businesses
- community safety

[Lee Green](#)

- Traffic and pollution: traffic speeds and rat running.
- Parking in areas without restrictions: over parking causing problems for residents.

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- Our environment: parks, green spaces, community gardens, streets, fly tipping, litter, dog fouling, neglected or empty buildings.
- Community services: community centre and community events.
- Antisocial behaviour and crime: misuse of bikes, noise, drug dealing.
- Transport links and accessibility of railway stations in the ward.

Lewisham Central

- Improving health and wellbeing.
- Cleaner, better environment.
- Better access to activities for children and young people.
- Better access to activities and opportunities for the elderly.
- Promoting and improving community cohesion.

New Cross

- Unemployment and skills development
- Activities for older people and tackling social isolation
- Housing developments and the built environment
- Health, wellbeing and community safety

Perry Vale

- Children and Young People
- Unemployment and skills development

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- Older people and intergenerational

- Crime and antisocial behaviour

- Environment and ecology

Rushey Green

- activities and opportunities for children (under 18) and young people (under 25)

- increasing opportunities for older people (55+)

- community cohesion – including events, activities and projects designed to create a sense of community in Rushey Green

- culture and the arts – with particular reference to improving the wellbeing of people in the Rushey Green Area

- improving your local area – including local 'streetscape', environment and ecology.

- The Rushey Green Assembly is also committed to keeping residents informed about the ongoing improvements to Catford town centre.

Sydenham

- bringing our community together

- health and wellbeing

- vibrant high street

- clean and green

- crime and anti-social behaviour.

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[Telegraph Hill](#)

- Unemployment and skills development
- Activities for older people
- Neighbourliness and tackling social isolation
- Community safety, wellbeing and tackling anti-social behaviour

[Whitefoot](#)

- Healthy living including fitness, wellbeing and mental health.
- Creative arts – using art to bring Whitefoot residents together and foster a sense of community spirit, mutual understanding and respect.
- Improved parks, play areas and green spaces – helping improve our local living environment, making Whitefoot a safer, cleaner and greener place to live, work, and learn

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Appendix E: notice of key decisions (attached) and online at: [link to key decision plans on the council website](#)

Appendix F: Public Accounts Select Committee draft work programme 2020-21

Item	Type of item	Corporate priority	24-Sep-20	03-Dec-20	02-Feb-21	17-Mar-21
Income generation and commercialisation review 2019-20	In-depth review	All	Final report			
Financial stabilisation - budget update and medium term plan	Performance monitoring	All				
Children's social care	Standard item	All, CP3				
Budget cuts	Performance monitoring	All				
Council budget 2021-22	Policy development	All				
Cost pressures in the Public Realm division	Standard item	All, CP6				
Financial forecasts 2020-21	Performance monitoring	All				

Information items

Annual complaints report	Information	All		October		
Reserves update	Information	All		November		
Asset strategy update	Information	All		November		
Income generation and commercialisation update	Information	All			January	
Audit Panel update	Information	All				March