



Public Accounts Select Committee

Select Committee work programme report

Date: 30 June 2022

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1 (not restricted)

Ward(s) affected: All (none specific)

Contributor(s): Assistant Chief Executive (Scrutiny Manager)

Outline and recommendations

To ask members to discuss the Committee's priorities for the 2022/23 municipal year and to agree an annual work programme.

The Committee is asked to:

- Consider the potential items set out in the draft work programme at appendix D.
- Consider the policy context: the corporate strategy and Future Lewisham.
- Discuss the Committee's priorities and agree a work programme for 2022-23.
- Note opportunities for public engagement, site visits and expert witnesses.
- Appoint a climate change champion for the Committee.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

The meeting dates below were agreed at the Council's Annual General Meeting on 25 May 2022:

- Thursday 30 June 2022
- Thursday 22 September 2022
- Monday 5 December 2022 (subject to change)
- Monday 23 January 2023 (subject to change)
- Thursday 16 March 2023

1. Summary

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

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to:
 - Consider the potential items set out in the draft work programme at appendix D.
 - Consider the policy context: the corporate strategy and 'Future Lewisham'.
 - Discuss the Committee's priorities and agree a work programme for 2022-23.
 - Note opportunities for public engagement, site visits and expert witnesses.
 - Appoint a climate change champion for the Committee.

3. The role of the select committee

- 3.1. The Committee has a key role in scrutinising the performance and supporting the development of the Council's financial functions and budget setting processes.. It also has a role in engaging and reflecting the views of residents in relation to finance-related matters.
- 3.2. The Committee considers how the Council manages and uses money - it can:
 - Review the way Council managers make decisions about spending money.
 - Challenge the Council to use the most effective means of managing its finances.
 - Examine and challenge the Council's plans for spending over the whole year - and delivering its budget.
 - Recommend ways to improve the Council's processes for buying goods and services (and for managing services to get the best value).
 - Listen to the views of the Council's Audit Panel and challenge it to do its best work.
- 3.3. The Committee's full terms of reference are set out in appendix A.

4. Different types of scrutiny

- 4.1. It's 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, circulated by email, for information, some may require site visits and public engagement, and others may require detailed questioning at a formal Committee meeting and input from stakeholders.
- 4.2. The Effective 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 SMART¹ recommendations. This will help the Committee decide on the most appropriate approach for the issue at hand.

¹ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria and appendix C for context and further information.

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- 4.3. 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.

- 4.4. 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.

Standard items

- 4.5. 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.

Policy development

- 4.6. 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.

Performance monitoring

- 4.7. 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.

Task and finish groups

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

Information items

- 4.9. 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.

5. Agreeing the Committee's work programme

- 5.1. A draft work programme is attached at appendix D. It currently includes:
- Key financial reports and regular reviews of financial performance
 - issues arising as a result of previous scrutiny
- 5.2. It is for the Committee, however, to set its own work programme and agree the priority issues it would like to include – the Committee does not have to look into everything officers, the public or other members suggest.
- 5.3. When deciding on issues to include in the work programme, the Committee should

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consider the key services and programmes within the Committee's remit, the criteria for selecting and prioritising topics (see flowchart below), upcoming Mayor and Cabinet decisions (appendix E) and avoid duplicating the work of any agreed task and finish groups.

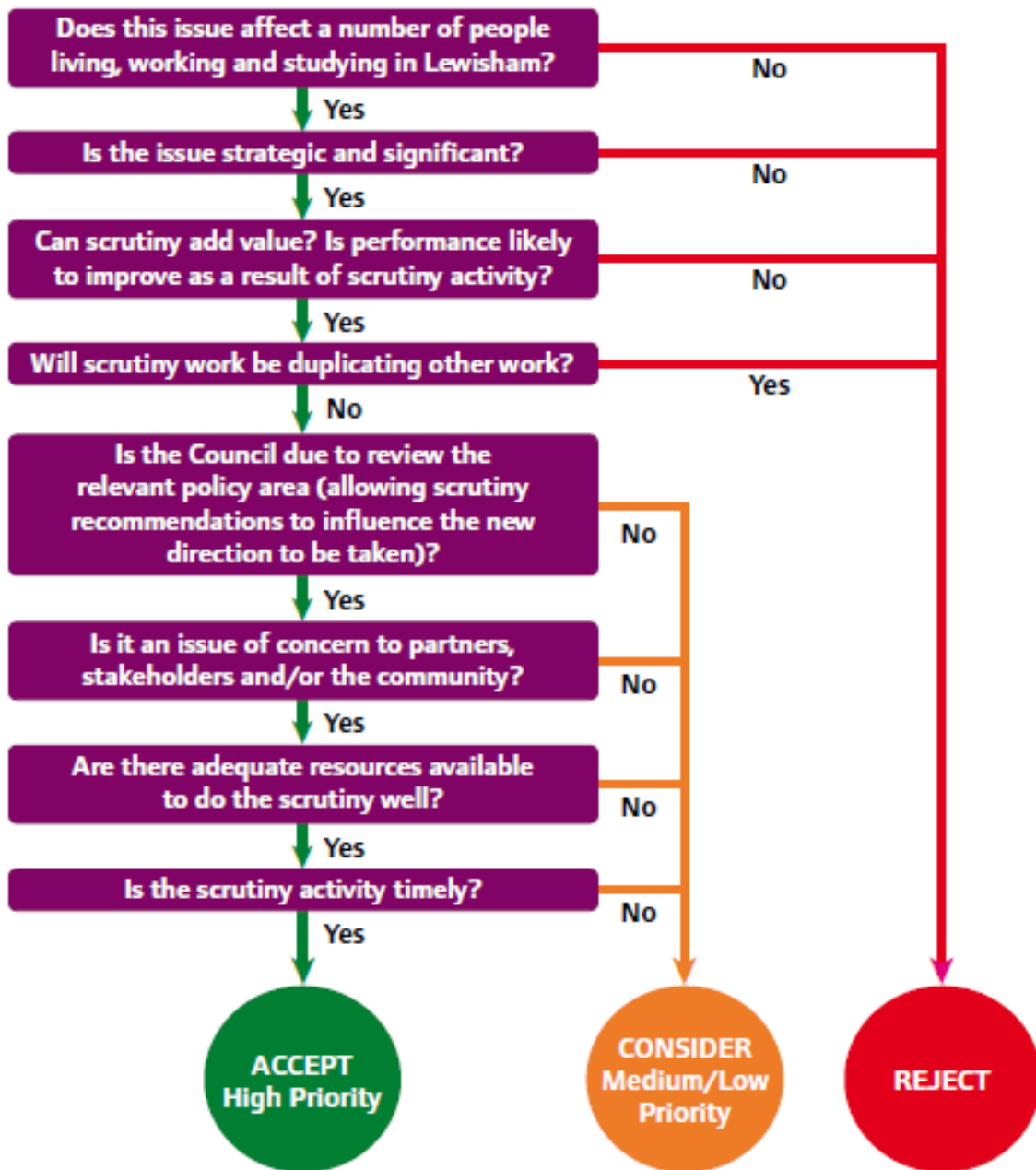
- 5.4. The Corporate Strategy 2018-22 sets out how the Council will deliver for its residents up to 2022. The Corporate Strategy provides an overarching framework and focus for all Council business; and items within the Committee's work programme should be linked to the priorities in the strategy (appendix B). A new Corporate Strategy is currently in development, which will include a refreshed set of priorities and describe how the Council will address the social, economic and environmental challenges facing the borough up to 2026. Once this is in place, the Committee may wish to review its work programme in light of the new strategy.
- 5.5. The Committee should also note and take into account the four strategic themes of the borough's Covid-19 recovery plan, Future Lewisham, which support what we want for every single resident and that we know are what we need to focus on locally: An economically sound future; A healthy and well future; A greener future; and a future we all have a part in.
- 5.6. The Committee is advised to schedule two substantive items per meeting to allow enough time for detailed discussions and the involvement of any invited witnesses or guests and to leave, leaving space available for any Mayor and Cabinet responses that arise throughout the year. The Committee should be responsive and if urgent business arises throughout the year the work programme can be amended with urgent business added and lower priority business removed.
- 5.7. Provision is made for meetings to last for up to 2.5 hours, but the Committee should aim to manage its business within 2 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.
- 5.8. 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 under the work programme item at every meeting.
- 5.9. At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held in November 2021, it was recommended that each select committee should appoint a climate change champion to ensure that (a) the annual work programme takes climate change matters into account; and (b) officers are given appropriate steers in relation to the reports for specific items, to ensure they include relevant climate change considerations. The Committee is asked to consider appointing one of its members to take on this important role.

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Scrutiny work programme – prioritisation process



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- 5.10. 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.
- 5.11. Some of the regular reports that fall under the Committee's remit, which are presented as reports to note and are circulated to members by email in the first instance, include the following. They are only taken as substantive items if wider engagement and scrutiny would add value, in line with the prioritisation process.
- Reserves update
 - Capital programme review
- 5.12. Key financial reports and financial monitoring
- Medium term financial strategy
 - Financial monitoring
 - Financial results 2021-22
 - Treasury management
 - Budget cuts
 - Council budget 2023-24
- 5.13. Issues arising as a result of previous scrutiny
- Budget pressures/management – key areas in previous years have been: children's social care, adult social care, passenger transport and environment services.
- 5.14. It is the Chair's responsibility to keep abreast of other developments within the Committee's remit, liaise regularly with the relevant cabinet member(s) and escalate any issues that require action by the Committee to the work programme as appropriate.

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 19 July 2022.
- 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 all 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.

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9. Equalities implications

- 9.1. 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.
- 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. 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.

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. An action plan to achieve this target was subsequently agreed by Mayor and Cabinet (following pre-decision scrutiny by the Sustainable Development Select Committee)². The plan incorporates all areas of the Council's work. Items on the work programme may well have climate change and environmental implications and reports considered by the Committee should acknowledge this.

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 then please contact: Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager) timothy.andrew@lewisham.gov.uk (020 8314 7916).

² See <https://lewisham.gov.uk/TacklingTheClimateEmergency> for a summary of the Council's work in this area.

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14. Appendices

Appendix A – [Committee terms of reference](#) (see below)

Appendix B – [Council corporate priorities](#) (see below)

Appendix C – Effective scrutiny principles (see below)

Appendix D – Draft work programme (see attached)

Appendix E – Notice of forthcoming executive decisions (see attached)

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Appendix A

The following roles are common to all select committees:

(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

(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)
- 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 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 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.
- To keep the Council's local ward assemblies under review and to make recommendations to the Executive and/or Council as to how participation in the democratic process by local

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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, 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, 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 the 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 has specific responsibilities for the following:

- (a) To exercise all the functions and roles of the overview and scrutiny committee in relation to the following matters:
- 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.

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Appendix B

Council corporate priorities 2018-2022

Items within the work programme should be linked to the priorities of the Council's Corporate Strategy for 2018-2022 (set out below):

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.

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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).

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