



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee Work Programmes 2023 – 24

Date: 04 July 2023

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Head of Scrutiny and Policy)

Outline and recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) is asked to review and approve the proposed contents of the work programmes of the Select Committees (attached at Appendix A) as discussed and agreed by members of those committees. As the Safer Stronger Communities and Public Accounts Select Committees are meeting after despatch for this meeting, their work programmes are to follow.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

The Select Committees discussed and agreed their draft work programmes at the following meetings held in 2023:

- Housing – 6 June
- Children and Young People – 15 June
- Sustainable Development – 19 June
- Healthier Communities – 20 June
- Safer Stronger Communities – 27 June
- Public Accounts – 28 June

OSC is being asked to review and approve the proposed contents of the work programmes at its meeting on 04 July 2023.

1. Summary

- 1.1. By the time of the meeting, each Select Committee will have met and agreed a draft annual work programme. OSC is asked to consider and agree the proposed work programmes of each of the Select Committees. (As the Safer Stronger Communities

and Public Accounts Select Committees are meeting after despatch for this meeting, their work programmes are to follow).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. OSC is asked to review and approve the proposed contents of the work programmes of the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees (attached at Appendix A) as discussed and agreed by members of those committees.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1. The Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-26 sets out 7 corporate priorities that drive decision making in the Council. Lewisham's corporate priorities have been agreed by full Council and they are the principal mechanism through which the Council's performance is reported:
 - Cleaner and greener
 - A strong local economy
 - Quality housing
 - Children and Young People
 - Safer Communities
 - Open Lewisham
 - Health and Wellbeing
- 3.2. The Select Committees have devised annual work programmes which cover areas of business that fall within, and contribute towards achieving, all corporate priorities. The implementation of the attached work programmes will therefore have implications for all policy areas.
- 3.3. The Select Committees have tried to make sure that their work programmes reflect the diversity of Lewisham's communities and that the views of residents are fairly represented in scrutiny processes. Any recommendations arising from scrutiny work carried out this year, will support the Council's corporate strategy and reflect the needs of local residents.

4. Background

- 4.1 In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny procedure rules outlined in Part IV E of the Council's Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) is required to:

Consider the proposed work programmes of each of the Select Committees and devise a co-ordinated overview and scrutiny work programme which avoids duplication of effort and facilitates the effective conduct of business.

- 4.2 The OSC may amend the work programme of any of the Select Committees to secure the most effective use of committee time and Council resources and to prevent overlaps. However, OSC will not normally amend work programmes unless it is necessary to ensure the effective conduct of Council business. Once the OSC has approved the select committee work programmes, the Select Committees will implement them. Nevertheless, select committee work programmes are living documents and re-prioritisation and amendment is expected over the course of the year.
- 4.3 A couple of items in certain select committee work programmes may be of interest to members of another select committee. The Housing Select Committee plans to look at the housing retrofit strategy in September and will invite Members of the Sustainable Development Select Committee to attend their meeting for consideration of that item. The Healthier Communities Select Committee will consider the role of cultural

competency in delivering healthcare services towards the end of the municipal year, most likely in March 2024, and will invite Members of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee to attend their meeting for consideration of that item.

- 4.4 Each Select Committee will meet five times a year, to allow capacity for task and finish groups to be established, which will carry out in-depth investigations into topical issues. The establishment of Task and Finish Groups is the subject of a separate report.

5. Scrutiny Principles and Practice

- 5.1. Lewisham's *Effective Scrutiny Guidelines* state that, at Lewisham, Scrutiny:

Prioritises

"It is more effective to look at a couple of key issues per meeting in an in-depth way, than skim the surface of a large number of items. We try to focus on issues of concern to the community and 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."

Stays independent

"Scrutiny is led by Scrutiny Members. We are not whipped by our political party or unduly influenced by the Cabinet or senior officers."

Works collectively

"We collectively agree in advance what we want to achieve in relation to each issue we consider, including what the key lines of enquiry should be. We work as a team to question witnesses and ensure that all the required evidence is gathered."

Engages

"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. We engage so that our recommendations result in residents' wants and needs being more effectively met."

Makes evidence-based recommendations

"We know that scrutiny has the most impact when our recommendations are based on solid, triangulated evidence – where a variety of sources of evidence point to a change in practice that will positively alter outcomes."

- 5.2. Current scrutiny practice is that:

- Each Select Committee meets five times per year.
- Each Select Committee looks at no more than three (ideally two) substantive items per meeting.
- Select Committees specify what information they would like to see in officer reports to ensure they meet expectations.
- Select Committees can look at items in an in-depth way. (Methods of conducting in-depth scrutiny can include, but are not limited to: inviting expert witnesses / representatives of user groups to attend meetings to provide evidence; arranging site visits to collect evidence; carrying out engagement activity to inform discussion at meetings).
- Each Select Committee aims to conclude its business within two hours. (If, in exceptional circumstances, standing orders are suspended to allow the meeting to

continue beyond two and a half hours, the meeting should continue for no longer than a further 30 minutes¹.)

- If they are required, Select Committees can receive information reports (reports to note) outside of the formal meeting cycle. The report is emailed to Committee Members with any questions put to the report author for a written response, via the Scrutiny Manager.
- Task and Finish Groups may be established to look into topical issues of concern and conduct in-depth scrutiny over a set period of time.

6. Select Committee Work Programme Setting 2023-24

6.1. In developing their work programmes for 2023-24, the Select Committees have considered:

- regular items, e.g. annual budget scrutiny
- topics recommended for scrutiny by select committees at the end of the 2022-23 municipal year
- topics recommended for scrutiny by senior officers based on recent and future developments
- suggestions from individual members
- decisions due to be made by Mayor and Cabinet
- Issues suggested by members of the public.

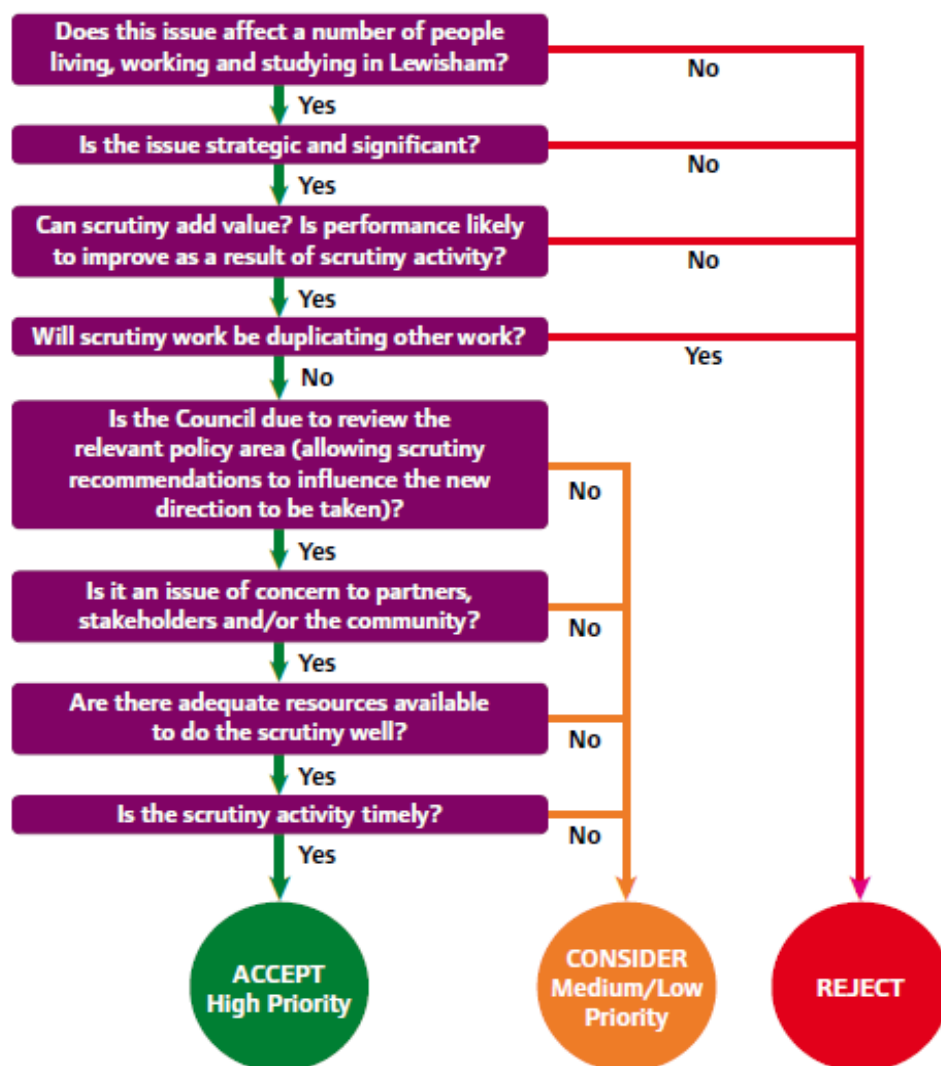
6.2. In choosing topics to be added to their work programme, Members have taken account of the scrutiny prioritisation process (please see below), which supports members in identifying priorities and managing workloads and the guidelines for effective scrutiny (please see above).

6.3. The draft work programmes attached at Appendix A reflect the discussions held at the first round of select committee meetings and present a broad and varied programme of scrutiny over the next few months, focussed on key policy issues, for OSC to consider.

6.4. In order to increase public participation in scrutiny, the committees may ask members of the public to contribute to in-depth scrutiny work by submitting evidence via the council website: [Open Overview and Scrutiny Investigations](#).

¹ This is because meetings over three hours, late in the evening, are not effective because it is difficult for everyone to maintain concentration and make valuable contributions.

Scrutiny work programme – prioritisation process



7. Financial implications

- 7.1. The work programmes will be managed within existing budgets. However, formal recommendations to the Mayor arising out of any specific work items within the respective work programmes will be evaluated in the usual way through the process of formal reports.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) is required to consider and co-ordinate an overview and scrutiny work programme which avoids duplication and facilitates the effective conduct of business across the scrutiny select committees. Once OSC has approved the overall work programme, the select committees will implement it.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1. The [Equality Act 2010](#) (The Act) legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single act, making the law easier to understand and strengthen protection in certain situations. 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 Act also imposes a public sector equality duty. This means that in public bodies, of which this Council is designated, they must consider all individuals in carrying out their day-to-day work when shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It also requires public bodies to:

- Have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

9.3. The Council recognises diversity is one of its strengths and is committed to creating a more inclusive community. Therefore, having due regard to the Act, is confirmation of the Council's commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination against any group within the community and to actively promote an equality of opportunity and positive community partnership.

9.4. The delivery of the Council's equalities objectives is to be achieved through the delivery of all of the Council's strategies, plans and procedures. As such, all select committees and other scrutiny bodies, when planning their work and scrutinising items, bear in mind the delivery of the Council's equality objectives.

9.5. Scrutiny tries to make sure that its work reflects the diversity of Lewisham's communities and that the views of residents are fairly represented in scrutiny processes. Any recommendations arising from scrutiny work support the Council's corporate strategy and reflect the needs of local residents.

9.6. There may be equalities implications arising from items listed in the select committee work programmes and all activities undertaken by the select committees in discharging these items 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 this report. Select Committee may appoint one of their members to be a climate change champion to work with the Select Committee Chair in order to provide a steer to report authors on how committee reports might encompass climate change considerations, in accordance with a previous recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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. However, the work of the select committees, in particular the Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee, relates to this area.

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. However, the work of the select committees, in particular the Healthier Communities Select Committee, relates to this area

13. Background papers

13.1. Work programme reports to the following meetings held in 2023:

- Housing – 6 June
- Children and Young People – 15 June
- Sustainable Development – 19 June
- Healthier Communities – 20 June

- Safer Stronger Communities – 27 June
- Public Accounts – 28 June

14. Glossary

Term	Definition
Members	Members (or councillors) are elected by the community to decide how the Council should carry out its various activities. They represent the wider public interest as well as all individuals living within the area that they have been elected to serve.
Overview & Scrutiny	Overview and scrutiny is the way in which Mayor and Cabinet (the 'Executive'), officers and external organisations are held to account for the decisions that they make. It is led by councillors who are not members of the Executive. They also influence policy development and investigate issues of local concern, making recommendations for improvement.
Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme	An annual programme of work setting out the matters which the select committees will scrutinise over the year.
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is made up of the chair and vice-chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the chair of each of the Select Committees, and two other non-Executive councillors.</p> <p>The main functions of OSC are looking at key strategic and cross-cutting issues; reviewing key decisions once they have been taken but not yet implemented (call-in); coordinating and approving the overall scrutiny work programme; allocating scrutiny work in the event that it crosses the remit of more than one scrutiny body; and establishing task and finish groups.</p> <p>Three parent governors and two diocesan representatives sit on OSC, alongside the councillor members, when education matters are discussed. This is primarily when key decisions that are education matters are reviewed (called-in).</p>
Select Committee	Lewisham has six Select Committees (sub-committees of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee), each made up of non-Executive councillors and responsible for scrutinising a specific service area. Select Committees gather evidence to help them review policies and performance and make recommendations to improve outcomes for residents.
Task and Finish Group (TFG)	A time limited scrutiny body which gathers evidence in relation to a topical issue of concern in order to make recommendations to improve outcomes for residents.

15. Report author and contact

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Appendix A: 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).