



Public Accounts Select Committee

Select Committee Work Programme Report

Date: 29 January 2024

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1 (not restricted)

Wards affected: Not applicable

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Outline and recommendations

This report gives Committee members an opportunity to review the Committee's work programme and make any necessary changes.

The Committee is asked to:

- Review the work programme attached at Appendix B.
- Consider the items for the next meeting and specify the information required.
- Look at the forward plan of key decisions at Appendix E to consider whether there are any items that should be considered for further scrutiny.

Timeline of decision-making

28 June 2023 - Draft Public Accounts Select Committee work programme 2022/23 agreed by Committee

4 July 2023 - Work programme 2022/23 – agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Committee proposed a draft work programme at the beginning of the municipal year. This was considered alongside the draft work programmes of the other select committees and agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 July.
- 1.2. The work programme should be reviewed at each meeting to take account of changing priorities.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Committee is asked to:

- Review the work programme attached at Appendix B.
- Consider the items for the next meeting and specify what evidence is required, including being clear about the information the committee wishes to be included in officer reports.
- Look at the forward plan of key decisions at Appendix E to consider whether there are any items for further scrutiny.

3. Work programming

3.1. When reviewing the work programme the Committee should consider the following:

The Committee's terms of reference

3.2. The Committee's areas of responsibility, include, but are not limited to:

- Reviewing the way Council managers makes decisions about spending money
- Challenging the Council to use the most effective means of managing its resources
- Examining and challenging the Council's plans for setting its annual budget
- Recommending ways to improve the Council's processes for buying goods and services (and for managing services to get the best value)

Whether any urgent issues have arisen that require scrutiny

3.3. If the Committee becomes aware of an issue requiring further scrutiny, it should consider the prioritisation process (Appendix C) and the Effective Scrutiny Guidelines (Appendix D) before deciding on its priority.

Whether a meeting is the most effective means for scrutinising the issue

3.4. Committee members should consider whether there are alternative methods for gathering information or receiving updates on issues of interest. For example, would a briefing, written summary or review of exiting material be more appropriate and effective?

Whether there is space in the Committee's work plan to consider the item

3.5. Members should consider which work programme items could be removed or rescheduled to make space for the full consideration of more important issues.

Whether the item links to the priorities set out in the corporate strategy

3.7 A new corporate strategy has been developed¹ – which explains the Council's values, priorities and focus for the next four years (2022-2026):

- Cleaner and Greener
- Strong Local Economy
- Quality Housing
- Children and Young People
- Safer Communities
- Open Lewisham
- Health and Wellbeing

¹ [Corporate Strategy for 2022-2026](#)

- 3.6. The Committee should consider how the scrutiny of items on its work programme adds to the effective delivery of the strategy.

4. The next meeting

- 4.1. The following items are scheduled for the next meeting. For each item, the Committee should clearly define the information and analysis it wishes to see in officer reports. If the Committee has designated one of its members as a climate change champion, that member should work with the Chair to ensure that officers are given appropriate steers in relation to the reports, to ensure they include relevant climate change considerations.
- 4.2. The Committee should also consider whether to invite any expert witnesses to provide evidence, and whether site visits or engagement would assist the effective scrutiny of the item.

Agenda Item	Review type
Housing revenue account pressures	Standard item
Financial monitoring	Performance monitoring
To be decided	Tbd

5. Referrals

- 5.1. This is a list of referrals made by the Committee this municipal year:

Referral title	Date of referral	Date considered by Mayor and Cabinet	Response due at Committee
Social value	30 Dec 23	24 Jan 24	Tbd

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. 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.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1. 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.

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1. 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.

- 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.

9. Climate change and environmental implications

- 9.1. 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.

10. Crime and disorder implications

- 10.1. 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.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

- 11.1. 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.

12. Report author and contact

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

Appendix A

Public Accounts Select Committee Terms of Reference

The following roles are common to all scrutiny 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
- 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 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 Committee. Once approved, 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 to place an item on the agenda of that select committee 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 Overview and Scrutiny Committee for decision.

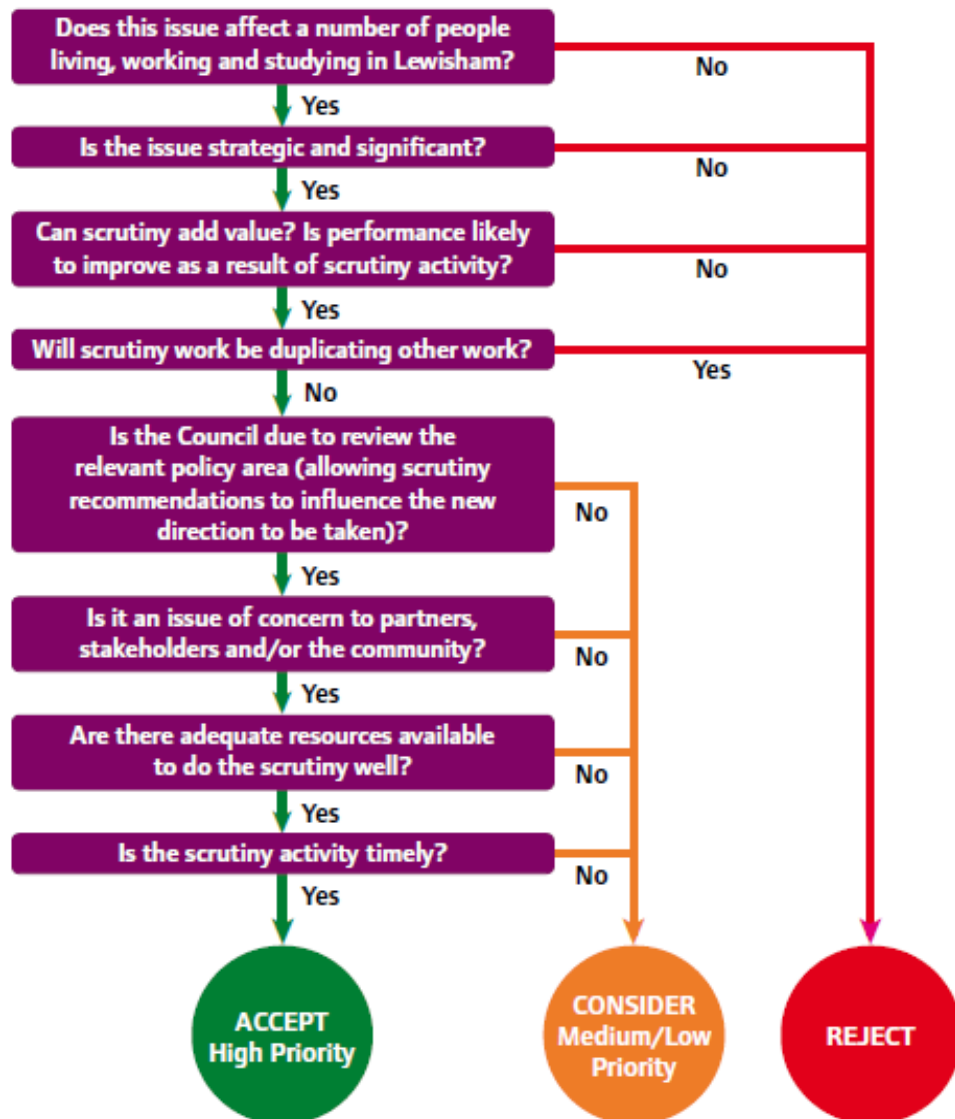
In addition to the general terms of reference outlined above, the Public Accounts Select Committee has the following specific terms of reference - to exercise all the functions and roles of the overview and scrutiny committee in relation to the following matters:

- 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.

Appendix C

The flowchart below is designed to help Members decide which items should be added to the work programme. It is important to focus on areas where the Committee will influence decision-making.

Scrutiny work programme – prioritisation process



Appendix D

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).