



Children and Young People Select Committee

Report title: Select Committee Work Programme Report

Date: 12 March 2024

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: Not applicable

Contributors: Benjamin Awkal (Scrutiny Manager)

Outline and recommendations

This report provides committee members with opportunity to review the Committee's completed work programme and make suggestions for the next municipal year.

The Committee is recommended to:

- Review and note the completed work programme attached at Appendix D.
- Review the forward plan of key decisions attached at Appendix E.
- Consider priorities for the 2024/25 work programme.

Timeline of decision-making

Children and Young People Work Programme 2023/24 – draft agreed on 15 June 2023

Children and Young People Work Programme 2023/24 – approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 July 2023

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Committee proposed a draft work programme at the beginning of the municipal year. This was considered and approved, alongside the draft work programmes of the other select committees, by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 July

2023.

- 1.2. The work programme has been reviewed at each meeting to take account of changing priorities.
- 1.3. The Committee should now consider priority topics for consideration in the next municipal year – these topics will be subject to the agreement of the Committee in 2024/25.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee is recommended to:
 - Review and note the completed work programme attached at Appendix D.
 - Review the forward plan of key decisions attached at Appendix E.
 - Consider priorities for the 2024/25 work programme.

3. Work Programming

Topics considered in 2023/24

- 3.1. The Committee met five times in 2023/24. Its completed work programme is included at Appendix D.
- 3.2. Key topics considered in 2023/24 were:
 - Children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health
 - Post-16 education and career pathways
 - Youth violence
 - Holistic school improvement
 - Children's social care improvement
 - Primary and secondary school organisation
 - Embedding race equality in education
 - School standards.

Setting the work programme for 2024/25

- 3.3. Five committee meetings are to be scheduled for the 2024/25 municipal year. A draft work programme based on the Committee's terms of reference, previous work and relevant local issues will be provided at the Committee's first meeting. At the meeting, the Committee will discuss, refine and agree its draft work programme, which will then be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval.
- 3.4. At this meeting, the Committee should consider and suggest themes or topics for inclusion in the Committee's work programme for the next municipal year. Forthcoming key decisions are available at Appendix E.
- 3.5. The Committee is recommended to consider no more than two substantive items per meeting and should use to the flowchart in Appendix B to aid the prioritisation of topics.
- 3.6. The Committee's terms of reference are included at Appendix A. Its areas of responsibility, include, but are not limited to:
 - Schools and related services
 - Children's Social Care

- Transition for care leavers
 - Youth services
 - SEND provision for children and young people up to age 25.
- 3.7. The Council's Corporate Strategy sets out the Council's values, priorities and focus for 2022-2026. These are categorised under the following headings:
- Cleaner and Greener
 - Strong Local Economy
 - Quality Housing
 - Children and Young People
 - Safer Communities
 - Open Lewisham
 - Health and Wellbeing
- 3.8. The work of the Children & Young People Select Committee will relate most closely to the 'Children & Young People' priority, which commits the Council to:
- supporting our schools to improve and increasing the opportunities for young people in Lewisham;
 - working with our schools and communities to build on the inclusive and high-achieving system of local comprehensive schools;
 - ensuring our most vulnerable children are protected from harm, driving improvement in Children's Social Care and aiming to reduce the number of children coming into care through earlier targeted support for families in crisis;
 - helping to create new breakfast clubs at schools and continuing to lobby the government to expand their free school meals programme.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1. 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.

5. Legal implications

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

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. 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.

7. Climate change and environmental implications

- 7.1. 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)¹. 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.

8. Crime and disorder implications

- 8.1. 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.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

- 9.1. 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.

10. Report author and contact

If you have any questions about this report please contact Benjamin Awkal (Scrutiny Manager) benjamin.awkal@lewisham.gov.uk

¹ See <https://lewisham.gov.uk/TacklingTheClimateEmergency> for a summary of the Council's work in this area.

Appendix A – Children and Young People Select Committee Terms of Reference

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
- 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

(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.

The Children and Young People Select Committee has specific responsibilities for the following:

(a) To fulfil all overview and scrutiny functions as they relate to the social care of children and young people up to the age of 19 years including but not limited to the following activities: -

(i) the social services functions of the Council under the Children Act 2004, and all functions of the Council under the National Assistance Act 1948, the Mental Health Act 1983, Children Act 1989, the NHS and Community Care Act 1990, Children Act 2004, Children and Families Act 2014 and all other relevant legislation in force from time to time

(ii) to invite representatives of other service providers to children and young people in the area to give account of their performance and to answer questions.

(b) In so far as they relate to the provision of services for those under the age of 19 years, the exercise of all of the Council's powers under all relevant legislation pertaining to education from time to time in force. Without limiting the generality of this, this shall include, in particular, schools and school related services.

(c) The exercise of the overview and scrutiny powers of the Council in

so far as they relate to people under 19 years of age in the provision of opportunities for education, training and learning outside the school environment, including pre-school services.

(d) In so far as they relate to children and young people under 19 years of age, to make comments and recommendations to the Executive on the contents and proposed contents of the plans making up the Council's policy framework.

(e) In so far as they relate to people under the age of 25 years, to make comments and recommendations on the provision of education, training and learning by those with special educational needs.

(f) Without limiting the remit of the Select Committee, its terms of reference include the following matters:

- Child protection - covering provision for vulnerable children including children in need and children looked after, placements, foster care and adoption
- Early years provision
- Special needs provision
- Schools and related services
- Youth Services
- Youth offending and challenging behaviour
- Transitional services for those leaving care
- Other matters relating to children and young people

(g) To receive and consider referrals from Healthwatch in so far as they relate solely to people under 19 years of age. Otherwise, such referrals will be made to the Healthier Communities Select Committee.

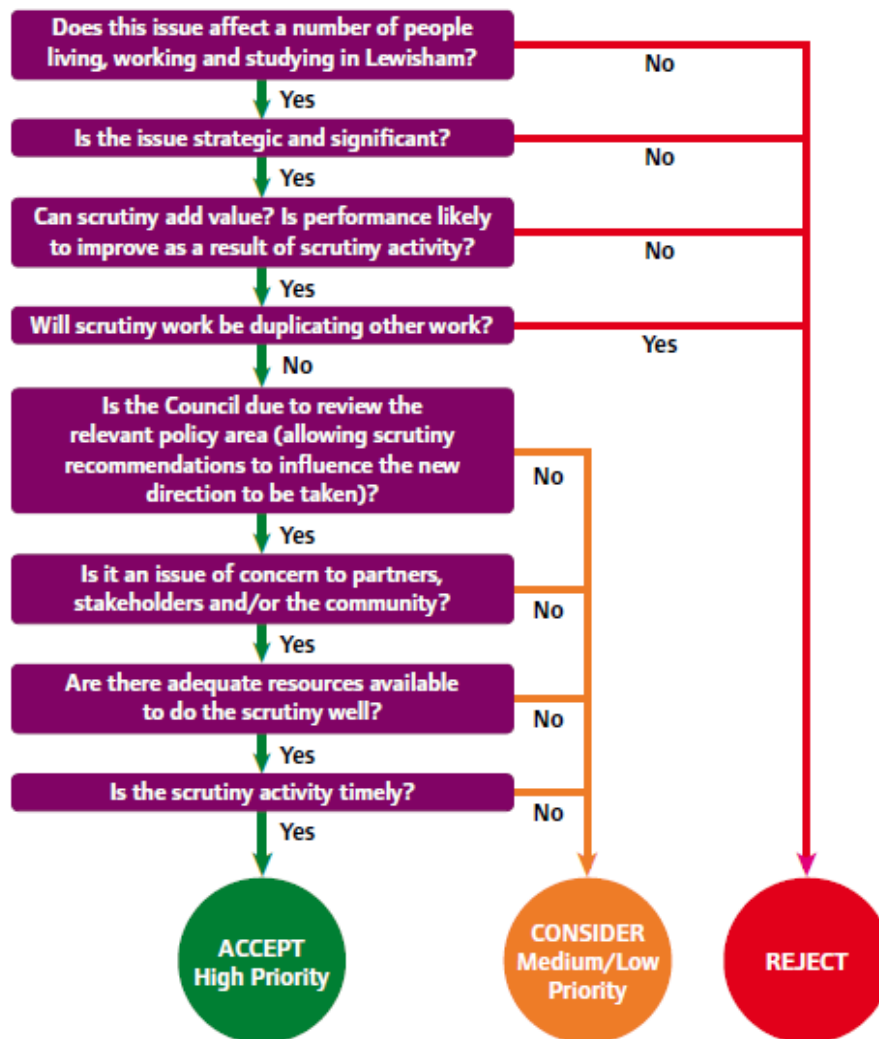
(h) Without limiting the remit of the Select Committee, to hold the Executive to account for its performance in relation to the delivery of Council objectives in the provision of services to children and young people.

NB In the event of there being overlap between the terms of reference of this select committee and those of the Healthier Communities Select Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall determine the Select Committee which shall deal with the matter in question.

Appendix B

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 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).