

Housing Select Committee		
Title	Select Committee work programme	
Contributor	Scrutiny Manager	Item 10
Class	Part 1 (open)	7 March 2017

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide Members of the Select Committee with an overview of the work programme for 2016-17 and to propose a draft work programme for 2017-18.

2. Summary

- 2.1 At the beginning of the municipal year each select committee is required to draw up a work programme for submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel. The Panel considers the suggested work programmes and coordinates activities between select committees in order to maximise the use of scrutiny resources and avoid duplication.
- 2.2 The meeting on 7 March 2017 is the last scheduled meeting of the Housing Select Committee in the 2016-17 municipal year. This Committee's completed work programme is attached at appendix B. The Committee is being asked to put forward suggestions for the 2017-18 work programme.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Select Committee is asked to:
- Consider the prioritisation process and priorities themes for the 2017/18 work programme
 - Note the completed work programme attached at **appendix B**
 - Review the issues covered in 2016-17 municipal year
 - Take note of the notice of key decisions attached at **appendix C**
 - Consider any matters arising that it may wish to suggest for future scrutiny, including topics for in-depth review
 - Note the draft work programme for 2017-18 attached at **appendix D**

4. Housing Select Committee 2016-2017

- 4.1 The Housing Select Committee had eight meetings in the 2016-17 year:
- 12 April 2016
 - 25 May 2016
 - 6 July 2016
 - 7 September 2016
 - 25 October 2016
 - 16 November 2016
 - 10 January 2017
 - 7 March 2017

4.2 Along with all other select committees, in 2016-17 the Housing Select Committee has devoted considerable attention to reviewing savings proposals put forward as part of the Lewisham Future Programme.

5. Prioritising and planning for 2017-18

5.1 Eight meetings will be scheduled for 2017-18 municipal year. The Committee is asked to consider a draft work programme report for 2017-18 for members to review, revise and agree (see appendix D). The draft work programme takes account of the Committee's previous work and incorporates:

- the scrutiny prioritisation process and potential key themes and priorities for 2017-18
- issues arising as a result of previous scrutiny;
- issues that the Committee is required to consider by virtue of its terms of reference;
- items requiring follow up from Committee reviews and recommendations;
- issues suggested by members of the public;
- petitions;
- standard reviews of policy implementation or performance, which is based on a regular schedule;
- suggestions from officers;
- decisions due to be made by Mayor and Cabinet.

Council finances

5.2 The Council has already made savings of £138.4m to meet its revenue budget requirements since May 2010 and is proposing further savings of £23.2m in 2017/18. It is expected that the Council will need to identify further savings of circa £32.6m for the following two years, 2018/19 to 2019/20. This will bring the total savings in cash terms made by the Council in the decade to 2020 to just short of £200m. Monitoring the impact of savings on service delivery and performance will continue to be of importance to scrutiny committees. Lessons learnt from this process can be used to help shape the scrutiny of future savings proposals as and when they are put forward.

5.3 Budgetary issues of particular relevance to the work of the Committee

- In March 2016 the Government legislated for a 1% reduction in social rents to be applied for four years from 2016/17. This is expected to reduce rental income by £2.62m in 2017/18. The expected cumulative rent reduction over the four years is £25.0m, with £374.0m being lost over the life of the 30 year business plan. It's not yet clear what rent regime will be in place after the four years – it's assumed that rent charges will be increased in line with prior Government guidance of CPI + 1%.
- The budgeted expenditure for the Housing Revenue Account for 2017/18 is £149.9m (£93.9m operational and £56m capital and new build costs). No direct savings have been identified so far for 2017/18.
- The HRA is budgeted to spend over £100.0m in 2016/17. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is currently projecting a surplus of £1.1m, but this will be reinvested to maintain a balanced budget position.

- As at the end of November 2016, the forecast overspend for the Customer Services directorate as a whole is £3.3m. The strategic housing service is projecting an overspend of £0.7m. This relates to the action taken to manage the demand for temporary accommodation in the borough.

Broader issues of particular relevance to the work of the Committee

5.2 From discussion with officers and the Chair, and from reviewing the items looked at over the course of the 2016-17 work programme, there are a number of issues that the committee may wish to consider for scrutiny over 2017-18:

- **Housing zones**

Housing zones are intended to boost housing supply in London by unlocking and accelerating housing delivery through a range of planning and financial measures. The GLA expects around 35% of housing in housing zones to be affordable. There are two housing zones in Lewisham: Catford Town Centre and New Bermondsey. The Housing Zone designation for the Catford Programme was approved by Mayor & Cabinet in September. Officers can now enter into agreements with the GLA for a grant of £30m to support affordable housing. An independent review of matters relating to the New Bermondsey housing zone process is expected in 2017. Updates on significant developments with both housing zones, particularly those relating to affordable housing, can be provided by officers.

- **Homelessness and temporary accommodation pressures**

While the number of Lewisham residents in temporary accommodation has stabilised in recent years, as a result of a number of steps taken by the council, homelessness remains a significant issue in the borough. There are around 1,800 households in temporary accommodation in Lewisham, around 400 of which are living outside of the borough. There are around 500 Lewisham residents living in nightly-paid accommodation. There has also been a 45% increase in the last two years of the number of applicants whose reason for homelessness is eviction from the private rented sector.

- **Homeless Reduction Bill**

Related the issues outline above is the Homeless Reduction Bill, currently making its way through Parliament. In short, the proposed legislation would require councils to do more to prevent homelessness including, among other things, providing more proactive advice and support to single people who are homeless. In Lewisham, it is expected that this could lead to an increased caseload of 2,200. The Government has said that additional funding of £48m will be made available. The LGA has said that the true costs of the legislation are difficult to predict. For more information see: House of Commons Library, [Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17](#), October 2016.

- **Supported housing**

There are a number of supported housing schemes in Lewisham, designed to help vulnerable people live more independently. From April 2019, the government is intending to introduce a new funding model for supported housing. In short, this will mean that people living in supported housing will only be able to claim housing benefit up to the Local Housing Allowance rate. The government is also planning to devolve funding to local authorities in England to provide, where necessary, a 'top-up' to providers to reflect the higher costs of supported housing. A Green Paper on

the detailed arrangements is expected in the spring. For more information see: House of Commons Library, [Paying for supported housing](#), December 2016.

- **Housing quality, suitability and affordability**

Given the significant housing development ongoing in Lewisham, including the two housing zones mentioned above, the committee may wish to review local evidence and best practice in this area. This could include the quality and suitability of recent housing developments in Lewisham and the impact that variations in this have on people and their quality of life. This could provide the committee with a good working knowledge of a complex and technical topic as key housing-related proposals come forward in the next municipal year.

Housing Select Committee terms of reference

- 5.3 The Council's constitution sets out the Committee's powers, as defined by the terms of reference. These are included at **appendix A**. The Committee should familiarise itself with the terms of reference and consider its remit when selecting items for scrutiny.
- 5.4 As set out in the constitution, the Committee has a responsibility for scrutinising the Council's strategic housing functions as well as the work of Lewisham Homes and the Brockley Private Finance Initiative (PFI). The strategic housing division is responsible for delivering housing objectives based on the borough's sustainable communities strategy and delivered through the borough's housing strategy.
- 5.6 The Council is responsible for a stock of approximately 18,000 homes. These are managed by the Council's Arm's Length Management Organisation, Lewisham Homes and the Brockley Private Finance Initiative. In previous years, the Committee has scrutinised the Lewisham Homes and Brockley PFI annual reports and business plans. Members of the Committee have also resolved to receive six monthly updates from these organisations. The Committee's terms of reference also give it the remit to establish links with social housing providers in the borough.

6. Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

7. Legal implications

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 The 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.

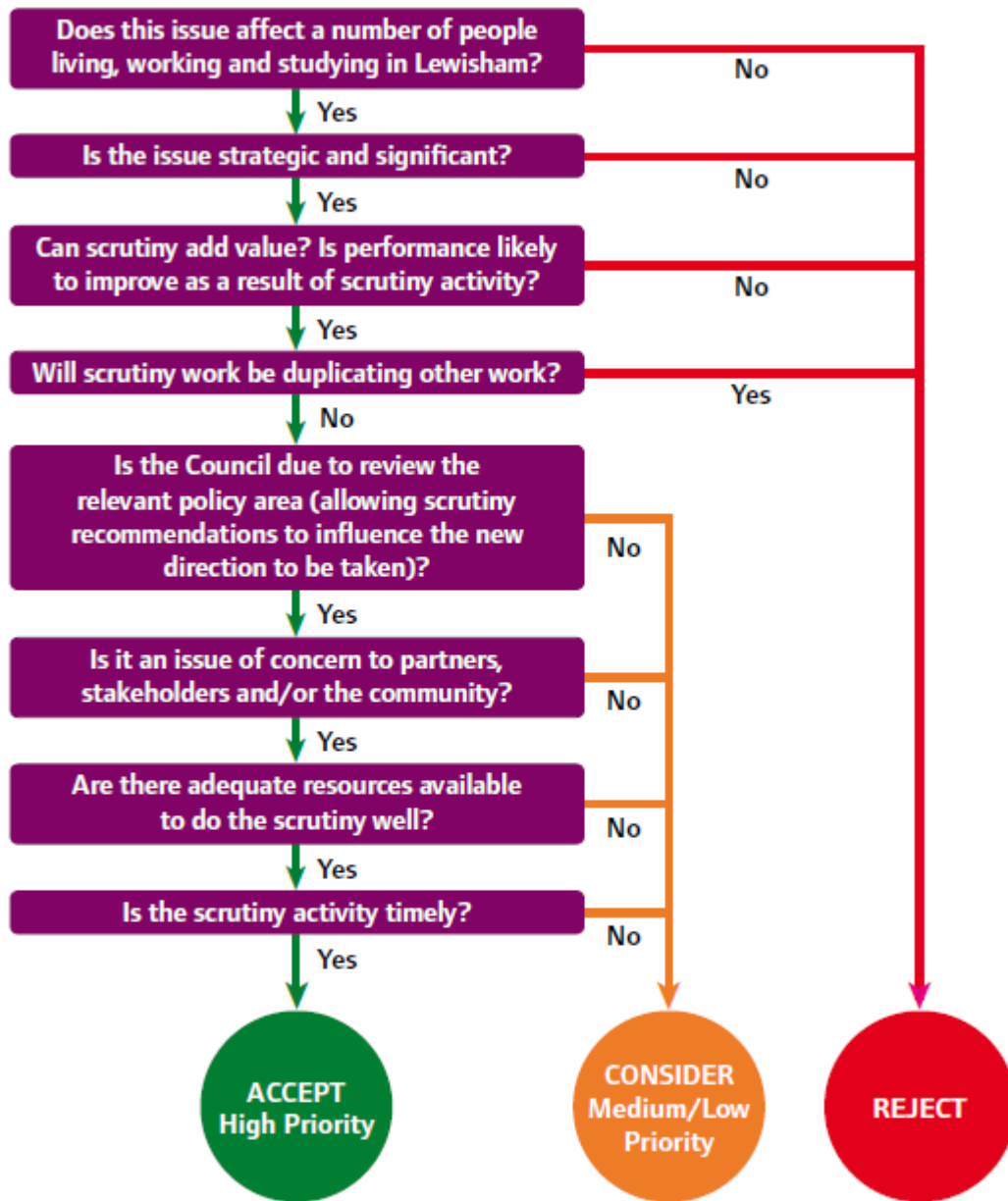
8.3 There may be equalities implications arising from items on the work programme and all activities undertaken by the Select Committee will need to give due consideration to this.

Background documents

Lewisham Council's Constitution

Centre for Public Scrutiny: the Good Scrutiny Guide

Scrutiny work programme – prioritisation process



Appendix A

Housing Select Committee terms of reference

To fulfil all overview and scrutiny functions in relation to the discharge by the authority of its housing functions. This shall include the power to:

- (a) review and scrutinise decisions made or other action taken in connection with the discharge of the Council of its housing function
- (b) make reports or recommendations to the authority and/or Mayor and Cabinet with respect to the discharge of these functions
- (c) make recommendations to the authority and/or Mayor and Cabinet proposals for housing policy
- (d) to review initiatives put in place by the Council with a view to achieving the Decent Homes standard, making recommendations and/or report thereon to the Council and/or Mayor and Cabinet
- (e) To establish links with housing providers in the borough which are concerned with the provision of social housing