



Public Accounts Select Committee

Report title: Select Committee work programme report

Date: 18 March 2020

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Timothy Andrew, Scrutiny Manager

Outline and recommendations

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

- To note the Committee's terms of reference attached at Appendix A;
- To consider the completed work programme attached at Appendix B.
- Agree the final report and draft recommendations for the 'Commercialisation and culture change' at Appendix C;
- To consider potential items for the Committee's work programme in the next municipal year as well as possible items for future task and finish groups.
- To review the forward plan of key decisions to consider whether there are any items for further scrutiny.

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Committee drew up a draft work programme at the beginning of the municipal year for submission to the Business Panel for consideration.
- 1.2. The Business Panel considered the proposed work programmes of each committee on 7 May 2019 and agreed the overview and scrutiny work programme.
- 1.3. This is the last scheduled meeting of Public Accounts Select Committee for the 2019/20 municipal year. The Committee's completed work programme is attached at Appendix B. The Committee is asked to put forward suggestions for the 2020/21 work programme and for potential task and finish groups.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Committee is asked to:

- Note the Committee's terms of reference attached at Appendix A;
- consider the completed work programme attached at Appendix B,
- Agree the final report and recommendations for the 'Parks Management in-depth review' at Appendix C;
- consider potential items for the Committee's work programme in the next municipal year as well as possible items for future task and finish groups.
- review the forthcoming key decisions set out in Appendix D, and consider any items for further scrutiny

3. Public Accounts Select Committee 2019-20

3.1. The committee had eight meetings in the 2019-20 municipal year. The completed work programme is attached at appendix B. The committee undertook an in-depth review into 'Commercialisation and culture change.

3.2. The Committee continues to focus on areas of exception and risk. Over the past year it has extended its oversight beyond the pressures in children's and adult social care spending (where there are sustained pressures with multiple causes) to include scrutiny of the Council's environmental services, where significant challenges remain in managing costs. The Committee continues to review regular financial forecasts and the medium term financial strategy - as well as the preparation of the Council's budget and the cuts programme.

3.3. The Committee's ongoing review into corporate culture change and commercialisation has been directed by Councillor Krupski - who has developed a scrutiny specialism on this topic. A fact finding visit to the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham in the autumn demonstrated how that Council had taken a 'big bang' approach to commercialisation through the radical transformation of all of its services. An informative session with officers from the London Borough of Waltham Forest in the spring demonstrated an alternative 'organic' and 'incremental' approach to commercialisation, which used existing strengths in that Council to grow its commercial capabilities. The Committee anticipates that funding will be made available from the transformation budget to take forward this work in the near future.

3.4. At its February meeting, the Committee scrutinised the draft budget for 2020-21. Both the Mayor and the Cabinet Member were in attendance to answer questions. It is clear that the significant pressures facing the Council's finances and its resources are set to continue. Sustained improvement is still required in children's social care – whilst the service also works to contain spending pressures and resolve historic overspending. The receipt of grant funding for adult social care – not least from 'better care' and 'winter pressure' funding - have alleviated some of the pressures in that budget but continued uncertainties and risks remain. The Committee expects that the measures taken in environmental services (specifically in relation to fleet costs) will begin to have a positive impact on its budget pressures but some of the issues it faces will take concerted efforts at every level to resolve. Furthermore, there are uncertainties in the broader economy and it is highly likely that the Government's upcoming spending review will result in major challenges for local government. The recent stay from compound years of cuts will not last - and the Council will be required to make approximately £40m of additional reductions to its budget over the next three years.

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4. **Prioritisation and planning for 2020-21**

4.1. Five meetings of Public Accounts Select Committee are provisionally scheduled for the next municipal year with the proposed dates as follows:

- 11 June 2020
- 1 October 2020
- 3 December 2020
- 2 February 2021
- 17 March 2021

4.2. A work programme report will be put forward at the first meeting of Public Accounts Select Committee for 2020-21 for members to discuss and agree. The report will take account of the Committee's previous work and may incorporate:

- The scrutiny prioritisation process and potential key themes and priorities for 2020-21
- 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;
- suggestions from officers;
- relevant decisions due to be made by Mayor and Cabinet.

4.3 When deciding on items to include in the work programme, the Committee should have regard to:

- the criteria for selecting and prioritising topics;
- the Committee's terms of reference;
- the capacity for items in terms of the Committee's time and resources;
- the context for setting the work programme and advice from officers;

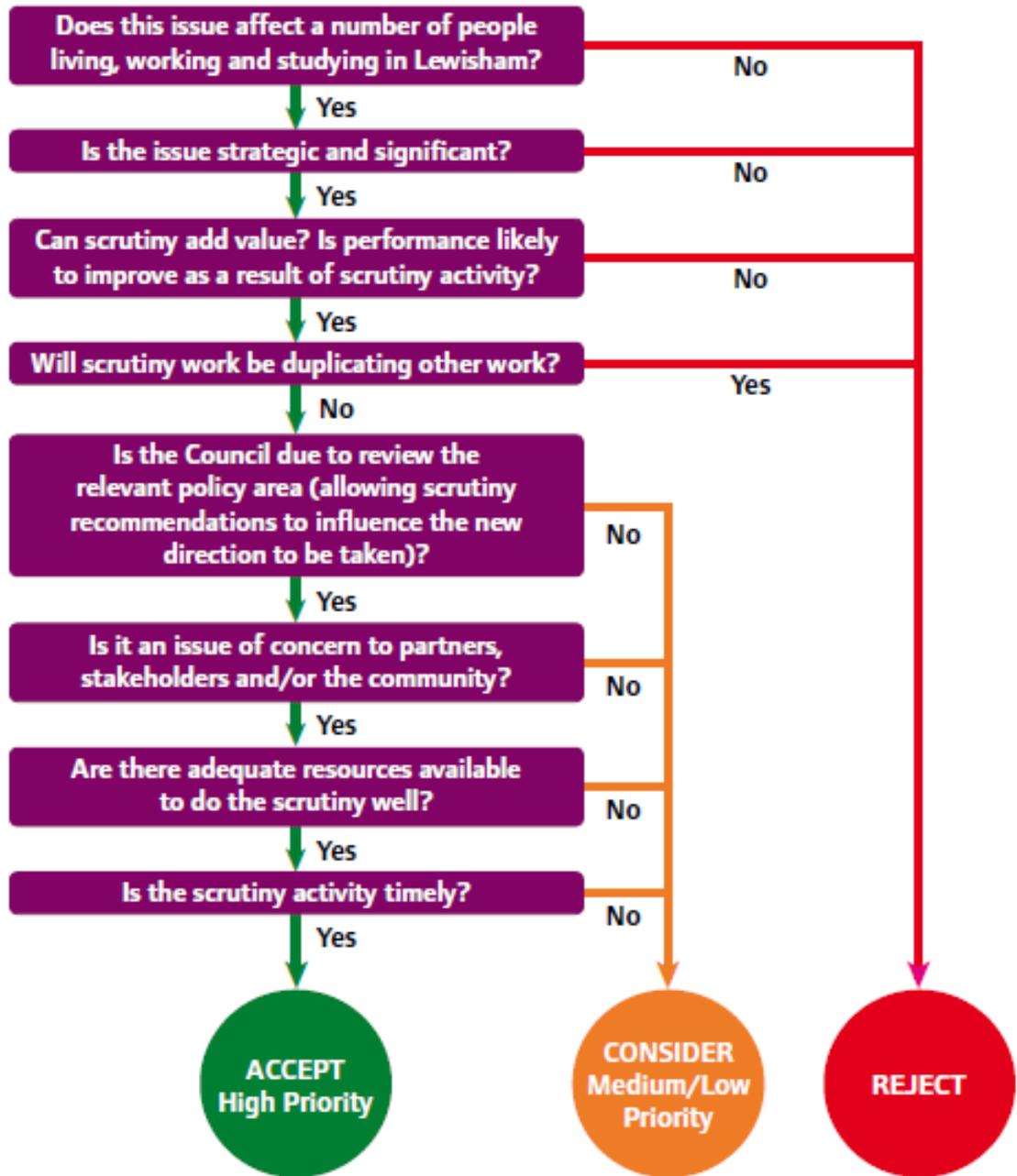
4.7 The flowchart below, based on the model from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) is designed to help Members decide which items should be added to the work programme. It is important to focus on areas where there is a clear recommendation and consideration by the Committee will influence decision-making.

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Scrutiny work programme – prioritisation process



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- 4.8 The remit of the Public Accounts Select Committee is broad and for the Committee to ensure its work programme is as tailored and focussed as possible delivering robust scrutiny, it is important to ensure items are prioritised and key outcomes identified. It is likely that due to the volume of work, the Committee will have to make difficult decisions considering where it can most add value and influence and which items are of most importance to the Council and Lewisham residents. Particular care needs to be taken regarding the potential for duplicating work by other committees and boards.
- 4.9 As well as using the prioritisation process above, the Committee may wish to highlight key themes which it believes to be of strategic importance for 2020-21 as well as for possible task and finish groups. These can then be used by the Committee to help determine whether items should be added to the work programme.

Different types of scrutiny

- 4.10 It is important to agree how each work programme item will be scrutinised. It is recommended that items for information only do not come to Committee. Typically, the majority of items take the form of single meeting items, where members:
- (a) agree what information and analysis they wish to receive in order to achieve their desired outcomes;
 - (b) receive a report presenting that information and analysis;
 - (c) ask questions of the presenting officer or guest;
 - (d) agree, following discussion of the report, whether the Committee will make recommendations or receive further information or analysis before summarising its views.

The new structure should free up time to seek different voices when considering topics. This could include independent experts, partner organisations or community representatives.

- 4.11 For each item, the Committee should consider what type of scrutiny is required and whether the item is high or medium/low priority (using the prioritisation process). Allocating priority to work programme items will enable the Committee to decide which low and medium priority items it should remove from its work programme, when it decides to add high priority issues in the course of the year.
- 4.12 Items within the committee's work programme should be linked to the priorities of the Council's Corporate Strategy. The Council's Corporate Strategy for 2018-2022 was approved at full council in February 2019.

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4.13 The strategic priorities of the [Corporate Strategy for 2018-2022](#) are:

[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.

Task and finish groups

4.14 Subject to agreement at the Council's annual general meeting, it is proposed that in addition to five meetings per year of each Select Committee, there will be up to six thematic 'task and finish groups' in the course of a municipal year. Members will suggest topics through a proforma and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will agree which topics should be taken forward. Each task and finish group will then carry out in-depth work looking at a particular topic, gathering evidence and research, hearing from expert witnesses and going on visits where required. The task and finish group will produce a final report with recommendations for the Mayor and Cabinet.

5. **Financial implications**

5.1. 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.

6. **Legal implications**

6.1. 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.

7. **Equalities implications**

7.1. 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.

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- 7.2. 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.
- 7.3. 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.
8. **Climate change and environmental implications**
- 8.1. There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Items on the Committee's work programme may have climate change implications and these will need to be considered as part of the reports on those items.
9. **Crime and disorder implications**
- 9.1. 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.
10. **Health and wellbeing implications**
- 10.1. 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.
11. **Report author and contact**
- 11.1. If you have any questions about this report please contact: Timothy Andrew, timothy.andrew@lewisham.gov.uk

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Appendix A

Public Accounts Select Committee 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

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