



## Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel

### Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee Work Programmes 2021 – 22

**Date:** 20 July 2021

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Assistant Chief Executive (Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

### Outline and recommendations

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

### Timeline of engagement and decision-making

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

- Housing – 7 June 2021
- Safer Stronger Communities – 16 June 2021
- Children and Young People – 17 June 2021
- Healthier Communities – 21 June 2021
- Sustainable Development – 30 June 2021
- Public Accounts – 7 July 2021.

Business Panel is being asked to review and approve the proposed contents of the work programmes at its meeting on 20 July 2021.

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. The Select Committees have each met and agreed a draft annual work programme. Business Panel is asked to consider and agree the proposed work programmes of each of the Select Committees.

## 2. Recommendations

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

## 3. Policy Context

- 3.1. The Council's Corporate Strategy 2018-22 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:
1. Open Lewisham
  2. Tackling the housing crisis
  3. Giving children and young people the best start in life
  4. Building an inclusive local economy
  5. Delivering and defending: Health, Social Care and Support
  6. Making Lewisham greener
  7. Building safer communities
- 1.5 There are four strategic themes in the borough's Covid-19 recovery plan, *Future Lewisham*, which support what the organisation wants for every single resident and the borough:
1. An economically sound future
  2. A healthy and well future
  3. A greener future
  4. A future we all have a part in
- 1.6 The Select Committees have devised annual work programmes which cover areas of business that fall within, and contribute towards achieving, all corporate priorities and strategic themes. The implementation of the attached work programmes will therefore have implications for all policy areas.
- 1.7 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 recovery themes 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 Business Panel 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 Business Panel 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, the Business Panel will not normally amend work programme unless it is necessary to ensure the effective conduct of Council business. Once the Business Panel has approved the select committee work programme, the Select Committee will implement it.

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- 4.3 It has been agreed that each Select Committee will meet five times a year, and no longer conduct in-depth reviews, to allow capacity for task and finish groups to be established, which will carry out in-depth investigations into topical issues. Three Task and Finish Groups were established by the full Overview and Scrutiny Committee in May 2021.

## **5. The review of the approach to scrutiny**

- 5.1. As a result of the findings of the Local Democracy Review, various changes to the existing practice and approach to scrutiny were agreed and implemented. The changes are as follows:

- Each Select Committee will meet five times per year.
- Each Select Committee will have six members apart from the Children and Young People Select Committee which will have eight members plus five statutory parent governor and diocesan representatives.
- Each Select Committee will look at no more than three (ideally two) substantive items per meeting.
- Select Committees will specify what information they would like to see in officer reports to ensure they meet expectations.
- The Select Committees will not conduct ongoing in-depth reviews but will look at items in an in-depth way. (Methods of conducting in-depth scrutiny might include, but will not be 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 will aim 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 to allow urgent business to be concluded, the meeting should continue for no longer than a further 30 minutes<sup>1</sup>.)
- If they are required, the Select Committees will receive information reports (reports to note) outside of the formal meeting cycle. The report will be emailed to Committee Members with any questions put to the report author for a written response, via the Scrutiny Manager.
- Task and Finish Groups will 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 2021-22**

- 6.1. In developing their work programmes for 2021-22, the Select Committees have considered:

- regular items, e.g. annual budget scrutiny
- topics recommended for scrutiny by select committees at the end of the 2020-21 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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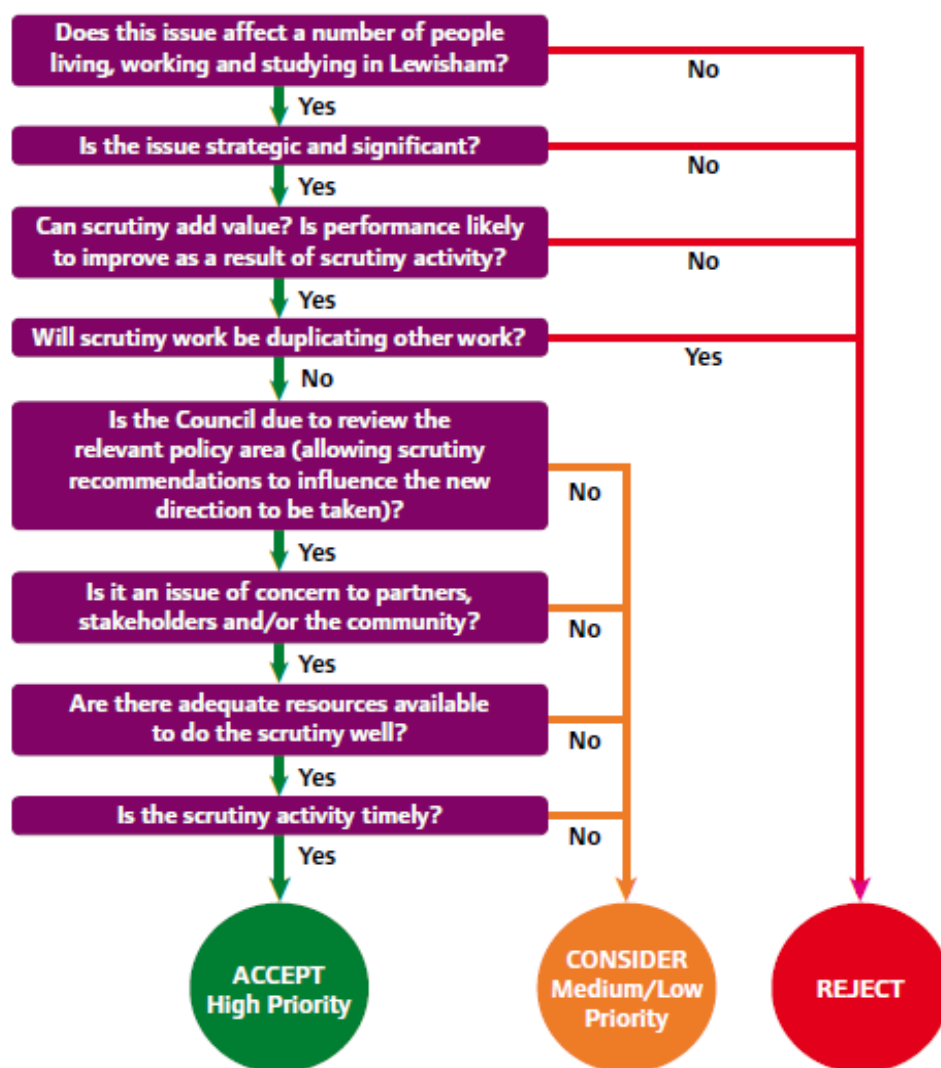
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of the scrutiny prioritisation process (please see below), which supports members in identifying priorities and managing workloads and the guidelines for effective scrutiny (Appendix A).

- 6.3. The draft work programmes attached at Appendix B 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 Business Panel 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](#).

## 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.

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## **8. Legal implications**

- 8.1. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel 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 the Business Panel 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 the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

## **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.

## **12. Health and wellbeing implications**

- 12.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the implementation

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of the recommendations in this report.

### 13. Background papers

13.1. Work programme reports to the following meetings:

- Housing – 7 June 2021
- Safer Stronger Communities – 16 June 2021
- Children and Young People – 17 June 2021
- Healthier Communities – 21 June 2021
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### 14. Glossary

| Term   | Definition  |
|--|---|
| Local Democracy Review                                       | The Local Democracy Review was a councillor-led review of local democracy in Lewisham, which made recommendations about how the Mayor and Council could enhance their openness and transparency, increase public involvement in Council decisions and promote effective decision-making.  |
| 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 Business Panel (OSBP) and Education OSBP | <p>Lewisham has two Business Panels (sub-committees of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee).</p> <p>OS Business Panel 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 Business Panel are reviewing key decisions once they have been taken (potentially "calling in" key decisions that have been made but not yet implemented); coordinating and approving the overall scrutiny work programme; and allocating scrutiny work in the event that it crosses the remit of more than one scrutiny body.</p> <p>Three parent governors and two diocesan representatives sit on the Education Business Panel, alongside the councillors</p> |

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|-----------------------------|--|
|                             | that make up the regular Business Panel. The Education Business Panel reviews (and can call-in) key decisions that are education matters.  |
| 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

- 15.1. Charlotte Dale, Head of Overview and Scrutiny, 0208 31 48286  
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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).

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