



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND RESOURCES**

to
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
1 AUGUST 2023**

SCRUTINY WORKPLAN UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the new Committee at its first meeting with an update on the existing scrutiny workplan for review.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee reviews and endorses the existing scrutiny workplan, together with any updates, as a basis for the planning of its future meetings.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 At the end of the last municipal year, the existing workplan with outstanding actions was as follows:

Subject	Status / Learning outcomes and actions	Update
<p>Notice of Motion relating to a successful planning appeal and award of costs against the Council – site at Burnham-on-Crouch. (Councillor A S Fluker)</p> <p>Planning decision-making</p>	<p>In referring this and another related motion, the Council having emphasised the need for more objective and evidence-based decision-making in the future.</p> <p>Following an interim report in October 2022 the Committee considered a report from its Working Group in January 2023 identifying a range of measures to help improve planning decision making. The Committee recommended to the Council the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and refresh of the Planning Appeals Protocol; • Views and conclusions on Member Training – limited to concentrating on bespoke and specialised training; and • Review and improvement of 	<p>The Council at its meeting in February 2023 accepted the Committee’s recommendation which has been actioned and referred onwards.</p> <p>A previous conclusion of the Committee as part of its work on this item, but not recommended, was the concept of a ‘constitutional break’ where Planning Committees were minded to overturn an Officer’s recommendation.</p> <p>Although the need for a review and improvement of Officer reports on planning applications has already been identified, when previously looking at this item the suggestion was made that Members’ understanding of the issues associated with certain planning proposals could be improved by Officers providing technical</p>

Subject	Status / Learning outcomes and actions	Update
	Officer Reports.	<p>presentations prior to and outside the formality of the meeting itself.</p> <p>Both these items are therefore available for review, and the workplan item itself is quite wide and capable of ongoing scrutiny.</p> <p>With the agreed conclusions already being actioned, and further work being undertaken on the wider aspects of this item, an ultimate outcome could be the production of a new protocol on Planning Decision Making for inclusion in the Constitution.</p>
Planning Enforcement – performance and processes	<p>An interim report was considered at the January 2023 Committee when it was decided to seek further information on the following detailed issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritisation of enforcement cases • Baseline study/pathways for specific categories of enforcement processes • Protocols for Member involvement in enforcement processes • Arrangements for after-office hours work to assist with investigating and monitoring enforcement cases • Arrangements for the closing of enforcement cases • Concept of Compliance Officers for the checking of planning conditions particularly on new residential developments, new builds and extensions etc. <p>At the March meeting of the Committee a further report on progress was received and it was agreed that this should be added to the scrutiny workplan, with a focus on policy review, staffing resource and other ongoing performance review issues.</p>	<p>Given the decision at the March meeting, it will be for the Committee to decide how it wishes to proceed with this item of scrutiny, and to what extent it wishes to further involve the Working Group in any scrutiny planning.</p> <p>In the meantime, more recent internal performance data indicates further progress in the closing of cases with the number of open cases at the beginning of the year having been halved by mid-June.</p>
Staff Exit	Reference from Performance	

Subject	Status / Learning outcomes and actions	Update
Questionnaires	<p>Governance and Audit Committee in September 2022 that the Committee reviews the outcomes from these.</p> <p>The Committee in October 2022 agreed to add this to its scrutiny workplan and further detail behind high level data on responses will be brought to the Committee in due course.</p>	
Cyber Security Update	<p>Reference from Performance, Governance and Audit Committee in September 2022 that the Committee reviews the audit and technical reports on this matter.</p> <p>The Committee in October 2022 agreed to add this to its scrutiny workplan. At its March 2023 meeting, it agreed to accept by way of reassurance the update on the various actions undertaken, and to further review the item in the light of the pending Internal Audit reports.</p>	
Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults – corporate risk update	<p>Reference from Performance, Governance and Audit Committee in January 2023 for review to ensure that the Council is supporting this area of work appropriately together with the Officers undertaking the actual work.</p> <p>At its March 2023 meeting the Committee received this reference and agreed to add the item to its scrutiny workplan. In the light of information received as to work in progress the Committee agreed to review the matter before the end of September 2023.</p>	<p>At the last meeting of the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee as part of the last quarter's performance reporting, it was stated that the Safeguarding Forum online reporting and case management continued to be robust. Dates for meetings of the Forum were due to be set, followed by adjustments to the online reporting tool and reviewing the wider Safeguarding Strategy.</p>

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This report provides the Committee with the existing status of previously agreed items included in the scrutiny workplan together with updates as shown. It is open to

the Committee to review this and endorse the workplan as a basis for its future meetings.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2023 - 2027

5.1 Provide good quality services.

5.1.1 Thorough scrutiny processes support improved performance and efficiency which in turn will contribute to the quality of services provided, and functions undertaken by the Council.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – None directly, but individual scrutiny reviews will enable the impact on customers to be assessed.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – Equalities are considered as part of the reporting on review work undertaken by Officers.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Scrutiny reviews enable potential Corporate Risks to the organisation and their mitigation to be identified.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Scrutiny reviews offer the potential for an assessment of financial impact to the organisation.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Scrutiny reviews offer the potential for an assessment of any resource impact to the organisation.

Background Papers: None

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