

Work Programme

Date: 24 January 2024

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

- All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work programme for the municipal year. In doing so, the work programme should not be considered as fixed and rigid, it should be recognised as a document that can be adapted and changed to reflect any new and emerging issues throughout the year; and also reflect any timetable issues that might occur from time to time.
- The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules also state that, where appropriate, all terms of reference for work undertaken by Scrutiny Boards will include ‘to review how and to what effect consideration has been given to the impact of a service or policy on all equality areas, as set out in the Council’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme.’
- Reflecting on the information in this report, members are requested to consider and discuss the Board’s work programme for this municipal year.

Recommendations

Members are requested to:

- a) Consider the Board’s work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.

What is this report about?

1. A draft work programme for the Children and Families Scrutiny Board is presented at Appendix 1 for consideration and discussion. Reflected in the document are known items of scrutiny activity, such as performance and budget monitoring, as well as other areas of work identified by the Board over the course of the municipal year.
2. The latest Executive Board minutes from the meeting held on 13 December 2023 are also attached as Appendix 2. The Scrutiny Board is asked to consider and note the Executive Board minutes, insofar as they relate to the remit of the Scrutiny Board; and consider any matter where specific scrutiny activity may also be warranted.
3. Members will note some adjustments to the work programme since the last meeting in late November. The March meeting now features a Draft Youth Justice Plan item which is part of the council's Budget and Policy Framework and therefore in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, Full Council is responsible for its adoption. As part of that process the Executive must consult with the relevant Scrutiny Board, which in this case is the Children and Families Board and following that consultation the Scrutiny Board shall report to the Executive on the outcome of its deliberations. More detail can be found on this procedure in Part 4 – Rules of Procedure in the Council's constitution.
4. As a result of this additional item in March members will note that there is now a busy agenda planned on that date.
5. In addition, and as noted under item 10 of today's agenda the EHCP Inquiry is an evolving work stream and members may wish to consider the timescale for that inquiry given that the work being led by the Children and Families Directorate, supported by PwC, on EHCPs is not expected to conclude until late March. Furthermore, there is an ongoing survey of children and families in the city aimed at obtaining feedback on how the process of getting EHCP and SEND support worked and what difference it has made, in order to improve things for those accessing support now and others who may need support in the future, which may have a bearing on the Board's work.
6. Following the recent Provision of EHCP Support Working Group the Chair of the Board referenced the possibility of allocating one of the Board's co-opted member places to an individual representing the voice of children and families accessing SEND support and Alternative Provision in the city. This will require a further, more detailed report to be brought to the Board in February setting out the options and process that will be followed if the Board supports this approach. Members are therefore asked to comment on this and if supported note that the Work Programme for February will be amended to reflect this planned report.
7. Lastly, in September 2023 the Board considered an item on the impact of asylum changes on children in Leeds. The Board retains an interest in this area of work and members are asked to consider when this item could be brought back for further scrutiny consideration.

What impact will this proposal have?

8. All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work programme for the municipal year.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

9. The terms of reference of the Scrutiny Boards promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the Best City Ambition.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

10. To enable Scrutiny to focus on strategic areas of priority, it is recognised that each Scrutiny Board needs to maintain dialogue with the Directors and Executive Board Members holding the relevant portfolios. The Vision for Scrutiny also states that Scrutiny Boards should seek the advice of the Scrutiny Officer, the relevant Director and Executive Member about available resources prior to agreeing items of work.

What are the resource implications?

11. Experience has shown that the Scrutiny process is more effective and adds greater value if the Board seeks to minimise the number of substantial inquiries running at one time and focus its resources on one key issue at a time.
12. The Vision for Scrutiny, agreed by full Council also recognises that like all other Council functions, resources to support the Scrutiny function are under considerable pressure and that requests from Scrutiny Boards cannot always be met.
13. Consequently, when establishing their work programmes Scrutiny Boards should:
- Seek the advice of the Scrutiny officer, the relevant Director and Executive Member about available resources;
 - Avoid duplication by having a full appreciation of any existing forums already having oversight of, or monitoring a particular issue;
 - Ensure any Scrutiny undertaken has clarity and focus of purpose and will add value and can be delivered within an agreed time frame.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

14. There are no risk management implications relevant to this report.

What are the legal implications?

15. This report has no specific legal implications.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft work programme of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board for the 2023/24 municipal year.
- Appendix 2 – Minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 13 December 2023.

Background papers

- None