

Work Schedule

Date: 7th July 2021

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

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work schedule for the municipal year. In doing so, the work schedule should not be considered a fixed and rigid schedule, 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 and Diversity Scheme'.
- The latest iteration of the Board's work schedule is attached to this report for the Board's consideration.

Recommendations

Members are requested to consider and discuss the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the 2021/22 municipal year.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

1. All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work schedule for the municipal year and therefore the latest iteration of the Board's work schedule for the remainder of the municipal year is attached as Appendix 1 for Members' consideration.
2. During the Board's consultative meeting on 9th June 2021, Members discussed possible areas of work for the Board to undertake this year, as set out within the note of that meeting. The latest iteration of the Board's work schedule is therefore reflective of the Board's discussion held on 9th June 2021.
3. The latest Executive Board minutes from the meeting held on 23rd June 2021 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.

Developing the work schedule

4. When considering any developments and/or modifications to the work schedule, effort should be undertaken to:
 - Avoid unnecessary 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.
 - Avoid pure "information items" except where that information is being received as part of a policy/scrutiny review.
 - Seek advice about available resources and relevant timings, taking into consideration the workload across the Scrutiny Boards and the type of Scrutiny taking place.
 - Build in sufficient flexibility to enable the consideration of urgent matters that may arise during the year.
5. In addition, in order to deliver the work schedule, the Board may need to take a flexible approach and undertake activities outside the formal schedule of meetings – such as working groups and site visits, where necessary and appropriate. This flexible approach may also require additional formal meetings of the Scrutiny Board.

Developments since the previous Scrutiny Board meeting

Report on the potential long-term impacts of Covid-19 on children and families.

6. During the Scrutiny Board's consultative meeting on 9th June 2021, it was noted that as well as monitoring and helping to inform some of the immediate responses needed during the Covid-19 pandemic, the former Children and Families Scrutiny Board had used its final meeting in March 2021 to begin exploring what the potential long-term impacts of Covid-19 are likely to be on children and their families.
7. In anticipation of the Scrutiny Board conducting its July meeting as a formal public meeting in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, it was proposed that a report summarising the Board's views and potential recommendations arising from its March discussion, but also reflecting any developments and issues raised since March, be considered and formally approved by the Board in July.
8. However, following confirmation by Government of the extension of national Covid-19 restrictions until at least 19th July 2021, a joint agreement was reached by all Scrutiny

Board Chairs to conduct the planned Scrutiny Board meetings in July as remote consultative meetings.

9. While this means that the Board's report can no longer be formally approved during today's consultative meeting, the Chair would like to use the opportunity of today's meeting under the work schedule item to invite Board Members to relay any views they may have on the report at this stage, with the intention of a final version of the report – subject to any suggested amendments – being scheduled for formal ratification at the next meeting of the Board held in accordance with the 1972 Act. The drafted report will therefore be made available to Board Members in advance of today's meeting.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

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

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

11. 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?

12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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 legal implications?

15. This report has no specific legal implications.

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

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

Does this proposal support the council's three Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

17. The terms of reference of the Scrutiny Boards promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the best council objectives.

Appendices

18. Appendix 1 – Draft work schedule of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board for the 2021/22 municipal year.
19. Appendix 2 – Draft minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 23rd June 2021.

Background papers

20. None.