

Work Schedule

Date: 22 February 2024

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)

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 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'.
- Reflecting on the information in this report and information presented as part of other agenda items at today's meeting, Members are requested to consider and discuss the Board's work schedule for this municipal year.

Recommendations

Members are requested to:

- a) Consider the draft work schedule for the 2023/24 municipal year.

What is this report about?

1. A draft work schedule for the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing & Communities) is presented at Appendix 1 for consideration and discussion. Reflected in the work schedule are known items of scrutiny activity, such as performance and budget monitoring, identified Budget and Policy Framework items and specific member requests for individual work items.
2. The Executive Board minutes from the meetings held on 7 February 2024 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 may wish to note that the [Executive Board agenda](#) included the response to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations relating to the accessibility and safety of parks and green spaces (original recommendations were included at [Appendix 1](#)). The agenda also included the joint Scrutiny Report, which responded to the initial budget proposals. This can be found at appendix 3 within the [full budget report](#) (page 123).

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. To deliver the work schedule, the Board may need to undertake activities outside the formal schedule of meetings – such as working groups and site visits. Additional formal meetings of the Scrutiny Board may also be required.
6. Members are asked to note that a working group is scheduled for 1.30-2.30pm on 2 April 2024 to discuss the changing regulations relating to social landlords.

What impact will this proposal have?

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

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

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

8. The terms of reference of the Scrutiny Boards promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the priorities set out in the Best City Ambition.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

9. 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?

10. 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.
11. 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.
12. Consequently, when establishing their work programmes Scrutiny Boards should consider the criteria set out in paragraph 3.

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

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

What are the legal implications?

14. This report has no specific legal implications.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft work schedule of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board for the 2023/24 municipal year.
- Appendix 2 – Minutes of the Executive Board meeting on 7 February 2024.

Background papers

- None.