

Report of Head of Democratic Services

Report to Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources)

Date: 16 November 2020

Subject: Work Schedule

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the municipal year 2020/21.

2. Background Information

- 2.1 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.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 A draft work schedule is attached for consideration at Appendix 1. Already included within the draft work schedule are traditional items of Scrutiny work. These involve recommendation tracking of work previously undertaken by the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board; performance monitoring reports and any Budget and Policy Framework Plans.
- 3.2 On 16 March 2020, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, Leeds City Council took the necessary steps to cancel a number of planned meetings of various Committees,

Boards and Panels. This included all Scrutiny Board meetings and any joint scrutiny arrangements where the Council acts as the lead authority.

- 3.3 In June 2020 public sessions of all Scrutiny Boards re-started, albeit remotely. It was agreed with Scrutiny Chairs that the first two sessions for each Board will be in a more streamlined format than traditional committee meetings. This meeting will be the fifth Strategy & Resources meeting to be held remotely and the new approach has proven to be effective in terms of stability and effectively delivering scrutiny board committee meetings.
- 3.4 At its July meeting Scrutiny Board Strategy and Resources considered the work schedule for the year and a number of suggestions were made. These focussed on the budgetary implications of Covid-19 including Council Tax and Business Rate collection, the impact the pandemic is having on ways of working, including home working, and on how the council manages its assets and also grant allocations to Welcome to Yorkshire.
- 3.5 Further consideration of the Work Schedule took place at the September meeting of the Board and members identified continued interest in Business Rate and Council Tax recovery rates for 2020/21 and how these have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, further interest in grant allocations to Welcome to Yorkshire and a desire to look in more detail at how Covid-19 will impact the Council in terms of new ways of working, staff well-being and use of office buildings and council assets. Some of these items were considered as part the October agenda and a number of others have been included in today's agenda pack. Members are asked to consider in more detail work schedule items for the remainder of the municipal year. The Board's work schedule is included at Appendix 1.
- 3.6 Printed draft minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 21 October 2020 are attached at 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 identify any matter where specific scrutiny activity may be warranted, and therefore subsequently incorporated into the work schedule.

Developing the work schedule

- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 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.

4. Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 The Vision for Scrutiny states that Scrutiny Boards should seek the advice of the Scrutiny officer, the relevant Director(s) and Executive Member(s) about available resources prior to agreeing items of work.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules 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'.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

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

Climate Emergency

4.3.2 When considering areas of work, the Board is reminded that influencing climate change and sustainability should be a key area of focus.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

4.4.1 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.

4.4.2 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.

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.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

4.5.1 This report has no specific legal implications.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 This report has no specific risk management implications.

5. Conclusions

5.1 All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work schedule for the municipal year. The latest iteration of the Board's work schedule is attached as Appendix 1 for consideration and agreement of the Scrutiny Board – subject to any identified and agreed amendments.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Members are asked to consider the matters outlined in this report and agree (or amend) the overall work schedule (as presented at Appendix 1) as the basis for the Board's work for the remainder of 2020/21.

7. Background Documents¹

7.1 None

¹ 1 The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.