



Report of Head of Democratic Services

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Date: 3rd February 2021

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 remainder of the current municipal year.

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 The latest iteration of the Board's work schedule for the remainder of the municipal year is attached as Appendix 1 for consideration and agreement of the Scrutiny Board – subject to any identified and agreed amendments.

Developing the work schedule

- 3.2 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.

3.3 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

Department for Education/Ofqual consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021.

- 3.4 During the Board’s last meeting on 6th January 2021, Members acknowledged the announcement made by Government on 4th January 2021 that summer exams would be cancelled and an alternative approach would be taken to assess pupils fairly. Members were advised that further announcements from Government were expected to clarify alternative methods of assessment, along with the launch of a formal consultation on these matters. While Members discussed the potential merits of the Scrutiny Board holding a further working group meeting to consider the detail of this consultation, the Board had agreed to await the launch of the consultation before determining an appropriate way forward.
- 3.5 The DfE/Ofqual consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021 was launched on Friday 15th January 2021, with a closing date of 29th January 2021.
- 3.6 In view of the restricted timescale, Board Members were invited to consider the proposals set out in the consultation document and share their views directly with the Chair so that a summary note, based around a consensus of views, could be shared with the Children and Families directorate as part of its broader engagement with stakeholders to inform a ‘Leeds’ corporate response to the consultation by the closing date of 29th January 2021.
- 3.7 As part of the Covid-19 Response and Recovery Planning Update item on today’s meeting agenda (see Agenda Item 7), representatives from the Children and Families Directorate will be able to brief Board Members on key issues arising from its engagement work with stakeholders that informed a response to the consultation.

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 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.