

Report of Head of Democratic Services

Report to Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources)

Date: 22rd March 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. With this being the final Work Schedule report of municipal year 2020/21 members are also asked to consider any work items they wish to pass over to the successor Board in municipal year 2021/22.

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 2 for consideration and agreement of the Scrutiny Board – subject to any identified and agreed amendments.
- 3.2 Executive Board minutes from the meeting held on 10th February 2021 are also attached as Appendix 1. 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

- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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

- 3.5 There are no significant developments to report since the last meeting.

Developing the work programme for the new municipal year 2021/22

- 3.6 Scrutiny Boards are subject to an annual review and appointment process as part of the overall governance arrangements presented and agreed by Council at its annual meeting each year.
- 3.7 As such, Scrutiny Boards have tended to adopt different approaches to planning for the new municipal year and providing a ‘handover’ of issues to be considered by the appropriate and newly constituted Scrutiny Board.
- 3.8 Historically, at the first meeting of the municipal year, Scrutiny Boards have been presented with an outline of proposed formal meeting dates, alongside a draft work schedule that reflected traditional and known items of scrutiny activity, such as performance and budget monitoring, identified Budget and Policy Framework items and recommendation tracking.
- 3.9 Specific scrutiny inquiries have tended to be identified at the initial meetings in June / July each year; however some Scrutiny Board members have previously raised concerns around this approach and the impact this can have on progressing and completing identified inquiries in a timely manner.
- 3.10 In order to bring these matters together and to adopt a longer-term approach to planning Scrutiny Board work programmes; each Scrutiny Board is being presented with:

- (a) A draft schedule of planned meeting dates for the municipal year (2021/22)
- (b) A draft work schedule that includes known items of scrutiny activity, such as performance and budget monitoring, identified Budget and Policy Framework items and recommendation tracking.
- (c) Details of specific areas / matters to be recommended for consideration by the appropriate Scrutiny Board, as part of the overall 2021/22 work programme.

3.11 The draft work schedule is presented at Appendix 3 for consideration. This also outlines planned meeting dates and for consistency, it is proposed to maintain the current meeting arrangements for the new municipal year, i.e. meeting on Mondays at 10.30AM (pre-meeting at 10.00AM).

3.12 In considering the details presented at Appendix 3, Members of the Scrutiny Board are reminded to consider the information outlined in paragraph 3.3.

3.13 In terms of any specific areas/ matters to be recommended to the successor Scrutiny Board, the draft work schedule already reflects the Board's commitment to continue its ongoing Inquiry into Agile Working and Estate Realisation which will feature at the June meeting. However, the Scrutiny Board is invited at this stage to also recommend any other matters for the successor Board to consider.

3.14 In agreeing to recommend any specific matters for consideration by the successor Scrutiny Board, members should recognise the future work schedule will:

- Become the responsibility of a successor Scrutiny Board (subject to the arrangements agreed by Council in May 2021).
- Remain flexible and adaptable to reflect any new and emerging issues or changing priorities identified in the new municipal year.
- Need to reflect any timetabling issues that might occur from time to time.

3.15 Nonetheless, setting out proposed meeting dates and a draft work schedule for the new municipal year will provide a foundation that will not only help with the initial planning for next year's Scrutiny Board, it also has the potential to help with planning the work programme in the longer-term.

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 2 for consideration and agreement of the Scrutiny Board – subject to any identified and agreed amendments.

5.2 Also attached as Appendix 3 is a draft work schedule for the next municipal year (2021/22) for Members to consider and to also identify any other specific areas/matters to be recommended to the successor Scrutiny Board.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Members are asked to

- (a) consider the matters outlined in this report and agree (or amend) the overall work schedule (as presented at Appendix 2) as the basis for the Board's work for the remainder of 2020/21.
- (b) consider the draft work schedule as presented at Appendix 3 and make recommendations as deemed necessary for the next municipal year.

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.