

Report To:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date:	23 JUNE 2022
Heading:	SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23
Executive Lead Member:	NOT APPLICABLE
Ward/s:	ALL
Key Decision:	NO
Subject to Call-In:	NO

Purpose of Report

The scrutiny work programme is a rolling plan of reviews undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Scrutiny Panel A, and Scrutiny Panel B. The work programme is monitored by Members to ensure appropriate terms of reference, progress, and review outcomes.

The work programme is revised and refreshed annually with new topics to be reviewed. The purpose of this report is to focus Members on discussing and approving appropriate topics for the 2022/23 work programme. This report also provides Members with an overview of ongoing review topics from the 2021/22 work programme.

Recommendation(s)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members are recommended to:

- a. Note the update on the ongoing review topics from the scrutiny work programme 2021/22.
- b. Consider topics for approval to the scrutiny work programme 2022/23.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Ensuring that the scrutiny work programme is monitored consistently and refreshed annually is a key responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options have been considered. Approving the scrutiny work programme is part of the Overview and Scrutiny Rules of Procedure set out within the Council's Constitution.

Detailed Information

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

What is the Scrutiny Work Programme?

Scrutiny at Ashfield District Council follows a scrutiny work programme approved annually by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The work programme is a rolling plan of in-depth reviews, undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Scrutiny Panel A, and Scrutiny Panel B. Alongside bespoke topic reviews, standing items are considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out within the Council's Constitution.

These items are:

- Crime and Disorder
- Performance
- Budget

The programme outlines areas of work to be scrutinised over the next year. Any topics added to the programme should have anticipated outcomes that will add value to services delivered by the Council and its partners and improve quality of life in Ashfield.

The work programme is a live document and consultation on potential topics will be continued throughout the year with Service Directors, Third Tier Officers, Members, and the public. All suggestions received will be discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for potential inclusion on the work programme.

Sources of Work Programme Topics

There are many sources where topics for scrutiny review can be identified, including:

- Issues of community concern
- Service delivery concerns
- Review, audit, and inspection outcomes
- Issues relating to Council outcomes, objectives, and priorities
- Partnership objectives
- The Forward Plan
- Peer challenge outcomes
- Performance
- Budget
- Improvement plans

Selecting Work Programme Topics

Scrutiny work programme topic selection should be stringent, and Committee Members should use effective processes to select topics that will contribute towards the best and most effective work programme. This means having clear terms of reference in mind and considering many different sources of information to help inform the selection.

This involves approving topics:

- Of community concern

- That contribute to the Council's Corporate Priorities
- With defined objectives and clear outcomes
- That add value to the Council's overall performance
- That has potential impact for more than one section of the District's population
- That adequate resources are available to carry out a review
- That have not been reviewed recently

A common pitfall for Overview and Scrutiny can be the inclusion of topics on the programme that are unsuitable for review due to different factors. It is advised that Overview and Scrutiny Members avoid topics that are:

- Unmanageable
- Purely for informational purposes
- Have limited anticipated outcomes
- Fail to add value to service delivery
- Fail to improve community wellbeing and quality of life

Scrutiny has limited time and resources meaning the work programme must be manageable. It is not possible to include every topic suggested throughout work programme consultation. The selection and prioritisation of topics is critical to the effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny function. A clear topic selection process ensures in-depth and effective reviews, resulting in impactful recommendations and improvements.

ONGOING TOPICS

Gambling Related Harms

Scrutiny Panel A have recently begun a review of Gambling Related Harms. Members held the introductory meeting on the topic at the March 2022 meeting of Scrutiny Panel A. Please see below the minutes from this introductory meeting.

The Chairman introduced the new scrutiny review topic regarding Gambling Harms. The topic was added to the scrutiny work programme at the December 2021 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and it was agreed that the topic had the potential to be interesting, informative, and thought provoking.

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) were also currently working on a project with the Gambling Commission to raise awareness and increase the involvement of elected members in overview and scrutiny roles for tackling gambling related harms. Gambling, particularly through online platforms including gaming sites, was on the rise and people were now starting to gamble at a younger age. It was acknowledged that local authorities were often on the receiving end of the resulting social issues arising from gambling difficulties (alongside partners including the NHS and Police) in the form of homelessness and anti-social behaviour (ASB) problems.

However, it needed to be acknowledged that not all gambling had negative consequences and the review would hopefully investigate how the Council could work proactively in partnership with other key organisations to assist, support and mitigate against families struggling with gambling issues such as debt management, homelessness, anti-social behaviour and even suicide.

Julian Alison, the Council's Licensing Manager took the opportunity to give an overview of the Council's current role in facilitating licensing applications and regulating gambling on premises. The Council currently had 3 bingo halls, 11 bookmakers and various public houses/premises with slot

machines and consideration of any licensing applications for this type of premises would need to satisfy the three gambling licencing objectives as follows:

- preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime
- ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way
- protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

At this point Members were asked to note that the Council had no jurisdiction over any form of online licensing for gambling.

The Council's Statement of Gambling Policy included a section in relation to a local area profile in which areas of ASB within the District were highlighted and would be referred to in any licensing applications for gambling purposes. Gambling premises within Ashfield were currently subject to annual compliance checks and to date no issues/complaints had been documented from these inspections. In any event staff within these premises were always trained to take care of and support vulnerable people utilising the in-house gambling facilities.

To conclude, the Licensing Manager did acknowledge that such tight controls prescribed to be undertaken by local authorities did not seem to currently extend to online gambling and any advertisements through television and social media channels.

The Chairman thanked Julian for his informative presentation and Members then proceeded to discuss the following:

- concerns surrounding loot boxes provided on gaming platforms as a potential gambling risk to children and young people and the urgent need for education within schools to combat this introduction to potential early gambling addiction
- the huge task nationally to endeavour protect young people from online gambling sites
- an early suggestion to write to the Government requesting information on how the rise in early online gambling addiction is currently being tackled
- the potential benefit of consulting with gambling company/betting shop representatives as part of the review process to ascertain what projects or initiatives are being supported to raise awareness of healthy gambling limitations
- a suggestion to consult a representative from the local Citizens' Advice Bureau to ascertain the levels of social and personal impacts of gambling
- the dangerous implications of betting advertisements now looking 'cool' and 'glamorous' whilst targeting a much younger audience already dealing with pressures to fit into society
- the rise in subtle gambling promotion via daytime television competitions
- acknowledgement that gambling addictions can ruin lives and should be dealt with as a health issue

- the realisation that many people who are struggling financially start betting to try and improve their lives for themselves and their families which has a huge impact on their mental health amongst other issues
- the objectives of the GambleAware organisation as a wholly independent body that has an agreement with the Gambling Commission to deliver the National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms in association with the gambling industry.

RESOLVED

that the Scrutiny Research Officer undertake the following in readiness for the next meeting of the Panel in June/July 2022:

- a) to formulate the Terms of Reference for the review and identify the most appropriate key witnesses to contribute to the process;
- b) to compile some background information on any local 'GambleAware' projects or initiatives within the Ashfield District;
- c) to ascertain if any Council staff in front facing roles have needed to offer advice or support to residents in relation to gambling addictions and any resulting social or personal difficulties.

Scrutiny Panel A will be continuing with the Scrutiny Review: Gambling Harms at the next meeting of the Panel scheduled for July 2022.

Social Housing White Paper

The Social Housing White Paper was added to the scrutiny work programme by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2021.

The Social Housing White paper was published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government on 17 November 2020. It is the follow up to the Social Housing Green Paper published in August 2018, both of which are part of the Government's response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the Hackitt Review of building safety and fire safety.

The Social Housing White Paper sets out 7 core commitments that social housing residents should be able to expect from their landlord:

1. To be safe in your home
2. To know how your landlord is performing
3. To have complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
4. To be treated with respect – backed by improved consumer standards and regulations
5. To have your voice heard by your landlord
6. To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
7. To be supported to take your first step to home ownership

The publication of the Social Housing White Paper was long awaited, with a number of the measures having been fed out to the sector for months leading up to the publication.

The Council have been working to identify the key implications of the paper and an action plan has been developed through the Housing and Assets' Departmental Management Team overseen by the Corporate Leadership Team and Executive Lead Member for Housing and Assets. The action plan highlights areas within the White Paper and specific consumer standards that are being met and identifies gaps where service areas will need to ensure work continues to remain compliant.

The Scrutiny Review: Social Housing White Paper has not yet commenced. Committee Members should look to identify which committee/panel will be best suited to undertake the review.

Waste and Recycling

At the December 2021 meeting of Cabinet, a report on Corporate Risk was presented for consideration. Cabinet Members were asked to review the Corporate Risk Register and the analysis of movement in risk and mitigating actions in respect of those risks.

Within the Corporate Risk Register, the Government's emerging Waste Strategy was identified as a risk for the Council to be aware of and act against. Comments within the Corporate Risk Register highlighted that, at the time of the report, the Environment Bill was yet to reach final stages for approval.

Set out in a report titled *Year End Corporate Risk Update*, set for June 2022 Cabinet, the risk associated with the Waste Strategy has been moved to service level as it has been identified as an operational risk. These risks include the Government setting unattainable targets around recycling and service provision. Including the potential requirement to provide free garden waste service and separate food waste collections.

The Scrutiny Review: Waste and Recycling has not yet commenced. Committee Members should look to identify which committee/panel will be best suited to carry undertake the review.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The scrutiny work programme should include issues based on performance, priority objectives, and community concerns. Many of which contribute to the Council's corporate priorities outlined within the Corporate Plan.

Legal:

Consultation with Members on items for the scrutiny work programme is carried out in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Overview and Scrutiny set out within the Council's Constitution.

Finance:

Any financial implications identified through items approved to the scrutiny work programme will be considered appropriately as part of the established scrutiny review process.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	None.

General Fund – Capital Programme	
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to adequately monitor and refresh the scrutiny work programme could lead to items being added that fail to add value and fall outside the remit of the Council's scrutiny function.	The scrutiny work programme is reviewed annually and throughout the year ensuring that Members can appropriately monitor review progress and the suitability of topics.

Human Resources:

Any HR implications identified through items approved to the scrutiny work programme will be considered appropriately as part of the established scrutiny review process.

Environmental/Sustainability

Any environmental/sustainability implications identified through items approved to the scrutiny work programme will be considered appropriately as part of the established scrutiny review process.

Equalities:

Any equalities implications identified through items approved to the scrutiny work programme will be considered appropriately as part of the established scrutiny review process.

Other Implications:

Any other implications identified through items approved to the scrutiny work programme will be considered appropriately as part of the established scrutiny review process.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

None.

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