
Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20 and Work Programme 2020/21

Background

- 1 The Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee (PFSC) has the over-arching task of ensuring effective scrutiny at the Council and that the highest priorities are being scrutinised. This report reviews activity during 2019/20 and looks ahead to 2020/21. The Committee's 2019/20 annual report, in the form of a newsletter, **is attached at Appendix 1** for approval. In addition, each scrutiny committee's Business Planning Group (BPG) prepares a work programme with priorities for scrutiny and their approach, and these are **set out at Appendix 2** for approval. N.B. The newly-established Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee does not have a BPG therefore work programme planning is carried out by the whole committee. The impact of the public health emergency is covered, but programmes remain flexible and adaptable to change during the year.

Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20

- 2 PFSC has responsibility for monitoring the performance of the scrutiny function. It evidences this work through the scrutiny newsletter, which should enable members to fulfil this role. The newsletter, attached at Appendix 1, provides an annual overview of scrutiny business, shares best practice and highlights any development or training required. The newsletter's content and format has been updated to be more accessible, as well as to better reflect the scrutiny work in 2019/20.
- 3 The newsletter describes the challenges and the review of the function which took place during 2019. The findings and recommendations of the review were reported to the Governance Committee and to County Council in December 2019. The recommendations for improvement included:
 - a more focused approach to priorities and outcomes;
 - increased training and development;
 - changing the name of committees;
 - a dedicated Fire & Rescue scrutiny committee; and
 - changes to how chairmen and vice-chairmen are appointed.

The review's findings are outlined in the newsletter.

- 4 In January 2020 the County Council commissioned work (the 'good governance review') on all aspects of Council governance, including the procedural and constitutional arrangements for Council business. The outcomes of this programme will be reported to the Governance Committee, to include any implications for the scrutiny process. PFSC will be considering its own role in this work and which will be assisted by an all-member event on 8 July.

Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/21

- 5 Each scrutiny committee develops a work programme for its work for the year ahead. This should be informed by the corporate priorities of the Council, service priorities and major change plans, issues raised by service users and communities and concerns about performance. Work programmes include proposals for task and finish groups and for cross-cutting scrutiny (across the portfolio areas of different committees).

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- 6** In developing their work programmes, BPGs focus on the objectives and desired outcomes for any scrutiny work. Sources of information include the Forward Plan, performance and risk data, contract information and input from the executive. Issues taken into account include what value the committee can add; what the desired outcomes are from scrutiny; whether the issue is one that matters most to residents and is a corporate priority; whether it is an area where performance, outcomes or budget are a concern.
- 7** PFSC has the responsibility for agreeing the whole scrutiny work programme prior to approval by County Council. It has considered the work programmes for the scrutiny committees and these are attached at Appendix 2. They are based on current plans and priorities but will need to be flexible and reviewed to ensure they reflect changing demands and issues. This flexibility is particularly important due to the current Covid-19 health emergency which will have longer term effects on the priorities, plans and working arrangements of the County Council. A full review and re-set of these plans is set out elsewhere on the Council meeting agenda.

Recommended

- (1) That the Annual Scrutiny Report 2019/20 be approved; and
- (2) That the Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/21 be approved.

Joy Dennis

Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee

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Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Annual Scrutiny Report 2019/20
- Appendix 2 - Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/21

Background papers

None