

Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee
9 July 2020
2019/20 Scrutiny Annual Report and 2020/21 Work Programme
Report by Director of Law and Assurance

Summary

This Committee has the 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 annual report in the form of a newsletter and work programme for the year ahead is attached (Appendix 1) for approval. In addition, each committee's Business Planning Group prepares a work plan with priorities for scrutiny and their approach (Appendices 2 and 3). The impact of the public health emergency is covered, but plans remain adaptable.

The focus for scrutiny

The Committee is asked to:

- 1) Review scrutiny activity (Appendix 1) and identify areas for improvement;
- 2) Confirm that the highest priority areas are in the work programme for this committee (Appendix 2) and consider how priorities are identified;
- 3) Review how scrutiny of these priorities is most effectively undertaken – when and how and with what aims.
- 4) Consider the best use of member capacity and resources available for scrutiny to meet these aims;
- 5) Examine the proposals of the service scrutiny committees (Appendix 3) and review what to recommend to County Council in July in relation to the scrutiny work programme; and
- 6) Give an indication of any topics from the work programme for debate at future County Council meetings.

The Chairman will summarise the debate for consideration by the Committee.

Proposal

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 This Committee 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 (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.
- 1.2 The newsletter describes the challenges and the review of the function. The findings and recommendations of the review were reported to Governance

Committee and County Council in December 2019. The recommendations for improvement included

- a more focussed approach to priorities and outcomes
- increased training and development
- changing the name of committees
- a dedicated Fire and Rescue committee and
- changes to how chairmen and vice chairmen are appointed.

The review's findings are outlined in the Newsletter.

- 1.3 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. This Committee will wish to consider its own role in this work. This will be assisted by an all member event on 8th July.
- 1.4 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).
- 1.5 In developing their work programmes, Business Planning Groups (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 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 is a concern. N.B. The newly established Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee (FRSSC) does not have a BPG and work programme planning is carried out by the whole committee.
- 1.6 The PFSC work programme developed by the BPG is attached at Appendix 2 and the work programmes for the service scrutiny committees are at Appendix 3. PFSC has the responsibility for agreeing the whole scrutiny work programme prior to approval by County Council.
- 1.7 The Scrutiny work programmes attached 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 situation 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 underway and will be reported to the County Council in July.

2. Resources

- 2.1 During the current pandemic scrutiny arrangements have had to be flexible and react to the changing situation to enable scrutiny activity to continue. It has succeeded through virtual meetings and using Task and Finish Groups

(TFGs) for pre-decision scrutiny. The number of TFGs established will be monitored by PFSC to ensure best use of resources and capacity.

- 2.2 The work programmes need to be flexible to enable the highest priority issues to be scrutinised within resources. The Governance Committee will be receiving regular reports on resources and impacts on governance which will need to be considered when determining the capacity of scrutiny.

Factors taken into account

3. Issues for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee

- 3.1 The Annual Newsletter reflects scrutiny in 2019/20. The Committee is asked to consider the outcomes achieved and examples of best practice, as well as national developments and guidance, to identify any areas for improvement.
- 3.2 The draft scrutiny work programmes for 2020/21 reflect current priorities. These may change, particularly due to the current emergency and the need to re-set the plans, targets and working arrangements of the County Council. The framework for this re-set is due to be debated at the County Council meeting in July. PFSC will have a role in monitoring the scrutiny activity and resource to meet the work programme.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Scrutiny committee members have had the opportunity to input into the development of work programmes. In addition, Cabinet Members and Service lead officers have input into work programme planning.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1 None

6. Implications

- 6.1 There are no risk management, Equality, Social Value, Crime and Disorder Act or Human Rights Act implications arising directly from this report. However, many of the substantive reports to the Committee will have some implications and an Equality Impact Report will be included where appropriate to the Committee.

Tony Kershaw

Director of Law and Assurance

Helen Kenny

Head of Democratic Services

Contact: susanne.sanger@westsussex.gov.uk 033 022 22550

Appendices

Appendix 1 – 2019/20 Annual Scrutiny Newsletter

Appendix 2 – 2020/21 Work Programme for Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 3 – 2020/21 Work Programme for other service scrutiny committees

Background Papers

None