

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD



Report subject	Forward Plan
Meeting date	8 January 2024
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	The Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Board is asked to consider and identify work priorities for publication in a Forward Plan.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: the O&S Committee/ Board consider, update and confirm its Forward Plan.
Reason for recommendations	The Council's Constitution requires all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to set out proposed work in a Forward Plan which will be published with each agenda

Portfolio Holder(s):	N/A – O&S is a non-executive function
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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. All Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) bodies are required by the Constitution to consider work priorities and set these out in a Forward Plan. When approved, this should be published with each agenda. It is good practice for the Forward Plan to be kept under regular review by the Board, and in this report members are asked to discuss and agree work priorities for the next meeting to allow sufficient time for report preparation as appropriate. See the Forward Plan attached at Appendix B to this report.
2. Preparations for a forward planning workshop are in hand. Workshops for some O&S bodies have been delayed pending a decision on the O&S structure. Board members are therefore advised that minimal Forward Plan review is required at this stage and a more in-depth review, to plan work for the whole municipal year, may take place at the workshops.
3. For guidance, the following documents are appended to this report:
 - Appendix A -Terms of Reference for all O&S Committees
 - Appendix B – Current O&S Board Forward Plan
 - Appendix C - Request for consideration of an issue by Overview and Scrutiny
 - Appendix D - Current Cabinet Forward Plan

O&S Committees updated terms of reference

4. Changes to the O&S Committee structure were agreed by Council on 12 September 2023. Among other changes, the Corporate & Community O&S Committee has been renamed the O&S Board; the remit of the Board has been updated, and the meeting frequency of the Board will now be monthly, tracking Cabinet meetings. Figure 1 within Appendix A - 'Terms of Reference for all O&S Committees' outlines this update.

BCP Constitution and process for agreeing Forward Plan items

5. The Constitution requires that the Forward Plan of O&S Committees (including the O&S Board) shall consist of work aligned to the principles of the function. The BCP Council O&S function is based upon six principles:
 - Contributes to sound decision making in a timely way by holding decision makers to account as a 'critical friend';

- A member led and owned function – seeks to continuously improve through self-reflection and development;
 - Enables the voice and concerns of the public to be heard and reflected in the Council's decision-making process;
 - Engages in decision making and policy development at an appropriate time to be able to have influence;
 - Contributes to and reflects the vision and priorities of the Council;
 - Agility – able to respond to changing and emerging priorities at the right time with flexible working methods.
6. An O&S Committee may take suggestions from a variety of sources to form its Forward Plan. This may include suggestions from members of the public, officers of the Council, Portfolio Holders, the Cabinet and Council, members of the O&S Committee, and other Councillors who are not on the Committee.
 7. The Constitution requires that all suggestions for O&S work will be accompanied by detail outlining the background to the issue suggested, the proposed method of undertaking the work and likely timescale associated, and the anticipated outcome and value to be added by the work proposed. No item of work shall join the Forward Plan of the O&S Committee without an assessment of this information.
 8. Any Councillor may request that an item of business be considered by an O&S Committee. Members are asked to complete a form outlining the request, which is appended to this report at Appendix C. The same process will apply to requests for scrutiny from members of the public.
 9. A copy of the most recent Cabinet Forward Plan will be supplied to O&S Committees at each meeting for reference. The latest version was published on 5 December 2023 and is supplied as Appendix D to this report.

Resources to support O&S work

10. The Constitution requires that the O&S Committees take into account the resources available to support their proposals for O&S work. This includes consideration of Councillor availability, Officer time and financial resources. Careful and regular assessment of resources will ensure that there is appropriate resource available to support work across the whole O&S function, and that any work established can be carried out in sufficient depth and completed in a timely way to enable effective outcomes.
11. It is good practice for O&S Committees to agree a maximum of two substantive agenda items per meeting. This will provide sufficient time for Committees to take a 'deep dive' approach to scrutiny work, which is likely to provide more valuable outcomes. A large amount of agenda items can lead to a 'light touch' approach to all items of business, and also limit the officer and Councillor resource available to plan for effective scrutiny of selected items.
12. O&S Committees are advised to carefully select their working methods to ensure that O&S resource is maximised. A variety of methods are available for O&S Committees to undertake work and are not limited to the receipt of reports at Committee meetings. These may include:
 - Working Groups;

- Sub-Committees;
- Tak and finish groups;
- Inquiry Days;
- Rapporteurs (scrutiny member champions);
- Consideration of information outside of meetings – including report circulation/ briefing workshops/ briefing notes.

Further detail on O&S working methods are set out in the Constitution and in Appendix A – Terms of Reference for O&S Committees.

13. Bodies commissioned by an O&S Committee (such as Sub-Committees or Working Groups) may have conferred upon them the power to act on behalf of the parent body in considering issues within the remit of the parent body and making recommendations directly to Portfolio Holders, Cabinet, Council or other bodies or people within the Council or externally as appropriate.

Options Appraisal

14. The Committee is asked to agree work priorities for the next meeting, taking account of the supporting documents provided. This will ensure member ownership of the Committee Forward Plan by newly elected members to the Committee, and that reports can be prepared in a timely way, as appropriate.
15. Should the Committee not agree priorities for its next meeting, reports may not be able to be prepared in a timely way and best use of the meeting resource may not be made.

Summary of financial implications

16. There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The Committee should note that when establishing a Forward Plan, the Constitution requires that account be taken of the resources available to support proposals for O&S work. Advice on maximising the resource available to O&S Committees is set out in paragraphs 10 to 13 above.

Summary of legal implications

17. The Council's Constitution requires all O&S Committees to set out proposed work in a Forward Plan which will be published with each agenda. The recommendation proposed in this report will fulfil this requirement.

Summary of human resources implications

18. There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

Summary of sustainability impact

19. There are no sustainability resources implications arising from this report.

Summary of public health implications

20. There are no public health implications arising from this report.

Summary of equality implications

21. There are no equality implications arising from this report. Any member of the public may make suggestions for Overview and Scrutiny work. Further detail on this process is included within Part 4 of the Council's Constitution.

Summary of risk assessment

22. There is a risk of challenge to the Council if the Constitutional requirement to establish and publish a Forward Plan is not met.

Background papers

None

Appendices

Appendix A – Overview and Scrutiny Committees Terms of Reference

Appendix B - Current O&S Board Forward Plan

Appendix C – Request for consideration of an issue by Overview and Scrutiny

Appendix D – Current Cabinet Forward Plan