

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD



Report subject	Forward Plan
Meeting date	26 February 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 Board: a) Consider, update and confirm its Forward Plan. b) Consider and confirm the agreements made in O&S workshops to develop a lens and a framework for scrutiny, as set out in Appendix E to this report. c) Note the next steps in developing the Board's work programme, as set out in Appendix E to this report.
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
Corporate Director	Graham Farrant, Chief Executive
Report Authors	Lindsay Marshall, Overview and Scrutiny Specialist
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 councillors 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. Three work- planning workshops were held with the O&S Board during December 2023 - February 2024. The aim of the workshops was to develop an approach to O&S work programming at BCP that is based on good practice, addresses improvements already identified for O&S and will frame scrutiny work during 2024/25 and beyond. Councillors were supported with expert advice and guidance by officers and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS). Throughout the workshops councillors agreed a lens that will provide a focus for O&S work. Councillors also developed a framework that sets out how O&S will identify and carry out work along with a format for monitoring information on an ongoing basis outside of meetings. The Board is asked to confirm the agreements made in the workshops as set out at Appendix E.

BCP Constitution and process for agreeing Forward Plan items

3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Any Councillor may request that an item of business be considered by an O&S Committee. Councillors 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.
7. 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 6 February 2024 and is supplied as Appendix D to this report.

Resources to support O&S work

8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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;
 - Task 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.

Options Appraisal

11. The O&S Board is asked to consider, update and confirm its Forward Plan, taking account of the supporting documents provided and including the determination of any requests for scrutiny. This will ensure member ownership of the Forward Plan and that reports can be prepared in a timely way. Should the Board not confirm its forthcoming priorities, 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

12. There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The Board 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 8 to 10 above.

Summary of legal implications

13. The Council's Constitution requires all O&S bodies 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

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

Summary of sustainability impact

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

Summary of public health implications

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

Summary of equality implications

17. 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

18. 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

Appendix E – Work programming framework for O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S Committee.