

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD



Report subject	Work Plan
Meeting date	18 November 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 Work Plan.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: the O&S Board review, update and confirm its Work Plan.
Reason for recommendations	The Council's Constitution requires all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to set out proposed work in a Work 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 Work Plan. When approved, this should be published with each agenda.
2. It is good practice for the Work Plan to be kept under regular review by the Board. Between meetings O&S Chairs and Vice Chairs, in consultation with officers, suggest updates to the work plan to ensure proposed topics remain timely, fit for purpose and allow sufficient time for report preparation as appropriate. The Board is now asked to review, update and/ or confirm the latest work plan update. See the Work Plan attached at Appendix B to this report.
3. The current work plan is based on annual work programming activity undertaken by the Board in Winter 2023. Through this work, which was supported by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), the Board agreed a [framework](#) which outlines how scrutiny work will be selected and approached. This is based on good practice. The framework outlines that scrutiny work will be divided into three categories of:
 - Proactive scrutiny
 - Reactive scrutiny
 - Pre-decision scrutiny.

Information only items should be received in other ways, reserving committee and working group capacity for value-added scrutiny. The Board's current work plan is structured to reflect this.

4. O&S statutory guidance recommends that a 'lens' or key set of priorities be established by O&S committees, to clearly communicate their role and how they will add value to the work of the organisation. The statements also clarify the role of the committee to the public. Through annual work programming activity, the Board agreed the following lens and supporting statement:

The **O&S Board** will approach work through a lens of **RESIDENT IMPACT AND EXPERIENCE**, such as considering:

- benefits that could be brought to residents by **delivering services** in different ways
- how the areas of highest **financial risk** for the council may impact on residents
- the council's **relationship with the public** and work that can be done to strengthen this.

5. Established lenses provide a tool to assist O&S members in work programming, to sift suggestions for work into a realistic annual work programme for each committee and to provide an angle by which to approach scrutiny topics. The lens should be referred to throughout the year as arising suggestions for work are made. The establishment of a lens does not preclude the Board from using the full extent of its scrutiny powers where appropriate.

Principles of Good Scrutiny

6. The Constitution requires that the Work Plan of O&S committees 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.

Process for agreeing Work Plan items

7. An O&S committee may take suggestions from a variety of sources to form its Work 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.
8. 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 Work Plan of the O&S Committee without an assessment of this information.
9. 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.
10. A copy of the most recent Cabinet Forward Plan will be supplied to O&S Committees at each meeting for reference when determining items of pre-decision scrutiny. The latest version is supplied as Appendix D to this report.

Resources to support O&S work

11. 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.

12. It is good practice for O&S Committees to agree a maximum of two/ three 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.
13. 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.

Options Appraisal

14. The O&S Board is asked to review, update and confirm its Work Plan, taking account of the supporting documents provided and including the determination of any new requests for scrutiny. This will ensure member ownership of the Work 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

15. There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The Board should note that when establishing a Work 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 11 to 13 above.

Summary of legal implications

16. The Council's Constitution requires that all O&S bodies set out proposed work in a Work Plan which will be published with each agenda. The recommendation proposed in this report will fulfil this requirement.

Summary of human resources implications

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

Summary of sustainability impact

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

Summary of public health implications

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

Summary of equality implications

20. There are no equality implications arising from this report. Any councillor and 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

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

Background papers

None.

Appendices

Appendix A – Overview and Scrutiny Committees Terms of Reference

Appendix B - Current O&S Board Work Plan

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

Appendix D – Current Cabinet Forward Plan

Appendix E – O&S Framework