

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLANNING GUIDANCE

All Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) bodies are required by the Constitution to consider work priorities and set these out in a Work Plan. This is published with each agenda of the O&S committee.

This guidance provides detail on the formulation and review of O&S Work Plans.

WORK PLANNING FRAMEWORK

BCP O&S Work Plans are planned annually and reviewed on a regular basis.

Work planning is based on good practice principles as advised by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS). Work items are identified and divided into the following categories:

- **Proactive scrutiny** (inquiry topics chosen by the O&S committee)
- **Reactive scrutiny** (topics chosen in reaction to an arising issue that cannot be planned for in advance)
- **Pre-decision scrutiny** (scrutiny of a topic prior to a Cabinet decision)

Information only items are different from scrutiny and should be received in other ways, such as informal briefings or reports circulated for information. Information items are separately identified on Work Plans. This ensures that committee time and working group capacity is reserved for value-added scrutiny.

These principles are set out in more detail in a [framework](#) drawn up by O&S councillors which outlines how scrutiny work will be selected and approached.

IDENTIFYING A CLEAR ROLE FOR O&S WORK

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 and residents.

Established lenses provide a tool to assist O&S members in work programming, to help sift suggestions for work and maintain a focus on the agreed priorities for scrutiny. Lenses also provide an angle by which to approach and scope scrutiny topics.

The committee should refer to the lens throughout the year as arising suggestions for work are made. The establishment of a lens does not preclude the committee from using the full extent of its scrutiny powers where appropriate but should be considered a tool to help target and refine scrutiny planning and work.

Through annual work programming activity, O&S committees have agreed the following lenses:

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.

The **ENVIRONMENT & PLACE O&S COMMITTEE** will approach work through a lens of **SUSTAINABILITY**, with a specific focus on the following priorities, drawn from the Corporate Strategy:

- **Climate change** is tackled through sustainable policies and practice
- Our **green spaces flourish** and support the wellbeing of being people and nature
- Our communities have pride in our **streets, neighbourhoods and public spaces**
- **Good quality homes are** accessible, sustainable and affordable for all

The **HEALTH & ADULT SOCIAL CARE O&S COMMITTEE** will approach work through a lens of **EQUALITY OF ACCESS TO PERSON CENTRED INTEGRATED CARE**.

The **CHILDREN'S SERVICES O&S COMMITTEE** has not established an agreed lens for the 2024/25 municipal year.

Lenses should be revisited on a regular basis to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD SCRUTINY

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

An O&S committee may take suggestions from a variety of sources to form its Work Plan. This can include suggestions from:

- **residents**
- **members of the O&S committee**
- **Portfolio Holders, Cabinet and Council**
- **council officers**
- **councillors who are not on the O&S committee**

The majority of work planning should be done annually and published in the Work Plan for the year ahead. It is good practice for room to be reserved on the Work Plan for arising issues to be accommodated throughout the year.

Any councillor may request that an item of business be considered by an O&S committee and requests can be made at any time throughout the year. Councillors are asked to complete a [scrutiny request form](#) outlining the request. The same process will apply to requests for scrutiny from members of the public.

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.

Scrutiny requests received will be published to the next available meeting of the O&S committee for consideration. If the committee agrees to the request it will be added to the Work Plan and scoped further.

Updates to the [Cabinet Forward Plan](#) are published to the council's website and will also be supplied to O&S committees at each meeting for reference when considering whether pre-decision scrutiny is appropriate for any forthcoming Cabinet decisions.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT O&S WORK PLANS

The Constitution requires that 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.

It is good practice for O&S committees to agree two/ three substantive agenda items per meeting, as a maximum. 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.

One piece of O&S commissioned work can be undertaken per O&S committee at a time. This includes working groups, sub-committees, task and finish groups and inquiry days.

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**
- **Information sharing**

Full detail on O&S working methods is included within the [Overview and Scrutiny Committees Terms of Reference](#) document.

REVIEWING THE WORK PLAN

The Work Plan is a living document and owned by the full O&S committee. It is good practice for the Work Plan to be kept under regular review by the O&S committee and discussed at each meeting.

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 achievable within resources.

Updates suggested between meetings by Chairs and Vice Chairs will be provided to each committee meeting in draft for the full committee to approve or amend.

Urgent updates affecting the next meeting of a committee will be shared with committee members by email for awareness and views.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules outlined in Part 4C of the Council's Constitution.