

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Report subject	Work Plan
Meeting date	14 September 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee is asked to consider and identify work priorities for publication in a Work Plan.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review, update and confirm the 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. An agreed scrutiny lens is good practice and assists O&S councillors in selecting work plan items and channelling scrutiny enquiries against an agreed key focus.
Portfolio Holder(s):	N/A – Overview and Scrutiny is a non-executive function
Corporate Director	Aidan Dunn, Chief Executive
Report Authors	Lindsay Marshall, Overview and Scrutiny Specialist
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Work Plan updates

1. This report provides the latest version of the Committee's Work Plan at Appendix A and guidance on how to populate and review the Work Plan in line with the Council's Constitution. For the purposes of this report, all references to Overview and Scrutiny Committees shall also apply to the Overview and Scrutiny Board unless otherwise stated.

2. Items added to the Work Plan since the last publication are highlighted as **NEW**. Councillors are asked to consider and confirm the latest Work Plan, subject to any updates agreed at the meeting.
3. The most recent [Cabinet Forward Plan](#) can be viewed on the council's website. This link is included in each O&S Work Plan report for councillors to view and refer to when considering whether any items of pre-decision scrutiny will join the O&S Committee Work Plan.

Resources to support O&S Work

4. The Constitution requires that O&S Committees take account 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 the O&S Work Planning Guidance document referenced below. Resources available for 2026/27 scrutiny are set out in detail at paragraph 14 below.

Work programming guidance and tools

5. The [Overview and Scrutiny Committees Terms of Reference](#) document provides detail on the principles of scrutiny at BCP Council, the membership, functions and remit of each O&S committee and the variety of working methods available.
6. [The O&S Work Planning Guidance](#) document provides detail on all aspects of work planning including how to determine requests for scrutiny in line with the Council's constitution.
7. The [O&S Framework for scrutiny topic selection](#) was drawn up by O&S councillors in conjunction with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. The framework provides detail on the criteria for proactive, reactive and pre-decision scrutiny topics, and guidance on how these can be selected to contribute to value-added scrutiny outcomes.
8. The '[Request for consideration of an issue by Overview and Scrutiny](#)' form is an example form to be used by councillors and residents when making a new suggestion for a scrutiny topic. Word copies of the form are available from Democratic Services upon request by using the contact details on this agenda.
9. Performance information: progress against the council's Corporate Strategy can be viewed on the council's [Performance Dashboard](#). The dashboard includes ratings to show where the council is on target, areas for monitoring or where action is required, and explanations. The dashboard includes measures relevant to all O&S Committees and is provided to assist Committees in their horizon scanning and work selection process.
10. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has utilised a structured [Decision Matrix](#) as part of the process for prioritising work plan items, evaluating suggested topics against the following measures: resident impact, urgency, influence and the value scrutiny could add.
11. Data Toolkit: The Children's Services O&S Committee has developed a Data Toolkit to assist with the inclusion of data into its work. Resources included in the Data Toolkit can also be used as horizon scanning tools to help the committee to understand where it can impactfully target its work. [Data Toolkit](#).

Work Programming 2026-27

Methodology

12. In early 2026, potential topics for the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee were sourced from a range of stakeholders in a desktop exercise. Topics were received from councillors, officers, Cabinet Members and partners of the

Council. Children's Services O&S councillors were supported to review these topics in a workshop on 17 February 2026, with a view to determining their priorities for the next municipal year using an evidence-led approach. Councillors evaluated the list of potential topics using a structured matrix assessing resident impact, urgency, influence, and the value scrutiny could add.

13. At its workshop, the Committee agreed to operate using a lens of **"Nurturing Children, Young People and Families"**. This use of a lens helps O&S councillors to filter scrutiny requests and channel lines of scrutiny enquiry against an agreed key focus, and is good practice adopted across all BCP O&S Committees.
14. Following the workshop, the refreshed Work Plan has been drafted through collaborative work with Officers and Councillors and reflects agreed priorities and available scrutiny capacity. The Work Plan is attached at Appendix A and the Committee is now asked to approve this Plan. The Work Plan also includes reserve items for inclusion if capacity allows, as well as an outline of items not included in the Work Plan, with rationale.

Scrutiny resources available in 2026/27

15. When considering topic priorities, Children's Services O&S Members assessed these against a good practice approach of allocating approximately 1 hour of scrutiny per topic for sufficient depth and effectiveness of inquiry, and 2–3 hours of scrutiny per committee meeting. On this basis, the illustrative resource capacity for the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2026/27 is as follows:

- 5 hours - pre-decision (scrutiny of Cabinet reports)
- 10 hours – proactive scrutiny (topics requested by O&S)
- 2 hours – reactive scrutiny topics (those that are unplanned and urgent)
- 4 hours – briefings (information giving sessions between meetings)

PLUS

- Approximately 1 working group (priority order of all working groups to be determined by O&S Chairs / Vice Chairs group)
- Unlimited rapporteurs (member-led independent work)
- Unlimited info only reports

Next Steps and In Year Scrutiny Requests

16. Whilst the refreshed Plan concludes the Committee's annual work planning activity, updates and refinements may be needed throughout the year to ensure that scrutiny is timely and impactful. It is good practice for the Committee to keep the work plan under review at each meeting and make changes as appropriate to promote impactful scrutiny.
17. Pre-decision topics can be identified and confirmed by the Committee on a regular basis when the Cabinet Forward Plan is refreshed, with Children's Services-related items added as appropriate.
18. The Committee identified one Working Group suggestion through its work planning activity: 'Children's Wellbeing'. Working Groups are in depth and resource intensive and fall under the category of 'commissioned' scrutiny work, as outlined by the BCP Constitution. All commissioned topics across O&S Committees have been passed to the O&S Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group for consideration. The Group is responsible for agreeing the order of progression for commissioned work, in line with Constitution

requirements, which allow for only one commissioned topic to be progressed at any one time across the whole O&S function. At a meeting in April 2026, the Group agreed the following order of progression for O&S commissioned work:

Priority 1 – Van Life (Environment & Place O&S Committee topic)

Priority 2 – Children’s Wellbeing (Joint Children’s Services O&S and Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committee topic)

Priority 3 – Budget Scrutiny (All O&S Committees joint topic)

Priority 4 – Resident’s Parking (O&S Board topic)

This will be kept under review and any changes reported to O&S committees as arising.

19. Key Lines of Enquiry documents will be prepared for individual scrutiny topics where required. Advice on scoping will be sought from officers to strengthen inquiries (in line with usual practice) and from the O&S Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (to provide additional test and challenge in line with updated Constitutional requirements).
20. In-year topic requests: notwithstanding the Committee’s planning of its annual programme of work, councillors retain the right to suggest scrutiny topics throughout the year. Requests for scrutiny work may also be made by residents and other council bodies, such as Full Council, at any time. For arising “in-year” requests, the Committee is recommended to make use of the matrix tool to assess topics in an evidence-led way. Where scrutiny capacity is reached, the Committee can weigh up the value of swapping topics by referring to the evidence generated through the annual work-planning workshop.

Options Appraisal

21. The Committee is asked to consider and confirm, or amend, the scrutiny priorities as outlined in the work plan attached at Appendix A, and provide any further guidance on approach to scrutiny that it sees fit at this time.
22. To ensure that work can be accommodated within available resources, the total number of scrutiny slots available should not be exceeded. If priorities as outlined are not agreed by the Committee, topics should be swapped to remain within capacity.
23. Updating the Work Plan at this time will ensure clear direction for progression of reports in a timely way. If updates are not confirmed there may be an impact on report timings and other scrutiny activity.

Summary of financial implications

24. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Summary of legal implications

25. There are no legal implications arising from this report. 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

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

Summary of sustainability impact

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

Summary of public health implications

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

Summary of equality implications

29. 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 O&S Procedure Rules at Part 4 of the Council's Constitution.

Summary of risk assessment

30. 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

- [Overview and Scrutiny Committees Terms of Reference](#)
- [O&S Work Planning Guidance document](#)
- [O&S Framework for scrutiny topic selection](#)
- [‘Request for consideration of an issue by Overview and Scrutiny’](#)
- [Performance Dashboard.](#)
- [Decision Matrix](#)

Further detail on these background papers is contained within the body of this report.

Appendices

Appendix A – Children’s Services O&S Work Plan