

Report to: Policy and Oversight Board

Date: 20/06/2022

Subject: Work Planning and Prioritisation

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SUMMARY

This report provides best practice guidance to support the Policy Unit and Oversight Board in developing a prioritised work programme for 2022/23.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Policy and Oversight Board:

- a) Discuss a possible list of key strategic issues within its remit to programme for consideration in 2022/23.
- b) Note that the Chair will work with relevant officers and Board members to scope prioritise work programme items for consideration at subsequent meetings.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Policy and Oversight Board Terms of Reference

Appendix 2: Longlist of potential work plan items

Appendix 3: Work Plan Template

INTRODUCTION

1. On 25 May 2022, a meeting of Full Council agreed to establish a new Policy and Oversight Board with a function to oversee the Council's overview and scrutiny function, which is delivered through six Policy and Accountability Committees (PACs). These are:

- Children and Education
- Adult Social Care
- Social Inclusion and Community Safety
- Climate Change and Ecology
- The Economy, Arts, Sports and Public Realm
- Housing and Homelessness.

2. The creation of the Policy and Overview Board, is accompanied by the demise of a specific Finance PAC. Therefore, the primary responsibility for oversight of budget matters will fall to the Board.
3. The relationship between the PACs and the Board shall need to be worked through. It may be that while the overall budget is scrutinised by the Board, individual PACs ensure they receive regular updates as to the budget position of the services they are scrutinising, along with appropriate performance management data on the operation of services within their remit.
4. A single sheet summary of each PAC meeting, particularly where issues of concern have been identified might be presented with the agenda and papers for the Board, which should, preferably, meet at the end of each scrutiny cycle.
5. In addition to leading the coordination and development of the Council's Policy and Scrutiny function, the new Policy and Oversight Board ('The Board') also has a remit to develop policy and recommendations for consideration by Cabinet, across a range of major cross-cutting council functions including the corporate budget, major programmes and partnership working, for example. **Appendix 1** sets out the full Terms of Reference for the Board.
6. The Board and PACs are all able to discharge statutory overview and scrutiny functions under section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

FORMING A WORK PLAN

7. The Board's Work Plan is a live document that sets out what issues will be considered and at which meeting. The Work Plan may be reviewed at each meeting, allowing space to remain flexible to new and urgent priorities throughout the year. To facilitate some discussion at this meeting, officers have provided a longlist of items that the Board may want to consider scheduling (**Appendix 2**).
8. However, as a member led process, these are only suggestions to help inform a discussion, and the Board is asked to consider the areas it wishes to investigate and prioritise for its 2022/23 work programme. The Chair will work with Officers and consult with Members of the Board to scope out the items, and report back at a subsequent meeting.

SCOPING AND PRIORITISING ITEMS

9. Scrutiny best practice recognises that work plan items can be prioritised by using a set criterion for topic selection. The 'TOPIC' criteria is one example that has been developed to assist local authority committees in prioritising their work, encouraging councillors to ask:

- T - Timely: Is now the best time to review the issue?*
- O - Organisational priority: Is the issue a priority for H&F?*
- P - Public Interest: Is the issue of significant public Interest?*
- I - Influence: Can the Board have significant influence over the issue?*
- C - Cost: Are significant social / financial costs associated with the issue?*

10. In addition, given the specific policy development remit, Members may wish to retain an appropriate balance between scrutiny of decisions already taken and a forward-looking examination of future policy initiatives.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

11. An effective work plan will make best use of the resources available. Where the Board chooses to review upcoming decisions and pre-existing strategies, for example, the resource requirements will be more limited. However, where the Board wishes to originate new evidence gathering exercises, or commission its own report, the resource implications will be more substantial and will need to be scoped out on a case-by-case basis. Some service areas may also come under greater scrutiny than others, which will place a greater draw on officer time in that department, and the Board is advised to be mindful of the resource implications in this respect.

NEXT STEPS

12. The Board is asked to use this meeting to identify a shortlist of key strategic issues within its remit, which can be further scoped and programmed for consideration in 2022/23. With the support of officers, the Chair will report back at the next meeting with an indicative work programme for the year for agreement.

APPENDIX 1: POLICY UNIT AND OVERSIGHT BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members

8 voting Councillors Quorum:
3 Members of the Committee

Political proportionality

7 Administration Members
1 Opposition Member

Principal Functions

All the powers of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and in particular:

- The coordination, and development of the Council's Policy and Scrutiny function and the monitoring of its performance.
- To develop policy and make recommendations to the Cabinet.
- Monitor the administration and spending of Council services.
- To review the impact of decisions and policies implemented by the Council.
- Scrutinising the relevant Cabinet Member(s).

Scope

- Creation and monitoring of new policy development via the Policy and Accountability Committees
- Considering the corporate budget.
- Development of long-term savings plans within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- Oversight of finance and use of resources.
- Performance management (including external assessment of the Authority and its services).
- Managed and shared services and other joint working with outside bodies.
- Electoral and other registration services.
- The Council's communication strategy.
- Procurement and management of IT services.
- The development, implementation and operation of the governance, structure, and processes in respect of joint working with other authorities, save for matters within specific service areas which fall within the remit of the PACs.
- Research, innovation, and the Council's continuous improvement and cultural change agenda.
- All human resources and organisation development functions.
- The Council's customer care and complaints services.
- Corporate Programmes and assurance.
- Other major cross-cutting functions of the Council.

APPENDIX 2: LONGLIST OF WORKPLAN ITEMS

Progress of major policies/ strategies approved by Cabinet in past c.2 years - being mindful of past/ planned work of the PACs.

Areas of corporate and cross cutting policy:

- People and Talent (HR) (inc. Inclusion, Employment etc)
- Digital (inc. Digital Inclusion, Information management/ security)
- Procurement and purchasing e.g., our ethical / sustainable procurement policy development including social value, modern slavery, green procurement, local spend.

Annual Budget (February Board), MTFs and long-term savings proposals.

Specific service areas under the remit of the Board (as per scope in ToR).

Major policy areas from the new Manifesto and relating to H&F Values.

Progress with newer Resident Commissions or strategies following Commissions (one-year on reports on Commissions has previously been reported to PACs)

Performance management – corporate or of specific areas.

Annual progress report on new Business Plan (implementation of Manifesto).

Major change and transformation projects and programmes e.g., Resident Experience and Access Programme, Housing Transformation.

Partnership working – including joint working with other authorities.

Strategies of partner organisations that support H&Fs vision/ values and political priorities.

APPENDIX 3: Policy Unit and Oversight Board Work Programme Template

Item / working title	Overview / Development	Report Author / service
20 June 2022		
12 September 2022		
12 December 2022		