

Report to: Place Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 23 June 2021

By: Assistant Chief Executive

Title: Place Scrutiny Committee future work programme

Purpose: To review and agree items for the Place Scrutiny Committee's future work programme and receive updates on previous work.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Place Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1) Receive a verbal update on Workstyles Programme which covers potential changes to working practices and office use, and agree the timescale for a written report on the Workstyles Programme;

2) Note the work of the Highway Services Re-Procurement Project (HSRP) Scrutiny Member Reference Group and consider whether to re-establish the Reference Group to work on the next stages of the Project;

3) Note the report of the Archives and Historic Records Reference Group in appendix 2;

4) Review and agree agenda items for the future Committee meetings, including items listed in the work programme in appendix 3;

5) Review and agree topics for Scrutiny Reviews to be included in the Committee's future work programme; and

6) Review upcoming items on East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) Forward Plan in appendix 4 to identify any issues that may require more detailed scrutiny.

1. Background

1.1 The work programme is an important tool in ensuring the correct focus and best use of the Committee's time in scrutinising topics that are of importance to the residents of East Sussex, and the efficient and effective working of the Council. It also provides clarity for those who may be requested to give evidence to the Committee on the issues under review, and the questions the Committee requires answers to.

1.2 Discussion of the work programme provides the Committee with the opportunity to examine topics that it may be of value to scrutinise, and to decide whether further scoping work is required. This provides a basis for deciding the best way of scrutinising a topic, the timescale, and who from the Committee will be involved in carrying out the review work. If there are a number of topics for review, the Committee can determine the priority of the work within the resources available to the Committee.

2. Verbal Update on Workstyles Programme on changes to working practices and office use

2.1 At the Committee meeting held on 17 March 2021, the Committee requested a verbal update on the Workstyles Programme which is reviewing working practices and the Council's requirements for corporate office space post the Covid19 pandemic. This links to the Committee's work on climate change and the need to reduce carbon emissions from building use and staff travel. It is also relevant to the Committee's interest in the changes that may be needed in the way the Council operates and provides services in a post Covid world.

2.2 The Committee is recommended to receive a verbal update from Officers in the Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR&OD) and the Property Services Teams in the Business Services Department (BSD).

3. Highway Service Re-Procurement Project (HSRP) – Reference Group

3.1 The current Highways and Infrastructure Services (HIS) contract comes to an end on 30 April 2023 and officers have established the Highway Services Re-procurement Project (HSRP) to carry out the work needed to specify and retender the contract. The Place Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a Reference Group to work alongside officers on the development of the new contract in keeping with the previous involvement the Committee has had in this area of work.

3.2 The work of the Reference Group to date covers the planning and preparing of the Outline Business Case (stage 1) and planning and preparing the Outline Business Case (stage 2). For Stage 1, the Reference Group was comprised of Councillors John Barnes, Bob Bowdler (Chair), Godfrey Daniel and Andy Smith. They were joined by Councillor Darren Grover for their work on Stage 2 of the Project. In total the Reference Group has met on ten occasions to undertake their work on the Project and held three briefing sessions.

3.3 The Reference Group's comments, and input have been incorporated into the Outline Business Case (OBC) which was presented to, and agreed by, Cabinet on 26 January 2021. The Interim Report of the Reference Group (contained in appendix 1) accompanied the Cabinet report. Officers have now completed the work on the draft Detailed Business Case (DBC) and the draft DBC will be considered for approval by Cabinet at the meeting to be held on 13 July 2021.

3.4 The Scrutiny Committee, through the work of the Reference Group, has had input into and helped shape the content of the draft DBC. A second report from the Reference Group outlining their work and comments on the DBC will accompany the Cabinet report.

3.5 Once the DBC has been agreed the next stage of the Project is to deliver the procurement strategy (stage 3). This is the tendering of the HIS contract which will culminate in a report going to Cabinet to approve the award of contract. This does not require extensive involvement from scrutiny during the tendering process but there may be a need for some work around the time of the award of the contract. The final stage of the Project is the implementation and monitoring of the new contract.

3.6 The Place Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the work that has been undertaken to date by the Reference Group and consider whether it wishes to re-establish the Reference Group to comment on the next stages of the Project.

4. Archives and Historic Records Reference Group

4.1 The Reference Group was established to examine the impact of the planned savings for the Archives and Records Service as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the implementation of The Keep Sustainability Plan (KSP). The Reference Group was comprised of Councillors Andy Smith (Chair) and John Barnes. The report in appendix 2 outlines their work and conclusions on the impact of the proposed savings on the Service.

Summary of Findings

4.2 Overall, the Reference Group was assured that the changes made through the implementation of The Keep Sustainability Plan will not impact on the historic record, with the KSP and Collections Policy supported by The National Archives. The savings made will leave a sustainable service which will still be able to provide high quality services. However, in the view of the Reference Group it will not be possible to make further savings in future without damaging the Service, as all avenues for reducing costs and increasing income have been explored. The Place Scrutiny Committee should maintain some involvement with the Service as it works to develop and implement the The Keep 5 year Strategy, and regarding any future changes to the Collections Policy.

4.3 The Committee is recommended to note the report of the Archives and Historic Records reference Group and the Reference Group's conclusions regard future scrutiny involvement with this Service.

5. Work programme and future scrutiny reviews

5.1 The Committee is asked to review the items in the work programme contained in appendix 3 of the report and agree the future agenda items and other scrutiny work of the Committee.

5.2 The Committee is asked to consider whether there are any potential topics for future scrutiny reviews, or agenda items for future meetings, that should be included in the work programme. This can include any topics or issues identified through the Committee's work on the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process.

6. Forward Plan

6.1 A copy of the Council's Forward Plan of executive decisions for the period 1 June 2021 to 30 September 2021 is included in appendix 4. The Committee is requested to review the forthcoming items on the Forward Plan to identify any issues that may require scrutiny work. The Forward Plan is revised and published on a monthly basis, and Committee members should regularly review the Forward Plan.

7. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

7.1 The Place Scrutiny Committee is recommended to agree the agenda items and topics for scrutiny reviews to be included in the future work programme. The Committee is asked to note the work of the HSRP Reference Group, and consider whether to re-establish the Reference Group and to note the report of the Archives and Historic Records Reference Group. The Committee is also recommended to review the Council's Forward Plan of decisions to identify any issues that may require more detailed scrutiny.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.