

Report to: Place Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 19 March 2026

By: Deputy Chief Executive

Title: Place Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Purpose: To review and discuss the Place Scrutiny Committee's future work programme

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) review the current work programme at Appendix 1 and identify any key areas that should be highlighted for consideration by the incoming Place Scrutiny Committee to inform its early work programming and RPPR engagement;
 - 2) review the suggested approach to ongoing work and areas of focus for the Committee;
 - 3) review the Committee's input to the RPPR process and identify any additional information which may be required to inform future scrutiny engagement;
 - 4) review upcoming items on East Sussex County Council's Forward Plan as set out at Appendix 3 to identify any issues that may require more detailed scrutiny; and
 - 5) identify any priority topics it would be helpful to incorporate within the induction and training programme for new members and the new committee.
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1. Background

1.1 The work programme is an important tool in ensuring a Committee led approach and that the Committee's time is used scrutinising topics that the Committee considers are of importance.

1.2 In the context of the forthcoming election, Members are recommended to consider which areas of work can now be concluded, and which areas should be highlighted for early consideration by the incoming committee from May 2026 onwards.

1.3 In setting and reviewing the work programme, Members should also consider the Committee's input into the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process and identify any information which may be needed for the incoming committee to provide effective challenge on key issues and areas of work impacting on the Council's future planning.

2. Supporting information

2.1 The March meeting provides a final opportunity for this committee to consider its current work programme, including the status of reviews, reference group work and RPPR engagement, and to identify any suggested areas of focus that may be helpful for an incoming committee to consider as part of its early work programming. Current and planned work of the Committee is outlined below.

Committee meetings

2.2 The next meeting of the Committee is on 22 July 2026 and will be the first meeting of the committee following the local elections. There are five substantive reports currently scheduled for that meeting. It is usual for the first meeting of a new committee to have a shorter agenda, to allow time for induction, meaning some items currently scheduled would need to be deferred. The Committee is invited to note the reports currently listed, and to note that flexibility in scheduling of items will be required so that the agenda is manageable and takes account of the Member induction programme.

Scrutiny Reviews

Street Works

2.3 The review of Street Works has concluded and the report of the Review Board is included on this meeting agenda. In light of the timing of the election, the incoming committee will have the opportunity to consider the report and recommendations ahead of reporting to Cabinet and Council.

Reference Groups

Devolution and LGR

2.4 The Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Reference Group, made up of Members of both Place and People Scrutiny Committees, last met on 17 February 2026. The Reference Group reviewed and provided comments for consideration to the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development on his response to the Government's request for views regarding any Structural Change Order required for Local Government Reorganisation. The Reference Group also considered and commented on the latest position on the imminent establishment of the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority. The Reference Group agreed that it would not meet again prior to local elections in May 2026, and that future scrutiny engagement on these issues should be reviewed following the Government's decision on LGR and the local elections.

Exceat Bridge

2.5 The Exceat Bridge Reference Group met for the first time on 16 January 2026 and received a presentation from officers that provided background and overview of the project. The Group will next meet on 20 April, which will include representatives from Jackson Civil Engineering Group, the contractor appointed to construct the new bridge. Given that the Exceat Bridge replacement is an ongoing project, it is proposed to retain this on the work programme to enable the incoming committee to continue scrutiny in this area.

Asset Management Strategy

2.6 The Asset Management Strategy Working Group was established to provide scrutiny input into the update of the corporate Asset Management Strategy, however this work was paused in light of LGR, and the Group has not met since March 2025. It is proposed that this issue be retained on the work programme, enabling the incoming committee to consider whether to resume this work, either via a Reference Group or through LGR scrutiny arrangements.

Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)

2.7 The LTP4 Reference Group provided scrutiny input between 2022-24 into the creation of the Local Transport Plan, which was adopted by the Council in October 2024. Since then, the Group has met on an ad hoc basis to comment on additional supporting documents of the LTP4, drawing on the existing knowledge of the committee. In light of a new committee being established after local elections, and the likely impact of the creation of the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority on the Council's current transport planning functions, it is proposed that this is removed from the work programme.

Carbon Reduction Target

2.8 Following a recommendation from Cabinet in December 2025 that scrutiny considers the target for the carbon emissions arising from County Council operations measure within the Council Plan, Place and People Scrutiny Committees confirmed that they would undertake this work through a joint Reference Group. The Group will review evidence and consider whether the current carbon reduction target remains realistic and achievable within existing resources. Meetings will take place in March and April 2026 with a view to benefiting from the knowledge and experience of existing members prior to consideration by the incoming scrutiny committees.

Scrutiny engagement in RPPR planning

2.9 This committee has provided key input into the RPPR process, both through consideration of specific RPPR reports and through more detailed scrutiny of specific issues through the wider work programme.

2.10 At the **November** meeting the Committee discussed the latest update to Cabinet on planning for 2026/27, including the latest financial position and national policy reforms.

2.11 The Committee's **RPPR Board** met on 16 December 2025 to consider the draft 2026/27 Portfolio Plans and the latest financial position. The Board:

- considered the emerging financial outlook based on Government announcements during the autumn;
- considered the draft Portfolio Plans and how priorities were reflected against the proposed key areas of budget spend for the coming year; and
- discussed savings proposals for service areas within the committee's remit contained in the December report to Cabinet.

2.12 **Appendix 2** summarises the comments and recommendations made by the Place Scrutiny Committee RPPR Board to Cabinet.

2.13 Members will be very familiar with the Council's budget setting process, having scrutinised and collectively set a number of budgets over the last 5 year electoral term. This accumulated knowledge forms an important basis for the Committee's contribution to the RPPR process and its ability to provide constructive challenge.

2.14 As Members will know, one element of the annual budget development process is identifying potential areas of search for savings, efficiencies, or income generation. At the present time, no further areas of search have been identified beyond those already presented to Members through

the RPPR process and previous Cabinet reports. This reflects both the significant work undertaken in recent years to find efficiencies and the limited remaining scope for further reductions.

2.15 Members may wish to reflect on any learning from the 2025/26 RPPR cycle that would assist a new committee in engaging effectively with the RPPR process in 2026/27 and beyond.

2.16 The committee is invited at this meeting to identify any additional information which may be required to inform future scrutiny engagement, and:

- identify any further areas for potential savings, efficiencies, or income generation which should be considered as part of the future RPPR process;
- consider any issues arising from recent RPPR discussions that should be recommended to include in the future work programme; and
- review the Committee's input to the RPPR process and consider any improvements to the process from a scrutiny perspective.

2.17 Scrutiny's input to planning, through RPPR, for 2027/28 will begin at the **July** meeting with consideration of relevant parts of the quarter 4 2025/26 (end of year) monitoring report and the 2026 State of the County report.

Briefings and training

2.18 The incoming committee will receive induction and Member development support following the elections. Members are invited to identify any priority topics it would be helpful to incorporate within the programme.

Forward Plan

2.19 A copy of the Council's Forward Plan of executive decisions for the period 1 March to 30 June 2026 is included at **Appendix 3**. The Committee is requested to review the forthcoming items on the Forward Plan to identify any issues within the remit of this committee that may require more detailed scrutiny. The Forward Plan is revised and published on a monthly basis and committee members should regularly review the Forward Plan.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 An important part of managing the work of the Place Scrutiny Committee, including its input into the RPPR process, is regularly reviewing the future work programme. This involves the Committee assessing its priorities, ensuring reviews are completed in a timely fashion, and identifying new areas for scrutiny.

3.2 This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to review the current work programme at the end of the 2025/26 municipal year, to note progress made and any ongoing activity, and to identify any matters that it would be helpful to draw to the attention of the incoming Place Scrutiny Committee following the May 2026 elections, including in relation to early work programming and engagement in the RPPR process.

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