

# Briefing Note

## Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25



**To:** Corporate Resources and Governance  
Scrutiny and Improvement Committee  
**From:** Governance Manager

**Date:** December 2024  
**Ref:** Children's and Families  
Scrutiny Improvement  
Committee

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### 1 What is the purpose of this report?

1.1 To provide an update on scrutiny's work programme 2024/25.

### 2 What is the background to this report?

2.1 The LGA and Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) advise that robust work programming is an essential part of a successful scrutiny process.

2.2 Scrutiny and Improvement Committees are an important part of the Council's overall political management arrangements and provide an opportunity for non-executive Members to maintain an overview of progress against delivery of corporate strategy, to be involved in policy development and improvement work, and to hold decisions makers to account. With carefully planned work, coupled with the experience and insights elected members have of their local communities, scrutiny can play a valuable and effective role in making sure services are as efficient and effective as they can be.

2.3 The work of Scrutiny and Improvement Committees generally falls into the following broad categories:

#### Policy and Strategy Development

Scrutiny provides opportunities to examine matters in more depth, to inform policy and strategy development and to drive service improvement. These topics should be clearly aligned to the Council's corporate priorities and strategic plans. It is likely that much of this work could be progressed through the scheduled Committee meetings, perhaps spreading the work over 2-3 meetings where the subject matter warrants it. For particular 'in-depth' review work, there may be the opportunity to undertake some of this work outside of the committee cycle via task and finish panels. These would be supported by Democratic Service Officers where resources allow.

#### Pre-Decision Scrutiny

In addition to policy and strategy development and review, Scrutiny Committees will undertake 'pre-decision' scrutiny by considering Cabinet reports that are listed for the current cycle.

#### Performance Monitoring/Overview

Committees also have the opportunity to examine a mix of annual reports and performance monitoring documents in their role as 'critical friends'.

2.4 Work programmes do need to include some degree of flexibility throughout the year so that they are able to respond to emerging issues and the business needs of the Council. It is good practice to routinely monitor progress against the work programme, therefore, the work programme will remain a standing item on agendas to allow Members to monitor upcoming items and make suggestions for the future topics.

### **Approach to agreeing work programme for 2024-25**

2.5 Members' views were sought on potential areas of focus for Scrutiny work. New suggestions were collated with previously identified topics, considered by the Chair and Vice Chair of each committee together with the relevant Director and Cabinet Members and agreed through Committees in July. A simple flow prioritising the suggestions using a simple flow chart technique. This flow chart is attached as an appendix for information and also to serve as a guide for prioritising any new or emerging work programme topics in year.

2.6 The results of this exercise have been translated into a workplan for each committee showing how each topic relates to the various categories of scrutiny work as described in para 2.3 above. Section headings have also been added to the agendas to reflect these broad categories and assist in the management of the meeting.

2.7 Current scrutiny task and finish panel work includes:

- Flood Management Strategy (work paused pending Government guidance on flood strategies. Interim report and recommendations being drafted)
- Waste Management Strategy (preparatory work taking place with service area)
- Support for carers and guardians of families going through transitions (jointly commissioned by Children and Families and Adults Well-being and Health Scrutiny & Improvement Committee)

2.8 In addition to this, Members are involved in other broader Council task and finish work such as:

- Collaborative Working Group looking at Crustacean Deaths
- Litter bin provision Task and Finish Group

2.9 These demands, on both Members and Officers, have been taken account of when prioritising and setting indicative timeframes around scrutiny work, and will be a consideration in relation to any additional proposed policy and strategy development work which is likely to require more in-depth consideration and a greater time commitment.

2.10 Children's and Families Scrutiny & Improvement Committee work programme for 2024/25 is attached in appendix B.

2.11 The recent Budget task and finish work culminated in a Budget Conference for all Members and identified a number of areas considered worthy of further exploration or monitoring to support ongoing budget and transformation work (set out below). Democratic Services Officers are liaising with Directors, Assistant Directors and Scrutiny Chairs/Vice Chairs to programme work in appropriate timeframes.

## **Climate and Environment**

- Asset Management: Return on Investment, commercial rents/leases v subsidised, business case development, Parking charges review to address deficit (may also be considered by Corporate Resources and Governance Scrutiny and Improvement Committee)
- Car Parking and Enforcement
- Waste Management: opportunities to explore through Scrutiny & Improvement Committees or the Task and Finish Group that is currently being scoped.

## **Children and Families**

- Delivery of Children and Families Action Plan
- Milestones and targets to be developed and monitored, particularly in relation to in-house service provision of Children's residential care
- How to shape services to support Children and Families (for example, Healthy Community Co-ordinators)

## **Corporate Resources and Governance**

- Performance Management Framework: further development of key metrics that link Corporate Plan and the MTFP and role of Scrutiny and Improvement Committees in relation to performance monitoring and management.
- Fees and Charges: consider in detail, default position full cost recovery / dialogue with government re statutory fees (each Scrutiny & Improvement Committee to look at Fees and Charges relevant to their remit)
- Digital Strategy - opportunities to deliver efficiencies with service areas

2.12 To assist with the efficient management of the work programme, it is suggested that each Committee to spends a short time, as part of this item, giving some thought to the key lines of enquiry or information requirements for upcoming items, enabling Officers to prepare information to meet those requirements and facilitate effective scrutiny.

## **3.0 Conclusions & Recommendations**

3.1 Members are asked to:

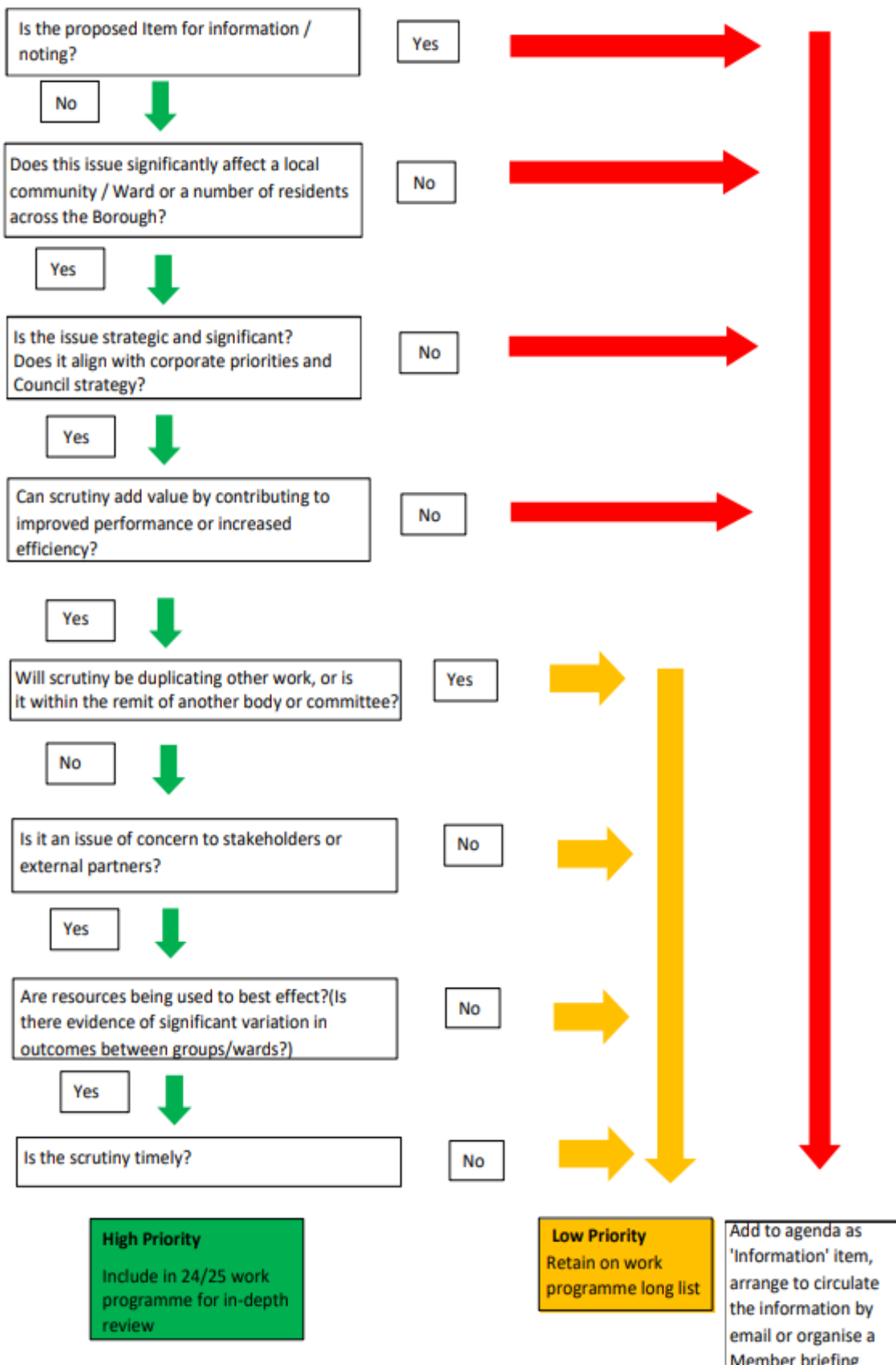
1. Note the approach to planning the timeframes for progressing the matters raised through the Budget Task and Finish work.
2. Note the work programmes for 2024/25 for their relevant Scrutiny and Improvement Committee.
3. Consider the key lines of enquiry or information requirements for upcoming topics.

## **4.0 Appendices**

Appendix A – Prioritisation flow chart.

Appendix B – Proposed Scrutiny & Improvement Committee work programme.

**Flow Chart for Prioritisation of Scrutiny Review Topics**



**Topics to be timetabled:**

1. HeadStart Programme
2. Edge of Care
3. Care Placement Costs
4. Supporting Families Programme
5. *Free School Meals Automatic Enrolment (update)*
6. Focused session on NEETs to be planned
7. SAFE & SHiFT Update & Case studies (to be presented at a closed session)
8. "Knife Crime
  - Loss of PCC funding re: knife crime programmes in schools, Officers to map the funding to identify new provision
  - CURV2 survey results be presented at a future meeting"
9. Strategies:
  - Performance data to be presented at a future meeting referencing how progress towards the outcomes in the strategies was achieved.
  - Information and action plans underpinning the main strategies to be presented at a future meeting"
  - Poverty Strategy (Feb 2025?)
10. Developing Milestones and targets to be developed and monitored, particularly in relation to in-house service provision of Children's residential care (from Budget T&F)
11. How to Shape services to support Children and Families (e.g. Health Community Co-ordinators) (from Budget T&F)

Meeting date	Report	Scrutiny role	Cabinet date
03 December 2024	Q2 reports - six monthly directorate specific performance report	Monitoring and Oversight	
	STSCP Annual Report	Monitoring and Oversight	
	Childcare Sufficiency Report	Pre-decision Scrutiny	10-Dec-24
	Children's and Families Transformation Programme		
	School Readiness Strategy	Pre-decision Scrutiny	10-Dec-24
	Fees and Charges 2025/25	Pre-decision Scrutiny	10-Dec-24
	Rota Visits Feedback	Information Items	
	Work Programme 24/25	Information Items	
	Outside Bodies Update	Information Items	
04 February 2025	Q3 reports - six monthly Corporate Plan/Strategy delivery update report - Inc Summer 2024 examination data??	Monitoring and Oversight	
	Delivering Better Value SEND Review	Monitoring and Oversight	
	Safe Families for Children Update (Feb TBC)	Monitoring and Oversight	
	School Admission Arrangements	Pre-decision Scrutiny	11-Feb-25

	SENDCo Update	Information Items	
	Fostering Update	Information Items	
	Public Law Outline and Decision Making (S17 CIN, S47 info)	Information Items	
	Rota Visits Feedback	Information Items	
	Work Programme 24/25	Information Items	
	Outside Bodies Update	Information Items	
11 March 2025	'Provisional' Educational Results Across all Key Stages – Summer 2024 Exam Series	Pre-decision Scrutiny	18-Mar-25
	Rota Visits Feedback	Information Items	
	Work Programme 24/25	Information Items	
	Outside Bodies Update	Information Items	
22 April 2025	Rota Visits Feedback	Information Items	
	Work Programme 24/25	Information Items	
	Outside Bodies Update	Information Items	
03 June 2025	Q4 reports - six monthly directorate specific performance report	Monitoring and Oversight	
	Investment in our Schools	Pre-decision Scrutiny	TBC
	Rota Visits Feedback	Information Items	
	Work Programme 24/25	Information Items	
	Outside Bodies Update	Information Items	