

<p style="text-align: center;">Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p style="text-align: center;">18th September 2023</p>	
<p>Report of: Robin Beattie, Interim Director of Strategy, Improvement and Transformation</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24</p>	

Executive Summary

This report sets out the 2023/24 work programmes for the:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- Health & Adults Scrutiny Sub-Committee;
- Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee;
- Children & Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee; and
- Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Lead

The work programme has been informed by a scrutiny members workshop, discussion at committee meetings and in consultation with senior officers and partner agencies. The work programme is informed by intelligence from a range of sources including council performance reports, annual complaints data, DLTs feedback, and horizon scanning on key national, regional and local issues that scrutiny may want to engage with. The work programme is intended to be flexible to allow scrutiny to address any emerging issues as and when they arise throughout the year.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Agree the Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24 as set in Appendices 1-6

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), its three sub-committees, and scrutiny lead set out evidence-based focus areas that scrutiny members have identified as important to scrutinise over this municipal year.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The scrutiny work programme is delivered on ad hoc basis. This is not recommended as it is unfocused and is not an efficient use of members and officers time and will not have an impact on improving outcomes for residents.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The scrutiny function in Tower Hamlets is led by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and three scrutiny sub-committees (Health & Adults, Housing & Regeneration, and Children's & Education). There is also a dedicated scrutiny lead for Environment & Community Safety. The scrutiny lead role for Resources & Finance remains vacant and the work will be covered by the OSC.
- 3.2 The terms of reference for OSC and the sub-committees were agreed at the first meeting of each committee.
- 3.3 The work programming process was conducted for each scrutiny committee and scrutiny lead ensure that it targets its work at areas which will add real value, improve outcomes for residents, and support the council to achieve its strategic aims.

Developing the work programme

- 3.4 Members of the OSC and co-opted members across the scrutiny committees held a workshop on the 17 June 2023 to shape the work programme. This was a joint workshop across all scrutiny committees to develop a co-ordinated approach to delivering scrutiny in 2023-24.
- 3.5 Ahead of the workshop, all Directorate Leadership Teams (DLT) were engaged and asked to outline areas where scrutiny can add value to their work. This is a key stage in the development of the work programme. Members want to focus on items where they can help shape policy development and have the opportunity to input into strategies and key decisions whilst in their formative stages. This provides scrutiny with scope to add value and ensure the robustness and transparency of key policies and decisions. DLTs were also consulted on timelines for potential items to be presented at OSC and/or Sub-Committees and asked how best to engage with partners and independent experts. Scrutiny will undertake regular engagement with DLTs and other key stakeholders to ensure the strategic focus of the work programme is maintained throughout the year.
- 3.6 Scrutiny Leads also met with Corporate Directors, Divisional Directors, and Cabinet Members to discuss their portfolios, consider how they can best work with each other, and understand where the efforts of scrutiny can be put to best use. Scrutiny Leads will continue to meet with Corporate Directors and Cabinet Members on a quarterly basis to help embed scrutiny as a tool for continuous improvement. It provides a space outside of formal committee meetings to discuss key issues and prioritise, scope, and agree the format of scrutiny activities throughout the year.

- 3.7 In order to ensure all Members from each committee had an opportunity to feed into the work programme the first meeting of each Sub-Committee considered reflections and achievements in 2022-23, and outlined some of the ongoing pressures and challenges the council is facing. Sub-Committees also heard from Directorates on what their priorities for 2023-24 are. This was followed by an overview of the scrutiny forward plan for the Committee and an opportunity for members to provide their comments and feedback.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop

- 3.8 To identify areas of focus for the committee, the workshop considered:
- Scrutiny values.
 - Prioritisation methods and tools.
 - Council priorities, performance information and horizon scan information.
 - How to engage residents and partners more effectively.
 - Outcomes the committees wish to achieve.
- 3.9 Scrutiny members also considered what makes an effective work plan and held discussions to explore how scrutiny can add value to service delivery and what scrutiny members understood to be the key priorities for the council. Scrutiny members also considered improvements for the scrutiny function and how they can build on scrutiny's 2022/23 role and activities for the forthcoming scrutiny year.
- 3.10 Using a prioritisation tool set out in the [scrutiny toolkit](#), scrutiny members discussed and voted on their priorities for each committee and produced a list of key areas to cover. In developing the work programme, Members were keen to ensure scrutiny covered fewer issues in more depth. They also want to be clear about the outcomes they want to achieve and make more effective recommendations.

Agreeing the work programme

- 3.11 Following the workshop, discussions were held with the scrutiny leads to prioritise, scope and agree the format of scrutiny activities for the year. Scrutiny leads agreed and specified the priorities in their area, developed an understanding of OSC priority outcomes, and defined how scrutiny can add value. This was presented back to the OSC on 24 July 2023 for discussion.
- 3.12 A digital form was created to gather input from residents about the key areas they believe the work programme should consider. A number of submissions have already been received including issues on housing, crime, education cost of living, access to health services, mental health and wellbeing which the committee has incorporated within the work programme. The Committee will continue to review resident responses for potential inclusion throughout the year.
- 3.13 The scrutiny work programme is flexible and can accommodate significant strategic issues and key decisions that requires scrutiny's consideration. An example of this are the forthcoming inspections i.e. Peer, Children Services and Adult Social Care.

Types of scrutiny

3.14 The 2023/24 the scrutiny work programme will comprise of different types of scrutiny focus:

- **Scrutiny Spotlight Sessions:** a Cabinet member and/or a senior leader from a stakeholder organisation (e.g. the Borough commander) provides an overview of their work, including key risks within their portfolio, and is then questioned by members of the committee;
- **Scrutiny Reviews:** led by a scrutiny lead member to examine a topic over multiple evidence gathering sessions, followed by a report with recommendations for service improvement. These are directly supported by a strategy and policy officer from Corporate Strategy & Communities team, with input from the relevant directorates;
- **Scrutiny Challenge Sessions:** led by a scrutiny lead member, these take place during one 'deep dive' evidence gathering session and are followed by a report with recommendations for service improvement. These are directly supported by a strategy and policy officer from Corporate Strategy & Communities team, with input from the relevant directorates;
- **Budget & Policy Framework Scrutiny:** OSC has a mandatory consultation role on all items that are the responsibility of Full Council to agree rather than the Executive, including the budget.

Members Development

3.15 In 2022-23 scrutiny leads received 1-2-1 coaching support for chairs from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CFGS). Wider scrutiny members were offered specialist scrutiny training by CFGS on understanding strategic role of scrutiny, questioning skills and finance scrutiny.

3.16 Scrutiny members will have access to the wider members training offered by democratic services and will be encouraged to take these opportunities up. Local Government Association also offer a number of learning and development opportunities which will be available to scrutiny members. Scrutiny Members will take part in a skills audit in September to identify where further learning and development is required to ensure they are effective in their role and further training will be organised accordingly throughout the year.

3.17 In addition to external training, services will be engaged to see where they can provide briefing sessions for members to help inform their subject knowledge on a specific topic.

3.18 The following briefings have been planned to support Members development:

- Setting and Rationale on Strategic Targets and Performance Measures (Undertaken in July 2023)
- Annual Residents Survey (ARS) findings and Office for Local Government (OFLOG) implications for the council

- Inspection Briefings
- ASC Practice Week
- Adult Safeguarding
- Adult Social Care Transformation Board
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and implications for the Council

3.19 Scrutiny Members will also be encouraged to attend the London Scrutiny Network forum that offers opportunities for peer-to-peer engagement and issues-based and benchmarking learning and development opportunities.

3.20 The policy team will also horizon scan and identify relevant publications and training opportunities for members and will share these with members as and when appropriate.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The work programme is set out to navigate a complex landscape of public policy and aims to shine a spotlight on key resident and community issues and aims to scrutinise how well key decisions support and intersect with the diverse demographic needs of the borough. The scrutiny work programme lends itself as a strategic roadmap in holding the executive account in decision making and also acts as compass for addressing the fundamental principle of equality. The work programme aims to magnify potential impacts on marginalised and underrepresented groups ensuring that the committee amplifies the diverse residents voice and one which resonates fairness and justice.

4.2 The application of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED as set out in the Equality Act 2010), will enable OSC and its sub-committees to evaluate key strategy and policy decisions and establish whether the level of impact will reinforce existing disparities for protected characteristic groups or deliver significant improvements. The work programme is agile and aims to consider current issues that will require the committee to consider equality implications, factoring the nuances of a shared community and the varying issues faced by different groups of the community.

4.3 In developing the work programme, the Committee members applied a range of data driven intelligence including Borough Equality Assessment (BEA) and the latest census data alongside key performance and complaints data. This equipped the Committee to consider equality insights as part of the intelligence to help inform the scrutiny topics. The work programme agenda will facilitate to bring in focus equality implications on the issues such as gender, ethnicity, age, disability, and socio-economic status and help Members also identify and recognise communities might be at a disadvantage or experiencing underrepresentation i.e. deprivation among children and older individuals is notably higher than overall deprivation. Moreover, children in low-income families continue to represent a significant portion of poverty in the local population.

- 4.4 Feedback from the borough's equality groups such as the Disabled People's Network helped to understand some of the key issues that disabled residents faced and reflecting this within the work programme will help to highlight some of the inequality issues that disabled people face and how it can be improved. A number of council wide strategies will be refreshed or newly developed and the committee will be able to consider the equality impact assessments and address any gaps arising from the scrutiny.
- 4.5 OSC's scrutiny of the annual budget proposal and mid-term financial strategy will help to support the council to consider any inequality challenges that may be faced by different groups of community and actions to redress the issue.
- 4.6 Equality considerations is an integral part of the OSC and its sub-committees work, amplifying the residents voice and helping to embrace the diverse needs and aspirations of residents and contribute to building a more cohesive and robust community.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
- Best Value Implications,
 - Consultations,
 - Environmental (including air quality),
 - Risk Management,
 - Crime Reduction,
 - Safeguarding.
 - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.
- 5.2 The O&S work program aligns with the continuous improvement objectives outlined as set out in its [scrutiny toolkit](#). A crucial aspect of scrutiny involves enhancing public services. The effort will concentrate on evaluating the council's alignment with strategic goals, the decision's effects on residents, decision-making processes, potential for service delivery enhancement, budget considerations, and wider policy impacts across boroughs.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 This report sets out the proposed Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for the Municipal Year 2023-24. It also includes draft work programmes for the Health & Adults, Housing & Regeneration and Children's & Education Scrutiny Sub-committees.
- 6.2 It is envisaged that the work programme will be delivered through existing resources and therefore there are no additional financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report. However, in the event that additional resources may be required to deliver particular aspects of the work

programme, these will need to be considered in accordance with the Council's financial framework.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 requires authorities to set up an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a strategic and co-ordinating role over the Council's scrutiny function and in that regard, the Committee sets its own work programme.
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Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Overview & Scrutiny Committee work programme 2023/24
- Appendix 2: Health & Adults Scrutiny Sub-committee work programme 2023/24
- Appendix 3: Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-committee work programme 2023/24
- Appendix 4: Children's & Education Scrutiny Sub-committee work programme 2023/24
- Appendix 5: Scrutiny Lead Resources & Finance work programme 2023/24
- Appendix 6: Scrutiny Lead Environment & Community Safety work programme 2023/24

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A