

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee
Date:	04 January 2024
Subject:	Review of Forward Work Programme of the Corporate Improvement Select Committee (CISC)
Chief Officer:	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Alexander Polak, Statutory Scrutiny Officer Michael Edley, Scrutiny Officer
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	Appendix A – Revised Draft Forward Work Programme Jan 2024 - April 2024 for Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee Appendix B: Workplan as at 28 November 2023

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out the latest version of the work programme for the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC), included at Appendix A. It follows a review by members of the current workplan Appendix B, and also includes key training workshops and Briefings for members,

Recommendations:

- The Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee is recommended to review and agree the revised Forward Work Programme (Appendix A).

Commissioner Review

To Follow.

2. **Report**

- 2.1 The Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC) is invited to agree this revised work programme (Appendix A) whilst noting that it is a living document and is intended to continue to evolve in response to events over the course of the period covered. In the usual course of things, it will also be fully refreshed after each Annual Council.
- 2.2 Work programmes always evolve over time, and this version (Appendix A) is the result of a review on 13 December to which members were invited to submit proposals for topics/issues they felt CISC might be able to add value. Guidelines for this process (Appendix C) had been circulated to members in November, This

includes a template for a member/s to complete, prior to such a review, for members to consider in the context of an existing work plan.

- 2.3 The revised work plan also now includes CISC training events as well as other minor changes previously agreed by the committee and/or Chair between October and December, such as accommodating the Chief Constable's and PCCs Annual Report.
- 2.4 Four proposals were submitted at the review workshop (in relation to the private rented property licencing scheme (PRPLS), SEND issues at a primary school, inappropriate sub-letting of council housing properties and asset disposal). Proposers introduced their proposals and colleagues sought further elaboration, clarification and explanation as they felt appropriate. Each member then scored the proposals using the form provided (Appendix D).
- 2.5 There was clear support for scrutiny of PRLPS and this has been added to the forward plan for February where a gap had been created by agreeing to move the Report of the Task and Finish Group on Resident Engagement to its March meeting.
- 2.6 It was agreed that the other proposals needed further consideration and evidence, and that they may be considered again at a future review of the Forward Work Plan.
- 2.7 For the Committee's information, other actions from the Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan have also progressed since the last time a revised draft work programme was reported to the committee. For example:
 - The quarterly Corporate Performance Reports, Budget Management Outturn Reports and Updates from the Improvement and Recovery Board will in future be received by or circulated to the Committee as "For Information items" that they will take account of in their more focussed investigations.
 - Pre-publication and agenda scoping meetings are now scheduled simultaneously on a monthly basis, for the Chair and Vice Chair to meet report authors for the next two meetings, helping to shape the content of reports prior to publication and to scope the reports for the next meeting in a little over a month's time.
 - All-member pre-meetings are also held between the date of publication of the Agenda and the committee meeting itself. These are run in the spirit of a workshop to collectively agree key lines of enquiry, identify relevant questions and if necessary, the specific approach for each topic. This is leading to more focused discussions in the public meetings, with increasing recognition that members' questions are on behalf of the committee as a whole, rather than of the individual asking them.

3. Implications of the Recommendations

3.1 Financial implications

- 3.2 This is not a decision-making report so there are no direct financial implications. Where further work is required to respond to the issues identified, any recommendations from CISC will be made to Cabinet.

3.3 *Legal implications*

3.4 The Local Government Act 2000 introduced a new political management system for local councils in England and Wales, requiring them to have a separate 'executive' in the form of a leader, or elected mayor, and cabinet. To provide a counterweight for this, the Act also introduced the concept of 'overview and scrutiny' – sometimes referred to simply as 'scrutiny' – whereby every council with an executive management structure is required to have an overview and scrutiny committee. This enables the rest of the council to scrutinise the executive by investigating their decisions; policies; issuing reports and recommendations where any shortcomings are identified. Four key roles for overview and scrutiny are: holding executive, individual cabinet members and chief officers to account to ensure corporate priorities are met; policy development and review; external scrutiny, and performance management and best value.

3.5 *Risk management implications*

3.6 Overview and Scrutiny, commonly referred to as Scrutiny, is a statutory function and is currently subject to government direction in Slough. Failure to develop and approve a Forward Work Programme for Corporate Improvement and Scrutiny would increase the risk of challenge and criticism. The process of scrutiny itself can often serve as an early risk warning mechanism for the organisation.

3.7 *Equality implications*

3.8 The FWP and the covering report include reference to the CfGS scrutiny guidance – which together with the general Public Sector Equality Duty and Nolan's principles, incorporates provisions that are linked to the Equality Act duties, including, inter alia, a requirement to maintaining integrity, respect the rule of law, consideration of any disproportionate impact of decision-making process, ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

4. **Appendices**

Appendix A: Draft proposed Forward Work Programme January to April for the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee

Appendix B: Current Forward Work Programme as at November 2023.

Appendix C: Selecting Topics For Scrutiny: A Guide For Scrutiny Councillors

Appendix D: Template for evaluating proposals.