

Report title	Overview and Scrutiny Function – Annual Report 2023/24 and Work Programme for 2024/25.
Report author	Andrew Finch
Department	Democratic Services
Exempt?	No
Exemption type	N/A
Reasons for exemption	N/A

Purpose of report:

- To recommend to Full Council
- To resolve

Synopsis of report:

To present the annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny function for the municipal year 2023/24 (Appendix A) for submission to the Full Council meeting on 18 July 2024.

The Committee is also invited to nominate its proposed work programme for the municipal year 2024/25.

Recommendation(s):

- i) The Committee is asked to confirm if it is content for the report at Appendix A to be submitted to Full Council in July.
- ii) The Committee is invited to nominate its proposed workstreams for the municipal year 2024/25.

1. Annual Report

- 1.1 Sub-paragraph 6.03 (d) of the Council's Constitution states:-
"(d) **Annual Report.** The Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee must report annually to full Council on its workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate."
- 1.2 The Committee is asked to confirm if it is content for the report at Appendix A to be submitted to full Council in July, or if it wishes to make any amendments.

2. Work programme for 2024/25

- 2.1 Overview and scrutiny committees have statutory powers to scrutinise decisions an authority is planning to take, those it plans to implement, and those that have already been taken/implemented. Recommendations following scrutiny enable improvements to be made to policies and how they are implemented.
- 2.2 Overview and scrutiny committees can also play a valuable role in developing policy, and effective overview and scrutiny should:
- Provide constructive ‘critical friend’ challenge
 - Amplify the voices and concerns of the public
 - Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
 - Drive improvement in public services
- 2.3 Councils who adopt the committee system are not required to have overview and scrutiny but may do so if they wish. Runnymede exercised the discretionary power to establish an Overview and Scrutiny committee. Following an internal training session between the committee and the Corporate Head of Law & Governance, the committee are invited to discuss a proposed workstream for 2024/25, and notify officers of their intended course of action for dealing with those topics.
- 2.4 Selected topics can be scrutinised in several ways, including:
- (a) As a single item on a committee agenda
This often presents a limited opportunity for effective scrutiny but may be appropriate for some issues or where the committee wants to maintain a formal watching brief over a given issue.
- (b) At a single meeting
Which could be a committee meeting or something less formal. This can provide an opportunity to have a single public meeting about a given subject, or to have a meeting at which evidence is taken from a number of witnesses.
- (c) At a task and finish review of two or three meetings
Short, sharp scrutiny reviews are likely to be most effective even for complex topics. Properly focused, they ensure members can swiftly reach conclusions and make recommendations, perhaps over the course of a couple of months or less.
- (d) Via a longer-term task and finish review
The ‘traditional’ task and finish model – with perhaps six or seven meetings spread over a number of months – is still appropriate when scrutiny needs to dig into a complex topic in significant detail. However, the resource implications of such work, and its length, can make it unattractive for all but the most complex matters.
- (e) By establishing a ‘standing panel’
This falls short of establishing a whole new committee but may reflect a necessity to keep a watching brief over a critical local issue, especially where members feel they need to convene regularly to carry out that oversight. Again, the resource implications of this approach means that it will be rarely used.
- 2.5 Whilst invitations to external partners can be issued on the Committee’s behalf, no external party can be compelled to attend an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, task and finish group, or any other council meeting as part of the process.

2.6 It is acknowledged that there needs to be a degree of flexibility throughout the year in order to also deal with matters that may crop up.

2.7 Further meetings of the Committee are scheduled on the following dates:

- 8 October 2024
- 5 December 2024
- 12 February 2025
- 27 March 2025

3. Outstanding Action from 2023/24 workstream

3.1 At the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's final meeting of the 2023/24 municipal year it was content to note the information provided as part of the grounds maintenance programme, however it was considered valuable for the committee to receive the complaint statistics for grounds maintenance on the basis that the bulk of the complaints would be received during spring/early summer.

3.2 The latest complaint statistics for grounds maintenance can be found at appendix B.

4. Conclusions

4.1 The Committee is invited to confirm its approval for the annual report to be taken to Full Council, and notify officers which topics to cover for the 2024/25 municipal year as part of its work programme, and intended course of action for dealing with those topics.

Background Papers

None

Appendices

Appendix A – Overview & Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2023/24

Appendix B – Grounds Maintenance complaints statistics.