

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 DECEMBER 2019

Scrutiny Committee Work Programme Planning

Responsible Officer: Clare Robathan, Policy and Research Officer

Reason for Report: To assist the Committee's discussion on topics to include in the Work Programme for 2020.

RECOMMENDATION(S): That Members agree the proposed shortlisting considerations, and use them as guiding questions on what topics to include in the Work Programme for 2020.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The priorities of the Corporate Plan will help frame this discussion, and agreed topics will address how they link to the Corporate Plan.

Financial Implications: None.

Legal Implications: None.

Risk Assessment: Done well, effective work programming can help lay the foundations for targeted, incisive and timely work on issues of local importance, where scrutiny can add value. It

helps ensure scrutiny avoids wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done may be minimal.

Equality Impact Assessment: Not applicable.

Impact on Climate Change: Not applicable.

1.0 Background

1.1 Following the discussion at the Scrutiny Committee on the 28 October, it was agreed that a further discussion would be had on topics to include in a Work Programme.

DCC Selection Criteria

Whether the issue is in the public interest
Is there a change to National Policy?
Does it affect people across Devon?
Are there performance or risk concerns?
Is it a safety issue?
Are people concerned about it?
Can scrutiny add value by looking at it?
Is it ACTIVE?

2.0 MDCC shortlisting considerations

2.1 When considering whether an item should be included in the work programme, the questions to consider could include:

- What benefits would scrutiny bring/how would scrutiny add value?
- Is the issue of concern to the community?
- Would it affect /have potential impact on people across Mid Devon?
- Are there performance or risk concerns?
- What would be the outcome of this work?
- Is it timely?

2.2 These are guiding questions that will assist Members in coming to a view as to whether an issue should be included, and if so whether it is given high or medium priority in the Work Programme.

3.0 Types of review

3.1 It was suggested at the previous meeting that further information should be provided on the different types of reviews carried out by the Scrutiny Committee in Devon County Council.

3.2 Devon County Council Scrutiny Committee has two types of 'Groups' looking into topics. The first is a Task Group (like Working Groups) which undertake in depth investigations often over several months. These Groups report back to the Committee and then make recommendations for change. These are used when there is a challenging or complex issue to look at with many layers, on issues that the Committee may need to hear detailed views from a variety of different people.

3.3 The second is a Spotlight Review which is similar, but takes place over half a day or a single day. This is beneficial for single issues that are not complex, or that need to be turned

around quickly. Significant research is carried out in advance of the project, in order that the right people can be brought together on one day to discuss.

3.4 Devon County Council also have methods for increasing Member knowledge, through either a 'Masterclass' or 'Standing Overview Group'. A Masterclass is an information sharing and member development session where issues can be presented informally to raise awareness and increase knowledge. No formal notes are taken. This is useful when Members have an interest in an issue but where formal scrutiny at this stage would not add value.

3.5 A Standing Overview Group is a member development session where topic specific issues are discussed and explored informally to increase knowledge and insight. This is useful where members may want to understand complicated issues on a deeper level in order to better hold decision makers to account. Points are reported to the Committee.

4.0 Background information

4.1 In order to consider what should be included in the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, the

following information could be reviewed as background:

- Forward Plan
- Scrutiny Forward Plan
- Audit Committee Forward plan
- Risk and Performance (28th October 2019 – Scrutiny)
- Complaints Report (30th September 2019 - Scrutiny)
- Information on issues other Councils are considering

5.0 Policy Development Groups

5.1 At the previous meeting Members asked for information on the remit of each of the Policy Development Groups (PDGs).

5.2 Mid Devon District Council has four PDGs which act as the overview function, developing and reviewing policy. They are not committees or sub-committees of the Council and do not have decision-making powers:

- Economy: Economic Development and growth, inward investment, business support and development, improving and regenerating town centres, growing the tourism sector.
 - Current/future activity: grant allocations to the TIC, GWC and the museum; market toll for 2019/20.

- Environment: Waste and recycling, street cleaning, climate change and reduction of carbon footprint, parks and open spaces, environmental enforcement, flood defence and drainage.
 - Current/future activity: climate change declaration; reduction of single use plastics; tree planting.

- Homes: Housing strategy and provision of affordable housing, housing strategy, housing policies, neighbourhood and tenancy management, tenant involvement, homelessness prevention, housing needs and allocations.
 - Current/future activity: homelessness; improvements to council property policy; car parking management policy; tenancy strategy.

- Community: any matters that impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of people (e.g. air quality, pollution, noise), Public health, Environmental Health (e.g. food standards, water quality), Leisure, Grants funding, Town and Parish fund updates, Presentations from grant funded organisations, Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
 - Current/future activity: use of CCTV policy; air quality action plan; community safety action plan.

6.0 Working Groups

6.1 There are currently two active working groups:

- Customer Experience – A Scrutiny Committee working group to review the customer experience, and how the Council’s systems work, to ensure they are effective and delivering a positive and efficient service.
- Net Zero – An Environment PDG working group to consider ways the Council can reduce its own carbon impact as well as supporting residents and businesses in Mid Devon to do the same.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 That Members agree the proposed shortlisting considerations, and use them in a discussion on what topics to include in the Work Programme for 2020.

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