

Overview and Scrutiny work priorities and approach:

Recommendations from the 2017-21 council

Purpose

1. To report to the new Overview and Scrutiny (OS) Management Committee work recommended for inclusion in the new OS work programme by the former Management Committee, including select committee items, task groups, scrutiny panels, rapid scrutiny exercises and other ad hoc OS activities.

Background

2. An opportunity for OS to review its activity during the outgoing council is an established part of its learning and improvement journey. This “legacy process” allows for consideration of OS’s approach and key work priorities for the future. In March 2021, the Management Committee agreed a report that highlighted:
 - a) The key pieces of OS work undertaken during the 2017-21 council;
 - b) The work priorities to be recommended for inclusion on the OS work programme during the 2021-25 council;
 - c) In terms of the approach OS takes, key strengths and improvement areas for OS to reflect on under the 2021-25 council.
3. This report presents the results of that process for the new Management Committee to consider and take forward.

Overview and Scrutiny forward work programme

4. The topics recommended by the previous Management Committee for further work are listed in **Appendix A**. The new Management Committee is invited to consider their inclusion within a new OS work programme. Agreed work areas will then be referred to the relevant select committees for further consideration at their first meetings of this council.
5. To use OS’s resources most effectively, the OS work programme should primarily be aligned to the council’s strategic priorities. Management Committee is therefore asked to support early discussions between select committee chairs/vice-chairs with the Executive and directors to gain a more informed understanding about key priorities and projects. This will be vital to deliver a focused, relevant and effective work programme.

6. The OS work programme should also provide space for further topics raised by the select committees and non-executive councillors, and requested by the Executive and Full Council. It is also important that OS is outward facing in terms of seeking and understanding the views of customers, partners and stakeholders.
7. The OS work programme should be viewed as a live document that is constantly reviewed and updated. It will be reported to every meeting of the Management Committee and relevant sections to every meeting of the other select committees. The Management Committee will need to be mindful of the capacity of councillors and officer resource when determining its work programme.
8. At the beginning of this council term, Management Committee is asked to note council's agreed OS core values:
 - Mature and harmonious working relationships
 - OS should be an integral part of decision-making
 - OS should add value to decision-making and focus on the big, important matters
 - A "two-way street" for communication
 - Responsible behaviour and sound practices based on evidence
 - All councillors and officers should work together.

Management Committee task groups

9. Management Committee under the previous council has recommended the continuance of two task groups within its remit. The task groups, their terms of reference and remaining members are set out in **Appendix A**. They are:
 - Financial Planning Task Group
 - Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Scrutiny Panel
10. **Appendix A** also includes task groups and other ad hoc activities that fall under the **other** select committees. This is in recognition of Management Committee's overall responsibility for the function and co-ordination of the OS work programme.
11. The membership of the Management Committee itself will be decided by Full Council on 18 May 2021 and its chair and vice-chair will only be elected at today's meeting. It will therefore need to decide whether it feels it is sufficiently well-informed at its first meeting to finalise its task group structure and make all/some of these appointments.
12. Where it is decided to re-establish Management Committee task groups, the Committee may want to re-appoint those members who remain Wiltshire councillors following the elections (subject to their wishes) for the benefit of continuity. Where vacancies have arisen it may authorise the Chair and Vice-chair to name councillors to fill vacancies as and when appropriate.
13. Whenever new OS activities are established, all non-executive councillors are notified and invited to express an interest in taking part. Approaches to individual councillors may also be made by OS chairs and the Scrutiny team using

councillors' responses to the survey of their skills, experience and areas of interest circulated after the election.

14. Having received Management Committee's recommendations regarding the OS work programme, the other three select committees will also consider their task group structures and memberships at their first meetings.

OS representation on boards

15. In addition to task groups, OS sometimes receives invitations to appoint a representative (without decision-making powers) to specific project or programme boards. The Committee may therefore take the opportunity to re-appoint a representative to these, and those that are the direct responsibility of the Management Committee are listed below.

Board	Previous OS rep
Gigaclear Contract Board (replacing Wiltshire Online Project board)	(Cllr George Jeans)
Constitution Focus Group (if re-established by the Standards Committee on 3 June)	Cllr Jon Hubbard

Overview and Scrutiny's approach

16. In March 2021, the previous Management Committee highlighted the following as key strengths of Wiltshire OS during 2017-21:
 - a) Positive OS-Executive working relationships
 - b) In general, good opportunities to influence policy at an early stage
 - c) An apolitical and collaborative culture
 - d) Focused on the council's key priorities
 - e) An appropriate balance of proactive-reactive OS (with few "call-ins")
 - f) Willingness and support from officers across the council
 - g) Dedicated scrutiny officer resource
 - h) Information briefings to inform and educate councillors, as a complement to OS meetings
 - i) Particularly valuable work undertaken by OS task groups
 - j) Positive engagement with a variety of partners
 - k) Efficient and effective engagement on the COVID-19 response when a streamlined OS model was necessary

17. The following were identified as approaches that OS could develop further:
 - a) Be more proactive in identifying and pursuing work priorities beyond the Cabinet forward work programme
 - b) Reintroduce regular liaison between OS chairmen/vice-chairmen and their Executive counterparts to support OS work planning

- c) More regular liaison between all OS chairmen and vice-chairmen, focusing on oversight and continuous improvement
- d) Give greater profile to financial and corporate scrutiny
- e) Seek more opportunities to influence policy at an early stage
- f) Continue to make efficient use of virtual meetings for task groups, rapid scrutiny exercises and briefings etc.
- g) Continue to aim for committee agendas focused on priority areas, delivering sub-2-hour meetings where possible
- h) Undertake more liaison with MPs on local issues with a national component
- i) Increase public awareness of, and engagement in, OS work
- j) Make better use of councillors' diverse knowledge and experience
- k) Maximise the number of non-executive councillors participating in OS, taking the post-election induction as an opportunity to promote OS
- l) Expand the use of information briefings, taking advantage of remote meeting technology to arrange these flexibly, having discussed the most appropriate topics with Executive, officer and partner colleagues
- m) Refine the process for OS task groups jointly established by two or more select committees

18. The new Management Committee will naturally want to consider the areas highlighted above alongside its own experiences of OS as it begins work in the new council. There will be further opportunities to evaluate OS's approach and impact, including discussions with the Executive and key partners (reflecting the two-way nature of OS), with this process being led by the Chair and Vice-chair of the Management Committee.

Next Steps

19. The Management Committee will have appointed its Chair and Vice-chair at today's meeting, as will the select committees in the forthcoming weeks. This will provide leadership of the function and, as outlined above, allow for informal meetings to be arranged with Executive members and directors in order to gain common understanding and support over priorities in the work programme.

Recommendations

1. To note this council's agreed core values for its OS function.
2. To approve the legacy topics listed in Appendix A for inclusion in the new OS work programme and to advise the select committees accordingly.
3. To note the task group structure at the conclusion of the previous Management Committee as follows (Appendix A):
 - Financial Planning Task Group
 - Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Scrutiny Panel

4. If appropriate, to consider continuation of the above task groups and membership and to authorise the Chair and Vice-chair to name councillors to fill vacancies on task groups and other ad hoc activities following expressions of interest.
 5. To appoint OS councillor representatives to the following boards, with further appointments to be considered once current programme board activity is confirmed:
 - Gigaclear Contract Project Board
 - Constitution Focus Group (if re-established by the Standards Committee on 3 June 2021)
 6. To note OS's key strengths and development areas as highlighted by the previous council and to include these in any review of OS's approach and effectiveness in the new council.
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Appendices

Appendix A Work areas recommended for further scrutiny by Management Committee under the previous council