

BRIEFING	TO:	Improving Places Select Commission
	DATE:	20 October 2020
	LEAD OFFICER:	Katherine Harclerode Governance Advisor 01709 254532
	TITLE:	Updated Work Programme 2020-21 Municipal Year
1. Background		
1.1	The remit of the Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC) is to undertake scrutiny activity in respect of all matters pertaining to the borough of Rotherham as a place. In broad terms, this remit relates to business and economic development, employment, emergency planning, environment, housing, climate change, leisure, culture and tourism, transport and highways, as well as regulatory services such as trading standards and environmental health. The breadth of functions and services that fall within the Commission's remit is significant. The way in which the Commission discharges its scrutiny activity is a matter for itself, having regard to the provisions of the Constitution and any direction from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.	
1.2	Members are required to determine their work programme for the 2020/21 municipal year to give focus and structure to scrutiny activity to ensure that it effectively and efficiently supports and challenges the decision-making processes of the Council, and partner organisations, for the benefit of the people of the borough.	
1.3	The IPSC has chosen to scrutinise a range of issues through a combination of pre-decision scrutiny items, policy development, performance monitoring, information updates and follow up to previous scrutiny work.	
1.4	<p>The IPSC has six scheduled meetings over the course of 2020/21, representing a maximum of 18 hours of scrutiny per year – assuming 3 hours per meeting. Members therefore had to be selective in their choice of items for the work programme. The following key principles of effective scrutiny were considered in determining the work programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection – There is a need to prioritise so that high priority issues are scrutinised given the limited number of scheduled meetings and time available. Members should consider what can realistically and properly be reviewed at each meeting, taking into account the time needed to scrutinise each item and what the session is intended to achieve. • Value-added – Items had to have the potential to ‘add value’ to the work of the council and its partners. • Ambition – the Programme does not shy away from scrutinising issues that are of greatest concern, whether or not they are the primary responsibility of the council. The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities the power to do anything to promote economic, social and environmental well being of local communities. 	

1.5	<p>Subsequent Acts have conferred specific powers to scrutinise health services, crime and disorder issues and to hold partner organisations to account.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility – The Work Programme maintains a degree of flexibility as required to respond to unforeseen issues/items for consideration during the year and to accommodate any further work that falls within the remit of this Commission. • Timing – The Programme has been designed to ensure that the scrutiny activity is timely and that, where appropriate, its findings and recommendations inform wider corporate developments or policy development cycles at a time when they can have most impact. The Work Programme also helps safeguard against duplication of work undertaken elsewhere. <p>The revised plan avails itself of a number of possible modes as appropriate, including but by no means limited to items on scheduled meeting agendas, Task Groups, and meetings with service Officers and Partners.</p> <p>In order to keep agendas to a manageable size, and to focus on items to which the Panel can make a direct contribution, the IPSC has chosen to take some “information only” items outside of formal Commission meetings, for example, by email.</p> <p>The Programme does need to maintain flexibility to accommodate additional or urgent items that may emerge during the year, and, if items are added, this may necessitate a review and re-prioritisation of the Work Programme. Furthermore, the scheduling of items may require some flexibility to take in to account the constraints on the capacity of officers and services currently responding to the active Covid-19 Crisis.</p> <p>With the postponed Whole Council election now scheduled to be held in May 2021, no meetings will be held in April 2021 during the pre-election period. The work of the Commission is therefore going to need to be completed by the meeting planned to be held in March 2021 before a new Council is elected for the 2021-22 municipal year.</p>
2. Key Issues	
2.1	<p>Some areas of recent scrutiny work that the Commission has previously completed may need to be re-examined in view of Covid-19, such as the implementation of changes by Dignity in respect of bereavement services. Other topics must be considered keeping in mind additional complexities that attend the pandemic, such as a cost/benefit analysis of Council buildings whose uses have diminished with the advent of working from home. Furthermore, the coming year is expected to see significant progress made on the Forge Island development and broader town centre public realm and housing improvements. These will continue to be matters of great interest to Members.</p>
2.2	<p>The work programme from 2019-20 had a number of items remaining which have formed the foundation of the 2020-21 work programme. These items were included as part of the initial compilation in Appendix 1 to this report.</p>
2.3	<p>The IPSC is free to determine its work programme as it sees fit. Good practice in respect of scrutiny work planning would involve seeking a range of suggestions from the public, partner organisations, officers and Members for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme.</p>
2.4	<p>Whilst formal conversations with Cabinet Members and officers continue to take place, Members should be clear about expected outcomes, how realistic expectations are and the impact of their decisions on their wider work programme and support time. Members are free to incorporate into their work programme any other issues they think should be subject to scrutiny over the course of the year, with the same considerations in mind.</p>

3. Key Actions and Timelines	
3.1	Pending approval at this meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, formal discussions will take place as needed with the relevant Cabinet Members and Link Officers in respect of the revised Work Programme for 2020-21. Following these discussions, the work programme will be updated and presented at the next meeting in December 2020, for endorsement.
4. Recommendations	
4.1	That the updated Work Programme be approved.

Appendix 1 - Outline Work Programme

Meeting Date	Agenda Items
9 June 2020	Housing Strategy Progress Update
	Initial Work Programme 2020-21
14 July 2020	Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy Update
	Housing Income and Service Charges Update
	Revised Work Programme 2020-21
Aug 2020 Workshop	Housing Maintenance and Repairs
8 September 2020	Town Centre Update
	Bereavement Services Update
20 October 2020	Economic Recovery
	Energy Switching Scheme
Nov/Dec 2020 Working Groups	MIP Review – Cllr Ken Wyatt, Chair Flooding Response – Cllr David Sheppard, Chair Building Use – Cllr Jeanette Mallinder, Chair
8 December 2020	Allotments Self-Management
	Cultural Strategy Implementation
	Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report
Jan/Feb 2021 Working Group	Homes Allocation Process – Cllr Rose McNeely
2 February 2021	Rotherham MBC Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment
	Council Plan Performance Measures - Exception Reporting
	Highways Maintenance
	Clean Air Zone
16 March 2021	Transportation – Active Travel, Transforming Cities
	Aids and Adaptations Tenant Scrutiny Review
	CCTV Update

2020-21 Sub-Group Membership:-

MIP Review
Cllr Ken Wyatt (Chair)
Cllr Brian Cutts
Cllr Jeanette Mallinder
Cllr Rose McNeely
Cllr Kath Reeder
Cllr David Sheppard
Cllr Robert Taylor
Cllr Bob Walsh
Mrs. Mary Jacques

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