



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26th June 2020

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME: 2019- 2020 MUNICIPAL YEAR (EXTENDED)

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to establish a work programme for the extended municipal year. In doing so, Members are asked to consider the Draft Cabinet Work Programme for the 2019-2020 Municipal Year (Extended) (attached at Appendix B)

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:-

2.1 Acknowledge the contents of the proposed Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme for the period June-August 2020 (attached at Appendix A);

2.2 Identify matters within the draft Cabinet forward work programme that committee may wish to seek the opportunity to pre-scrutinise or receive further information on, in advance of Cabinet/Council determination;

2.3 Consider and determine other matters it may wish to consider, challenge and scrutinise over this extended period, taking consideration of the factors set out in sections 4 and 5; and

2.4 Request that the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications reports the committees considerations to the Cabinet and/or appropriate Cabinet Members.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 In accordance with paragraph 12.1 (Part 4) of the Council's Constitution, the Cabinet Work Programme had been prepared to cover a period of three months, with an updated version provided at the end of each period.

3.2 The recommendations seek to provide appropriate detail to inform Member's deliberations when determining a work programme for the extended municipal year.

3.3 Consideration of the draft Cabinet Work Programme, will provide sufficient notice and opportunity for review and challenge of the emerging issues and the Council priorities during COVID-19 pandemic to the end of this municipal year.

3.4 The proposed work programme allows for an element of flexibility and taking into account any additional consultative documents or legislative matters requiring attention.

3.5 The Presiding Officer has indicated his intention to review holding an Annual General Meeting of the Council before the end of the summer and therefore **the work programme has initially been extended by a three month period, subject to further review.**

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Following the introduction of social distancing measures at the end of March and the suspension of formal committees, the decision making and governance of the Council has continued to operate in compliance with the Council's Constitution to discharge key decisions. This has included undertaking urgent decisions necessary to the Council's service response during this period.

4.2 [The Local Authorities \(Coronavirus\) \(Meetings\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020](#), published at the end of April, provided the opportunity for committee functions to operate virtually. The Council has subsequently taken an incremental approach to the roll out of committee meetings on a virtual basis. This approach has provided the opportunity for Members and officers to gain experience operating virtually and for the zoom applications to be made accessible for all members.

4.3 To date the Council's Cabinet and Planning Committees have met virtually.

4.4 At a briefing of Group Leaders and Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, held on 18th May 2020, Members supported the proposal presented by the Head of Democratic Services, to prioritise the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in the first phase of committee functions to be rolled-out virtually. Members also supported the proposal for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, as the Council's overarching Scrutiny Committee, to consider the forward work programme of the Cabinet and to initially take a council-wide approach.

4.5 At this first Scrutiny Committee, to meet under virtual arrangements, it is considered prudent to realign the forward work programme to deal with no more than

two matters per agenda over the next three months. During this period it may necessary for information and evidence to be reported in a combination of ways, both verbal and written (taking into consideration that Officer time continues to be focussed upon responding to the Coronavirus pandemic). This streamlined approach will enable a more focused platform for discussions, including the Council's response to COVID-19. This approach is not intended to contradict the principles agreed by members as part of the recent scrutiny review, but is instead intended to provide an immediate way of conducting scrutiny and challenge during this period.

4.6 Chairs have already acknowledged that scrutiny considerations over the immediate period, will need to be framed by the service response of the Council to COVID-19 and therefore the attached scrutiny work programme has been designed to incorporate those key matters for consideration, with the opportunity to identify other areas for further review from the Cabinet work programme. The importance for all Members to be engaged in these key matters, through this proposed approach, is recognised by both the Council's Senior Leadership Team and the Cabinet.

4.7 An awareness of the resource constraints the council is working has informed our preparation of the proposed forward work programmes and therefore Members are asked to be mindful and prepared to adopt an element of flexibility, when setting its work programme for the next three months, in recognition of the need for the Council to swiftly respond to changing information and guidance from both the Welsh Government and UK Government through this pandemic.

5. SCRUTINY APPROACHES DURING THIS PERIOD

5.1 Operating in a virtual committee environment will be distinctively different. Members are therefore encouraged to focus upon areas of public interest and where there is opportunity to constructively support decision making and service response.

5.2 It is important to acknowledge that Corporate Officers will have increased or different responsibilities during the current period. While we are proactively working towards resuming all committee functions, reports will unlikely feel like 'business as usual' and instead reports will need to be succinct, and less formal ways will be found to provide Members with key information in the immediate weeks and months. Constructive engagement by all political groups has and continues to support this approach and will continue to be facilitated by the Head of Democratic Services.

5.3 Importantly, remote or virtual meetings will require patience from all involved and will work more effectively through recognition of this point. This will need to be considered when formulating a work programme.

5.4 Members are encouraged to consider approaches and advice provided by the Welsh Local Government Association and Local Government Association to scrutiny during the COVID-19 pandemic, which can be found at:-

<https://www.wlga.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-councils>
<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/coronavirus-information-councils>

6. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

6.1 The Cabinet work programme has been compiled by members of the Senior Leadership Team in discussion with the relevant portfolio holder(s).

6.2 The Head of Democratic Services has facilitate discussions between the Deputy Leader of the Council (As the portfolio holder for Council Business) and the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny, in relation to upcoming Cabinet Business.

6.3 The Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme has been developed in consultation with the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny and Group Leaders.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 The report has been prepared in accordance with paragraph 12.1 (Part 4) of the Council's Constitution.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES.

10.1 This work programme takes consideration of the Council's Corporate Plan the work programme of the Cabinet and the service response to the COVID 19 pandemic.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee are asked to identify any items they would like to review in greater detail from the draft Cabinet work programme which will also ensure that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee fully evaluates the effectiveness of its overview and scrutiny function during these uncertain times.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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