

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Meeting date: 10 September 2020

**From: Executive Director – Corporate, Customer and
Community Services**

Scrutiny Management Board Briefing

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides Scrutiny Management Board with an update on any issues and developments that have occurred since the meeting of the Board on 22 May 2020.
- 1.2 This report also provides Board Members with the Scrutiny Work Programme attached as Appendix 1, a draft refreshed Scrutiny Development Plan attached as Appendix 2, the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions attached as Appendix 3. And a draft Scope for Scrutiny Activity in relation to Local Government Reform attached as Appendix 4.

2.0 Issues for Scrutiny

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- 2.2 Note the range of activity set out in the report
- 2.3 Consider the Work Programme presented in Appendix 1
- 2.4 Consider the draft refreshed Scrutiny Development Plan presented in Appendix 2
- 2.5 Consider the Forward Plan of Key Decisions set out in Appendix 3
- 2.6 Agree the draft scope for Scrutiny activity in relation to Local Government Reform presented in Appendix 4

3.0 Background

Scrutiny Work Programme

- 3.1 Since the last meeting of SMB on 22 May 2020, work has been undertaken by each Board or Board Chair, and subsequently with SMB Members, on refreshing the Scrutiny Work Programme following the pause of Scrutiny meetings over the Spring and Summer and in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 3.2 The Work Programme attached as Appendix 1 reflects the result of this review activity to date. Members also suggested that the presentation of the Work Programme be further developed to reflect the engagement of the partners and public in scrutiny activity around particular issues. Officers will take this forward ahead of the next meeting of SMB in November.

Scrutiny Development Plan

- 3.3 Following the last meeting of SMB on 22 May 2020, work has been undertaken with SMB Members to refresh the Scrutiny Development Plan to reflect progress made over the last year, and to review and reprioritise development activity for the coming months.

- 3.4 The Development Plan was based on the findings of the scrutiny self-assessment carried out in Spring 2019, and was produced and agreed by SMB in September 2019. Areas identified for development were:

- Communicating scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider authority to ensure all members and officers are made aware of the role the scrutiny plays in the organisation
- Scrutiny's profile in the wider community.
- Closer and earlier scrutiny involvement in policy formation and alignment of corporate work programmes;
- Making the most of Scrutiny Member's experience, expertise, interests
- Co-ordination of the various committees' work to make best use of the total resources available.
- Enhancing the relationship between the Audit Committee and Scrutiny
- Widening engagement with Scrutiny
- The approach to shortlisting topics for inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Programme, and to undertaking Scrutiny of specific projects
- The approach to scrutinising the Council's Budget and Strategic Planning process
- Securing insight from the executive on Scrutiny recommendations at an early stage

- 3.5 Activity has progressed throughout the year, although the pause in scrutiny activity due to the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in a delay on some areas.

- 3.6 The Council Plan Delivery Plan has been used to inform areas of the scrutiny work programme to contribute to the enabling of earlier scrutiny involvement in policy formation and alignment of work programmes.

- 3.7 The Council's Annual Report for 2019/20 was circulated to all Members and is now available on the Council's website. The Health Scrutiny Committee has agreed a joint protocol with the NHS Trusts to improve stakeholder engagement.

- 3.8 The refreshed Plan is streamlined and more focused on key development priorities. Members are asked to consider the draft refreshed Scrutiny Development Plan for 2020/21 attached as Appendix 2.

Forward Plan of Key Decisions

- 3.9 Members are asked to note the Forward Plan of Key Decisions provided as Appendix 3 to this report.

Scope for Scrutiny Activity – Local Government Reform

- 3.10 On 19 August 2020, the Chair of SMB chaired a session to which all non-executive Members were invited focusing on the opportunity for local government reform in Cumbria. Members received a brief presentation from the Chief Executive, the Executive Director – People, and the Executive Director – Economy and Environment on the current opportunity in respect of devolution and local government reform and recent discussions with Ministers, and on the Council's development of a proposal.

- 3.11 Members then had the opportunity to discuss, in groups, the issues they would like to see considered in developing proposals and future local government in Cumbria, and also to identify areas of focus for Scrutiny activity in relation to this issue over the coming weeks and months.

- 3.12 A summary of the comments and ideas contributed by Members in the groups is included in Appendix 4 attached. In respect of the focus for Scrutiny activity Members raised a number of issues:

- Locality arrangements
 - Locality governance models
 - Town and parish councils – local devolution
 - Decision-making and delivery of resources
- Engaging Communities
 - Engaging communities and community groups in proposals
 - Communities engaged in development of locality structures
 - Scrutiny engaging directly as part of evidence gathering
- Learning from Best Practice and Experience
 - Learning from other areas
 - Draw on the previous Task and Finish Group work from 2013
- Assessment of vulnerable areas - benefits, disbenefits, risks
 - Impact of simplification and rationalisation
- Future ways of working
 - Arrangements for strong system leadership
 - Benefits of increased efficiency and rationalisation, as well as longer-term transformation

- Eliminating organisational siloed working with other public service bodies
 - Building on the strengths of Covid-19 response and recovery ways of working
 - Relationship with devolution
- 3.13 Members expressed their wish to engage in the reform process as it progresses, and for Scrutiny to play a key role in further developing proposals. The progress of this process is uncertain as decisions and timetabling will be determined by the Government, but Members recognised that this could be a long-term programme of work for Scrutiny.
- 3.14 In terms of taking this work forward and setting out the first stage of Scrutiny activity a draft scope for a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group is attached in Appendix 4 for Members' consideration.

Strategic Planning

- 3.15 Formal Scrutiny engagement in the Council's Strategic Planning cycle will begin in early October and involve a number of opportunities to be briefed and contribute to development of proposals over the autumn and winter. An invitation to the first session will be circulated to all non executive Members shortly.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 Scrutiny of a wide range of issues continues to be kept under consideration by each Board. A number of pieces of work are also being led by SMB over the Autumn and Winter period which will result in recommendations coming forward to inform Council priorities and delivery.

Clare Killeen
Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor
2 September 2020

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Work Programme

Appendix 2 – Draft Scrutiny Development Plan 2020/21

Appendix 3 – Forward Plan of Key Decisions

Appendix 4 – Summary and Draft Scope for Scrutiny Task and Finish activity (*to follow*)

Previous Relevant Council or Executive Decisions *[including Local Committees]*

No previous relevant decisions

Background Papers

No background papers

Contact: Clare Killeen, tel. 07771913588 email, clare.killeen@cumbria.gov.uk