

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee
Date:	26 September 2023
Subject:	Forward Work Programme of the Corporate Improvement Select Committee (CISC)
Chief Officer:	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Alexander Polak, Statutory Scrutiny Officer Kunwar Khan, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	Appendix A – Revised Draft Forward Work Programme 2023-24 for Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee Appendix B – Report outlining the context and process to date, as presented to 25 July 2023 CISC meeting

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out the latest version of a work programme for the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC), included at Appendix A. It should be read in conjunction with [Appendix B](#), a report on the same topic which was presented to the July meeting of this committee.

Recommendations:

- The Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee is recommended to review and agree the Forward Work Programme (Appendix A).

Commissioner Review

To Follow.

2. **Report**

- 2.1 The Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC) is invited to review and agree this work programme (Appendix A) whilst noting that it is a living document and is intended to continue to evolve in response to events over the course of the period covered. In the usual course of things, it will also be fully refreshed after each Annual Council.
- 2.2 Work programmes always evolve over time, but this version is significantly different to the draft work programme considered at the committee's last meeting in July 2023. The committee made a range of comments about how to further

develop the work programme, not least in light of feedback sent to that meeting by the commissioner Gerard Curren. Substantial further work was requested. Officers have therefore worked at the direction of the Chair to focus the work programme even more closely on the key drivers of Slough Borough Council's improvement and recovery.

- 2.3 A previous forward programming covering report was presented to 25 July 2023 CISC meeting and is [linked as Appendix B](#) to provide the necessary context and details. It explains how Members and officers worked together to shape the initial draft work programme for CISC with the active support of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, describing the process, contributions and details together with guidance about best practice. The work programme presented here today builds further on all of that work.
- 2.4 For the Committee's information, other actions from the Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan have also progressed since the last time a draft work programme was reported to the committee. For example:
- The Cabinet Forward Plan is now sent to scrutiny members monthly and the Chair and Vice Chair review it with Democratic Services' support to consider what items, if any, could be chosen for future scrutiny.
 - Pre-agenda meetings are now scheduled monthly, for the Chair and Vice Chair to meet report authors for the next two meetings, helping to shape the scope and content of reports, and helping to plan how to support the Committee to make an impact.
 - A very experienced, full-time Scrutiny and Governance Officer has been recruited into the Democratic Services Team. This completes the full resourcing of Scrutiny capacity, alongside the new Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager who started in May.

3. Implications of the Recommendations

3.1 Financial implications

- 3.2 This is not a decision-making report so there are no direct financial implications. Where further work is required to respond to the issues identified, any recommendations from CISC will be made to Cabinet.

3.3 Legal implications

- 3.4 The Local Government Act 2000 introduced a new political management system for local councils in England and Wales, requiring them to have a separate 'executive' in the form of a leader, or elected mayor, and cabinet. To provide a counterweight for this, the Act also introduced the concept of 'overview and scrutiny' – sometimes referred to simply as 'scrutiny' – whereby every council with an executive management structure is required to have an overview and scrutiny committee. This enables the rest of the council to scrutinise the executive by investigating their decisions; policies; issuing reports and recommendations where any shortcomings are identified. Four key roles for overview and scrutiny are: holding executive, individual cabinet members and chief officers to account to ensure corporate priorities are met; policy development and review; external scrutiny, and performance management and best value.

3.5 *Risk management implications*

3.6 Overview and Scrutiny, commonly referred to as Scrutiny, is a statutory function and is currently subject to government direction in Slough. Failure to develop and approve a Forward Work Programme for Corporate Improvement and Scrutiny would increase the risk of challenge and criticism.

3.7 *Equality implications*

3.8 The FWP and the covering report include reference to the CfGS scrutiny guidance – which together with the general Public Sector Equality Duty and Nolan’s principles, incorporates provisions that are linked to the Equality Act duties, including, inter alia, a requirement to maintaining integrity, respect the rule of law, consideration of any disproportionate impact of decision-making process, ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

4. **Appendices**

Appendix A – Draft Forward Work Programme 2023-24 for Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee

[Appendix B](#) – [Previous forward programming covering report outlining the programming process and details with work programming guidance from Centre for Governance and Scrutiny \(CfGS\) presented to 25 July 2023 CISC meeting.](#)