

BRIEFING NOTE: SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSALS

Executive Summary

At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 June 2023 Members discussed the procedure for submitting scrutiny topic proposals.

Previously, no deadline has been set for submitting scrutiny topic proposals for inclusion at the next meeting. To aid Members in having proposals considered by the Committee, a deadline is proposed in the report.

The Scrutiny Toolkit has also been included as an appendix to this report.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That

the proposed deadline for submitting scrutiny topic proposals, 7 days before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda publication, be agreed.

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers:	None.
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Submitting a scrutiny topic proposal is a useful tool for Members to formally request items that would not ordinarily be considered by the Committee.
- 1.2 Briefing papers have been provided to the Committee in previous years, and this paper provides a summary for the process in the Municipal Year 2023-24.
- 1.3 A deadline is proposed, so that Members can submit the topic request in time to be considered for inclusion on the agenda.

2.0 The Scrutiny Toolkit

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Toolkit is a significant resource covering all aspects of scrutiny, procedures, and powers of the Committee.
- 2.2 The Toolkit includes a template scrutiny topic proposal form. Alternatively, Members may submit a topic request through an e-form.
- 2.3 The Toolkit provides guidance on evaluating a topic proposed for the Committee, a flowchart is provided to guide whether a topic is appropriate for the Committee and its priority.
- 2.4 If the Member considers that it would be more appropriate to use Councillor Call for Action, or Call-in the Toolkit provides guidance on the criteria to use each, and how to do so. Forms for each are also included.

3.0 The Topic

- 3.1 It is important for any Member considering submitting a topic proposal to evaluate various aspects:
 - 3.1.1 Whether Council has any responsibility for, or can take action over, the issue, or if the issue impacts local people and the Council can represent those views through oversight or scrutiny.
 - 3.1.2 What objective(s) or benefits could be achieved by scrutiny of the topic.
 - 3.1.3 What resources and timescales the Council would need to commit to achieve the intended objectives.

4.0 Scrutiny of the Topic

- 4.1 The Committee has limited resources and therefore must balance being parsimonious with which topics it chooses to scrutinise or take an overview of, with working in the public interest and holding the Executive to account.
- 4.2 To aid in determining whether a topic is appropriate for consideration as an item full advice may be found in the aforementioned Scrutiny Toolkit.
- 4.3 The Committee should focus on those which bring the most benefit for the public but is commensurate with available Councillor and Officer resource. By considering the expected outcomes (i.e. benefits), Members will be most well placed to determine the topic's merit.
- 4.4 If the Committee considers the item as not appropriate for the Work Programme, it may still decide to take action:

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4.4.1 Instruct Officers to respond to the query outside of the meeting, or as an action arising from the meeting;

4.4.2 Formation of a task Group, which may be as little as one Councillor, to investigate the topic and report back; or

4.4.3 Suggest that the Member raising the topic consult with Officers outside of the meeting.

4.5 It is important to consider the Work Programme, suggested additions, or anticipated topics when determining the merits of a topic.

5.0 Deadline

5.1 The ordinary process of topic submission necessitates a deadline to be able to ensure consideration of the proposal for potential inclusion on the agenda before its publication.

5.2 It is proposed that a deadline of one week (seven (7) calendar days) before the publication of the agenda for the next meeting be used for scrutiny topic proposals.

5.3 The agenda for a meeting is published five (5) clear working days before the meeting. In effect, this ordinarily means ten (10) calendar days prior to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Equalities and Human Resources

6.2 There are no equalities or human resources implications arising from this report.

Legal

6.3 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7.0 Engagement and Consultation

7.1 No engagement or consultation has been carried out for this report.

REPORT ENDS