

Scrutiny Workshop Notes

A presentation was provided by the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) on the roles and responsibilities of the committee, the scoring approach to topics and an introduction to the workshop. An overview of topics covered by the committee in recent years was also provided.

The Executive Director (Finance and Transformation), Executive Director (Place) and the Executive Director (Resident Services and Climate Change) each gave an overview of services within their remit. They outlined the key priorities for these services over the coming year to provide context to areas the committee may wish to consider, and made some suggestions based around key topics discussed at full council and other committees on areas which the committee may have wished to cover. These included:

- Housing Repairs and Maintenance – Access issues
- Empty Homes – Council powers and bringing empty homes back into use
- Leaseholders – Support and advice available, in relation to service charges
- Performance of cultural facilities
- Weltech – Consideration to support provided in a challenging economy
- Debt management – Reporting of debt and support provided to residents

The committee then considered the topics it would like to be scored, and discussed topics that had been raised by residents and other Councillors. The topics that were agreed upon for scoring were:

- Effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny
- Traffic Regulation Orders
- Houses of multiple occupation / Supplementary planning document
- Youth violence
- Consultations
- Grass cutting
- Communal area maintenance

It was noted the following topics would also be brought as standard items for the year:

- Budget Setting Task and Finish Panel
- Crime and Disorder
- Health
- Action progress report (new annual item reporting on the actions agreed over the previous years OSC)

The remainder of this pack sets out the scoring, terms of reference and forward plan for the Committees consideration.

Scrutiny Scoring Matrix

Topic/area of interest: Effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny

	Numerical score			
Public Interest	low 1	medium 2	high 3	1
Risk to Council or service delivery	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Alignment to Corporate Priorities	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Financial Value	low 1	medium 2	high 3	1
Issue of concern for partners?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Will the outcome of scrutiny review result in any meaningful impact on the Council service?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Will the outcome of scrutiny result in any benefit for a significant part of the community / partners / stakeholders or the Council?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Total Score				13

Decision:

The committee recognised the important role the committee plays in the governance and policy making process. In 2020, the overview and scrutiny arrangements were amended at the council, and the committee would like to consider whether the arrangements are effective. In addition, it was agreed that to support scrutiny an annual report should be presented to the first formal meeting each year, on action status of recommendations from the previous year.

Based on the scoring it is recommended that **single report** be presented to the committee from officers to cover the following:

- The legal framework (what is the statutory purpose of OSC);
- A summary of all topics covered since 2020, including recommendations and actions;
- A summary of evidence used
- A summary of the scoring methodology; and,
- Details of where additional information is available for the committee;

The objectives expected through this scrutiny are:

- To consider whether all statutory topics have been covered by the committee annually;
- To consider whether the scoring methodology is working as expected;
- To consider whether committee members are actively utilising in year data (such as performance data) to inform the programme of work; and,
- To consider whether the committee has made recommendations that have been implemented and that have had an impact.

Scrutiny Scoring Matrix

Topic/area of interest: Traffic Regulation Order (TRO's) / Parking Permits

	Numerical score			
	low 1	medium 2	high 3	
Public Interest	1	2	3	3
Risk to Council or service delivery	1	2	3	2
Alignment to Corporate Priorities	1	2	3	2
Financial Value	1	2	3	2
Issue of concern for partners?	1	2	3	2
Will the outcome of scrutiny review result in any meaningful impact on the Council service?	1	2	3	2
Will the outcome of scrutiny result in any benefit for a significant part of the community / partners / stakeholders or the Council?	1	2	3	2
Total Score				15

Decision:

The committee discussed the councils parking permit policy, and enforcement of parking permits. A desire was expressed to consider the impact of parking permits on local facilities, businesses, health services and residents. There were also concerns raised on the impact houses in multiple occupation have where permit schemes are in place. Verge protection was also raised, but this was considered last year in the environment task and finish panel.

This topic has scored at the high range, and would warrant a **task and finish panel**, covering:

- the costs and income associated with controlled parking zones (CPZs) / parking permits;
- the policy approach for selection and consultation on CPZs;
- the legal framework and requirements;
- the enforcement of controlled parking zones; and,
- where available, information on the impacts, and mitigating factors, of controlled parking zones.

The objectives expected through this scrutiny are:

- to understand if the use of controlled parking zones has the desired effects;
- to consider if there are mitigating actions the council can put in place for any negative effects identified from the use of controlled parking zones;
- to consider if the councils policy and procedure is fit for purpose; and
- to consider if there are any recommendations on the enforcement of CPZs.

Task & Finish Terms of Reference

Scrutiny Review Title	Implementation of Traffic Regulation Orders
Scoring Matrix Result	15
T&F Panel Members	
Co-opted Members	
Portfolio Holder (s)	Councillor Sandreni Bonfante
Officers	Chris Barnes, Geoff Sampson, Eliska Robova
Key Stakeholders	
Background Issue to review - the rationale for scrutinising this issue	
<p>The committee recognised that parking restrictions are a powerful tool, used to ensure better parking outcomes for our residents. Used effectively, they enable residents and their visitors to access parking close to their property, as well as ensure there are convenient spaces for people to park in our Town Centres.</p> <p>The committee also recognised that effective enforcement of new regulations allows the Council to control the operation of parking, to address issues and challenges that arise, such as commuter or business parking affecting the availability of on-road spaces for residents.</p> <p>The committee acknowledged that the Council always follows consultation procedures before introducing new parking measures; this is overseen by a democratically accountable cross-party Cabinet Panel. However, Members have less oversight to how parking controls are reviewed and assessed following implementation.</p>	
Scrutiny Aims and Objectives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to understand if the use of controlled parking zones has the desired effects; • to consider if there are mitigating actions the council can put in place for any negative effects identified from the use of controlled parking zones; 	

- to consider if the councils policy and procedure is fit for purpose; and
- to consider if there are any recommendations on the enforcement of CPZs.

Review of Implications/Impacts/Risks

Parking is an emotive topic – negative experiences can impact businesses and residents satisfaction levels, and lead to complaints

If parking controls are not effective, they risk undermining the local economy and resident satisfaction, as well as the Council's reputation

Methodology for Gathering Evidence

- Examples of case studies of TRO's that have been introduced
- Discussion around the assessment of the 6-month review period
- Presentation of data on how the parking work programme is formulated
- Examples of consultation responses and how the Council has responded to them, either by introducing or not introducing parking restrictions
- Review of enforcement arrangements in place, and numbers of tickets issued
- Explanation of the legal framework governing parking restrictions
- Income and expenditure information for TROs and parking enforcement

Proposed time scales and meeting frequency (aim for 2 to 3 moths)

Start date	November 2024
Frequency of Meetings	6 weekly
End Date	February 2025
Reporting back to OSC/Recommendations to Cabinet	
Date of OSC	March 2025
Date of Cabinet	April 2025

-Scrutiny Scoring Matrix

Topic/area of interest: Houses of multiple occupation and the supplementary planning document

	Numerical score			
Public Interest	Low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Risk to Council or service delivery	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Alignment to Corporate Priorities	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Financial Value	low 1	medium 2	high 3	1
Issue of concern for partners?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Will the outcome of scrutiny review result in any meaningful impact on the Council service?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Will the outcome of scrutiny result in any benefit for a significant part of the community / partners / stakeholders or the Council?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Total Score				14

Decision:

The committee discussed the impact houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) can have on the local community (such as on parking, fly tipping and waste issues). A discussion was held on the effectiveness of the supplementary planning document, although it was also recognised some HMOs were created through permitted development.

The committee expressed a desire to understand how enforcement of HMOs took place, and whether there are processes and procedures in place to identify 'unofficial' HMOs.

Whilst this topic has scored on the middle range, which suggest providing a single report for scrutiny. The breadth of the topic is quite wide, So a **single report** will be produced to provide:

- the planning framework and level of influence the council has over the development/conversion to HMOs;
- the enforcement powers the council has for HMOs;
- an overview of the private accredited landlord scheme; and,
- the procedures in place for identifying HMOs, and numbers or registered landlords.

The objectives expected through this scrutiny are:

- to consider if the councils current supplementary planning document on HMOs is fit for purpose;
- to consider if there are any recommendations around the identification, monitoring and enforcement of HMOs.
- to consider if a more detailed delve into HMOS should be recommended for the 2025/26 OSC work programme

Scrutiny Scoring Matrix

Topic/area of interest: Youth Violence (Youth facilities/activities)

Public Interest + Strategic Value + Risk + Corporate Priorities + Financial Value = Scrutiny Value Score

	Numerical score			
Public Interest	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Risk to Council or service delivery	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Alignment to Corporate Priorities	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Financial Value	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Issue of concern for partners?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Will the outcome of scrutiny review result in any meaningful impact on the Council service?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Will the outcome of scrutiny result in any benefit for a significant part of the community / partners / stakeholders or the Council?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Total Score				18

Decision:

Youth violence was debated at the committee workshop. It is recognised this is not a direct responsibility of the Council, although the Council does play a key role in overall community safety with the community safety partnership, anti-social behaviour activities and in the provision of some youth facilities such as campus west.

Based on the scoring it is recommended a **task and finish panel** be set up, to cover:

- The definition of youth violence and the level of youth violence in the borough
- The roles and responsibilities of the council and other partners
- The activities undertaken by the council to reduce and/or prevent youth violence

The objectives expected are:

- to understand what the community safety partnership are doing towards youth crime and violence; and,
- to feed into partners and make recommendations
- to consider whether there are additional activities the council can do to support the reduction of youth violence.

Task & Finish Terms of Reference

Scrutiny Review Title	Youth Violence (Youth facilities/activities)
Scoring Matrix Result	18
T&F Panel Members	
Co-opted Members	
Portfolio Holder (s)	Councillor Sandreni Bonfante
Officers	Sue McDaid, Emma Walker
Key Stakeholders	
Background Issue to review - the rational for scrutinising this issue	
<p>Youth violence was debated at the committee workshop. It is recognised this is not a direct responsibility of the Council, although the Council does play a key role in overall community safety with the community safety partnership, anti-social behaviour activities and in the provision of some youth facilities such as campus west.</p>	
Scrutiny Aims and Objectives	
<p>The objectives expected through this scrutiny are to determine if recommendations could be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to understand the definition for and levels of youth violence in the borough; • to understand what the community safety partnership are doing towards youth crime and violence; • to feed into partners and make recommendations; and, • to consider whether there are additional activities the council can do to support the reduction of youth violence. 	
Review of Implications/Impacts/Risks	
<p><i>Failure to adequately work together to reduce youth violence can impact on community safety.</i></p>	

Methodology for Gathering Evidence

- Presentation of information and questioning of partners including Hertfordshire Police and Hertfordshire County Council
- Presentations from officers on council activities and the community safety partnership
- Presentation of youth provision from other areas / councils / community groups

Proposed time scales and meeting frequency (aim for 2 to 3 moths)

Start date	November 2024
Frequency of Meetings	6 weekly
End Date	February 2025

Reporting back to OSC/Recommendations to Cabinet

Date of OSC	March 2025
Date of Cabinet	April 2025

Scrutiny Scoring Matrix

Topic/area of interest: Consultations

Public Interest + Strategic Value + Risk + Corporate Priorities + Financial Value = Scrutiny Value Score

	Numerical score			
Public Interest	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Risk to Council or service delivery	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Alignment to Corporate Priorities	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Financial Value	low 1	medium 2	high 3	1
Issue of concern for partners?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	1
Will the outcome of scrutiny review result in any meaningful impact on the Council service?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Will the outcome of scrutiny result in any benefit for a significant part of the community / partners / stakeholders or the Council?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Total Score				14

Decision:

The committee discussed consultations and the poor response rate on consultations for parking and other services, and considered exploring what else could be done to increase uptake on responses.

This topic was added to the customer services cross party group in 2023, and some high level actions were developed for this years work programme. Based on the scoring, and the work of the cross party group, it is recommended that a **single report** be presented to the committee later in the year to provide an opportunity for the committee to scrutinise and input into work of the cross party group.

The objectives expected are:

- to understand where response rates are considered to be statistically low; and,
- to consider how response rates could be improved in areas they are considered to be low.

Scrutiny Scoring Matrix

Topic/area of interest: Grass Cutting / Grounds Maintenance Contract

Public Interest + Strategic Value + Risk + Corporate Priorities + Financial Value = Scrutiny Value Score

	Numerical score			
Public Interest	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Risk to Council or service delivery	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Alignment to Corporate Priorities	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Financial Value	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Issue of concern for partners?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Will the outcome of scrutiny review result in any meaningful impact on the Council service?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Will the outcome of scrutiny result in any benefit for a significant part of the community / partners / stakeholders or the Council?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Total Score				20

Decision:

A number of matters were discussed regarding grass cutting, including the contract performance, the introduction of wild areas / more wild flowers and the communication of grass cutting schedules. The committee acknowledged the level of complaints/comments from residents in this area. There is a perception that performance is reducing which members would like to explore. A debate was also held on whether the council should collect grass - this would have significant cost implications but members would like to explore whether HCC would contribute to this to reduce costs around blocked drainage.

A **task and finish panel** will be set up to cover:

- the performance of the grounds maintenance contract;
- understanding of how the contract compares to previous contracts, and prestige areas;
- understanding the impacts of changing weather patterns having an impact on grass cutting;
- an overview of the communications arrangements around grass cutting;
- considering implications and benefits of using wild flower areas / no mow areas; and,
- exploring the cost of grass collection and whether HCC will contribute to these costs

The objectives expected through this scrutiny are to determine if recommendations could be made:

- to improve public perception in relation to grass cutting;
- to improve biodiversity; and
- to improve the level of service using financial contributions from HCC

Scrutiny Review Title	Grounds Maintenance
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Task & Finish Terms of Reference

Scoring Matrix Result	20
T&F Panel Members	
Co-opted Members	
Portfolio Holder (s)	Councillor Sandreni Bonfante
Officers	Sue McDaid, Emma Walker, Paul Harris
Key Stakeholders	

Background Issue to review - the rationale for scrutinising this issue

The Committee discussed regarding grass cutting, including the contract performance, the introduction of wild areas / more wild flowers and the communication of grass cutting schedules.

The committee acknowledged the level of complaints/comments from residents in this area.

There is a perception that performance is reducing which members would like to explore. A debate was also held on whether the council should collect grass - this would have significant cost implications but members would like to explore whether HCC would contribute to this to reduce costs around blocked drainage.

Due to potential financial implications, this T&F panel is recommended to finish by November 2024 to ensure any cost implications can be considered by Cabinet in December 2024 as part of the budget setting process.

Scrutiny Aims and Objectives

The objectives expected through this scrutiny are to determine if recommendations could be made:

- to improve public perception in relation to grass cutting;
- to improve performance of the grass cutting contract;
- to improve biodiversity; and
- to improve the level of service using financial contributions from HCC

Review of Implications/Impacts/Risks

Failure to adequately undertake grass cutting can have issues in relation to safety (sight lines for vehicles), wellbeing (ability for public to utilise parks and open spaces) and reputational damage.

Methodology for Gathering Evidence

- Presentation from and opportunity to question the contractor, including Information on contractor performance (contract monitoring data); information relating to weather patterns and changes over time (nationally published data); and, future plans
- Information on contract specifications including areas such as number of cuts and specified prestige areas (contract data)
- Considering areas suitable for wild flowering / no mow areas, and impacts on biodiversity and maintenance requirements
- Cost of grass collection (contractor quote) and contact with HCC regarding cost sharing (officers)
- Complaints data

Proposed time scales and meeting frequency (aim for 2 to 3 moths)

Start date	August 2024
Frequency of Meetings	6 Weekly
End Date	October 2024

Reporting back to OSC/Recommendations to Cabinet

Date of OSC	November 2024
Date of Cabinet	December 2024

Scrutiny Scoring Matrix

Topic/area of interest: Social Housing – Communal area maintenance

Public Interest + Strategic Value + Risk + Corporate Priorities + Financial Value = Scrutiny Value Score

	Numerical score			
Public Interest	Low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Risk to Council or service delivery	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Alignment to Corporate Priorities	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Financial Value	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Issue of concern for partners?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Will the outcome of scrutiny review result in any meaningful impact on the Council service?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	3
Will the outcome of scrutiny result in any benefit for a significant part of the community / partners / stakeholders or the Council?	low 1	medium 2	high 3	2
Total Score				17

Decision:

Members discussed complaints they had been receiving from tenants regarding the maintenance of communal areas (including cleaning, decorating and estates). Any recommendations here may have an impact on leaseholders so it is important they are considered through the recommendations.

A **task and finish panel** will be set up to cover:

- providing details around the councils cleaning and maintenance schedules and levels of service
- providing an overview of service charges (where are they charged, what do they include)
- providing details of chargeable services to leaseholders

The objectives expected through this scrutiny are to determine if recommendations could be made:

- to improve maintenance of communal areas, where deemed required;
- to improve cleaning of communal areas, where deemed required; and,
- to consider service charges to tenants for such services

Task & Finish Terms of Reference

Scrutiny Review Title	Social Housing - Communal Area Maintenance
Scoring Matrix Result	17

T&F Panel Members	
Co-opted Members	
Portfolio Holder (s)	Councillor Gemma Moore
Officers	Sue McDaid, Janice White, Simon Kiff
Key Stakeholders	

Background Issue to review - the rational for scrutinising this issue

Members discussed complaints they had been receiving from tenants regarding the maintenance of communal areas (including cleaning, decorating and estates). This would include both internal and external communal areas.

The committee were keen to understand what level of provision was already in place for maintenance, and how this could be improved.

Any recommendations here may have an impact on leaseholders so it is important they are considered through the recommendations.

Scrutiny Aims and Objectives

The objectives expected through this scrutiny are to determine if recommendations could be made:

- to improve maintenance of communal areas, where deemed required;
- to improve cleaning of communal areas, where deemed required; and,
- to consider service charges to tenants for such services

Review of Implications/Impacts/Risks

Failure to adequately undertake adequate maintenance of communal areas can have reputational damage to the council, lead to maladministration findings by the ombudsman and social housing regulators, and impact on the quality of homes and communal areas for tenants and leaseholders.

Methodology for Gathering Evidence

- Information on existing maintenance regimes (officers)
- Information on cyclical decoration programmes (officers and contractor information)
- Information on cleaning arrangements (officers)
- Information on existing service charges, and ability to service charge, and leaseholder charges
- Feedback from tenants (including tenants panel)

Proposed time scales and meeting frequency (aim for 2 to 3 moths)

Start date	October 2024
Frequency of Meetings	6 Weekly
End Date	December 2024

Reporting back to OSC/Recommendations to Cabinet

Date of OSC	January 2025
Date of Cabinet	February 2025

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

July 2024

Meeting Date	Report Topic	What is the Outcome or Output required?
30 July 2024	Scrutiny action status implementation update Workplan	Report Report
25 September 2024	Effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny Grass Cutting / Grounds Maintenance Contract (update) Houses of Multiple Occupation	Report Verbal update from the Chair Report
20 November 2024	Budget Setting (update) Grass Cutting / Grounds Maintenance Contract (final) Social Housing – Communal Area Maintenance (update) Annual Ombudsman Reports Consultations	Verbal update from the Chair Final report and recommendations of the T&F Panel Verbal update from the Chair Report Report

<p>9 January 2025</p>	<p>Social Housing – Communal Area Maintenance (final)</p> <p>Budget Setting (final)</p> <p>Review of provision of health services in the borough *</p> <p>Youth Violence (update)</p> <p>Parking Permits (update)</p>	<p>Final report and recommendations of the T&F Panel</p> <p>Final report and recommendations of the T&F Panel</p> <p>To discuss annual report and feedback any recommendations</p> <p>Verbal update from the Chair</p> <p>Verbal update from the Chair</p>
<p>18 March 2025</p>	<p>Review of provision of the discharge of crime and disorder services in borough*</p> <p>Youth Violence (final)</p> <p>Parking Permits (final)</p>	<p>To discuss annual report and feedback any recommendations</p> <p>Final report and recommendations of the T&F Panel</p> <p>Final report and recommendations of the T&F Panel</p>

* Please note that these items are statutory requirements for scrutiny by local authorities.

Members of the Committee can, during the course of the year, add items within the remit of the Committee that they wish to be considered and discussed.