

**SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENT FOR
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 11 July 2023 at 7.30 pm
Council Chamber - Civic Centre**

The attached document is due to be considered at the meeting listed above and was unavailable for circulation when the agenda for the meeting was published. The agenda item to which the document relates is noted below.

AGENDA

9. Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2023/24

b) Agreement of Work Plan (Pages 2 - 3)

This pack contains an email from Councillor Edwards to the Leader, following the submission of the Leader's letter to the Committee.

Dear Councillor Swords

Thank you for your written submission to the Scrutiny Committee.

Below is a link to the LGA Councillors Workbook on Scrutiny

https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/11%2064_Scrutiny%20for%20councillors_03_1.pdf

Page 4 states

The principal power of a scrutiny committee is to influence the policies and decisions made by the council and other organisations involved in delivering public services. The scrutiny committee gathers evidence on issues affecting local people and makes recommendations based on its findings. Scrutiny can investigate any issue which affects the local area or the area's inhabitants.

Regarding your point about the focus of the Committee, it is interesting to note that since 2018 the Committee has explored the following topics:-

Policing (Town Centre Policing, Domestic Violence and Violence against Women,) Impact of the role of Universal Credit, The Closure of Osler House, Bus Provision, Paddling Pools /Splash Parks, Adult LD Social Housing provision, Impact of permitted Development, Harlow Council House Building programme, Notice Boards, Allotments, Youth Club Provision, Turnout in local Elections, Council Staff Home Working, Council Housing repairs and Pre Scrutiny of Economic Development, Climate Change, Community Safety, and Health and Well Being strategies.

The Committee, in reflecting the views of its members and topics submitted, has sought to develop a balanced agenda between those topics in which the Council has a primary role and others where it looks to work for the benefit of the town in cross agency partnership, sometimes in a secondary or subordinate role. We have also sought to avoid duplication of work of other Council Committees – this was particularly the case when the Cabinet Policy Development Working Group was functioning, as we were primarily seeking to comment where we could “add value” and perform the function of being a “critical friend” to the Council.

Where it has consulted other agencies, it's focus has been to try and understand the issues, particularly with respect to the work of/ impact on the Council, and to explore what if any actions the Council could/should take. Where such actions were identified, it made recommendations to Cabinet.

Regarding your comment about proceedings in Cabinet, that is a matter outside of the purview of the Scrutiny Committee. However, changes such as you suggest are likely to have significant implications for the wider aspects of democratic accountability. As Chair of Scrutiny I would only make the observation that, if as a Council we were to go down that path, it would also have significant implications for the resourcing of the Scrutiny Committee and its workload.

Whilst on the subject of workload, the Scrutiny Committee currently has six meetings a year, with additional task and finish groups as necessary. Last year we introduced the process of pre-scrutiny of the major strategies. So, for example this year it is being suggested that we take a detailed look at the new Corporate Plan when it is published. I agree with you, that it would also be of benefit to schedule time with each of the Portfolio Holders to understand and comment upon how they specifically plan to address the Council's agenda. However, this will have both time and staff resource implications which we as a Committee will need to explore if we are going to do this properly.

I have asked that this response is included in the papers for the Scrutiny Committee.

I look forward to seeing you at the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday.

Best regards

Cllr Tony Edwards
Chair of Scrutiny