

REPORT TITLE: Annual Workplan of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

To:

Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 10 June 2025; and
Services, Communities and Climate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1 July 2025

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All wards

1.	Recommendations
1.1	It is recommended that the committees: 1. Note the arrangements through which the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees will determine their business through the municipal year.
2.	Purpose and reason for the report
2.1	This report is to be presented to the first meetings of both the Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Services, Communities and Climate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide the committees with an outline of how committee business – and individual meeting agendas – will be determined throughout the municipal year. The recommendation to note this report is to provide the committees with a record of having been provided with an overview of the function of the newly established Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the methods through which their business is determined during the municipal year. It should be noted that the new committee Chairs and Vice Chairs, Overview and Scrutiny Committee members, and all other councillors have been provided with training and resources regarding the new Overview and Scrutiny Committees outside of the committee meetings formally convened through statutory powers.

3.	Alternative options considered
3.1	Do nothing: the committee would still exercise its powers in accordance with the council's constitution and statutory requirements and guidance but would not have had the opportunity to debate the committee's arrangements for work programming nor to have had context on the committee's early annual work programme nor the Cabinet's Forward Plan.
4.	Background and key issues
4.1	At its annual meeting on 22 May 2025, Council resolved to establish two new Overview and Scrutiny Committees: the Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and the Services, Communities and Climate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These two newly created Overview and Scrutiny Committees will exercise the Overview and Scrutiny powers as defined in law.
4.2	The two committees each have remits which cover the Cabinet portfolios: <u>Services, Communities and Climate Overview and Scrutiny Committee</u> - Climate Action and Environment - Communities - Safety, Wellbeing & Tackling Homelessness - Open Spaces - Culture, Economy & Skills <u>Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee</u> - Planning and Transport - Finance and Resources - Housing - Leader
4.3	The council's constitution (Section 5 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees) provides a summary of the powers and arrangements for these Overview and Scrutiny

	Committees.
4.4	These newly established committees reflect a change in focus of the council's Overview and Scrutiny function following a broader review of the council's governance arrangements by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and subsequent consideration by councillors through working groups and the Civic Affairs Committee. These newer points of focus include: - Emphasis on post-decision scrutiny, allowing the Council (through these committees) to measure the impact of decisions taken by Cabinet and other decision-makers. - To hold the Executive (IE Cabinet) to account, both collectively and individually - To advise on emerging policies
4.5	Section 5 – Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules – of the council's constitution provides an overview of the procedures to be followed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, including the business which may be considered at each meeting. These arrangements for committee business can be found throughout Section 5, particularly at 5.7 and 5.11, and can be summarised as follows: - Business which is a standard requirement of local authority meetings (e.g., minutes, declarations of interest) - Public participation - Matters referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee via the call-in procedure - Interaction with Cabinet (5.11) - Interaction with Council and its committees (5.11) - Consideration of the Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Committees' Work Programme - Other business agreed by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (5.11)
4.6	These constitutional and statutory parameters to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees are broad and allow the committees flexibility in how their business is to be determined throughout the year and how meetings will be structured.

4.7	In all matters, the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and officers will need to communicate openly and regularly. This is important both in determining how the business of meetings will be determined, but also in understanding what pieces of work can be delivered by officers and by when to best meet the needs of the committees, as emphasised at Section 5.11.1. It should be noted that routine requests for information from Overview and Scrutiny Committee members do not necessarily need to be considered as requests for Overview and Scrutiny Committee business; that councillors can have informal discussions with officers on services outside of the committee process. <u>Forward Plan</u>
4.8	The Cabinet Forward Plan is a legal requirement of local authorities operating an executive governance model (as Cambridge City Council is) to publish notice of decisions due to be taken by the executive [Cabinet] collectively and individually 28 clear days before the decision is to be made. The Cabinet Forward Plan of Cambridge City Council can be found on the council's website¹ and its latest version (published for June 2025) is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
4.9	The Cabinet Forward Plan gives notice of decisions due to be taken by Cabinet and so will be an important route through which the Overview and Scrutiny Committees can emphasise their post-decision scrutiny. Overview and Scrutiny Committee members will receive notice, via the Forward Plan, of upcoming decisions, make recommendations on such decisions to Cabinet, be able to see any debate around the decision to be taken, and, should they feel it necessary, can then call a Cabinet member to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to discuss the proposed – or actual – impact of the decision. <u>Work Programme</u>
4.10	Appendix 2 to this report is the nascent Work Programme of the two Overview and

¹ <https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=532&RD=0>

	Scrutiny Committees. This Work Programme provides a short list of items which officers have submitted for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Items listed may also be listed on the Cabinet's Forward Plan, but the Work Programme includes items which are not necessarily listed on the Forward Plan but may nonetheless be of interest to the committee. As well as discussing the committee's Work Programme during meetings, the committee will be able to feed into the programme outside of meetings through discussions with officers. As it is the Chair's constitutional prerogative to add items to agendas (Section 5.11.1), committee members who wish to see are encouraged to initially share their requests for committee business via email to: - The Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or, if unsure as to which committee would be responsible for the item, to the Chairs and Vice Chairs of both committees) - The relevant lead officer(s) - The member of the Democratic Services responsible for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or to the Democratic Services team)
4.11	The Chairs and Vice Chairs and relevant officers have agreed to hold joint monthly meetings to consider the overall business of the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, coordinate business which may need triage between the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and to consider how the Overview and Scrutiny Committees are exercising their powers. As part of determining business, the Chairs and Vice Chairs are minded to focus most of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees' time through the municipal year on fewer items but with a deeper focus rather than scrutinising many items at surface level.
4.12	Although there may be urgent requests for items to be taken at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, as far as practicable members are encouraged to submit requests for committee business with as much notice as possible to allow the requests to be properly considered, agendas to be planned, and officers to be tasked with preparing reports and other information. <u>Items of interest</u>

4.13	Several items were discussed in preparing the agendas for the first Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings which have not been listed on the agendas due to either the timing of the item and the need for policy proposals to be agreed by Cabinet before being available for post-decision scrutiny, or information which would inform proposals:
4.14	An update on the Local Plan is in part subject to the Spending Review 2025 and decisions regarding the Cambridge Growth Company. Clarity will inform the date on which such an item would be reported to Cabinet.
4.15	Section 5.9 of the council's constitution provides guidance on how the Overview and Scrutiny Committees will set their Work Programmes:
4.16	<i>The Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be responsible for setting their own work programme and in doing so they will take into account wishes of Members of that Committee who are not Members of the largest political group on the Council. The work programme should retain flexibility to deal with urgent issues.</i> <i>In setting its work programme, the Overview and Scrutiny Committees will take into account;</i> <i>- the Council's corporate and strategic priorities;</i> <i>- significant policies and proposed decisions in the Forward Plan;</i> <i>- submissions from members of the public;</i> <i>- submissions from Councillors/Cabinet; and</i> <i>- the need for a clear rationale for including items for consideration and with regard to the Forward Pan, ensuring that the largest, strategic items or those which are otherwise likely to have a significant impact are given precedence.</i>
5.	Corporate plan
5.1	The Overview and Scrutiny Committees will exercise broad powers to scrutinise all decisions taken by Cambridge City Council in pursuance of the corporate plan. It should be noted that the statutory basis for an Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to hold an Executive to account rather than to determine council policies itself.

6.	Consultation, engagement and communication
6.1	The changes to the council's governance, as formally agreed by the annual meeting of Council on 22 May 2025, were subject to extensive consultation, and a nine-month review of the new constitution is scheduled. In determining its business through the municipal year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committees may take representations from its members, the wider Council, interact with other committees and Cabinet, receive requests from members of the public, interact with external organisations and groups, and be supported by officers.
7.	Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact
7.1	It is intended that this report provides the new Overview and Scrutiny Committees with a sound basis for developing their workplans through the year, complemented by ongoing officer support and training in the Overview and Scrutiny function within local authorities.
8.	Implications
8.1	Relevant risks
	As this is a report outlining already agreed new arrangements there are no material risks arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
	Financial Implications
8.2	As this is a report outlining already agreed new arrangements there are no material financial implications arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
	Legal Implications
8.3	As this is a report outlining already agreed new arrangements there are no material legal implications arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
	Equalities and socio-economic Implications

8.4	As this is a report outlining already agreed new arrangements there are no equalities and/or socioeconomic implications arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
8.5	As this is a report outlining already agreed new arrangements there are no Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
	Procurement Implications
8.6	There are no such implications arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
	Community Safety Implications
8.7	There are no such implications arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
9.	Background documents Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.
9.1	None.
10.	Appendices
10.1	1 – Cabinet Forward Plan 2 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees' Work Programme
11.	To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Matthew Stickley, Interim Committee Manager Matthew.Stickley@cambridge.gov.uk.