



North Tyneside Council

Family Friendly Sub- committee

30 June 2023

Dear Councillor,

With reference to the agenda previously circulated for the meeting of the Family Friendly Sub-Committee to be held on **Thursday, 6 July 2023** please find attached supplementary papers in relation to the following agenda item.

Agenda Item	Page
5. Work Programme 2023/24	1 - 14

To give consideration to the sub-committee's work programme for 2023/24.

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Members of the Family Friendly Sub-committee

Councillor Sarah Burtenshaw

Councillor Ian Grayson

Councillor Chris Johnston

Councillor Martin Murphy

Councillor Pat Oliver (Deputy Chair)

Councillor Bruce Pickard

Councillor Sarah Day

Councillor Val Jamieson

Councillor Josephine Mudzingwa

Councillor Rebecca O'Keefe

Councillor Erin Parker-Leonard (Chair)

Councillor Judith Wallace

Meeting: Family Friendly Sub-Committee

Date: 6 July 2023

Title: Work Programme 2023-24

Author: Allison Mitchell, Head of Governance

Service: Governance

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposed approach to work planning for the Family Friendly Sub-Committee for 2023-24, together with an initial information base which the Sub-Committee may wish to utilise in considering and deciding on its outline work programme for 2023-24.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Sub-Committee is recommended to:
 - (a) Note the information set out in this report regarding Scrutiny work planning, including good practice guidance from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny
 - (b) Note that link Cabinet members and lead Senior Leadership Team officers will actively support the work and information needs of the Family Friendly Sub-Committee in the coming year, including providing information to support the Sub-Committee's work planning, at regular intervals during the year
 - (c) Note that link Cabinet members and lead senior officers have been invited to submit suggestions on current and upcoming policy matters which the Sub-Committee may wish to consider when planning its initial programme of work for 2023/24; and that Committee members have also been invited by the Chair to put forward suggestions for Scrutiny

topics; and a list of suggested Scrutiny topics for 2023/24 is included in this report for the Sub-Committee's consideration

- (d) Using this information and the views of Sub-Committee members, decide an outline work programme for the year; and agree that work programming will be included as a standard agenda item at each future meeting of the Sub-Committee in order that the work programme can be flexed as necessary in response to emerging matters as the year progresses.

3. Introduction

Background – Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) Review

- 3.1 The Authority's Scrutiny arrangements have recently been evaluated and restructured, following an external Scrutiny Improvement Review undertaken by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS). The CfGS is a national body which specialises in promoting governance excellence within local authorities.
- 3.2 The CfGS report was considered in full by the former Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee on 21 March 2023. The report is referenced in 'background information' below and can be accessed [here](#).
- 3.3 Following consideration of the CfGS report the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee proposed that the number and remit of scrutiny committees in North Tyneside should be restructured. This proposal was considered by the Constitution Task Group in April 2023 and reported to Annual Council on 18 May 2023. At that meeting Council agreed a new structure for Scrutiny, creating the new Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination and Finance Committee and five specialist sub-committees aligned to the Council Plan. One of these sub-committees is the Family Friendly Sub-Committee.
- 3.4 The meeting of 6 July 2023 is therefore the first meeting of the newly created Family Friendly Sub-Committee. This provides a good opportunity for the Sub-Committee to consider its approach to work planning, the information and input it will need to enable effective work planning, and the initial areas on which the Sub-Committee may wish to focus its work plan during 2023-24.
- 3.5 The Chair of the Family Friendly Sub-Committee has sought the views of Committee members, in addition to receiving information from the lead SLT Director and Cabinet members about potential policy areas. This is discussed in more detail below.

CfGS – Good Practice Recommendations regarding Work Planning

- 3.6 In their Scrutiny Improvement Review the CfGS made several ‘good practice’ suggestions around Scrutiny work planning. These included:
- (a) **A clearer focus on democratic accountability of the Executive** – the CfGS commented that scrutiny of the Mayor and Cabinet Members should form a key part of the work plan, and the Mayor and Cabinet Members should regularly attend scrutiny to answer questions on items falling within their portfolio responsibilities. Cabinet Members are also able to provide valuable information to support the identification of Scrutiny topics by the Committee and the Scrutiny work planning process.
 - (b) **Involvement of all Committee members in work planning** – the CFGS stated that work planning is key to ensuring that Scrutiny stays focussed on strategic issues where it can make an impact, whilst making the best use of time and resources. It went on to suggest that all members of each scrutiny Committee should have a chance to influence that committee’s work programme; and further, that committee members should lead development of their committee’s work plan, in order to have influence and ownership over committee activity.
 - (c) **Sufficient flexibility** – the CfGS noted that work planning is an on-going process and not just a one-off event. Whilst identification of a list of topics and priorities is sensible there will need to be flexibility in the work plan and time set aside to regularly revisit the relevance of topics in meetings as the local context changes.
 - (d) **Senior Officer Support** – the CfGS highlighted that the Mayor and Chief Executive both expressed a strong desire to support scrutiny and confirm that its role is central to open, transparent decision-making and accountability in the council. The CfGS commented that “buy-in at the most senior political and officer level is crucial to improvement and therefore highly valued”. In addition to the identification of link Cabinet members, the commitment of the Authority’s Senior Leadership Team to supporting the scrutiny function of the Council has been made clear. These officers possess a breadth of policy context for the organisation which will be a valuable information source for Scrutiny.
 - (e) **‘Less is More’** – the CfGS stated that “there is evidence that when scrutiny focuses on fewer things of greater importance, more is achieved”. This

would be worthwhile to consider when developing the scrutiny work plan. The CfGS also recommended considering the introduction of selection criteria to identify appropriate topics for the work plan, and bringing discussion of the work plan to the beginning of meetings, so emerging or changing priorities can benefit from considered discussion.

Taking these Ideas Forward

- 3.7 The Family Friendly Sub-Committee's Terms of Reference, agreed by Council on 18 May 2023, are attached as **Appendix A**. This sets out the remit and focus of the Family Friendly Sub-Committee.
- 3.8 It must be emphasised that it is for the Family Friendly Sub-Committee to determine its work programme. However to aid the Sub-Committee in this process, some initial activity to identify potential work plan topics has been undertaken, outlined below.
- 3.9 For each Scrutiny Committee the links with lead Cabinet portfolios and Directorates of the Authority have been identified. These links are summarised in the diagram of Scrutiny Support Arrangements attached as **Appendix B**. For the Family Friendly Sub-Committee, the Cabinet Member responsible for Supporting and Protecting Children and the Cabinet Member responsible for Inclusion, Employment and Skills will be the link Cabinet Members. The Director of Children's Services will be the link Senior Leadership Team officer to provide ongoing and regular officer support to the Committee.
- 3.10 The Cabinet members and SLT lead officer have been invited to meet with the Chair of Committee to provide information and suggestions on policy topics which the sub-Committee may wish to consider when planning its programme of work for 2023/24. In addition, the Chair of the sub-committee has also invited members of the Committee to suggest areas which the Committee may choose to examine this year. Those suggestions are summarised in **Appendix C**.

4. Background Information

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, Scrutiny Improvement Review Letter
(published in the Agenda for Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development
Committee on 21 March 2023) – see [here](#).

5. Appendices

Appendix A: Family Friendly Sub-Committee’s Terms of Reference, agreed
by Council on 18 May 2023

Appendix B: Scrutiny Support Arrangements 2023/24

Appendix C: Initial Information Base and Suggested Work Plan topics to
support decisions on the 2023/24 work programme by the
Family Friendly Sub-Committee

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(Agreed at Annual Council 18 May 2023)

Extract from Constitution

Part 3.5 – Terms of Reference of Council and Committees

Family Friendly Sub-Committee

Membership – 12 (plus 2 parent governor and 2 church representatives)

Quorum – 3

Terms of Reference

In relation to schools, adult education, work based learning, 14-19 skills, safeguarding, child protection, early years, children’s centres, youth offending, preventative services, substance misuse services, looked after children, youth services and play, Connexions, children’s health and wellbeing and vocational learning, the Family Friendly Sub-Committee will:

1. Scrutinise relevant budget monitoring and performance management information.
2. Contribute to the decision making process by examining key policy issues and making reports and recommendations on them to the Elected Mayor, Cabinet and or other relevant decision makers prior to decisions being made.
3. Conduct in-depth investigations in relation to topics of interest and concern to communities in North Tyneside.
4. Seek to involve communities in its work and reflect their views and concerns.
5. Present evidence based recommendations to the Elected Mayor, Cabinet and partner organisations to support them in the formulation of their future plans, strategies and decision making.
6. Monitor the impact of its reports and recommendations on service improvement.
7. On an annual basis undertake the challenge of the Cabinet’s budget and strategic planning proposals (see Part 4.7 – Budget and Policy Framework Rules of Procedure).
8. Unless in exceptional circumstances where the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination and Finance Committee agree otherwise, submit any reports and recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination and Finance Committee prior to submission to Cabinet, Council, an individual or outside organisation.

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Scrutiny Support Arrangements

Overview and Scrutiny Coordination and Finance Committee

Chair – Cllr Jim Montague
SLT Lead – Jackie Laughton & Jon Ritchie
Link Cabinet Members – Cllr Carl Johnson & Cllr Anthony McMullen

CARING Sub Committee

Chair
Cllr Jane Shaw

SLT Lead
Eleanor Binks

Link Cabinet Members
Cllr Janet Hunter
Cllr Karen Clark

Subject
Adult Social Care
Health

FAMILY FRIENDLY Sub Committee

Chair
Cllr Erin Parker-Leonard

SLT Lead
Julie Firth

Link Cabinet Members
Cllr Peter Earley
Cllr Steven Phillips

Subject
Education
Children's Services
SEND

GREEN Sub Committee

Chair
Cllr Martin Murphy

SLT Lead
Sam Dand

Link Cabinet Members
Cllr Sandra Graham
Cllr Hannah Johnson

Subject
Waste
Environment
Carbon reduction
Transport
Safe walking and cycling

SECURE Sub Committee

Chair
Cllr Andy Newman

SLT Lead
Peter Mennell

Link Cabinet Member
Cllr John Harrison

Subject
Housing
Community safety
Inequalities
Equality and diversity

THRIVING Sub Committee

Chair
Cllr Matt Wilson

SLT Lead
John Sparkes

Link Cabinet Members
Cllr Carl Johnson

Subject
Regeneration
Skills
Leisure
Tourism and culture

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Initial Information Base and Suggested Work Plan topics for 2023/24 – For Family Friendly Sub-Committee’s Consideration

As set out in **Appendix B**, link Cabinet Members and lead Senior Leadership Team (SLT) officers have been identified to support the work of each Scrutiny Committee.

The link Cabinet Members for the Family Friendly Sub-Committee will be the Cabinet Member responsible for Supporting and Protecting Children and the Cabinet Member responsible for Inclusion, Employment and Skills. The Director of Children’s Services will be the lead Senior Leadership Team officer to provide ongoing and regular officer support. The Cabinet Members and lead Director have been invited to meet with the Chair of the sub-committee to outline potential policy areas which the Committee may wish to consider including in its programme of work for 2023/24.

In addition the Committee chair has asked all committee members to put forward their suggestions for potential policy topics that might form the basis of items in the work programme.

Suggestions received from Committee members, and via the lead Cabinet members and link Director, which the Sub-Committee might wish to consider as an evidence and information base when deciding its programme of work for 2023/24 are set out below.

It is suggested that the work programme should be considered by the Sub-Committee as a standing agenda item at each meeting in order that this is up to date and able to respond to emerging themes during the year.

Family Friendly Sub-Committee – Potential Menu of Work Plan Items for 2023/24

Work programme Suggestions from sub-committee members	In depth look Suggestions from sub-committee members
Early Years.	Childcare and the possibility of a workplace childcare provision in the council
School meals and catering, support for schools, healthy meals.	School meals and catering, support for schools, healthy meals. Use of local authority catering services.
County Lines and the support for families whose children are being criminally exploited.	
Youth homelessness and provision. Young person’s pathway.	Sofa surfing. (Youth)

Young homeless sofa surfing young males under 25	
Our assistance to schools in difficulties	What help do we offer schools having issues? How successful are we in improving schools that have had problems?
Our offer to foster carers. Foster Care and Looked after young people.	Do we make a competitive offer to foster carers?
Safeguarding	
SEND, particularly in main stream schools at the level of appropriate support given. Attainment of Looked after children. Post 16 Provision and Looked After Children Educational achievement particularly in core subjects such as literacy Post 16 education including apprenticeship. Some degree of focus upon attainment Post 16 Post 16 Provision and Looked After Children	Performance at GCSE, A Level, University Entrance, Technical Apprenticeships Educational achievement at all levels SEND
Early diagnosis and support for children and young people who may be neurodivergent including Dyslexia, dyspraxia etc. (Earlier diagnosis in females)	
ASB and the increase in young people since not engaging with services since the Pandemic began in 2019.	ASB and criminal exploitation of children and young people in North Tyneside
Youth Apprentices within the local authority.	

Family friendly coping strategy – life skills – do we need to reflect this in policy?	
Post Pandemic – Social Skills and Social development post lockdown, 14-19 Skills, Wellbeing and Resilience. How many children aren't going to school post pandemic? Is support being provided? What are the post lockdown barriers to attendance?	
Kinship	
Dashboard of underlying indicators (are these highlighting any trends which would indicate areas to look at?)	

Additional potential Policy Areas highlighted from meeting with Cabinet Member and lead Director:

- Children and Young People Plan
- Attendance Strategy
- Sufficiency Strategy
- Employment and Skills Strategy
- Ambition for Education strategy
- Youth Justice Plan
- Regional Pathfinder for Fostering Hubs
- Mental Health – Children and Young People

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