

North Somerset Council

Report to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 13 July 2023

Subject of Report: Role, Remit and Work Plan of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Policy and Scrutiny Manager

Key Decision: NO

Reason:

It does not meet the criteria for a key decision.

Recommendations

That the Panel:-

1. Receive the contents of the report and information provided on policy and scrutiny.
2. Develop and agree the Panel's Work Plan.

1. Summary of Report

- 1.1 The details of the role, remit and work plan of the Panel are discussed below.
- 1.2 Members will have this opportunity to begin the process of developing the Plan going forward.

2. Policy

- 2.1 A copy of the Corporate Plan 2020-24 can be found by following this link: <https://n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-03/corporate%20plan%202020-24.pdf>
This sets out the priorities and vision of North Somerset Council. Most reviews undertaken by this Panel contribute towards the council's corporate aim of being an open and enabling organisation.

3. Details

- 3.1 Members are referred to **Appendix 1** for an overview of the policy and scrutiny function and how it currently operates at North Somerset Council. At the panel meeting, Members will develop and agree the Panel's work plan. Effective work planning will lay the foundations for targeted, incisive, and timely work on issues of local importance, where scrutiny can add value. Members are referred to **Appendix 2** for guidance on developing the work plan. **Appendix 3** sets out the current work plan template and **Appendix 4** sets out current government guidance on the principles and powers underpinning Health Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

3.2 The remit of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel (as defined in the Council's Constitution): -

- National Health Service (NHS)
- Wider Health Issues apart from NHS – health promotion, addressing health inequalities, impact of local and national initiatives (drugs and alcohol, hospitals, mental health, primary care etc.)
- Public Health issues for both adults and children
- Regulatory services
- Emergency planning
- Public Health directorate finance and performance

3.3 Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel (HOSP) statutory role and powers (as set out in recent Government guidance - see below).

- review and scrutinise matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of the health service in the area. This may well include scrutinising the finances of local health services;
- require information to be provided by certain NHS bodies about the planning, provision and operation of health services that is reasonably needed to carry out health scrutiny;
- require employees, including non-executive directors of certain NHS bodies, to attend before them to answer questions;
- make reports and recommendations to certain NHS bodies and expect a response within 28 days;
- set up joint health scrutiny and overview committees with other local authorities and delegate health scrutiny functions to an overview and scrutiny committee of another local authority;
- have a mechanism in place to respond to consultations by relevant NHS bodies and relevant health service providers on substantial reconfiguration proposals [ie significant proposed changes to NHS services];
- have a mechanism in place to deal with referrals made by local Healthwatch organisations or local Healthwatch contractors; and
- report disputed reconfiguration proposals to the Secretary of State until the new reconfiguration provisions take effect

Further information about these powers in the wider context of recent Government guidance on evolving Health Overview and Scrutiny committee principles can be found in the Department of Health & Social Care document at appendix 4

3.3 The Panel's Work Plan summarises the activity that the Panel plans to undertake in its consideration of issues of significant public concern, areas of poor performance and areas where Members think the Council could provide better value for money. The work plan is a "live" document and is subject to change as priorities or circumstances change.

The Panel meets formally three times a year but its Work Plan is informed and supported by a range of on-going "informal" activity undertaken by Panel members - including task and finish working groups and briefings. See Appendices 1 and 2 for further information.

3.5 The Work Plan is reviewed at every formal meeting for review and update.

3.6 At its last meeting before the recent election, the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel made a number of work plan priority recommendations for consideration by the new Panel that would replace it in the new Council administration. These are as follows:

- **Priority 1:** Ensuring that North Somerset residents see the benefits of the new Integrated Care System and this is truly collaborative across all partners.
- **Priority 2:** Access to dentist across North Somerset needs to vastly improve and with the Integrated Care System taking on greater responsibility for this locally it offers an opportunity to influence. Working with Bristol and South Gloucestershire Councils via the Joint Health Overview Scrutiny Committee will be important.
- **Priority 3:** Weston General Hospital has made significant improvements in recent months following their latest CQC report. Continue to work closely with the Trust to ensure continued improvement in patient outcomes.
- **Priority 4:** Monitor the Healthy Weston 2 programme and whether this has delivered the benefits envisaged and influence the next stages of the strategy.
- **Priority 5:** Hospital discharge remains a challenge, so work closely with the Adult Services and Housing Policy Scrutiny Panel to provide assurance and scrutiny that steps are being taken to address this.
- **Priority 6:** The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy is relatively new across North Somerset and has the potential to reduce health inequalities across North Somerset, but it will only be effective if all partners fully embrace and commit to it. So engage with the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Board, and use the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel to support this.

4. Consultation

Members will agree the Panel's work plan, taking into account any views that local constituents have expressed to them. Officers are encouraged to contribute their ideas, and the Panel is cognisant of the work being undertaken by the relevant Executive Members.

5. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. In undertaking future work, the Panel may make recommendations that have financial implications for the council.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

N/A

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

N/A

8. Risk Management

Risk assessments would be undertaken in respect of any future work.

9. Equality Implications

The work of the Panel is based on the council's commitment to ensure that the consideration of equality and diversity becomes a day-to-day part of decision-making to bring about positive changes that are felt by services users and employees.

10. Corporate Implications

Corporate implications would be dependent on the outcome of individual reviews.

11. Options Considered

N/A

Author:

Leo Taylor

Tel: 01934 634621

Policy and Scrutiny Senior Officer

Appendices:

Appendix 1: The Policy and Scrutiny Function

Appendix 2: Panel Work Planning guidance

Appendix 3: (attached separately) The Panel's Work Plan template June 2023

Appendix 4: Health Overview and Scrutiny Principles - Government guidance issued in 2022 (attached separately)

Background Papers:

North Somerset Corporate Plan 2020-24 (see link above).

Appendix 1

The Policy and Scrutiny Function

Policy and scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that decision makers remain effective and accountable. It helps in ensuring that the Executive's decision-making process is clear and accessible to the public and that there are opportunities for the public and their representatives to influence and improve council policy and services.

Policy – examining the council's aims and priorities and considering whether or not they are being achieved. This provides a vital means of ensuring all councillors can take part in the development of council policy.

Scrutiny – questioning and challenging major decisions that are being made about delivering services in order to help drive improvement. This is the main democratic means of ensuring that the council and its partners are held to account for decisions made.

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF GOOD SCRUTINY:

1. Provides "critical friend" challenge to executives as well as external authorities and agencies.
2. Reflects the voice and concerns of the public and its communities.
3. Should take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public.
4. Should make an impact on the delivery of public services.

[Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Good Scrutiny Guide]

WAYS OF WORKING:

- Formal work: Panel meetings (three meetings per year) – held in-person and in public to review issues and make recommendations.
- Informal work– a significant amount of Panel work will be done informally (typically – though not exclusively held virtually). This includes:
- Task and finish working groups - meetings involve small groups of Councillors who have been appointed by the Panel to investigate a given issue before reporting back to the Panel with recommendations for improvement or value for money. Topics are agreed and prioritised with the Chairman, taking account of officer resource to ensure capacity;

- Steering Groups – ongoing monitoring and policy development. These can be organised and progressed by identified lead members in direct consultation with the relevant directorate officer/team;
- Site visits / public consultation;
- Workshops – usually ad hoc sessions to receive information on a service or issue of concern to Members;
- Call-in – a formal challenge of a decision made by the Executive or Executive Member, undertaken at a panel meeting where the decision will be examined and recommendations sent back to the Executive or Executive Member; and
- Informal briefings or information sent to Members – can be done at any time in order to ensure that Members are aware of changes to services and are best placed to undertake meaningful debate and make informed recommendations.

Appendix 2

Work Planning Guidance

The work plan is a flexible document that is updated at each meeting to reflect progress and new developments.

Scrutiny is most effective when focusing on a limited number of in-depth topics, so it is important to prioritise suggestions put forward. When identifying topics to add to the work plan, the Panel should ask the following questions:

- Have Members or Officers identified the topic as a key issue for the public?
- Is it an area of poor performance?
- Has the topic been identified as a strategic risk?
- Is there new government guidance or legislation that will require a significant change to services?
- Has the external auditor or other inspection body highlighted concerns about the issue?
- Could scrutiny lead to increased value for money?
- Is there potential for policy development?
- Will the outcome make a difference?

Once topics have been chosen, brief terms of reference should be agreed at the panel meeting to address the basic questions of:

- What does the topic include?
- Why should the Panel consider?
- How should the Panel proceed? (such as working group, workshop, site visit, informal briefing, item for agenda)
- Who should be involved? (agree appropriate Members, Officers and witnesses)
- Timescale

Appendix 3

Current Panel Work Plan (template) – June 2024

The current work plan template is attached separately with the agenda papers.

Appendix 4

Health overview and scrutiny committee principles - this Government Guidance is attached separately with the agenda paper.