



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

Overview & Scrutiny Board

18th August 2026

Subject Heading:

SLT Lead:

Report Author and contact details:

Policy context:

Financial summary:

REPORT

Agreeing items for the Overview and Scrutiny Board's work programme for 2026/27

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The report deals with the statutory process of Overview and Scrutiny.

There is no significant financial impact from the statutory processes as these requirements are being met by existing budgets.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Things that matter for residents

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place X

SUMMARY

This report invites the Overview and Scrutiny Board to collectively discuss and agree its work programme for 2026/27. It sets out the principles and approaches that support effective, Member-led scrutiny and asks the Board to identify and prioritise topics where scrutiny can add value, influence forthcoming decisions and improve outcomes for residents, while taking account of the Council's strategic priorities, emerging risks and available Member and officer capacity.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board agrees the priority areas for inclusion in its 2026/27 work programme and, for each priority, determines the most appropriate method of scrutiny and indicative timing, taking account of strategic relevance, public interest, opportunities to influence decisions and available capacity.

REPORT DETAIL

Background

1. This report supports the Board in agreeing its annual work programme for 2026/27. A focused programme enables scrutiny to concentrate its limited time and resources on the issues of greatest importance to residents and the Council.

2. Through a well-planned programme, scrutiny can:

- **act as a critical friend** by providing constructive, evidence-based challenge;
- **hold the Executive to account** by examining Cabinet decisions, policies and actions;
- **improve policy, performance and value for money**, including through pre-decision scrutiny;
- **give residents a voice** by bringing community concerns and lived experience into decision-making;
- **scrutinise external partners** where their services affect Havering residents;
- **use call-in powers** to review executive decisions before implementation, where the constitutional requirements are met; and
- **establish task and finish groups** to investigate specific or complex issues in depth.

A well-planned programme supports effective scrutiny:

- **Policy review and development:** testing existing policies and contributing to new or revised proposals.

- **Performance monitoring:** assessing service outcomes and progress against agreed targets.
- **Budget scrutiny:** examining the Council's financial position, affordability and value for money.
- **External partnership scrutiny:** considering the impact of services delivered with or by partner organisations.

Poor Work Programming

3. Done badly, scrutiny can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done is likely to be minimal.

4. Work Programming that does not engage the whole committee is not conducive to effective scrutiny.

Principles for setting the work programme

5. Effective work programming moves scrutiny beyond the reactive receipt of reports and creates a purposeful, Member-led programme of challenge. It should align scrutiny activity with forthcoming decisions, strategic priorities and emerging risks, while identifying the evidence, public voices and expertise required.

6. When setting and reviewing its programme, the Board should:

- retain ownership of its work programme in accordance with the Constitution;
- select issues where scrutiny can add value and contribute meaningfully to policy, performance or decision-making;
- invite Cabinet's views during development of the programme and maintain regular, candid dialogue with Cabinet and relevant officers;
- schedule items early enough for recommendations to influence decisions;
- balance ambition with available Member and officer capacity; and
- avoid duplicating the work of the Executive, Audit Committee or other bodies.

7. Approaches available to the Board

- **Pre-decision scrutiny:** examination of significant proposals before Cabinet decides them. It can provide an impartial perspective, test assumptions, strengthen the evidence base, improve plans and targets, and build understanding of the final decision. It informs rather than replaces executive decision-making.
- **Joint scrutiny:** two or more committees or councils working together where an issue benefits from shared oversight, expertise or resources.
- **Thematic scrutiny:** examination of a cross-cutting outcome rather than a single service. This approach brings together evidence from services, residents and partners to identify gaps, duplication and opportunities for joint action. Potential themes include reducing health inequalities, community safety, housing and health, and support for vulnerable children.
- **Task and finish groups:** small, time-limited reviews used for focused examination of complex or strategically important issues.

8.Core work programming cycle

The Board should use the following cycle:

1. **Identify issues:** draw potential topics from corporate priorities, the Cabinet Forward Plan, performance and risk information, resident feedback and previous scrutiny work.
2. **Prioritise topics:** assess public interest, strategic significance, timing, available evidence and the added value scrutiny can bring.
3. **Plan delivery:** select the most suitable format and schedule activity realistically, allowing flexibility for emerging issues.
4. **Review impact:** monitor recommendations and assess whether scrutiny has improved policy, performance, decisions or outcomes.

Further guidance is available in the Local Government Association's [A councillor's workbook on scrutiny](#).

Areas considered by the Board in 2025/26

9.The Board may wish to follow up matters considered during 2025/26. The Annual Review Report, published on 17 March 2026 and listed under Background Papers, summarises that programme.

10.The programme focused on the Statutory Corporate Plan, the Council's financial position, and progress against the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Improvement and Transformation Plan and the CIPFA Financial Management Review, which supported the Council's exceptional financial support arrangements.

Developing the 2026/27 work programme

11.The Chair will invite the Board to identify and discuss potential areas for inclusion, supported by clear reasons and the intended scrutiny outcome. For each priority, the Board should consider the most appropriate approach: a standalone item, assurance review, joint or thematic scrutiny, pre-decision scrutiny, or a task and finish group.

What Members are being asked to do

12.Members are asked to propose and prioritise a manageable number of topics, explain the outcome they want scrutiny to achieve, select the most appropriate scrutiny route and agree indicative timing. The final programme should remain flexible so that urgent or emerging matters can be considered during the year.

13.Topic-selection criteria

- **Resident impact and public interest:** the number or groups of residents affected and the significance of the issue to local communities.
- **Strategic relevance:** alignment with Council priorities, significant forthcoming decisions or partnership commitments.

- **Risk and performance:** evidence of service, financial, legal, equality, reputational or delivery risk, or sustained underperformance.
- **Timing and influence:** whether scrutiny can take place early enough to shape a policy, budget or executive decision.
- **Evidence and access:** whether reliable information, witnesses and resident or service-user views can be obtained.
- **Added value and capacity:** whether scrutiny can make a distinctive contribution without duplicating other work and can be delivered within available Member and officer resources.

14.Choosing the appropriate scrutiny route

- **Work programme item:** a planned item used to examine policy, performance, risk, finance or an issue requiring assurance.
- **Pre-decision scrutiny:** planned examination of a proposal before Cabinet or another decision-maker reaches a decision.
- **Call-in:** a separate constitutional process through which an eligible executive decision may be reviewed before implementation when the specified requirements and timescales are met. It should not be used as a substitute for planned scrutiny.
- **Task and finish group:** a small, time-limited review suitable for a complex matter requiring evidence from several sources and detailed recommendations.
- **Joint or thematic scrutiny:** appropriate where an issue crosses service, committee, partner or council boundaries.
- **Assurance review:** a focused examination to establish whether governance, controls, delivery arrangements or improvement activity are operating effectively.

15.Information to record for each proposed topic

Proposed topic	Why scrutiny should consider it	Intended outcome	Suggested route	Indicative timing	Lead Member
To be agreed	Resident impact, strategic relevance, risk and supporting evidence	The change, assurance or influence sought	Board item, pre-decision, task and finish, joint, thematic or assurance review	To be agreed with regard to forthcoming decisions and capacity	To be agreed

Support, capacity and monitoring

16.Committee Services will support the Board to scope agreed items, identify evidence and witnesses, schedule activity and record recommendations. Relevant services will provide reports, data and professional advice.

17. Members should recognise that task and finish activity may require additional reading, evidence sessions and drafting outside formal meetings. Progress against the programme and implementation of agreed recommendations should be reviewed periodically by the Board, with adjustments made where priorities, risks or capacity change.

18. Remit of Overview and Scrutiny Board

The Overview and Scrutiny Board has responsibility for scrutinising the following areas:

- Strategy and commissioning
- Partnerships with Business
- Customer access
- E-government and ICT
- Finance
- Human resources
- Asset Management
- Property resources
- Facilities Management
- Democratic Services
- Social inclusion
- Councillor Call for Action
- Hearing of Requisitions/Call-ins

19. Glossary for new Members

- **Executive:** the Cabinet and other authorised executive decision-makers.
- **Forward Plan:** the published notice of forthcoming executive decisions.
- **Pre-decision scrutiny:** scrutiny carried out before an executive decision is made.
- **Call-in:** temporary suspension of an eligible executive decision so that it can be reviewed under the Constitution.
- **Task and finish group:** a time-limited Member group established to investigate a defined issue and make recommendations.
- **Thematic scrutiny:** scrutiny organised around an outcome or cross-cutting issue rather than a single service.
- **Assurance review:** a focused check that arrangements, controls or planned improvements are adequate and effective.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: There are no direct financial implications arising from agreeing the work programme. Scrutiny activity will be supported within existing Member and officer resources. Individual reviews may identify

financial implications, which will be assessed and reported separately where relevant.

Legal implications and risks: Overview and scrutiny is a statutory function. The work programme and any subsequent activity must be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Constitution and relevant legislation. Specific legal issues arising from individual reviews will be considered as part of those reviews.

Human Resources implications and risks: There are no direct staffing implications arising from agreeing the work programme. The scope and timing of reviews should nevertheless take account of Member and officer capacity. Any workforce implications identified through individual reviews will be assessed separately.

Equalities implications and risks: There are no direct equalities implications arising from agreeing the work programme. In selecting and undertaking reviews, the Board should consider impacts on people with protected characteristics and seek relevant resident and service-user evidence. Any specific implications will be assessed within the relevant review.

Environmental and Climate Change implications and risks: There are no direct environmental or climate implications arising from agreeing the work programme. Where a proposed topic has environmental or climate impacts, these should be considered within the scope and evidence for that review.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Self-Evaluation of Board's Work 2025/26 and Statutory Scrutiny Officer Presentation [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Overview & Scrutiny Board, 17/03/2026 19:00](#)

[Forward plan - AUGUST 2026- FORWARD PLAN | London Borough of Havering](#)

[A councillor's workbook on scrutiny](#) (page 10 work programming)