Topics suggested for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
2017-18 Work Programme

1. **Fines for residents who put recyclable material in the general waste bin** – this suggestion was received from a member of the public through the online form. Members decided that this issue had been dealt with through the work of the Recycling/Household Waste contract Task and Finish Group. Part of the Group’s work identified that, through education and bin-auditing, the Council had been able to deliver a message to residents that encouraged recycling and improved recycling rates. The education programme will continue as the Council works towards securing a new contract in 2018.

2. **The planning application process** – this topic was discussed at the Committee’s meeting in February 2017 where it was agreed that a task and finish group be appointed to look at the topic. The issues raised at the February meeting were around the transparency of pre-application advice (particularly in respect of major developments) and Member/community involvement at that stage, how the Planning Service demonstrates that there is no ‘steering’ of applications towards a pre-determined outcome and how the entire process can be made clearer to the public. Another issue highlighted was the overall level of consultation with Members prior to the determining of an application at Committee. Members noted that the process for calling-in planning applications was being dealt by the Constitutional Review Working Party. Councillors Woodward and Palmer volunteered for the task and finish group and ideally two more Members are required to complete the Group.

3. **Provision of rural bus services** – this issue was raised by a Member at the informal meeting to highlight the continuing concern about the lack of rural bus services in the borough. There is also concern about the patient transport service in the borough and whether it is meeting the needs of residents. In February 2016 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was presented with an update on the provision of bus services in rural communities and Kent County Council’s (KCC) Head of Public Transport talked to Members about the framework within which commercial operators ran their services and KCC’s duty to consider the funding of non-commercial operators. One of the areas highlighted in February 2016 was the devolving of services to local communities and Members may wish to revisit this issue to examine whether further devolution has taken place.

4. **Dog fouling** – this topic was considered 2016/17 when the Committee looked at its work programme and remains high on the list of issues that cause concern to residents. In 2012 the Committee appointed a task and finish group to look at what could be done to deal with the problem and a ‘bag and flag’ initiative was developed, providing local councils and community groups with resources such as leaflets, bags, flags and promotional cards. The ‘bag and flag’ events rely on the involvement of town and parish councils and residents - the Committee may wish to look at promoting the initiative again or at other ways of dealing with the issue, such as the ability to increase fines for dog fouling and whether more resources can be put into catching dog-owners when offences are committed.
5. **Scrutinising Scrutiny** – this topic was suggested by a Member at the informal meeting and the request is for Council’s Scrutiny officer to look at how scrutiny is done regionally by other authorities and nationally. Joined up Scrutiny has been undertaken by the Council in the past and with government continuing to advance the devolution agenda, joint scrutiny could offer a broader range of views and Member skill-sets. Looking at how scrutiny is done in other organisations such as the emergency services, housing associations, parliament and national park authorities could provide further insight.

6. **Review of the Cabinet Advisory Board system** – this topic was suggested in 2016/17 and again at the informal meeting of the Committee. Members were keen to know whether the effectiveness of the system in providing ‘pre-scrutiny’ of Cabinet decisions could be demonstrated. Members also wanted to look at the appropriateness of Cabinet members chairing the Cabinet Advisory Boards.

7. **Tunbridge Wells to Uckfield rail link** – this item was also included in the list of topics considered in 2016/17 and raised again at the informal meeting. Members should consider what influence the borough Council can have over decision makers in looking at the reopening of the rail link between Tunbridge Wells and Uckfield.

8. **Planning policy** – how this can be made less confusing and more easily understood by the public (online suggestion). The Council is currently working on a new local plan which will guide development up to 2033 and local councils have been invited to submit neighbourhood plans. Although a broad topic, Members may feel that the Planning Application Process Task and Finish Group could expand its scope to include an overview of this issue.

9. **The effectiveness of the Joint Transportation Board (JTB)** – the JTB is a joint working group of Kent County Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to co-operate regarding highway and transportation issues. It is made up of six borough and six county councillors (who’s districts cover Tunbridge Wells) and one independent member. Overview and Scrutiny Committee members may wish to consider the impact the government’s devolution agenda will have on areas such as highways and how this will in fit with the Boards existing remit.