

10. Annual Scrutiny Work Programme

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Purpose of the Report

This report outlines the purpose and function of the Scrutiny Work Programme and asks Members to consider items for the 2008/09 Annual Scrutiny Work Programme.

Action Required:

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- a) re-visit the items currently included in the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2008/09; and
- b) Consider any additional items brought forward by Committee members to be discussed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Why do we need a Scrutiny Work Programme?

Setting the Work Programme for the Overview and Scrutiny function is an important stage in the Scrutiny process. An effective Overview and Scrutiny work programme will identify the key topics that Scrutiny will consider over the coming year.

A well planned Overview and Scrutiny function will help both officers and members plan their workloads as well as providing a clear picture to the public of planned Overview and Scrutiny activity.

Who sets the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme?

It is vital that members of the Overview and Scrutiny function take responsibility for both drawing up and managing their own work programme. The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme is not approved by any body other than the main Scrutiny Committee. However, in the interest of improved co-ordination between all member level bodies, the Work Programme should be reported regularly to Full Council and be easily accessible to all members and officers, perhaps through regular agenda items on officer level meetings such as Senior Managers Board and Senior Managers Forum.

What are some key principles for setting Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes?

- Topics included in the Work Programme must add value to the work of the authority
- Where appropriate involve partners, stakeholders and the public
- Allow some flexibility to enable topics to be included as and when they arise.
- Ensure that the Work Programme reflects the priorities of the Council as laid out in the Corporate Plan

- The Work Programme should represent the views and concerns of the Community
- The Work Programme should reflect a realistic use of resources.

What are the possible sources for identifying items for the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme?

There are many different ways to identify issues for the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme, such as;

- Outcomes of public consultation (annual satisfaction surveys etc)
- Suggestions from elected members (especially non-executive members)
- Suggestions from Management Board
- Executive Forward Plan
- Strategic Improvement Plan (the document which collates all performance reports and improvement plans)
- Issues identified through Area Committees
- Issues identified through the budget setting and monitoring process
- Issues identified through the performance management role of Scrutiny.

It is important to bear in mind the points raised earlier about Scrutiny adding value when selecting items for the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme should reflect all types of Overview and Scrutiny activity such as policy reviews, reviews of external organisations and performance management.

In order to ensure consistency in selecting items for the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme a **Selection Criteria** has been devised. A copy is attached to this paper.

The **Selection Criteria** consists of 8 statements which must be considered by the Scrutiny Committee before any item is included in the Scrutiny Work Programme.

Scrutiny Work Programme 2008/09

The following items are currently included in the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2008/09:

- Front Line Councillor Grants - June
- GP Clinics – Health Authority Consultation - June
- Draft Carbon Reduction Strategy - tbc
- IT support to other bodies (Town Councils and CVS) – April 2009
- Future service provision – Octagon – tbc
- Housing Advice Centre – Commission to re-convene
- Affordable Housing – Commission to commence

The following monitoring reports are also included:

- Quarterly performance reports
- Revenue and Capital budget setting reports
- Impact of Equalities Strategy
- Impact and progress of Risk Management Strategy
- Strategic Improvement Plan
- Sports Zone proposals – updates at appropriate stages in the project.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee now have the opportunity to re-visit the issues listed above and consider whether they remain appropriate work programme items as well as considering any additional items brought forward by Committee members.

Members of the Committee are asked to consider any potential Scrutiny Work Programme items in advance of the meeting to inform the discussion. Members can discuss potential items with the Scrutiny and Acting Democratic Services Manager prior to the meeting if necessary.

As reported to the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, there are proposals being developed to facilitate Scrutiny reviews carried out by all Somerset authorities, looking at issues which effect all six local authorities. It is anticipated that scrutiny of the Somerset Waste Partnership will be an early example of this.

Background Papers: None
