

Scrutiny Committee – 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

## 9. Managing the Overview Scrutiny Work Programme

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### Purpose of the Report

To outline the reasons and processes that ensures that there is a well managed Overview and Scrutiny work programme. This report outlines the principles of an effective Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. During the meeting, Committee members will have the opportunity to consider various examples of best practice in terms of Work Programme content and scoring templates.

### Action Required

Scrutiny members are asked to:

- (1) Consider and agree the elements of an effective Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme; and
- (2) Consider the various templates that will be presented at the meeting and agree the most appropriate formats for future use.

### Background

#### Why do we need an Overview and 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 Scrutiny function will help both officers and members plan their workloads as well as providing a clear picture to the public of planned Scrutiny activity.

#### Who sets the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme?

It is vital that members of the 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.

#### Setting the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

It is important to establish criteria to determine the work programme, otherwise the Scrutiny Committee could agree an unrealistic list of items for consideration. Decisions about what should or should not be included in the work programme should be informed by the Council's corporate priorities and by high profile local issues so that scrutiny focuses on the issues that matter most to local people and to the Council.

In keeping with the four principles of effective Scrutiny, the work programme should enable Scrutiny to :

- act as a critical friend to the cabinet exerting challenge to its priorities and performance;
- enable the voice and concerns of the public to be expressed;
- act independently in determining the work programme and offering findings and recommendations to the Executive; and
- drive improvement by challenging underperformance, promoting good practice and being a catalyst for change.

It is important to ensure that Scrutiny has a 'corporate fit', adds value to what the Council is doing and does not duplicate other work. The Scrutiny Committee will need to be clear about the outcomes sought through its work and will want to ensure that Scrutiny has an impact on services and public satisfaction with the Council.

Issues for the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme may fall into the following categories (this list is not exhaustive):

- Constructive challenge to the Executive
- Policy Development
- The Budget setting process
- Policy review
- Response to emerging policies and legislation

### **Selection processes**

We currently use a selection criteria (attached) but since this was introduced there have been developments in terms of best practice and during the meeting, members will have an opportunity to consider how to amend the document.

***Background Papers:*** None

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