

Scrutiny Report



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Part 1

Date: 26 July 2017

Subject Annual Forward Work Programme

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The following people have been invited to attend for this item:

- Liz Blayney – Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

1 Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is asked to:

- 1.1 Consider the draft Annual Work Programme (**Appendix 1**) and determine if it wishes to make any amendments to the programme or if further information is required;
- 1.2 Agree the start time for the Committee meetings, and approve the proposed schedule of meetings for 2017/18 (**Appendix 2**).

2 Context

- 2.1 The Centre for Public Scrutiny's Good Scrutiny Guide recognises the importance of the forward work programme. In order to 'lead and own the process', it states that Councillors should have ownership of their Committee's work programme, and be involved in developing, monitoring and evaluating it. The Good Scrutiny Guide also states that, in order to make an impact, the scrutiny workload should be co-ordinated and integrated into corporate processes, to ensure that it contributes to the delivery of corporate objectives, and that work can be undertaken in a timely and well-planned manner.
- 2.2 Scrutiny Committees have limited time and resources and therefore work plans need to be manageable. It is not possible to include every topic suggested by Members, Heads of Service or the Public – successful Scrutiny is about looking at the right topic in the right way and Members need to be selective, whilst also being able to demonstrate clear arguments for including or excluding topics.
- 2.3 The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) guide to work effective work programming 'A Cunning Plan?' makes the following reference to the importance of good work programming:

'Effective work programming is the bedrock of an effective scrutiny function. Done well it can help lay the foundations for targeted, incisive and timely work on issues of local importance, where scrutiny can add value. Done badly, scrutiny can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done is likely to be minimal.'

3 Information Submitted to the Committee

3.1 The following information is provided to the Committee:

Appendix 1 – Draft Annual Work Programme

Appendix 2 – Draft Schedule of meetings

Draft Annual Work Programme

3.2 The draft work programme is being presented to the Committee for consideration following consultation with the Scrutiny Chairs, and Service Areas, and detailed research by the Scrutiny team. The scrutiny team has compiled this draft work programme using a number of different sources, including:

- The Cabinet Work Programme - [June 2017](#)
- Risk Register – Last presented to [Audit in June 2017](#)
- Previous Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programmes, Agendas and minutes (available online)
- Policy Framework
- Discussions with Heads of Service

There are also items where there is a Statutory duty to be considered by Scrutiny, particularly in relation to scrutiny of the Public Service Board for this Committee. This has been indicated within the draft work programme.

3.3 Once an Annual Work Programme is agreed with the Committee, the Committee will have a standing item on each agenda, with a breakdown of which items will be coming to each meeting. It will also clarify what information has been requested for the Committee's consideration, what the role of the Committee is for each item and a list of invitees.

4 Suggested Areas of Focus

4.1 The draft work programme contains suggested items for the work programme – Member input to the work programme is essential to the success of Scrutiny.

4.2 The Corporate Assessment, and the subsequent [follow up assessment](#) provide background information on the importance of good work programming. Specific reference is made to the need to align the Cabinet and Scrutiny work programmes to ensure the value of the Scrutiny Function is maximised.

In considering what items should be included in the Committee's forward work programme, the Committee should consider how each item fits within the following selection criteria:

Criteria for Selecting Scrutiny Topics

- **PUBLIC INTEREST:** The concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen for scrutiny;

- **ABILITY TO CHANGE:** Priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence, and which will result in a Cabinet decision being taken;
- **PERFORMANCE:** Priority should be given to the areas in which the Council, and other agencies, are not performing well;
- **EXTENT:** Priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or large parts of the city;
- **REPLICATION:** Work programmes must take account of what else is happening in the areas being considered to avoid duplication or wasted effort.

Reasons to Reject Scrutiny Topics

- The issue is already being addressed / being examined elsewhere and change is imminent
 - The top would be better addressed elsewhere (and will be referred there)
 - Scrutiny involvement would have limited / no impact upon outcomes
 - The topic may be sub-judice or prejudicial to the Council's interest
 - The topic is too broad to make a review realistic
 - New legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected within the next year
 - The top area is currently subject to inspection or has recently undergone substantial change
- 4.2 For each item on the work programme, the Committee should consider if they are well defined to ensure the Committee can effectively fulfil its role for each item.

Defining Scrutiny Topics

For every item on the work programme / new referral, it should be clear:

- What is the issue / activity / project under consideration?
 - *A brief outline of the matter being referred / the question being asked*
- What is Scrutiny being asked to do?
 - *e.g. undertake a full review of the subject? Investigate / interrogate different policy options? Be consulted of final proposals before decision making? Monitor outcomes / implementation?*
- What are the reasons for / expected benefits of involving Scrutiny in this matter?
- Is there a specific deadline for this piece of work?

Section B – Supporting Information

5 Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- 5.1 Having proper work programming procedures in place ensures that the work of Overview and Scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services, contributes to the delivery of corporate objectives, and ensures that work can be undertaken in a timely and well-planned manner.

6 Risks

- 6.1 If proper work programming procedures are not put in place, the organisation and prioritisation of the work programme is put at risk. The work of Overview and Scrutiny could become disjointed

from the work of the rest of the Council, which could undermine the positive contribution Overview and Scrutiny makes to service improvement through policy development.

- 6.2 A report is presented to each Committee every month in order to mitigate that risk. The specific risks associated with individual topics on the work programme will need to be addressed as part of the Committee's investigations.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 The preparing and monitoring of the work programme is done by existing staff for which budget provision is available. There will be financial consequences for some of the reviews undertaken. These will be commented upon by the Head of Finance as the reports are presented.

8 Background Papers

[Good Scrutiny? Good Question! Wales Audit Office Improvement Study in Local Government.](#)
'A Cunning Plan?' Devising a Scrutiny Work Programme' – CfPS Guide
[Corporate Assessment](#) , [Follow up](#) in 2015 and [Progress](#) Report August 2016

Report Completed: 19 July 2017