

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Tuesday, 20 June 2017

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| REPORT TITLE: | Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee - work programme update |
| REPORT OF: | The Chair of the Committee – Councillor Tom Usher |

REPORT SUMMARY

This report explains the process of developing and managing the scrutiny work programme for the municipal year. The Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in cooperation with the other three Overview & Scrutiny Committees, is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual scrutiny work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the Wirral Plan pledges which are within the remit of the Committee.

It is envisaged that the work programme will be formed from a combination of scrutiny reviews, standing items and requested officer reports. This report provides the committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. Some initial ideas for a work programme, based on issues which were of interest to members of the former People Overview & Scrutiny Committee, are attached as an appendix to this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

Members are requested to:

1. Approve the proposed Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2017/18, making any required amendments.
2. Nominate the Chair and membership of the task & finish group for the Statutory Care Plan scrutiny review.
3. Agree, in principle, to the establishment of a programme of Reality Check Visits which will form part of the Committee's annual work programme.
4. Note the proposal to establish a Members' workshop to determine a more effective working relationship with the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
5. Provide delegated authority to the Chair, Vice Chair and Spokespersons to give further detailed consideration to the Committee's work programme prior to the next scheduled Committee meeting in September.

6. Give delegated authority to the Chair, Vice Chair and Spokespersons of both the Children and Families OSC and the Adult Care & Health OSC to:
 - make arrangements to hold an appropriate workshop to scrutinise proposals for the all-age disability and mental health service; and
 - if necessary, to approve and refer any report arising from the workshop directly to Cabinet.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

To ensure members of the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of the annual work programme.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Not Applicable

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND THE WIRRAL PLAN

The work programme should align with the priorities of the Council and its partners. The programme will be informed by:

- The Wirral Plan pledges
- The Council's transformation programme
- The Council's Forward Plan
- Service performance information
- Risk management information
- Public or service user feedback
- Referrals from Cabinet / Council

The specific Wirral Plan pledges and associated strategies of particular relevance to the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee are:

| Pledge | Strategies |
|--|--|
| Children are ready for school Young people are ready for work and adulthood Vulnerable children reach their full potential | Wirral's Strategy for children, young people and families https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/About%20the%20council/Wirral%20Plan/Children%20Young%20People%20and%20Families%20Strategy.pdf |
| Reduce child and family poverty | Improving life chances https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/About%20the%20council/Wirral%20Plan/Improving%20Life%20Chances%20Strategy.pdf |
| Zero tolerance to domestic violence | Zero tolerance to domestic abuse https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/About%20the%20council/Wirral%20Plan/Domestic%20Abuse%20Strategy.pdf |

Although the People with Disabilities Live Independently pledge is within the remit of the Adult Care and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee, some aspects may also be of interest to the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

3.2 PRINCIPLES FOR PRIORITISATION

Good practice suggests that, in order to maximise the impact of scrutiny, it is necessary to prioritise proposed topics within the work programme. Members may find the following criteria helpful in providing a guideline towards ensuring that the most significant topics are prioritised:

| Principles for Prioritisation | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Wirral Plan | Does the topic have a direct link with one of the 2020 pledges? |
| | Will the review lead to improved outcomes for Wirral residents? |
| Public Interest | Does the topic have particular importance for Wirral Residents? |
| Transformation | Will the review support the transformation of the Council? |
| Financial Significance | Is the subject matter an area of significant spend or potential saving? |
| | Will the review support the Council in achieving its savings targets? |
| Timeliness / Effectiveness | Is this the most appropriate time for this topic to be scrutinised? |
| | Will the review be a good use of Council resources? |

By assessing prospective topics using these criteria, the Committee can prioritise an effective work programme that ensures relevance and the highest potential to enhance outcomes for residents.

3.3 DELIVERING THE WORK PROGRAMME

It is anticipated that the work programme will be delivered through a combination of:

- Scrutiny reviews undertaken by task & finish groups
- Evidence days and workshops
- Committee reports provided by officers
- Standing committee agenda items, for example, performance monitoring and financial monitoring
- Spotlight sessions
- Standing panels (where deemed necessary)

As some of the selected topics may well cut across the Wirral Plan themes, it is anticipated that some of the scrutiny topics may be of interest to members of more than one committee. In these circumstances, opportunities for members of more than one committee to work jointly on an item of scrutiny work will be explored.

Regular work programme update reports will provide the committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

3.4 TRANSFER OF SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME ITEMS

Members will be aware that, at Annual Council held on 16th May 2017, it was agreed that the remit of the former People Overview & Scrutiny Committee should be split between two successor committees, namely; the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Adult Care and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee. A number of work programme items of the former People Overview & Scrutiny Committee are likely to be of interest to members of the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee. In addition to the items proposed for this agenda and the meeting scheduled for 26th September, the following may be of particular interest to members:

Statutory Care Plan Scrutiny Review

Members of the former Children Sub Committee held a workshop in March 2017 to “reflect on current scrutiny arrangements regarding the Children’s Services Ofsted report and the Improvement Plan, providing input to the development of an effective work programme for the Children Sub Committee”. In order to provide some continuity in transition to the new scrutiny arrangements, Members may want to reflect the outcomes of that workshop in the emerging work programme for the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

At the workshop, Members agreed to recommend that a task & finish group should be formed to undertake a review of the effectiveness and timeliness of statutory care plans. Members were informed that this was a topic which was not currently subject to detailed investigation by the Improvement Board and would, therefore, not lead to duplication of effort. Subsequently, a number of members of the former Children Sub Committee formulated a draft scope for the review. Members are requested to nominate the Chair and membership of the task & finish group. The draft scope document, which is subject to amendment once the task & finish group membership is confirmed, is attached as an appendix to this report.

Reality Check Visits

Key to the success of scrutiny is the ability of Members to check evidence from a variety of sources. Since the publication of the Ofsted report in September 2016, Members of the former Children Sub Committee have considered ways in which evidence from different sources could be triangulated. While members routinely receive reports from senior management and have access to performance monitoring reports, it is suggested that greater access to frontline staff and service users would enable scrutiny members to triangulate evidence with other sources and would give members greater confidence in the outcomes of their scrutiny work. It is, therefore, proposed to establish a programme of Reality Check Visits through which scrutiny members could engage directly with frontline staff.

Proposed operating principles for the visits are:

- A programme of visits will be scheduled and will form part of the Committee's work programme. A visit will normally take place approximately every eight weeks. Visits will be set or amended taking into account the programme of externally set scrutiny by Ofsted and the Department of Education. There will be no direct relationship between each visit. Therefore, Members may volunteer to participate in any particular visit.
- Prior to each visit, the scrutiny officer will issue a short briefing note which will inform members of the function of the service area, background information and any issues directly relevant to the Ofsted report.
- Each visit will comprise a maximum of five members supported by a scrutiny officer. A visit will usually take a maximum of 2 hours.
- The visits will give Members the opportunity to talk directly to staff so they can understand the service directly from them. Members could ask questions directly, for example, on caseloads, support offered to staff, auditing of cases and the outcomes for children and families.
- The findings from each visit will be reported to the next meeting of the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The format of the short report could include visit attendees, context of the visit (where; when), the key issues found and any resulting recommendations.
- Outcomes of the visits will include greater Member reassurance but may also lead to members deciding to undertake a more detailed piece of scrutiny work on a particular topic.
- The programme of visits could include:
 - The MASH and Integrated Front Door;
 - Each of the 3 locality offices, spending time with the Children Looked After, Child Protection and Children in Need teams;
 - The children with disability service;
 - The safeguarding unit (Child Protection chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers);
 - Willow Tree (the disability respite centre);
 - Response, the provider of services for adolescents and homeless 16/17 year olds;
 - Early help settings

Working relationship with the Local Safeguarding Children Board

While the Improvement Board is currently in place, it is important that members establish scrutiny arrangements which will be effective in the long-term. A number of members attended a safeguarding training event provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny in January 2017. A key message for the scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements was the establishment of strong relationships with key partner bodies and organisations. The Local Safeguarding Children Board is clearly a key partner organisation. It is, therefore, planned to arrange a workshop at which Committee members will be able to understand the key links between scrutiny and the Board and to recommend ways in which those links could be improved. The outcomes of the workshop will be reported to the next available meeting of the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

3.5 ALL-AGE DISABILITY AND MENTAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Members may be aware that an approach to pre-decision scrutiny of Transformation Programme projects was reported to the former People Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 14th July 2016. There is a proposal to consider alternative delivery models for the All-age Disability and Mental Health services. In line with the general approach for the scrutiny of Transformation programme projects, it is proposed that a workshop be arranged in order to give members the opportunity to review the outline proposals. As these will impact on service delivery for both children and adults, it is suggested that a joint workshop be held with members of both the Children and Families OSC and the Adult Care & Health OSC invited to attend.

Current proposals are for a joint workshop to be held in July. In order to meet the project reporting timescales, it is proposed that the Chairs, Vice Chair and Spokespersons of both the Children and Families OSC and the Adult Care & Health OSC be given delegated authority to agree the plans for the workshop and, if necessary, to approve and refer any report arising from the workshop directly to Cabinet.

3.6 FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

In line with the new remit of the Committee and the principles for prioritisation, as described above, Members are requested to suggest possible topics for inclusion in the work programme. Committee Members should also consider how best to further develop the work programme in advance of the next scheduled Committee meeting in September. This could be achieved by Committee providing delegated authority to the Chair, Vice Chair and Spokespersons to provide further detailed input to the work programme's development.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Not Applicable

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Not Applicable

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

The delivery of the scrutiny work programme will be met from within existing resources.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

Not Applicable

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

Not Applicable

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

This report is for information to Members and there are no direct equality implications.

REPORT AUTHOR:

Alan Veitch

Scrutiny Support

0151 691 8564

email: alanveitch@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Work programme

Appendix 2: Statutory care plan scrutiny review – draft scope document

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
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