

WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD – 3rd JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE 2010 / 11 MUNICIPAL YEAR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the current status of the Scrutiny Programme Board's Work Programme for the previous municipal year (2009 / 10) and invites suggestions from members regarding the work programme for the new municipal year (2010 /11).

1. Background

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Programme Board was introduced in May 2009 as part of a re-structuring of the Scrutiny Committee arrangements in Wirral. Among the functions of the Scrutiny Programme Board are the following:
- Monitoring of the work programmes of the five themed scrutiny committees;
 - Undertaking scrutiny in its own right with regard to cross-cutting or strategic issues not covered by other overview and scrutiny committees;
 - Identifying and sharing good scrutiny practice across all overview and scrutiny committees.
- 1.2 It is expected that the five themed Scrutiny Committees will set their own work programmes during this first cycle of meetings. Once this has been done, subsequent meetings of the Scrutiny Programme Board will receive update reports to review progress against each of the programmes for the following committees:
- Children & Young People
 - Council Excellence
 - Economy and Regeneration
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Sustainable Communities
- 1.3 In addition, it is expected that members of the Scrutiny Programme Board will generate their own work programme which takes the functions listed in paragraph 1.1 into account. The Scrutiny Programme Board work programme for the previous municipal year (2009 / 10) is attached, as Appendix 1, to familiarise members with the previous and ongoing work.
- 1.4 Members will also be aware that separate items on this agenda provide update reports on two existing scrutiny reviews, namely the Alcohol scrutiny review and the 'One Council' scrutiny review.

2. Selection of Topics for Scrutiny Review

- 2.1 Topics selected for further scrutiny can be handled in different ways. Some may be best dealt with by departmental officer reports or presentations. Positive scrutiny is most likely if scrutiny committees are agreeing recommendations which can be sent to the Cabinet (rather than simply agreeing “reports to be noted”). Some topics may warrant an in-depth scrutiny review where a small panel of members gather detailed evidence and subsequently produce a report which is discussed by the committee. Examples of this approach include the Alcohol Scrutiny Review and the proposed ‘One Council’ Scrutiny Review.
- 2.2 A topic chosen for an in-depth review must have the potential to make a difference and should therefore be carefully chosen with reference to objective criteria. The review must also be conducted methodically and efficiently.

When selecting a topic, a set of criteria can be used to assess the key elements of the topic under the following headings:-

- **Public Interest** – members’ representative roles are an essential feature of Overview and Scrutiny. Being the eyes and ears of the public, members can ensure that policies, practices and services delivered to residents, by both the Council and other external organisations, are meeting the local needs and are to an acceptable standard. Consultations and other surveys are also extremely important and can provide useful information.
- **Impact** – not all issues of concern will have an equal impact on the well being of the community, which should be considered when selecting a topic for review.
- **Council Performance** – scrutiny is about improving performance and ensuring that the community is well served. Members will need good quality and timely information to identify how the Council and other external organisations’ performance can improve.
- **Keeping in context** – to avoid duplication or wasted effort. Members should take into account what else is happening in the areas being considered. Is the service about to be inspected by an external body? Are there any major legislative or policy initiatives already resulting in change about to impact on the service? If these circumstances exist, members may decide to link up with other processes, defer a decision until the outcomes are known or conclude that the issue will be addressed as part of other work.

3. Sources of ideas for topics

The following sources may help members to identify suitable topics for detailed scrutiny:

- The issue is identified as being important to the public (through area forums, members’ surgeries and other contact with constituents)

- Poor performing service (evidence from performance indicators / benchmarking)
- Service ranked as important by Council's community
- High level of user/general public dissatisfaction with services (for example, through surveys, area forums, complaints)
- Public interest issue covered in the local media
- High level of budgetary commitment
- Regular patterns of budgetary overspends
- Council corporate priority area
- Central government priority area
- Issues raised in external audit reports
- New government guidance or legislation
- Issues identified in the Council's Forward Plan

4. Reasons for rejection of suggested topics

Discussions on proposals may reveal that the topic is not a priority for scrutiny. Potential criteria for rejecting a topic might include:

- Issue being examined by the Cabinet
- Issue being examined by an officer group and changes are imminent, that is, changes are planned to take place within the next six months.
- New legislation or guidance expected within the next year

5 Financial implications

Scrutiny reviews should be managed from within existing resources.

6 Staffing implications

See paragraph 5 above.

7 Equal Opportunities implications

None

8 Community Safety implications

None

9 Local Agenda 21 implications

None

- 10 Planning implications**
None
- 11 Anti-poverty implications**
None
- 12 Human Rights implications**
None
- 13 Social Inclusion implications**
None
- 14 Local Member Support implications**
None
- 15 Background Papers**
None

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Scrutiny Programme Board develop a work programme for the new municipal year.

Appendix 1:

UPDATE ON WORK PROGRAM : SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD - END OF YEAR 2009 / 2010

New Reports to assist in monitoring the Committee's work programme

It was agreed by the Scrutiny Chairs Group in September 2008 to use the following reports to monitor the work programme for each Scrutiny Committee. The last item on each Scrutiny Committee agenda should be 'Review of the Committee Work Programme'.

Report 1 - Monitoring Report for Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

This report will list all items that have been selected by the Committee for inclusion on the work programme for the current year.

It will also include items, such as previous Panel Reviews, where recommendations have been made to Cabinet. It is important that the implementation of these recommendations is monitored. Otherwise there is no measure of the success of scrutiny.

For each item on the work programme, the report will give a description, an indication of how the item will be dealt with, a relative timescale for the work and brief comments on progress.

Report 2 - Suggestions for Additions to Work Programme

The Work Programme for the Committee should be reviewed at each meeting. This will include members having the opportunity to ask for new Items to be added to the programme. This report will list any newly suggested items. Committee will then have the opportunity to agree (or not) for them to be added to the programme.

Report 3 - Proposed Outline Meeting Schedule for the Municipal Year

The report will, for each scheduled Committee meeting, list those items which are likely to be on the meeting agenda. This will give the opportunity for Committee members to take a greater lead in organising their work programme.

Report 4 - Progress Report on In-Depth Panel Reviews

This report will give a very brief update on progress / timescales for in-depth panel reviews which are in the 'ownership' of the Committee.

REPORT 1
MONITORING REPORT FOR SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD: 2009 / 2010

Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
June 2009	Equality and Diversity	Monitor progress of other scrutiny committees on this issue.		Report provided to Scrutiny Programme Board in March 2010. Further work will be done by the Council Excellence Scrutiny Committee in the future.	
June 2009	Member's Scrutiny Questionnaire	Spokespersons panel to review the responses of the May 2009 questionnaire and report back to the Scrutiny Programme Board.		Follow-up report with recommendations approved by Scrutiny Programme Board on 14 th September 2009.	
Sept 2009	Implementation of the Wirral Alcohol Strategy	Panel review		Topic approved by Scrutiny Programme Board on 14 th September 2009.	
Sept 2009	One Council	Panel review		Topic approved by Scrutiny Programme Board on 14 th September 2009. Member's working group took place on 12 th March. A draft Scope document was approved by the Scrutiny Programme Board in March 2010. The review could be part of the Work programme for 2010/11.	
Sept 2009	How to encourage greater involvement of residents and community organisations in scrutiny processes.	Future report		Topic approved by Scrutiny Programme Board on 14 th September 2009 as a result of the member's questionnaire. A draft scrutiny information leaflet has been developed in March 2010.	

Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
Sept 2009	Identify and promote examples of good scrutiny practice.	Future reports		Topic approved by Scrutiny Programme Board on 14 th September 2009 as a result of the member's questionnaire.	
Sept 2009	Identify training opportunities for scrutiny members	Future reports		Topic approved by Scrutiny Programme Board on 14 th September 2009 as a result of the member's questionnaire. A verbal report will be provided at the meeting on 4 th November 2009. Meeting on 14 th January was informed that a meeting of the chief executive, relevant Portfolio holder and the Member Training Steering Group will be held on 8 th February. A further update was provided for the Scrutiny Programme Board on 4 th March 2010, giving details of proposed changes to procedures.	
Sept 2009	Oversee the production of a revised version of the annual scrutiny questionnaire for members	Future reports		Topic approved by Scrutiny Programme Board on 14 th September 2009 as a result of the member's questionnaire. Report provided to Scrutiny Programme Board in March 2010. The draft members' scrutiny questionnaire for 2010 was approved. The questionnaire will be distributed to members during April 2010.	
Nov 2009	Protocol for Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)	Officer report		Draft 'Councillor Call for Action' protocol agreed by Scrutiny Programme Board in Nov 2009. Subsequently, agreed by Cabinet on 9 Dec 2009.	

Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
Nov 2009	Review the format and relevance of the current format of the Forward Plan	Officer report		<p>Topic agreed by Scrutiny Programme Board on 4th November 2009. Officer report produced for the Jan 2010 meeting.</p> <p>The January meeting agreed that, in order to make the Forward Plan more user-friendly and to assist the scrutiny function, the Cabinet be requested to agree to the following:</p> <p>a) That officers include within the Forward Plan a more informative narrative of the key decisions to be taken, together with more accurate timescales.</p> <p>(b) That, for a short trial period, Chief Officers be required to submit to the next appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee a brief explanation of new items included in the Forward Plan.</p> <p>Subsequently, the Cabinet agreed on 4th February that:</p> <p>(1) Cabinet resolves that officers include within the Forward Plan a more informative narrative of the key decisions to be taken, together with more accurate timescales.</p> <p>(2) Cabinet notes that Overview and Scrutiny Committees set their own agenda and can call on officers to present additional reports to meet their requirements.</p>	

Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
Jan 2010	Update on New Legislation	Officer report		<p>Report presented to the January 2010 meeting. A further report will be produced regarding the response to the 'Strengthening Local Democracy' consultation process.</p> <p>A members training session on the impact of new legislation on scrutiny will be undertaken as part of the member Development training programme.</p>	
March 2010	Draft Protocol for working with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP)	Officer report		<p>Draft protocol approved by Scrutiny Programme Board in March 2010.</p> <p>Agreed that the protocol should also be reviewed by the CDRP, Sustainable Communities OSC, Children and Young People OSC and Cabinet.</p>	

REPORT 2
SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITIONS TO WORK PROGRAMME
SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD : END OF YEAR 2009 / 2010

Topic Description	Topic suggested by	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Completion Date
None			

REPORT 3
PROPOSED OUTLINE MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR
SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD : 2009 / 2010

Meeting Date	Topic Description
27/05/09	Terms of Reference Review of Scrutiny Work Programme Legislation and Guidance (from Centre for Public Scrutiny) Survey of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government 2008 Wirral Council Scrutiny Questionnaire Finance and performance Monitoring Scrutiny Chairs' visit to Warrington
07/09/09	Clarification of the Terms of Reference Response to the Wirral Member's Scrutiny Questionnaire Work Programmes of the five Scrutiny Committees Review of the current issues on the Forward Plan Scrutiny Programme Board – Work Programme
04/11/09	Councillor Call for Action – draft protocol Training needs for scrutiny members Work Programmes of the five Scrutiny Committees Review of the current issues on the Forward Plan Scrutiny Programme Board – Work Programme
05/01/10	Terms of Reference of Scrutiny Programme Board, especially in relation to the 'Call-in' process Progress report on referral of members training to Cabinet Progress report on the Alcohol Scrutiny Review, including agreement of the Scope Document One Council – How should this item be progressed? Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) protocol – Record and evidence trail Scrutinizing the Forward Plan Update on new legislation affecting scrutiny Annual Scrutiny Report for Wirral Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) – Good Scrutiny Awards 2009 Work Programmes of the five Scrutiny Committees Review of the current issues on the Forward Plan Scrutiny Programme Board – Work Programme

Meeting Date	Topic Description
04/03/10	Work Programmes of the five Scrutiny Committees Review of the current issues on the Forward Plan Scrutiny Programme Board – Work Programme Report on progress of Equality and Diversity in all departments of the Council Protocol for scrutinising the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) Revised version of the Annual Scrutiny Questionnaire for members Referral from Cabinet regarding scrutiny of the Forward Plan ‘One Council’ Scrutiny Review - Scope Members training – verbal update from members’ training steering group Allocation of call-In notices Scrutiny leaflet

REPORT 4
PROGRESS REPORT ON IN-DEPTH PANEL REVIEWS
SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD : END OF YEAR 2009 / 2010

Title of Review	Members of Panel	Progress to Date	Date Due to report to Committee
Access of alcohol to young people in Wirral	Councillors: Dave Mitchell Chris Meaden Sue Taylor Ann Bridson	<p><u>Update as at 16/10/09:</u> Topic approved by Scrutiny Programme Board on 14th September 2009. Volunteers to join the panel are Councillors Dave Mitchell, Cherry Povall, Chris Meaden, Sue Taylor and Ann Bridson. The nominated departmental link officer is Sue Drew, Deputy Joint Director of Public Health at Wirral NHS. The first panel meeting, to discuss the scope of the review, is currently being arranged.</p> <p><u>Update as at 17/12/09:</u> Panel members met on 6th November 2009 to discuss the scope for the review. The proposed Scope document for the review is due to be discussed at the Scrutiny Programme Board meeting in January 2010. Cllr Cherry Povall has decided that she will no longer be a member of the Review panel. An introductory presentation to panel members took place on 16th December 2009. Participants included officers from Wirral NHS, DAAT, Children & Young Peoples department, Trading Standards and Licensing.</p> <p><u>Update as at 20/05/10:</u> A meeting of the panel members with a representative of the police has taken place.</p>	
'One Council'	To be agreed	A Working Group of all members of the Scrutiny Programme Board was held on 12/02/10 to discuss the scope of this review. A draft scope for the review was approved by the Scrutiny Programme Board on 4/03/10.	