

WIRRAL COUNCIL

TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES POLICY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

30TH JULY 2013

SUBJECT:	<i>COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED:	<i>ALL</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH / HEAD OF POLICY AND PERFORMANCE.</i>
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	<i>CLLR ANN MCLACHLAN</i>

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Members of the Policy & Performance Committees will formulate a work programme for the forthcoming municipal year. This report advises members of the criteria that would be suitable to inform their work programme and requests that members propose items for inclusion on the Committee's programme.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 Four Policy and Performance Committees have been established to undertake the work of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function. Each of these committees is responsible for scrutinising specific areas of responsibility or departmental functions, which are reported elsewhere on the agenda. It is recommended that each of the Committees selects items within their remit to be included on their work programme. Due to the wide remits of the Committees, focusing on a small number of high priority issues will be beneficial. It is envisaged that the work programme will be subsequently monitored and updated at Committee meetings throughout the municipal year.

The Coordinating Committee will have an additional role to ensure that there is no duplication between the work of the other committees and to make sure that resources are available, from both members and officers, for the work items to be completed in a timely manner.

3.0 THE FUNCTIONS OF SCRUTINY

As a reminder, the types of work that Overview and scrutiny is empowered to undertake includes:

- Holding the Executive to account – a primary role is to provide a framework of accountability which seeks to modify executive behaviour and prevent the abuse of power.
- Holding Partners to account – scrutiny provides an opportunity to investigate the work of public, private and voluntary sector partners and their impact on the community.

- Horizon-scanning – looks ahead to future changes in local government in order to help the Council to adapt to them. This will usually mean considering future actions by central government which will have repercussions for local government.
- Policy Development and Review – scrutiny contributes to the development of key policies to be included in the Council's policy framework, as well as examining how well a policy has been implemented and if outcomes have been achieved.
- Pre-decision scrutiny – examines the council's proposals, objectives, and draft programmes in order to inform their development before they are delivered. This helps the council to achieve optimum impact by avoiding mistakes and grasping opportunities.
- Post-decision scrutiny – examines the implementation of council policy and performance and enables the council to review the effects of its decision-making
- In-depth review – small groups of councillors will undertake detailed investigations into a specific topic of particular interest to them. The process is member-led and can involve methods such as informal meetings, mystery shopping, external visits etc. This type of review can facilitate greater involvement of residents and community organisations.
- Performance management and improvement – involves reviewing achievement against Corporate Plan goals and targets. This can be a powerful force for improvement by highlighting areas of poor performance and ways to address this.

Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the work programme developed by a Policy and Performance Committee throughout the year will be a mixture of items covering these different functions.

4.0 CRITERIA FOR SELECTING ITEMS

In order to identify and prioritise items for inclusion on the Work programme, it is useful to measure each proposed item against a set of criteria to ensure that the most relevant topics are selected:

Internal Council Priorities

- Is it a priority in the Corporate Plan or in the Transformation Programme?
- Is it a key decision in the current Forward Plan?
- Is it a service with a high budget?
- Is it a service with performance indicators which consistently fail to meet targets?

Public Interest

- Is it an issue that is important to residents in the Borough?
- Is it a service that gives rise to most complaints from the public?
- Is it an issue that is covered heavily in the local media?

External Factors

- Is it a Government priority and how does it affect the Borough?
- Is the issue affected by the key national and local policy drivers within the remit of the Committee?
- Is the issue subject to new Government guidance or legislation?
- Has the particular services / areas of concern been highlighted by internal / external Audit reports?

Impact

- Will the Scrutiny work make a difference?
- What would Scrutiny of a particular issue achieve?
- Are there clear objectives for the scrutiny of a particular issue?

Reasons for exclusion of a particular topic may include:

- The issue is being examined elsewhere, for example, by the Cabinet, a working group of members or by an officer group.
- The issue has already been dealt with recently.
- Relevant new legislation or guidance is expected within the next year.
- There is limited scope for scrutiny to add value and make a difference.
- There is limited time to achieve the objective in the specified timescale.

5.0 METHODS OF UNDERTAKING DETAILED WORK

It is envisaged that as much work as possible will take place outside the formal committee meetings, with members reporting findings back to the Committee. In developing their work programme for the municipal year, members may wish to reflect on the different methods which are available to undertake scrutiny work. Whilst the following list is not exhaustive and is currently being further developed, members may wish to utilise a mixture of the following techniques:

- **In-depth Reviews** – Typically undertaken by a Task & Finish Group, members will review a specified topic in detail. Methodology will include scope definition, evidence-gathering via a series of separate meetings with witnesses over a period of time, report writing and recommendations to Cabinet. A number of scrutiny reviews in Wirral have followed this methodology, for example, the International Trade Centre Scrutiny Review and the Looked After Children Scrutiny Review.
- **Evidence Days** – This method is similar to the In-depth Reviews, although the evidence-gathering is undertaken during an Evidence Day(s) when a series of individual meetings are held with witnesses. This method is suitable for investigative scrutiny undertaken over a shorter timescale. The method was used for the Under-occupation Scrutiny Review undertaken earlier in 2013.
- **Workshop-style** – This method lends itself to collaborative work where a number of stakeholders / members are brought together to review a particular issue and to jointly identify potential solutions. An example of the possible use of this method is a review of the potential impact on the Borough of a piece of new legislation, prior to its implementation.

- **Reference Groups / Rapid scrutiny** – This method would be suitable for short, specific pieces of work whereby a small group of members, possibly supported by knowledgeable co-optees, review a specific issue. As an example, this method may lend itself to pre-decision scrutiny whereby a portfolio holder will present a specific proposal prior to decision by Cabinet and will receive comments from the member's group.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMMES OF THE PREVIOUS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Officers have reviewed the work programmes / minutes from the former Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings and have identified those areas where members had previously requested further work to take place. Those items are listed in the table below. As part of developing the work programme of the new Policy and Performance Committees, members may wish to identify any items from the list that are required for the new work programme. It would be beneficial to carry forward only those most significant items.

Previous Committee / Date	Item	Description	New Committee
Council Excellence 22/04/13	IT Strategy	Scope document produced in early 2013. Panel meeting with Tony Glew who agreed to refer the refreshed IT Strategy to the Panel (still outstanding). Cllr Whittingham (Panel Member) requested the review be on the work programme of the new committee.	Trans & Resources

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 Without an effective work programme, members of the Policy and Performance Committees will struggle to deliver valuable overview and scrutiny.

8.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8.1 None

9.0 CONSULTATION

9.1 No consultation has been carried out in relation to this report.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

11.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

11.1 It is envisaged that officer support to enable members to deliver their work programme will be delivered from within existing resources. In compiling their work programme members will need to be aware of capacity issues, both in terms of member time and officer support.

12.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

13.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?
(a) No

14.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

15.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

15.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

16.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 Members are requested to agree initial items for inclusion on the work programme.

16.2 Members are also requested to delegate the completion of the work programme to the Chair and Spokespersons prior to the next meeting of the committee. The Chair and Spokespersons will also be able to agree to the commencement of any specific parts of the work programme prior to the next Committee meeting.

17.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

17.1 This report was produced to provide background information to enable Committee members to compile a suitable work programme for the forthcoming municipal year.

REPORT AUTHOR: *Fiona Johnstone*

Director of Public Health / Head of Policy and Performance
0151 691 8152

email: Fiona.Johnstone@wirral.nhs.uk