

Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 20 May 2013

Subject: Overview & Scrutiny (OS) Work Programme

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Recommendations:

- (1) To consider an outline process for approving the OS work programme each year as set out in this report;**
- (2) To consider engagement with the public in this process; and**
- (3) To consider how the process is to be managed at member level.**

Report:

Background

1. The Panel has discussed the method of agreeing the work programme to be undertaken each year by OS. This should include work undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as well as the programmes of the various Panels. A number of factors come into play with this:

- (a) work programmes for previous year(s) and in particular items not undertaken, still in progress or where implementation is to be reviewed;
- (b) liaison with the Cabinet on projects to be undertaken on its behalf;
- (c) requests by Councillors via the "PICK" process (sample PICK priority setting form attached);
- (d) performance and other data for the authority which could provide evidence of areas of work by OS, independent of the Executive; and
- (e) views from the public on current concerns (e.g. petitions), which is particularly relevant to scrutiny of external organizations;
- (f) the forward plan.

2. Engagement with the public on issues to be examined by OS has not been discussed in detail. Ways of approaching this issue include:

- (a) relying on elected councillors to use their awareness of the local scene to raise items of concern to the public via the "Pick" process; or
- (b) seeking direct input from the public by whatever means are thought appropriate.

3. All aspects of the work programme must be assessed against:
 - (a) the time and other resources available to members and officers from all Directorates to support the programme;
 - (b) the need for balance between reviews of internal operations and external services; and
 - (c) items which are to be recurring features of each year's programme and those new items which can be conducted over a more limited timescale (vis quick "task and finish" work and single annual reviews)

Timetable

4. An outline timetable for compiling a work programme could look something like this:

March -

"PICK" forms circulated to members with return date to be determined

Review of previous year's programme with Panel Chairmen

Initial discussion with Leader of the Council re Cabinet plans for the following year

Public engagement - website, press etc (?)

April –

"PICK" form returns reviewed/any public input assessed

Cabinet plans examined.

Draft work programme formulated

Scrutiny panel structure reviewed to accord with draft work programme

May/June

Prepare draft programme for submission to the first OSC in the new Council year

Presentation to OSC by Leader and Portfolio holders on executive plans/questions

Programme agreed and Panels appointed.

Delivering the Process

5. The Panel needs to consider how the informal discussions on the work programme are to be managed. Is this to be role of the Chairman of OSC or a wider group of OS members? It was suggested during consultation that there was a case for a smaller steering panel which might also monitor both the OS Work Programme and the Executive Forward Plan as the year proceeds.

6. Bearing in mind the time of year when this work will have to be undertaken, the Panel need to be confident that this process, which is very much the ideal method, is actually achievable.