

Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel

**Agenda
Item No. 5**

17 July 2014

Consideration of Panel Work Programme for 2014/15

Ward(s) All

Portfolio Holders:

Councillor M. Bird - Leader

Summary of report:

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant background information for Members so that the Panels work programme can be agreed for 2014/15.

It is important for Members to consider the wide range of potential issues within their remits that they could consider during the year which could range from council specific to completely external issues.

When agreeing items it is important that consideration is given to what value the Panel can add and what tools and performance measures are available to support them in their work.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Member's consider the range of items within their remit available to them and agree a work programme for 2014/15 along with any potential working groups and their membership.

Resource and legal considerations:

In terms of resources it is important that the right balance and number of items and working groups are selected so that the work programme can be completed during the year without placing undue pressure on Member capacity.

Legal considerations for specific items will need to be addressed as and when necessary based on the items that are selected for inclusion on the work programme.

Citizen impact:

An effective work programme will enable the Panel to focus its work on the most important issues within its remit. Consideration of these issues and subsequent recommendations, if accepted, could improve the quality of services delivered to local residents.

Environmental impact:

The level of environmental impact will be dependant on which issues are selected to become a part of the panels work programme for 2014/15. The borough's Sustainable Community Strategy places an importance on considering the impact of present decisions on future generations which includes environmental issues.

Performance management:

The report asks Members to consider performance management information when deciding on their work programme, and also to consider how they wish to use performance management information and tools in assisting them with their work over the course of the year.

Equality Implications:

Ensuring equality for all is a key theme in the boroughs Sustainable Community Strategy as well as being one of the Council's core values. Members are advised to consider what, if any, equality implications there are for any items on their work programme.

Consultation:

Members may wish to consider the results of any formal or informal consultation exercises, including that with the public and partners, when considering what items they wish to include in their work programme. Whilst Council officers carry out a range of consultation activity on behalf of the Council, Members themselves engage with the public on a much more frequent basis and it is valuable to consider feedback from these sources as well.

Lead Officer:

Rory Borealis, Executive Director for Resources

☎: 07764 628 186

✉: borealisr@walsall.gov.uk

Report Author:

Craig Goodall, Committee Business & Governance Manager

☎: 01922 654765

✉: goodallc@walsall.gov.uk

Introduction

At the start of each municipal year it is good practice for scrutiny and performance panels to spend some time discussing and agreeing its work programme for the year ahead for issues within its remit.

As Members will already be aware scrutiny and performance panel remits were agreed by Council at its meeting on 18 June 2014. For information the Panels remit in Article 6 of the Walsall Council Constitution reads as:

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All aspects and general services related to the Councils corporate centre for example; financial services including the annual budget process and the Council wide financial position, corporate performance management, legal and democratic services, services falling within the Councils transformation agenda within the functions set out in Section 21 of the Local Government Act, 2000.

Work Programme

In agreeing its work programme for 2014/15 the Panel will be informed from a range of sources, including all 60 Members, last years Panel work streams and suggested carry over items, Council Officers, and Partners.

When agreeing the items to be included in its work programme focus should be given to the range of performance management information available that could assist the Panel with each particular issue. A whole host of performance information is available on a range of subjects that Members could utilise to measure success or otherwise.

Working Groups

Members need to decide whether they want to operate any working groups for this year. Working Groups are at their most effective when they are considering broad policy areas that require detailed investigation time that cannot be completed at Panel level. The Panel will set the working group remit, its membership and once a working group has completed its investigations it will report its findings and recommendations to the Panel for consideration and adoption.

It is very important that Member capacity is considered when deciding on what working groups are formed as many members sit on more than one panel and their respective working groups. As such getting suitable dates in the municipal diary and getting suitable attendance at those meetings is difficult if too many working groups are formed. In previous years experience and given the number of Panel's in this year's municipal diary, it is suggested that each Panel should look to operate one working group at any one time. Panels that wish to operate more than working group during the year should timetable the second to start as the first finishes.

Suggested Items

After reviewing last year's work programme there are two matters which the Panel will no doubt wish to add on the work programme for 2014/15.

Firstly, the Panel spent some time overseeing the five themes of the Working Smarter Programme in 2013/14. Therefore it could be worth considering now to follow this work up in the new year.

Secondly, last year the Panel operated a cross-panel working group investigating the impact of welfare reform in Walsall. This report has since been presented to both Council and Cabinet. The report made a number of recommendations and good practice recommends following up how the recommendations have been taken forward.

In addition to the above at the meeting the Executive Director (Resources) will give a presentation about the service area and provide further potential areas for the Panel to consider.

The items highlighted are not an exhaustive list, but are those that have been identified in advance of the meeting. Members should consider these alongside any items they wish to raise themselves and use them to develop a balanced work programme that concentrates on what is important to them and on where they believe they can make a difference.

Once agreed, the Chair, in consultation with the Executive Director, shall produce the work programme to ensure that each item is considered at the appropriate time before circulating a copy of the work programme to all members of the Panel.

Appendix One is a copy of the latest forward plan.