

## **Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

## **Agenda Item No. 7**

**DATE: 9 June 2009**

### **Consideration of Panel Work Programme for 2009/10**

**Ward(s)** All

**Portfolio Holders:** Cllr Arif- Business Support Services  
Cllr Towe- Finance and Personnel

#### **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 2009/10.

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 2009/10 along with any potential working groups and their membership.**

#### **Background papers:**

Scrutiny Annual Report 2008/09  
Minutes of previous meetings

#### **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 2008/09. The boroughs 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 and Local Area Agreement 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:**

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## 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 and 20 May 2009. The remit for the Corporate Panel remains unaltered from previous years. For information the Panels remit in Article 6 of the Walsall Council Constitution reads as:

**All aspects and general services relating to the Council's corporate centre for example; financial services including the annual budget process and the Council wide financial position, corporate performance management, legal and constitutional services, services falling within the Council's transformation agenda within the functions set out in section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.**

In agreeing its work programme for 2009/10 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, Partners and the Public.

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 increased number of Panel's in this year's municipal diary, it is suggested that each Panel should look to run only one working group at any one time. Panels that wish to operate more than working group during the year could timetable the second to start as the first finishes.

A copy of the councils working group toolkit has been despatched separately to Members and is available to members of the public by request. Member's are asked to familiarise themselves with this toolkit ahead of deciding what, if any, working groups they wish to run.

## **Value for Money Service Reviews**

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel has developed a value for money (vfm) toolkit to assist Members if it is decided to complete a service review. Last year the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel used the value for money toolkit to review the Councils Communication and Payroll and Pensions services. The two reviews were well received by both Members and Officers and resulted in positive recommendations for both services. The Corporate Panel recommended that other Panel's also look to use this toolkit and this recommendation was endorsed by the scrutiny working group of Chair's and Vice-Chairs.

The vfm assessment tool provides a framework for members in partnership with services to work through and is divided into 3 broad themes:

1. What does it cost to provide this service? (economy)
2. How is this service performing? (efficiency)
3. What quality is the service being provided? (effectiveness)

For each of these themes there is the opportunity/potential for scrutiny panels with the service being assessed to benchmark with other service providers to give a clearer picture of relative performance.

The aim is that on completing this assessment scrutiny members will be able to make a judgement regarding the vfm provided by the service and identify and recommend any potential further action.

The vfm toolkit can be used to support the investigations of working groups or independently as a service review led by an appointed member.

## **Suggested Items**

**Appendix One** contains a number of suggested items completed on a standard template to assist Members with deciding what they wish to include on their work programme. This template requires the following points to be considered-

- ø **What the Issue Is**
- ø **Where it has come from-** for example it could be a carry over item from last year's panel, a suggestion from a Councillor or member of the public or it could be a new item officers are aware of that is coming up this year,
- ø **Why it is important-** with limited time available to Members they need to be able to prioritise their work and concentrate on those things that really matter.
- ø **Who it affects-** Does it impact on any particular ward or user group? Does it concern partner agencies or staff groups? Any potential equalities issues may be highlighted here if the item is likely to have a disproportionate affect on any particular group.
- ø **How can scrutiny add value-** What specifically can Scrutiny do? E.g. provide feedback and recommendations ahead of a Cabinet (or partner executive) decision, support the development of policy, service review, public engagement etc. Suggestions have also been made here for if the item is particularly suited to a particular method of scrutiny such as a working group or value for money review.
- ø **Timings-** This will highlight any critical timings that would need to be taken into consideration such as statutory deadlines which would dictate when scrutiny would need to have considered the item by if they are to have any valuable input
- ø **Performance Information-** This includes any relevant performance indicators that can provide Members with a guide on current levels of performance and also give a benchmark to measure future improvement.

The items highlighted at appendix one are not an exhaustive list, but only those that it is possible to provide 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.

## **Financial Monitoring 2009/10 and Budget Planning 2010/11**

As in previous year the Panel will continue to receive monitoring reports on the in year financial position of the Council and also be asked to input into the budget setting process for the 2010/11 year.

<b>Issue</b>	Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)
<b>Who from</b>	Officers and Previous Years Panel
<b>Why is it important?</b>	CAA is the new partnership focused assessment framework which replaces the old Council focused Comprehensive Performance Assessment. CAA will ask the 'so what?' question in terms of assessing the difference local public service providers are making and what the prospects are for sustaining improvements, rather than simply concentrating on the processes in place to deliver them. For the first time, local public services will be held collectively to account for their impact on better outcomes. This means that CAA will look across councils, health bodies, police forces, fire and rescue services and others responsible for local public services, which are increasingly expected to work in partnership to tackle the challenges facing their communities.
<b>Who does it affect?</b>	CAA affects all organisations within the Walsall partnership and will impact on the reputation of the Council
<b>Who needs to be involved?</b>	The Audit Commission have appointed Gary Stevens as CAA Lead for the Area; he will be able to provide a good insight for Members on what is expected.
<b>How can scrutiny add value?</b>	<p>The Inspectorates recognise that council scrutiny committees have an important role in contributing to local outcomes. Not only do scrutiny committees hold the council executive to account but they also consider matters that affect the local area and Walsall residents as well as having specific powers in relation to local health services and crime and disorder.</p> <p>There is a two-way relationship between scrutiny and CAA. Scrutiny reviews carried out locally will provide valuable evidence that can feed in to CAA and may help inspectorates understand issues without having to carry out additional work. In return, the findings from CAA will also be helpful to scrutiny committees in identifying potential areas for future reviews.</p> <p>With this in mind it is essential that Members have a thorough understanding of CAA and its impact and are seen to proactively engage with the new regime.</p>
<b>Timings</b>	The first Assessment will be published in November 2009, the Panel may wish to carry out some work ahead of this date in order to influence the outcome as well as carry out evaluation after publication in order to identify areas for improvement.

<b>Performance Information</b>	The whole national indicator set will inform judgements made by CAA and these will continue to be monitored by the relevant members and officers on an ongoing basis through the Council's performance management processes.
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<b>Issue</b>	Welfare Advice Provision
<b>Who from</b>	Last years Corporate SPP (based on original referral from Council)
<b>Why is it important?</b>	<p>It is anticipated that in the current economic downturn there will be an upsurge in demand for welfare advice and the provision of this advice can play a valuable role in supporting vulnerable citizens in Walsall as well as helping stimulate the local economy.</p> <p>Whilst the Corporate Panel have previously taken an interest in the work of the Council's own welfare rights service and of a possible amalgamation with the fairer charging team, February's full Council meeting resulted in a referral to look at the level of funding given to the Citizens advice bureau. With this in mind, and in the knowledge that there are also other organisations in the borough providing similar advice it was recommended that a holistic review of welfare advice provision within the borough was undertaken, incorporating the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.</p>
<b>Who does it affect?</b>	<p>Welfare advice provision impacts on all communities across the borough, traditionally those in more deprived areas but increasingly in the current climate on other households as well.</p> <p>In carrying out the work it is likely the Panel will wish to see more detailed information on how different communities access welfare advice which may identify some equalities gaps.</p> <p>The item will require close partnership working with other organisations, notable the CAB, but also other voluntary and community groups providing welfare advice.</p>
<b>Who needs to be involved?</b>	<p>The item cuts across the remit of a number of Panels so whilst Corporate Scrutiny should act as lead panel for the work, invites to other panels to nominate representatives should also be considered.</p> <p>As mentioned above active involvement will also be required from the CAB, other organisations operating in this field and internal officers working in the welfare rights and fairer charging teams.</p> <p>Members may also wish to consider how to get public</p>

	engagement in the working group.				
<b>How can scrutiny add value?</b>	In taking a holistic view of welfare advice provision in the borough the working group will be able to develop recommendations as to gaps in service provision and areas of duplication.				
<b>Timings</b>	The CAB Service Level Agreement has been extended on current terms for additional 12 months, any working group findings before 31 March 2010 will help inform a new SLA and funding levels.				
<b>Performance Information</b>	<i>Include any relevant performance information that will inform members of current performance levels and provide baseline for future monitoring.</i>				
	PI Number	Description	Current Position	08/09 target	RAG
	NI152	Working-age population on out-of-work- benefit	16.30%	16.20%	Red
	Figures show that within the last year unemployment in the borough has risen by 84% and we have been identified regionally as being one of the hardest hit areas from the recession. We have seen job losses from a significant number of key manufacturers in the area particularly those who support the car industry and construction which are sectors that have been very badly hit by the recession. The target is due to be re-negotiated with GOWM (Government Office for the West Midlands) as part of the possible MAA (Multi Area Agreement) and in light of the affects from the recession.				



<b>Issue</b>	Single Status				
<b>Who from</b>	Previous years panel				
<b>Why is it important?</b>	The implementation of a new pay and grading model could have significant implications for the budget and for industrial relations. The Panel have previously received updates on the project and have requested a further update once pay modelling has been completed.				
<b>Who does it affect?</b>	All staff and trade unions. Budget implications could also have a wider impact on other council services.				
<b>Who needs to be involved?</b>	At this stage it is likely that the only involvement needed will be from the relevant officers.				
<b>How can scrutiny add value?</b>	The Panel being informed of this project and its associated risks will help with their deliberations on budget matters. The Panel can also make recommendations back to the project group and to Cabinet on suggested courses of action once modelling has been completed.				
<b>Timings</b>	Pay modelling is due for completion in late summer and a report should be available after that point.				
<b>Performance Information</b>	<i>Include any relevant performance information that will inform members of current performance levels and provide baseline for future monitoring.</i>				
	PI Number	Description	Current Position	Current Rag	09/10 Target

<b>Issue</b>	Payroll and Pensions
<b>Who from</b>	Previous years panel
<b>Why is it important?</b>	<p>The payroll service ensures that all council employees are paid their correct contractual remuneration on the correct payday every month. Included within this scope are elected members and pensioners in receipt of Local Governemt Pension Service payments. In addition to this through fair funding arrangements, the service runs the payroll for all non former grant maintained schools. The council also provides an income generated contract payroll service to 15 other external pubic organisations. In total over 15000 payslips are issued each month.</p> <p>Last autumn the Panel carried out a value for money assessment of the service which found that the service was, in general delivering an efficient and effective service and demonstrating vfm but did identify some areas for improvement. The following resolutions were made:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That a full options appraisal of the Payroll service be carried out, following on from the work done with the scrutiny VFM toolkit, including looking at providing payroll service to other organisations at a profit, with an ambition towards making this service cost neutral within three years;</li> <li>2. That the results of this options appraisal be reported back to the Panel in 6 months time;</li> </ol>
<b>Who does it affect?</b>	All staff, elected members and LGPS pension scheme members.
<b>Who needs to be involved?</b>	Panels Members and Lead officers
<b>How can scrutiny add value?</b>	Scrutiny has already carried out an effective piece of work with the payroll service but it is important that is now followed up, in line with the recommendation, to ensure continued added value.
<b>Timings</b>	The resolution of the Panel asked for a 6 month update which would align most closely with the July meeting of the Panel
<b>Performance Information</b>	The Value for Money review brought to the Panel including a range of local performance indicators (e.g. % of employees paid without error) An update on this can be supplied to the Panel when the item is discussed.

Issue	Procurement				
Who from	Previous years panel				
Why is it important?	Effective procurement helps ensure better value for money and the delivery of better citizen outcomes. The Panel have previously looked at procurement via a working group but it was decided to discontinue this due to difficulties in securing member attendance. However the working group did feel it was important that the issues continued to be brought to the main panel as appropriate.				
Who does it affect?	All services are affected by procurement though the role of the Corporate Panel should be focussed on the strategic element of this and its impact on the Council's overall use of resources.				
Who needs to be involved?	Predominantly just the Panel and lead officers though Members may also wish to involve other partners (e.g. the Chamber of commerce) as appropriate.				
How can scrutiny add value?	<p>Whilst specific procurement activity will be picked up by the relevant Panel to the Service undertaking the procurement the Corporate Panel has a role in the overarching strategic review of procurement.</p> <p>A strategic review of commissioning and procurement will take place this year led by the Executive Director for Resources, Scrutiny will have the opportunity to input into this review.</p>				
Timings	Initial findings from the strategic review should be available to report in the Autumn.				
Performance Information	Include any relevant performance information that will inform members of current performance levels and provide baseline for future monitoring.				
	PI Number	Description	Current Position	Current Rag	09/10 Target