

## **Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

**Agenda  
Item No.**

**DATE: 12 June, 2008**

**07**

### **Consideration of Panel Work Programme for 2008/09**

**Ward(s)** All

#### **Portfolio Holder:**

Cllr Mohammed Arif- Procurement, transformation and performance management

Cllr Al Griffiths- 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 2008/09.

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, if any, performance measures and assessment tools can be utilised to assist Members in completing their work.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. That Member's consider the range of items within their remit available to them and agree a work programme for 2008/09 along with any potential working groups.**

#### **Background papers:**

Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/08

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 new Local Area Agreement. As with performance management information consideration of equality issues could form a part of the Panels work programme for 2008/09.

**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.

## 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 amended by Council at its meeting on 21 May 2008. For information the Panels remit in Article 6 of the Walsall Council Constitution now reads as:

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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 2008/09 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.

### **Possible / potential items carried over from last year**

The following items were discussed to varying degrees last year and may have the potential to carry over in to this year's work programme.

It is valuable that the suggested carry over items are considered but the Panel need to consider them in light of all possible work streams and in relation to the value that scrutiny could add.

The items detailed below were identified at the last panel meeting of 2007/08 for potential inclusion on the 2008/09 work programme:

Item	Commentary
Procurement Working Group	Procurement is a vital strategic tool that touches and affects all services and as such it is of great importance in decisions that impact on financial matters. Members were concerned that councillors were not fully engaged or aware of the role of procurement and that this essential in allowing them to effectively fulfil their role as critical friend. The Working Group has considered a whole host of issues concerning procurement strategy and practice at Walsall Council. The principal task that is currently outstanding concerns benchmarking. This benchmarking is linked to an officer led task that should be complete in the summer. The working group

	was run as a joint group between the Corporate Panel and the Children's Panel due to a cross over in remits, however changes to the remits for this year means that this now falls solely into the remit of the Corporate Panel.
Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Funding	This item was on the work programme for last year but a decision was made to delay consideration until the outcome of a Judicial Review.
Safety and Health Improvement Plan monitoring	The panel received this item last year and resolved to monitor exception reports from the plan throughout the year. This could also be linked into a potential service review of the SHAW team as mentioned in the suggested items sections below.
Electronic Document Management System	Members were impressed with the results of the implementation of this system within the Revenues and Benefits Service and were keen to see its functionality utilised in other services. There is potential for this to be built into a wider review about how EDMS could be extended into other service areas. This was identified as a potential carry over item from last year.
Information Communication Technology Service	This was an area that members expressed an interest in towards the end of last year, although the exact scope is not clear, it has the potential to be linked in with EDMS as above.
Welfare Rights Service	The Panel recommended the establishment of a Trust to Council. Cabinet, though not rejecting the idea, decided not to pursue it at this stage.
Job Evaluation	At its meeting on 10 April 2008 the Corporate Panel commented on the pay structure item on the forward plan and resolved that they believe it was an item of such importance that it should come to scrutiny for their input prior to going to Cabinet. A letter was sent from the Chair, on behalf of the panel, to the Leader of the Council to request that any reports relating to the above issue be considered by the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel to allow the opportunity for the full implications of any draft proposals to be evaluated before any formal decisions are taken by Cabinet.

### **Additional suggested items**

Since the last meeting of the Panel each Council Directorate has reviewed their own work plans so that any potential areas that may be of interest to the Panel can be identified at this stage and timetabled into the Panels work programme if Members require.

Item	Background	Timescales	Performance Management Information												
LAA Monitoring	At Council on 21 May, Members approved the indicators for the new LAA, with delegated powers for final negotiations of targets to the chief executive, in consultation with the leader. 26 of the National Indicator set were chosen along with 5 further local indicators, of these 3 in particular are of direct relevance to the Corporate SPP	The LAA will be monitored quarterly and reported to Cabinet; information can be brought at those points to the panel. Members can also access the most up to date information available themselves through the PIMS system which was made available through all group rooms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality</li><li>• Overall/general satisfaction with local area</li><li>• Working-age people on out-of-work benefits</li></ul>												
Corporate Assessment Findings	The findings of the recent Corporate Assessment was made public on 3 June 2008 and the Council needs to work to ensure it implements the recommendations made and uses learning from the process to drive service improvement.	A brief report is being received by Cabinet on 18 June which purely outlines the score, some of the strengths found and the areas for improvement. A more detailed report is scheduled for September which will contain information regarding how we will be addressing the areas for improvement. This report will not be a key decision and so will not feature on the Cabinet Forward Plan.	Summary of assessment scores: <table><tr><td>Ambition</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>Prioritisation</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>Capacity</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>Performance Management</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>Achievement</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td><b>Overall</b></td><td><b>3</b></td></tr></table>	Ambition	3	Prioritisation	3	Capacity	2	Performance Management	3	Achievement	3	<b>Overall</b>	<b>3</b>
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Transition from CPA to CAA	The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) regime set by the Audit Commission has now been replaced by Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA.) This sets new challenges for the council and its partners in the way they monitor evidence and improve performance.	A second government consultation will be published in the Summer outlining proposed frameworks and reporting requirements. Officers should be in a position to report to the panel on proposals and progress to date in the Autumn.	The new CAA inspections regime will present new challenges with regard to what and how we measure and monitor performance, with a shift towards more ‘outcome’ focussed measures on public perception. As more information becomes available members												

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			should be able to see how they can use this new information for their own scrutiny purposes.
Budget role of scrutiny	Scrutiny panels and the corporate panel in particular, have a key role in the budget setting process each year. Successfully engaging scrutiny is important to ensuring they are able to add value to this process.	The first round of budget scrutiny meetings are scheduled to begin on 25 November (N'hoods SPP.) so any changes to the format of these meetings or the information received at them will have to be agreed prior to this date.	
Member Development	The charter mark for member development is being reviewed this year. Member development is seen as an integral part of driving forward improvement as well as being of significant benefit to councillors. Organisational Development (OD) in general falls within the remit of the Corporate Panel and so too member development. Learning how to engage effectively with members and ensure the service is delivering an effective member development programme is an area where the panel could greatly assist.	OD has recently launched a 6 month programme for members, up to November 2008. Members may wish to feed into the programme for the remaining 6 months by completing work prior to November or look to influence the programme for the next municipal year.	
Payroll and pensions	As a largely transaction based service (with added duties around support and advice) this is an area where efficient processes can realise considerable savings and improved services and as such is perhaps an area which may benefit from input from the panel similar to the work done on the Revenues	No specific timescales other than fitting into the panel's schedule, though the panel may wish to consider how any potential recommendations can input into the services planning and budget processes for the following year.	The vfm toolkit (if used) includes sections on performance benchmarking which should bring to light useful performance information on this area and how that compares to others.

Item	Background	Timescales	Performance Management Information
	and Benefits Service.		
Safety, Health and Well-Being Service (SHAW)	The panel received information last year on the Safety Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) and this is one of the items that requested to be carried over to monitor in this municipal year. As well as monitoring this improvement plan, it is suggested that the panel may wish to consider reviewing the service itself to see how well it is equipped to deliver this important agenda.	The Health and Safety Executive are revisiting the Council in September 2008.	The vfm toolkit (if used) includes sections on performance benchmarking which should bring to light useful performance information on this area and how that compares to others.
Communications	The communications unit currently sit within the Regeneration Directorate but, as a corporate service, do now fall within the remit of the Corporate Scrutiny Panel. Effective communications are essential to any organisation and so this may be an area the Panel may wish to consider undertaking a service review to ensure the unit is sufficiently resourced to carry out its functions and that it is delivering good value for money.	No specific timescales other than fitting into the panel's schedule, though the panel may wish to consider how any potential recommendations can input into the services planning and budget processes for the following year.	The vfm toolkit (if used) includes sections on performance benchmarking which should bring to light useful performance information on this area and how that compares to others.

## **Scrutiny Tools**

It is 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. Experience has shown that two working groups per Panel with a membership of 4-5 Members is a realistic and achievable commitment.

If the panel decides to undertake a service review as part of its work programme then they should consider use of the Value for Money toolkit, which was developed specifically for this purpose and was piloted with the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel, with the work they did on the Revenues and Benefits Service. This tool has received positive feedback from external inspectors, including the value for money assessment by the Audit Commission.