

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2004/05

16. Members discussed their ideas and proposals for the work programme for the Panel for the 2004/05 Municipal Year. The following points and suggested issues for scrutiny were identified in the discussions:-

No.	Title	Brief	Progress Route
1.	Surplus places in Schools in the Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pattern of surplus places over 3/5/10 years to enable forward planning; this should be linked to the next item, namely the scrutiny of the state of school buildings so that there is a planned process to improve school buildings across the Borough - Possible amalgamation of schools 	<p>There is the opportunity to pull items 1 and 2 together to form a Working Group that has two key objectives:</p> <p>a) to use the findings of school buildings review in conjunction with the DDA Access Audit to formulate a strategy that will respond to identified need.</p> <p>b) to resolve the issue of surplus school places in the borough based upon the above findings.</p>
2.	State of School Buildings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Former School Buildings Working Group did considerable work as a basis for property audit; - The Asset Management Plan is regularly updated (25% of schools are reviewed each year and $\frac{3}{4}$ of schools have now been reviewed); - Consider approaching Cabinet with a recommendation to take one-off action to clear the backlog of school repairs so that funds are available each year for other work; Walsall has some of the worst school buildings in the country. - An index of all schools including information on the suitability of buildings (taking in DDA requirements); investment in the production of a comprehensive data base 	

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		of all school buildings	
3.	Social Inclusion Agenda: (Scope to be widened to include Travellers Children and Looked After Children)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look at Ofsted self assessment documents and sub-judgements to obtain an overall picture and then select one or more items to work through; - Look at facts and figures to decide whether Walsall is becoming more socially inclusive, particularly from the educational point of view; - Involve parents/youth workers/social workers in a whole range of - multi-disciplinary fields in discussions to decide where scrutiny could make a real difference and to help find a solution; - Look at school examination results and gaps in attainment. - (Gaps relating to Pakistani and Bangladeshi children's educational attainment are massive). Work with communities to find out why progress is not being met; - Baseline issues of ethnic minority and gender gaps; look in particular at widest gap of educational attainment (key stage 4); - Scrutinise exam results of looked after children (Councillors are Corporate Parents) - How school exclusions can be tackled and what support can be offered to schools and individuals concerned (progress is being made here) 	<p>It is proposed that a 'Social Inclusion Working Group' is set up. It would be practical for this working group to start early 2005.</p> <p>It is also suggested that the make-up of this working group is multi-agency to include as a minimum, senior management representation from,:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Services - Education Walsall - Leisure & Culture - Crime & Disorder Partnership, and the - Health Partnership

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4.	Governor Training:	Dealing with selection of school personnel in the light of the Bichard report into Soham murders (copy of summary of Bichard report to be made available to members)	This information is being shared in a presentation of the 'Bichard' report at the Children's Services & Life-long Learning Scrutiny Panel set for 30 November 2004 There is no clear brief for a subsequent working group at this stage.
5.	Tackling Obesity in Schools:	<p>Healthy schools partnership agenda (many schools accredited to this);</p> <p>Set of standards for schools to achieve (perhaps a working group to look at a range of ways to tackle this issue)</p> <p>In addition to the clinical issues the group should explore the social aspects of obesity in children.</p>	<p>There is already a Health Scrutiny Panel which has chosen Obesity as the focus of its work. It is suggested that rather than have two panels resourcing two separate working groups, that this particular issue becomes a joint panel.</p> <p>It is also suggested that the make-up of this working group is multi-agency to include and should include:- representation from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Services (PP) - Leisure & Culture (IM) - Cllr E Pitt (Lead)
6.	Free School Meals Uptake:	<p>Walsall is losing out on funds because of its below average uptake of people registering for free school meals;</p> <p>Possibility of producing a single form for families to complete so that families registering for housing benefit are automatically registered for eligibility for free school meals (this is done by many Authorities, e.g. Birmingham has carried out a major overhaul of its</p>	It is proposed that as this issue has now reached cabinet, that a copy of the resolution and the accompanying report is circulated to the Children's Services & Life-long Learning Scrutiny Panel along with any 'benefits action plan' for members to consider. Cross cutting the work of Benefits working group. Perhaps Scrutiny Board can look at the form.

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		<p>benefit forms);</p> <p>Action to ensure that different dietary needs are catered for;</p> <p>Change procedures in school so that children receiving free school meals cannot be identified because of the stigma attached to this. The Panel agreed to request Resources and Performance Scrutiny and Performance Panel to investigate this issue</p>	
7.	Section 52 School Spending:	<p>How can we assist schools that are struggling to meet their budget requirements? Concerns have been expressed, how big is the problem?</p>	<p>It is proposed that the Section 52 School Spending report is presented to the next appropriate Children's Services & Life-long Learning Scrutiny Panel for member's consideration and that a working group is not yet appointed until a clear brief has been identified.</p>
8.	Corporate Parenting	<p>Underpinning the corporate parenting role is a range of PAF indicators that the council and its partners have to report upon and meet government targets.</p>	<p>Presentation to Scrutiny Panel. New members need to understand the Corporate Parenting Strategy. Document to be presented to members for information showing legal requirements.</p>
9.	Development of 'Every Child Matters'	<p>'Every Child Matters' is a Government White Paper, which sets the agenda for the Children's Bill which is expected to be law early 2005.</p>	<p>It is suggested that the strategy is presented to the Children's services & Life-long Learning Scrutiny Panel for regular monitoring. The</p>

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		<p>The Council is currently part of the Children & Young People Strategic Partnership and has developed a strategy to support this work.</p> <p>A presentation for this strategy has been set for 08 December 2004.</p>	<p>frequency of which to be determined by members at the next scrutiny panel meeting.</p>
10.	Teenage Pregnancy		<p>There is already a work group of the Children's and Young People SP looking at this. Scrutiny panel could receive reports / presentation this is a multi-agency piece of work.</p> <p>Panel to receive an update report showing analysis of how many teenage pregnancies are in school.</p>