

Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel

**Agenda Item
No. 6**

Date: 15 June 2009

Consideration of Panel Work Programme for 2009/10

Ward(s) All

Portfolio Holders: Councillor Walker – Environment
 Councillor Ansell - Transport

Summary of report:

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant background information for Members so that the Panel's 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.

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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 amended by Council at its meeting on 18 and 20 May 2009. For information the Panels remit in Article 6 of the Walsall Council Constitution now reads as:

Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel

All aspects and general services related to the environment such as waste management, highways maintenance, grounds maintenance and traffic management, 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 years 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. When used independently the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel appointed a lead member who liaised with the service area whilst the toolkit is completed and then reports back their findings to the Panel for agreement of recommendations and any other further action that may be necessary.

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-

- **What the Issue Is**
- **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
- **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
- **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 effect on any particular group
- **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
- **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
- **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.

Appendix Two contains the latest forward plan of key decisions.

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Community Association Leases					
Who from	Previous years panel	Individual Member	Officers	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	During 2007/08 the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel played a part in the development of new terms for community association buildings. During 2009/10 the Panel learned that progress with the issue had stalled due to there being no budget available to carry out building condition surveys. The Panel resolved that a budget be found for these tasks and expressed the wish to monitor progress with this issue in the future.					
Who does it affect?	Community Associations					
Who needs to be involved?	Property Services Community Associations					
How can scrutiny add value?	By monitoring the development and progress of implementing new community association lease terms the Panel can assist in ensuring that the programme is completed and that the Council meets the requirements identified in the Quirk Review.					
Timings						
Performance Information	<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	

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Impact of Decriminalised Parking					
Who from	Previous years panel	Individual Member	Officers	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	The Council commenced decriminalised parking enforcement earlier this year across the borough. Members have previously expressed the desire to review the effectiveness of the new enforcement arrangements and review the suitability of the arrangements introduced for the future.					
Who does it affect?	All residents across the borough					
Who needs to be involved?	Residents Anyone adversely affected by the new changes Enforcement Staff					
How can scrutiny add value?	Scrutiny will be able review the current arrangements and ensure that they are completing the purpose they were set out to achieve which could led to Members making recommendations for improvements.					
Timings	In order to review the effectiveness of the new arrangements it will be necessary for them to have been operational for a suitable period of time. It is suggested that the Panel consider this during the autumn as the policy will have been in place for at least 6 months.					
Performance Information	<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	

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Review of Highways Maintenance Contract					
Who from	Previous years panel	Individual Member	Officers	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	The Council entered into a new partnership arrangement for highways maintenance with Tarmac early in 2009. Members have previously expressed the desire to review the effectiveness of the new arrangements and review their suitability for the future.					
Who does it affect?	All residents across the borough					
Who needs to be involved?	Highways inspectors Representatives from Tarmac					
How can scrutiny add value?	Scrutiny will be able review the current arrangements and ensure that they are completing the purpose they were set out to achieve which could led to Members making recommendations for improvements.					
Timings	In order to review the effectiveness of the new arrangements it will be necessary for them to have been operational for a suitable period of time. It is suggested that the Panel consider this during the autumn as the policy will have been in place for at least 6 months.					
Performance Information	<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	
	NI 168	Principle roads where maintenance should be considered	6%	Green	4%*	
	NI 169	Non-principal roads where maintenance	5%	Green	5%*	

		should be considered			
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* Change in way indicator calculated and targets were set from old calculation. See below

NI 168

This performance measure replaces BVPI223, and the production of NI168 requires the use of accredited processing software "MARChpms v4.0" using Rule Set ID RP8.01, which supersedes MARChpms v3.04. Direct comparisons between the 08/09 NI out turn and the 07/08 BVPI out turn are yet to be acknowledged as robust. Early indications suggest that slight improvements in perceived condition are expected nationally using this new MARChpms. In recent years changes in Rule Sets have increasingly squeezed out turns into a narrow single figure range, so Walsall's 2% decline could signal a general worsening of condition across the Classified Principal A Road network which is slightly greater than current national trends.

NI 169

This performance measure replaces BVPI224a, and the production of NI169 requires the use of accredited processing software "MARChpms v4.0" using Rule Set ID RP8.01, which supersedes MARChpms v3.04. Direct comparisons between the 08/09 NI out turn and the 07/08 BVPI out turn are yet to be acknowledged as robust. Early indications suggest that slight improvements in perceived condition are expected nationally using this new MARChpms. In recent years changes in Rule Sets have increasingly squeezed out turns into a narrow single figure range, so Walsall's 0% change could still signal a marginal worsening of condition across the Classified Principal B & C Road network which is slightly greater than current national trends.

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Impact of the New Recycling Scheme					
Who from	Previous years panel	Individual Member	Officers	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	The Council rolled out new recycling arrangements across the borough at the start of 2009. Members have assessed the initial impact of the new arrangements and have previously expressed the desire to review the effectiveness of the new arrangements and review their suitability for the future after they have been in place for a longer period. The Panel also considered the impact of the new scheme on the Links to Work service and it may be desirable to see how the Councils suggestions for collecting alternative waste streams have worked.					
Who does it affect?	All residents across the borough					
Who needs to be involved?	Streetpride Links to Work					
How can scrutiny add value?	Scrutiny will be able review the current arrangements and ensure that they are completing the purpose they were set out to achieve which could led to Members making recommendations for improvements.					
Timings	In order to review the effectiveness of the new arrangements it will be necessary for them to have been operational for a suitable period of time. It is suggested that the Panel consider this during the autumn as the new scheme will have been in place for at least 6 months.					
Performance Information	<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	
	NI 192	Household waste	35.3%	Green	40.0%	

Appendix 1

		recycled and composted			
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NI 191/192/193 have all been submitted to Waste Data flow, these figure are subject to change due to them needing to check the data is accurate, waste data flow have come back with a couple of queries which are currently being looked in to. This process could take until the end of June for them to finalise and authorise the out-turn for these measures. The target set for 2008/09 was 30.0% so according to the unconfirmed outturn we have exceeded this target. More sustained improvements need to be made to achieve the ambitious target of 40% set for 2009/10.