

7 June 2011

Consideration of Panel Work Programme for 2011/12

Ward(s) All

Portfolio Holders: Councillor M. Bird – Leader
Councillor Z. Ali – Communities and Partnerships
Councillor A. Harris – Leisure, Culture and Environment

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 2011/12.

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:

- 1. Member's consider the range of items within their remit available to them and agree a work programme for 2011/12 along with any potential working groups and their membership;**

and;

- 2. the Panel consider appointing a non-voting co-opted from West Midlands Police Authority.**

Background papers:

Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/11
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 2011/12. 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 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 23 and 25 May 2011. For information the Panels remit in Article 6 of the Walsall Council Constitution now reads as:

Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel

All aspects and general services related to serving the community, for example community safety, leisure and culture, the local strategic partnership, third sector co-ordination and to review or scrutinise decisions made or other actions taken in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions (no less than twice in every 12 months) as required by the Police and justice Act, 2006, within the functions set out in section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.

Work Programme

In agreeing its work programme for 2011/12 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 years 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.

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. Previously, 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.

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny

The Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel is the Councils designated crime and disorder panel and has the power to review or scrutinise decisions taken by the responsible authorities crime and disorder functions. The responsible authorities are:

- Local authority
- Police authority
- Police force
- NHS
- Probation service
- Fire and rescue service

The Panel has the power to consider any crime and disorder related issue, invite witness to attend meetings and make recommendations on policy and future action.

The Councils Constitution requires the Panel to consider crime and disorder issues at least twice a year.

To facilitate crime and disorder scrutiny in previous years the Panel has co-opted a non-voting Member from the West Midlands Police Authority. Members are asked to consider whether or not they wish to reappoint a member for 2011/12.

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-

- o **What the Issue Is**
- o **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,
- o **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.
- o **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.
- o **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.
- o **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

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 is a copy of the forward plan for May to September 2011.

Appendix Three (to be circulated at the meeting) is the outcome of the suggested items from the scrutiny survey that fall in the remit of the Panel.

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Area Partnerships – Review (Neighbourhood Management)					
Who from	<i>Previous years panel</i>	Individual Member	Officer	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	<p>Area Partnerships have now been operating for approximately 12 months and Walsall Partnership is undertaking an independent review of the current model, to identify how we can improve on the successes we are already delivering.</p> <p>Area Partnerships are one of the key strands of the Working Smarter programme and are assisting the Council in identifying where there are inefficiencies in delivering what our customers want.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the evaluation will highlight areas of good practice and suggest how we can improve on the model that is already in place.</p> <p>Area Partnerships are a key priority for the Council and its partners.</p>					
Who does it affect?	<p>The fundamental principle of Area Partnerships is to improve how we deliver services locally and deliver what our customers want.</p> <p>One of the key targets for the Council is to improve residents' perceptions of how the Council (and its partners) deliver services. We are aiming to achieve 75% customer satisfaction and be amongst the top 5% of local authorities.</p>					
Who needs to be involved?	<p>The delivery of Area Partnerships includes everyone – our Elected Members, Council and partners at all levels, the voluntary and community sector and our residents, to enable us to achieve long-term sustainable outcomes.</p>					

<p>How can scrutiny add value?</p>	<p>Scrutiny will provide another viewpoint to how we are operating and enable a critical friend in terms of how we are approaching resolving issues, changing service delivery to customer need and suggesting how we can gain greater involvement from our partners and communities.</p>
<p>Timings</p>	<p>We would anticipate reporting to Community Services Scrutiny in July 2011, with the view of reporting to Cabinet / Council in July 2011.</p>
<p>Corporate Priority</p>	<p>Area Partnerships sit within the Communities and Neighbourhoods strand of the Corporate Plan. We aim to improve the way residents to be happy with local services; residents can influence decisions locally; streets are clean and green and there is reduced anti-social behaviour; increase volunteering and communities are more cohesive.</p> <p>We are also looking at how we can improve our economy, using local people and voluntary / community sectors to increase job opportunities; how we can support local enterprises to create jobs for the future and to help people identify where they can access support to gain the future skills required for a thriving economy.</p> <p>We are working with partners to identify projects which can support the health and well-being of our communities, tackling obesity in both adults and young people; providing youth activity locally to engage with our young people and ask them what activities they would like to see the Council and partners provide; identifying those vulnerable people where services are not working together to resolve their problems.</p>

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	The Results of the Library Service Consultation and review of Libraries recommendations from the Libraries and Leisure Centres Working Group.					
Who from	<i>Previous years panel</i>	Individual Member	Officer	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	<p>Following the report of the Libraries and Leisure Centres Working Group last year, the Library Service has undertaken a fundamental review of its services and the way they are delivered and made accessible to local people. As a key part of this review, a consultation has been undertaken with both users and non users of the service, stakeholders and staff. The aim of this consultation is to identify the current and future learning and cultural needs of local people and will inform plans for the future development of the service. The results of this consultation are now available and it is suggested these are presented to the Panel.</p> <p>It is suggested that Members also consider Cabinets response to the Libraries recommendations made by the Libraries and Leisure Centres Working Group.</p>					
Who does it affect?	The potential service changes following the identification of the needs and values of the public have the potential to affect every resident of the Borough.					
Who needs to be involved?	Scrutiny, Cabinet, Council and local residents					
How can scrutiny add value?	Scrutiny can examine the key findings of the review, debate possible options and make recommendations to Cabinet for changes to service delivery in the light of these findings.					

Timings	Following consultation with Scrutiny, it is planned to take an options paper to Cabinet in late summer.
Corporate Priority	Communities and Neighbourhoods Economic Health and Well-being

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Monitoring the implementation of the Leisure Centre recommendations from the Libraries and Leisure Centres Working Group					
Who from	<i>Previous years panel</i>	Individual Member	Officer	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	<p>The Libraries and Leisure Centres Working Group made a series of recommendations in October 2010 in order to achieve their vision for the two services in 2020. These recommendations were reported to Cabinet in November 2010.</p> <p>It is important that Scrutiny and Performance Panels review the outcome of recommendations reported to Cabinet as part of their role of holding the executive to account and providing critical friend challenge to policy and decision makers.</p>					
Who does it affect?	All residents.					
Who needs to be involved?	Scrutiny Members, relevant portfolio holder.					
How can scrutiny add value?	It is important that Scrutiny and Performance Panels review the outcome of recommendations reported to Cabinet as part of their role of holding the executive to account and providing critical friend challenge to policy and decision makers.					
Timings	As and when required by Members.					

Corporate Priority	Health and Wellbeing Communities and Neighbourhoods

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill					
Who from	Previous years panel	Individual Member	Officer	Public	Other Council Committee	Other Police Authority
Why is it important?	<p>The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill (PRSRB) is currently working its way through the Parliamentary process. One of the key changes it proposes is the introduction of directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). It is proposed that the West Midlands will elect a PCC in May 2012. The PCC will be responsible for the strategic direction and use of resources for all policing and community safety requirements across the region.</p>					
Who does it affect?	All residents					
Who needs to be involved?	Crime and disorder partners, local residents					
How can scrutiny add value?	<p>If introduced PCCs will have direct control of crime and community safety resources across the whole West Midlands. By understanding the proposals Members will be able to plan the way forward with the new arrangements.</p>					
Timings	The Bill is currently in the Committee Stage at the House of Lords. After this amendments to the Bill will be considered.					

	It is suggested that the Panel considers the Bill once the final draft is complete.
Corporate Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communities and Neighbourhoods• Health & Wellbeing

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Crime and Community Safety in Walsall					
Who from	Previous years panel	Individual Member	<i>Officer</i>	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	<p>Tackling acquisitive crime such as theft and burglary and reducing anti-social behaviour are key aims identified in the Councils Corporate Plan for 2011/12 – 2014/15.</p> <p>If local people feel safe in the town and district centres then this will contribute greatly to building pride in the borough.</p> <p>The Walsall Community Safety Plan for 2011 – 20 14 was approved by Council on 25 May 2011 and identifies 6 strategic priorities, namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tackle violent crime 2. Tackle anti-social behaviour 3. Address harm caused by drugs and alcohol 4. Community – focus on counter-terrorism, community cohesion and public perceptions 5. Tackle serious acquisitive crime 6. Reduce re-offending 					
Who does it affect?	All residents					
Who needs to be involved?	Police Force, Police Authority, Community Safety Services, Probation Service, Walsall Primary Care Trust, Magistrates Court, Fire and Rescue Service, Local Authority.					
How can	Scrutiny can add value by considering the issue of crime and					

scrutiny add value?	<p>community safety in the borough and the work that all partners are taking to achieving the priorities set out in the Community Safety Plan.</p> <p>The Panel could host a large item where activity to achieve all priority areas are reviewed or specific priorities could be identified and reviewed individually over the course of the 2011/12.</p> <p>This will enable the Panel to make cross cutting recommendations on how tackling crime in Walsall could be improved.</p>
Timings	To be agreed by the Panel.
Corporate Priority	Communities and Neighbourhoods

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Green Spaces Strategy					
Who from	Previous years panel	Individual Member	<i>Officer</i>	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	<p>At its meeting on the 7th April 2011 the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel considered a report on the significant progress made in the implementation the existing five year Green Space Strategy and its importance to the service development and delivery. The Panel recognised that the strategy was coming to an end and felt that it would be beneficial to renew the plan.</p> <p>A new Green Spaces Strategy will allow a comprehensive, strategic approach to be taken to managing the boroughs green spaces.</p>					
Who does it affect?	The development of the strategy will involve consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including elected members, officers, residents, friends groups, resident associations, minority support groups and organisation, sports clubs and environment groups etc.					
Who needs to be involved?	Elected members, Green Space Officers and other agreed stakeholders to lead on the co-ordination and development of the new strategy.					
How can scrutiny add value?	<p>Scrutiny can add value by making policy recommendations to Cabinet for inclusion in the new Green Spaces Strategy.</p> <p>Members could consider the issue through Panel meetings or by forming a working group to review the issue and make more detailed recommendations. Members should note the need for a new strategy to be in place by 31 March 2012. Therefore, if a working group is established, a final report will</p>					

	need to be complete several months before to allow Cabinet to consider any recommendations that are made.
Timings	The new strategy needs to be completed by 31 st March 2012. Therefore Members would need to complete consideration of the topic to allow time for the final strategy to be completed and operational by this date.
Corporate Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities and Neighbourhoods • Health and Wellbeing

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	The Big Society					
Who from	<i>Previous years panel</i>	Individual Member	Officer	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise awareness of national development • To report local progress 					
Who does it affect?	The whole population will be affected by the rolling back of the State and the expectation that society will step in.					
Who needs to be involved?	The Big Society will impact on all council staff and citizens.					
How can scrutiny add value?	<p>To ensure that Walsall Council is challenged to develop effective policy in the implementation of the Big Society.</p> <p>The previous years Panel recommended the establishment of a working group to consider this issue.</p>					
Timings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to develop the Big Society is ongoing. • The national policy framework is still emerging. 					
Corporate Priority	<p>The Big Society impacts on all corporate priorities, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities and Partnerships • Economy 					

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health and Well-being |
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Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Home Office Consultation on ASB Tools and Powers – “More Effective Responses to Anti Social Behaviour”					
Who from	Previous years panel	Individual Member	<i>Officer</i>	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	<p>On 7th Feb 2011 the Home Office published its consultation document on the findings of its review of many of the tools and powers introduced to deal with anti social behaviour since 1998. The consultation “More Effective Responses to Anti Social Behaviour” outlined the findings of the review (announced in July 2010) and puts forward some proposals for simplifying and improving the ASB toolkit.</p> <p>The Government is proposing to streamline the current toolkit by moving away from a tool for each identified problem and ensuring that partners have faster more flexible tools that allow them to act more quickly and protect our communities. The proposals include replacing/merging many of the tools available to deal with ASB including the Anti Social Behaviour Order.</p> <p>The closing date for the consultation was Tuesday 17th May.</p> <p>Once the outcome of the consultation is known and the Government announce the direction and timescale for any changes to tools and powers this will clearly impact directly on the way in which ASB is tackled in Walsall.</p>					
Who does it affect?	ASB is an identified priority across the Area Partnerships and is one of the six strategic priorities in Walsall’s Community Safety Plan. As such tools and powers to deal with ASB have a wide ranging impact across the communities of Walsall.					
Who needs to be involved?	Any changes to tools and powers will impact upon the way in which the councils ASB Unit operates and could also impact upon colleagues in Environmental Health, the Police and Registered Providers.					

How can scrutiny add value?	It will be useful to inform the scrutiny panel on changes to the existing tools and powers and outline any potential impact upon the way in which ASB is tackled within Walsall.
Timings	This would need to be considered once the Government have announced the outcome of the consultation and the timeframe for any changes in respect of tools and powers that are to be made. The date for this is not known at this time.
Corporate Priority	This sits within the Communities and Neighbourhoods Corporate priority.