

11 June 2012

Consideration of Panel Work Programme for 2012/13

Ward(s) All

Portfolio Holders:

Councillor M. Bird – Leader
Councillor Z. Ali – Public Protection
Councillor T. Ansell – Transport & Environment
Councillor I. Shires – Community Engagement & Voluntary Sector

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 2012/13.

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:-

- 1 - Consider the range of items within their remit available to them and agree a work programme for 2012/13 along with any potential working groups and their membership;**
- 2 - Consider whether to appoint a co-opted non-voting Member from the West Midlands Police Authority.**

Background papers:

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 2012/13. 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 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:

Jamie Morris, Executive Director for Neighbourhoods

t: 01922 652070

e: morrisjamie@walsall.gov.uk

Report Author:

Craig Goodall, Scrutiny Officer

t: 01922 653317

e: goodallc@walsall.gov.uk

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 and 23 May 2012. For information the Panels remit in Article 6 of the Walsall Council Constitution now reads as:

Community Services & Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel

All aspects and general services related to (1) 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 and (2) the environment such as waste management, highways maintenance, grounds maintenance and traffic management, and to review and scrutinise the exercise of flood risk management functions which may affect the local authority's area as required by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 within the functions set out in Section 21 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (as amended).

Work Programme

In agreeing its work programme for 2012/13 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 2012/13.

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 affect 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

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 2012.

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Review of the Council's School Catering service					
Who from	Previous years panel	Individual Member	Officer	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	<p>The Council's Catering Service provides c.1.5million meals per year to 74 of the Borough's schools. It delivers both hot and cold lunches, breakfast clubs and other refreshments.</p> <p>Since 2007/8 the service has been reorganised and has operated under budget for three consecutive years. Through the Primary Schools' Head teachers' Forum a working group was formed in December 2011 and a Blue Coat "cluster" action plan has been developed.</p>					
Who does it affect?	The children in the 74 schools that the Council's Catering Service currently provide a service to.					
Who needs to be involved?	Head teachers, school governors, children, Children's Services, Director of Public Health, Public Health Consultants, Catering Services, Leisure & Community Health.					
How can scrutiny add value?	The Council has been undertaking a year-by-year assessment of the service's performance. It would be an ideal time for Scrutiny to focus on the service and contribute to an independent analysis and review.					
Timings	Completion of a review asap would be ideal so that it can inform any Cabinet consideration of the future service provision.					
Corporate Priority	<p>The Council's purpose is to maintain and improve the health and well-being of all its residents.</p> <p>Walsall wants to give every child as good a start in life.</p> <p>Portfolio holder intention: "To provide the best hot (and cold) meal possible to</p>					

	Walsall's children."
--	----------------------

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Green Space Strategy and Scrutiny Working Group Recommendations					
Who from	Previous years panel	Individual Member	Officer	Public	Other Council Committee	Other
Why is it important?	<p>At its meeting on the 27th April 2011 the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel considered a report on the benefits and successful delivery of the Green Space Strategy which was coming to the end of its five year life.</p> <p>The Panel agreed to the development of a new strategy covering a further five year term and to the establishment of a Green Space Strategy Working Group who's policy recommendations would be incorporated within the strategic document.</p> <p>It is important to present the completed Green space Strategy for consideration by the Community Services and Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel to ensure the working groups recommendations are contained within that document.</p>					
Who does it affect?	<p>The development of the Green Space Strategy has involved consultation from a large number of stakeholder including elected members , officers from differing services within the council, friends and residents groups, environment and sports organisations, area managers effect and young people.</p> <p>The delivery of the strategy will have the potential to effect every member of the boroughs community encouraging greater use of green space and leading to an improved health, quality of life and environment.</p>					
Who needs to be involved?	Cabinet Members, Friends Group Organisations.					

How can scrutiny add value?	This is a piece of pre- decision scrutiny. Members will be adding value by holding the executive to account to see how the recommendations of the Greenspaces Working Group
Timings	The strategy is going to Cabinet in September 2012 therefore it is suggested the Panel consider the draft strategy on 30 August 2012.
Corporate Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities and Neighbourhoods • Health and Wellbeing