

Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel

**Agenda
Item No.**

DATE: 11 June 2009

Consideration of Panel Work Programme for 2009/10

Ward(s) All

Portfolio Holders: Councillor Mike Flower – Children’s Services

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 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 agreed by Council at its meeting on 18 and 20 May 2009. The remit for the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel remains unaltered from previous years. For information the Panels remit in Article 6 of the Walsall Council Constitution reads as:

All aspects and general services related to serving children and young people for example; education, children services, youth services 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.

Potential Items

Appendix One contains a number of items that the Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel previously resolved to consider at a future date and further suggestions of emerging issues. A summary of the potential item has been 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 it the item is particular 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 taking 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
- o **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 most recent forward plan available at the time the report was published. The Panel may wish to consider if it is appropriate for them to look at any of the items on the forward plan within their remit.

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Area Based Grants				
Who from	At the Panel's 30 October 2009 meeting, Members requested a session on area based grants be included on the work programme to enhance Member understanding of this funding stream				
Why is it important?	To enhance Member understanding and to contribute towards effective scrutiny of the LAA				
Who does it affect?					
Who needs to be involved?	Walsall Partnership				
How can scrutiny add value?	Through applying understanding of area based grants to future scrutiny items on LAA and associated funding				
Timings	2009/10 municipal year				
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
	LAA PI's				

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Building Schools for the Future, updates at each meeting				
Who from	Panel				
Why is it important?	The Panel has agreed that it is important that they, as customers of the BSF project, be updated on progress at each meeting.				
Who does it affect?	Secondary schools Children and Young People				
Who needs to be involved?	Officers of Children's Services and Walsall Children's Services Serco BSF project team Possible work with Regeneration panel as BSF falls within it's remit				
How can scrutiny add value?	Through receiving regular updates, Members will have the opportunity to monitor progress and make recommendations on this				
Timings	Throughout 2009/10 municipal year				
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
	N/A				

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Provision of Integrated Youth Services				
Who from	Panel				
Why is it important?	In discussing the budget, Members expressed concerns over the review and restructuring of service delivery within the Youth Offending Service. Members were informed that there was a move nationally to integrate young people's services. A new structure was being designed for these services and it was agreed that a report on the new integrated youth services would be presented once the options had been drawn up.				
Who does it affect?	Children and young people as service users Service providers				
Who needs to be involved?	Officers of Children's Services and related organisations				
How can scrutiny add value?	Through considering potential structures and providing feedback on the options for integrated services				
Timings	2009/10 municipal year				
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
	N/A				

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Positive Activities Working Group
Who from	The working group was formed in response to a council motion to investigate the provision of positive activities for children and young people in the borough
Why is it important?	<p>What young people do, or do not do, out-of-school matters. Research demonstrates that the activities young people participate in out-of-school have a significant bearing on their later life outcomes. Positive activities are a good use of young people's time because they provide opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acquire, and practice, specific social, physical, emotional and intellectual skills • contribute to the community • belong to a socially recognised group • establish supportive social networks of peers and adults • experience and deal with challenges • enjoy themselves <p>Source: Audit Commission NI110 guidance</p> <p>The working group will consider the duty to secure access for young people to "positive activities", as per the council motion. The working group's initiation document proposes the consideration of 9-13 year olds, which is often a period of transition and vulnerability in development, and then post aged 13 (which extends up to the age of 19). With a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing youth offer • Mindful of the engagement of vulnerable groups LAC, C&YP with learning and physical disabilities • Current compliance with legislation (Education Act 2006)
Who does it affect?	<p>Children and young people across the borough aged 9-19.</p> <p>Council Services in particular Youth Services in the provision and signposting to positive activities</p>
Who needs to be involved?	This item potentially cuts across the remit of both the Children's and Young People and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel, due to the links with reducing anti-social behaviour in the age ranges being considered.

	<p>The Passenger Transport Authority (PTA) was keen to engage with young people and to identify with key stakeholder groups.</p> <p>The Childrens Trust</p> <p>Head of Youth Service</p> <p>Young People involved in positive activities</p>				
How can scrutiny add value?	<p>The outcome from this group will be a response to the original council motion following a thorough investigation into the current youth offer. In investigating the current offer, Members may identify areas for improvement and through benchmarking may identify new initiatives that could be implemented in Walsall.</p>				
Timings	<p>Response to Council motion by end of 2009/10 municipal year</p>				
Performance Information	<p><i>Include any relevant performance information that will inform members of current performance levels and provide baseline for future monitoring.</i></p>				
	PI Number	Description	Current Position	Current Rag	09/10 Target
	NI110	Young People's Participation in Positive Activities	Dec 2008 out-turn from TellUs - 71.3%	Amber	

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Property Services Working Group				
Who from	The group was originally set up during the 2007/08 municipal year, to ensure the Council was achieving value for money in its investments in property services and buildings within education and children's services				
Why is it important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue to ensure the Council has a process in place that ensures that the Council achieves value for money in the procurement of building work for Children's Services • To ensure an independent quantity surveyor continues to ensure a fair and equal bidding process • To maintain improved communication and build on relationships between property services and elected Members • To monitor the education and children's services building capital projects via the project register 				
Who does it affect?	Property Services and their clients Children and young people of the borough				
Who needs to be involved?	Property Services Walsall Children's Services – Serco, possibly to provide information as and when requested by the group				
How can scrutiny add value?	Through monitoring and evaluating projects and processes, ensuring value for money is achieved				
Timings	2009/10 municipal year				
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
	Possibly PI's from the Framework contract could be monitored				

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

Issue	Unauthorised Absence Policy				
Who from	Panel				
Why is it important?	<p>On 16 April 2009, the Panel received a report on the unauthorised absence policy for schools in the borough. Members were informed that the policy was being reviewed in light of new DCSF legislation. Therefore a resolution was passed, that on completion of the policy review, an update be presented to the Panel.</p> <p>Evidence shows that only 26% of pupils who are absent 20 days or more per year achieve 5 or more good GCSE grades, therefore it is important that absences are minimised and action is taken to prevent, in particular, long term unauthorised absence</p>				
Who does it affect?	Primary and Secondary schools, teachers, governors etc Children and Young People				
Who needs to be involved?	<p>Officers of Children's Services and Walsall Children's Services Serco</p> <p>Possibly head teachers and members of the steering group who are reviewing the policy</p>				
How can scrutiny add value?	Reviewing the policy that has been developed, ensuring it meets their needs as elected members and also the needs of schools and communities				
Timings	2009/10 municipal year				
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
	NI87	Secondary schools persistent absence rates	Dec 08: 6.9%	R	(6.34% 08/09) 09/10 and 10/11 targets to be

Proposed Items for Scrutiny Work Programme

					provided by DCSF
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Holiday Absence Data – 2007-08

Secondary Schools – **14,605 DAYS LOST TO COMBINED HOLIDAY**

ABSENCE

	H – Agreed holiday absence	G – Agreed extended leave	F – Holiday absence not agreed (unauthorised)	Combined holiday absence
Walsall	0.45%	0.0017%	0.13%	0.58%
England	0.38%	0.01%	0.10%	0.49%

Primary Schools – **22,056.5 DAYS LOST TO COMBINED HOLIDAY**

ABSENCE

	H – Agreed holiday absence	G - Agreed	F – Holiday absence not agreed(unauthorised)	Combined holiday absence
Walsall	0.67%	0.03%	0.06%	0.78%
England	0.69%	0.02%	0.09%	0.80%