

**17 July, 2013**

**Consideration of Panel Work Programme for 2013/14**

**Ward(s)**                      All

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor R. Andrew**

**Summary of report:**

Members of the Panel deferred setting a work programme at the meeting held on 4 June, 2013. This allowed time for members to undertake training which would, in turn, assist in the development of a work programme for 2013/14.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**That Member's consider the range of items within their remit available to them and agree a work programme for 2013/14 along with any potential working groups and their membership.**

**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 2013/14. 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.

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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.

## Work Programme

In agreeing its work programme for 2013/14 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.

Members of the Panel will have attended training sessions held on 11, 16 & 25 June, 2013 focussing on:-

- Corporate parenting and children's safeguarding and the role of scrutiny in this.
- How do Walsall's scrutiny processes currently work and what are the links and role in relation to:
  - The Walsall Safeguarding Children Board
  - The Children's Improvement Board
  - The Health and Well Being Board
  - The Children and Young People's Partnership Board
- How scrutiny can function best and bring challenge to the safeguarding of children and corporate parenting agenda.
- How scrutiny will carry out its role and responsibilities going forward.

The outcomes that these workshops aimed to achieve were:

- A greater awareness by scrutiny of their role in the safeguarding and corporate parenting agenda.
- An increased understanding and knowledge of the key issues they should be scrutinising around safeguarding and corporate parenting.
- Greater clarity on the relationship and role of scrutiny in holding services to account and their relationship with other significant partnership boards.
- A clear plan of action going forward.

Arising from these training sessions a number of areas for consideration have been suggested for inclusion within the 2013/14 work programme. A draft work programme is attached as appendix 1 to this report which takes into account items identified at the Panel's meeting held in June together with suggestions arising from the training.

## **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.

Two working groups have been identified and members are invited to consider establishing and appointing members to the following working groups:-

- 'Health Matters'
- 'Looked After Children'

## **Process**

Members should consider the draft work programme and consider any further areas they wish to consider in order to develop a balanced work programme that concentrates on what is important to them and on where they believe they can make a difference.

Once agreed, the Chair, in consultation with the Executive Director, shall produce the work programme to ensure that each item is considered at the appropriate time before circulating a copy of the work programme to all members of the Panel.