

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 7 September 2009

Title: Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2009/10

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Service: Legal and Democratic Services

Directorate: Chief Executive

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

This report provides the Committee with an overview of the work proposed to be undertaken by its sub-committees during the course of the year which will make up the overview and scrutiny work programme 2009/10. The Committee are asked to endorse those projects identified so far and to receive a further report once all the sub-committees have determined their work programmes.

2. Details

At its previous meeting on 14 July 2009, the Committee discussed the formulation of the overall overview and scrutiny work programme for the year ahead.

In previous years members of sub-committees had expressed concern that their work programmes had been determined by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and they had had insufficient influence over the work they have been asked to undertake. In view of this, the Committee agreed to refer the list of suggested topics for scrutiny to the Sub-Committees for selection together with a request that in selecting the topics the sub-committees should have regard to:-

- a) the overall aim of overview and scrutiny, to improve services for the people of North Tyneside by influencing decision makers.
- b) the roles of overview and scrutiny underpinning this aim, namely
 - i) to act as a critical friend to the Mayor and Cabinet and other decision makers, i.e. the Council's partners;
 - ii) investigating issues of interest and concern to communities in North Tyneside;
 - iii) involving communities in its work; and
 - iv) making recommendations to decision makers on how services can be improved.

- c) the need to be clear about the objectives and desired outcomes for each exercise;
- d) the different working methods which may be employed including in-depth investigations, monitoring reports, informal meetings with officers and partners, focus groups, meeting user/interest groups, surveys, site visits, evidence gathering days and Cabinet Member discussions.
- e) the capacity of members, officers and partners to undertake and support the scrutiny exercises;
- f) programming additional meetings required to deliver their work programmes; and
- g) identifying any relevant topics which could be subject to in-depth investigation by a time limited Study Group and referring these back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee also agreed that the sub-committees report the outcome of their deliberations back to the Committee so that an overall overview and scrutiny work programme might be compiled and co-ordinated.

The following sections provide a progress report on the formulation of work programmes by each of the sub-committees. It should be noted that not all sub-committees have yet met to determine their work programmes.

3. Health and Well-being Sub-Committee

The Health and Well-being Sub Committee is approaching the end of its in-depth investigation into measures to further improve the timely and safe discharge from hospital which was carried over from last year. It also has a programme of monitoring the action plans of previous sub committee studies to identify whether any further work needs to be undertaken and to identify examples of good practice

It will also continue to monitor the delivery of health services in North Tyneside through inviting each of the NHS trusts to provide an overview of their performance over the past year and an indication of their key priorities for the coming year.

The sub committee will also continue to give consideration to any NHS proposals for changes in the delivery of services which can be classed as significant variations. This can be as a sub committee or alternatively as part of a joint health scrutiny committee involving neighbouring authorities.

4. Regeneration Sub-Committee

The Regeneration Sub-Committee is to revisit its study into the North Bank of the Tyne scheme in light of progress made on the ground. It is anticipated that a presentation on the scheme would be made to the next meeting of the sub committee and then a decision taken on the piece of work to be undertaken by the sub committee which will add value to the process.

The sub committee will also undertake a piece of work in relation to Jobcentre Plus around the services provided to residents in the current economic climate.

Members also wish to invite the Cabinet member with responsibility for Regeneration to address the sub-committee to set out his key priorities for the coming year. This will be

followed up towards the end of the year with a similar invitation for the Cabinet Member to provide a report on the success of his priorities and to see what lessons have and can be learned.

5. Finance Sub-Committee

The work programme for the Finance Sub-Committee will be structured around bi-monthly budget monitoring reports. These reports will initially be submitted to Cabinet before being considered at the next Finance Sub-committee (currently scheduled to take place 9 days after Cabinet).

The sub-committee has identified the following issues for scrutiny and has requested reports to be submitted to future meetings of the sub-committee: the Council's policy in relation to the Section 117 Reserve; School Balances; and details of the employee head count in relation to redundancies.

6. Organisational Effectiveness Sub-Committee

There were no specific topics put forward from the scrutiny conferences that fell within the remit of the Organisational Effectiveness Sub-Committee.

The Chair and Deputy Chair have identified a range of topics that they would like the sub-committee to consider. These topics are: the Council's office accommodation strategy and current position in relation to the disposal and management of empty buildings; the Council's procurement policy and options for the Council to support local businesses during the economic downturn; support for the voluntary sector; and equality and diversity issues.

The first meeting of the sub-committee has been re-arranged for 16 September 2009. The sub-committee will be considering reports at this meeting on the Accommodation Strategy and the Procurement Strategy. There will also be an opportunity for the sub-committee to discuss the work programme for the year ahead and scope the issues to be reviewed in more detail. The topics identified do not suggest a focus on in-depth investigations. However, the sub-committee is interested in looking at alternative methods of scrutiny and may be looking to undertake visits and meetings with officers as part of the work programme if appropriate.

The sub-committee has also indicated an interest in reviewing support to members and the procedures in relation to the member enquiry system. This is something that potentially conflicts with the remit of the Member Support Group. The Chair and Deputy Chair will be looking at whether these matters can be taken up by that group.

7. Communities Sub-Committee

The Communities Sub-Committee is continuing to look at the development of a new policy in relation to Community Lettings and it is anticipated that this will be submitted to the sub-committee for final consideration further into the municipal year.

The sub-committee have been designated at the Council's 'crime and disorder committee', as required by the Police and Justice Act 2006. In undertaking this role the sub-committee will deal with any crime and disorder matters referred to them by Members of the Council. The sub-committee will also consider any CCfA that are related to a crime and disorder matter.

The sub-committee have identified neighbourhood disputes, enforcement action in relation to run down properties and motorbikes using cycle paths as possible topics to study throughout the year. The sub-committee decided that, due to the unpredictable amount of work that could be generated by crime and disorder matters, it would be best to focus on one topic at a time.

8. Children and Young People Sub-Committee

The Children and Young People Sub-Committee will be completing its study into Looked After Children at the beginning of the year, sharing the information that has been obtained with the relevant Cabinet Member.

Of the list of suggested topics that was presented to the sub-committee, Members identified Building Schools for the Future as an important topic to look at and decided that would be the main focus for the year. As the topic covers a broad area, it was decided that the committee would request an overview of the topic before deciding which area(s) to cover in greater detail. A further meeting of the sub-committee is to be arranged for September 2009 in order to consider this.

9. Environment and Transport Sub-Committee

The Environment and Transport Sub-Committee, which was appointed by Council on 23 July, is due to have its first meeting on 8 September 2009. At this meeting the sub-committee will be considering the work programme suggestions that have been received and discussing any other priority areas that they wish to look at.

The sub-committee was appointed with the following scope: climate change and sustainable development, waste management, transport and infrastructure; environmental issues, footpaths and roads, grass cutting, street cleaning, grounds maintenance, the development framework and accessibility.

10. Overview and Scrutiny Committee

A 12 month rolling work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is being devised in conjunction with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee. This is based on the topics that members of the Committee have identified and the Committee's various constitutional duties and responsibilities.

The work programme for 2009/10 will include provision for working with partners in scrutinising the delivery of the Local Area Agreement through the North Tyneside Strategic Partnership and contributing towards the formulation of the next Sustainable Community Strategy, dealing with Councillor Calls for Action, monitoring the performance of the Council, scrutinising the Cabinets proposals in respect to key plans and strategies and co-ordinating and managing the overview and scrutiny function.

11. Background Information

The following background papers have been used in the compilation of the report and are available for inspection at the offices of the author.

- Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 14 July 2009
- Minutes of scrutiny sub-committees June/July 2009