

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Scrutiny and Overview Committee
AUTHOR: Scrutiny Development Officer

6 September 2011

WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

Purpose

1. To enable the committee to plan its work programme for the remainder of 2011/12.

Options

2. The Committee may wish to agree the draft programme at Appendix A subject to amendments made at this meeting.

Considerations

3. At the meeting of 30 June the committee agreed to the draft programme as presented, subject to an amendment to one of the February topics; monitoring of waste and recycling would scrutinise progress on the target of achieving 65% recycling and composting by 2012.
4. The committee had planned to scrutinise community transport at today's meeting, looking at the effect of funding decisions and County Council's wider plans. However the County Council's relevant portfolio holders are unavailable and so the item has been delayed to the November meeting.
5. The committee has been asked to review the effectiveness of the member development strategy in November. This would add to the Council's ability to demonstrate that the strategy is councillor-led in its formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
6. Further topics may be chosen from suggestions from residents, members, officers and partners, and the Council's Forward Plan as at <http://scams.moderngov.co.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=293&bcr=1>.
7. A revised draft work programme is at **Appendix A** and the Committee is invited to discuss, amend and agree this.

Selecting topics for scrutiny in 2011/12

8. In choosing topics for the work programme, Members are reminded of their agreed selection criteria as at **Appendix B**.
9. All activities need to add value to the work of the Council and contribute to the achievement of its corporate objectives.
10. The committee may also perceive that it now has a greater responsibility for helping the Council to demonstrate openness and accountability, given the reduction in external audit and inspection and the growing emphasis on self-regulation.

Task and Finish Groups

11. The Sheltered Housing task and finish group has held three meetings to date. These initially focussed on background research into the issues, and analysis of the data from the recent support needs assessment. The group made an interim recommendation to the housing portfolio holder in July, suggesting that he should meet with political colleagues at the County Council to set out this Council's position regarding the support service for sheltered housing residents. More recently they have begun to develop some core values for the service and looked at a variety of delivery models.
12. The task and finish group has been awaiting the outcome of today's meeting of the County Council's Cabinet. Depending on that, there is a possibility that the timescale for this review may need to be extended. Four members of this committee sit on the sheltered housing task and finish group and so the chairman may invite them to provide a verbal update.
13. There is capacity to set up a second task and finish group. At the last meeting, the committee agreed to set up a group to look at partnership working. However, the Chairman has now been advised that the senior management team are currently addressing partnership working and it would therefore be useful to await their findings before proceeding.
14. Another suggestion was to review the Council's progress on its sustainability aims, focussing specifically on the 'greenness' of South Cambridgeshire Hall. However, the Climate Change Working Party is already working on an action plan and so the Committee may wish to maintain a watching brief on progress for the time being. The vice-chairman of this committee sits on the Working Party and may therefore be invited to provide an update on progress.
15. A review of communication and community engagement has been on hold pending the appointment of a communications manager. The new appointee is due to arrive on 10 October and so managers have requested that a task and finish group be delayed until the New Year.
16. A decision on whether to review absence management has been deferred, awaiting the outcome of the work being undertaken by senior officers and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing. First quarter figures for 2011/12 showed a marked improvement and so the committee is advised to wait until the next meeting, when the half-year data will be available.

Progress on past recommendations

17. The report of the Customer Contact Review was presented to the Cabinet on 7 July and all nine recommendations were accepted in full. Work is now underway to deliver the recommended changes and improvements to customer contact services. Cllr Bygott is attending this meeting and may therefore be invited to report any progress.
18. The report of the Planning Services Review was also presented to the Cabinet on 7 July. Officers presented a corresponding action plan, which undertook to "monitor and oversee the full implementation of ... Scrutiny Task and Finish Group recommendations".
19. Cllr Mason, the chairman of the task and finish group is maintaining a watching brief on progress and will monitor the action plan via portfolio holder's meetings. Progress currently observed includes:

- continuing meetings of the Parish Council IT forum
 - plans to hold an operational review of enforcement
 - workshop for improving the efficiency of the planning committee
 - an operational review of enforcement
20. The chairman of the committee may invite Cllr Mason to talk about any further progress he has observed.
21. Progress reports on previous task and finish groups have been scheduled for monitoring during 2011/12.
22. **Implications**

Financial	The Committee has a discretionary budget of £5,000. Up to £3,000 may be needed for Member training. Some external venues carry a small hire charge. External witnesses and co-optees may claim expenses.
Legal	The Local Government Act 2000 requires the Council to have at least one scrutiny committee. The Police and Justice Act 2006 requires that crime and disorder appears on at least one agenda each year. The Constitution states that the Committee will set its own work programme.
Staffing/ capacity	The committee is supported by one scrutiny officer. Each item selected for scrutiny will require support by at least one lead officer. Capacity for sub committee work is also dependent on the number of elected members available and willing to participate
Risk Management	The potential burden on the organisation of supporting scrutiny work must be balanced against the potential value it can add. External scrutiny carries the risk of affecting the Council's relationship or credibility with partners.
Equal Opportunities	All proposed changes to policy or services require an Equality Impact Assessment

Involvement of Children and Young People

23. Children and Young People (CYP) have been actively invited to suggest topics and this will continue. The Committee has also agreed to involve CYP in reviews and to ensure that all reports to the committee demonstrate CYP involvement.

Consultation

24. Cabinet, elected members, senior officers and residents have been invited to suggest potential topics. Parish councils continue to be consulted during the year.
25. Ongoing consultation with nearby councils, including the county council, explores the potential for joint scrutiny activities.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

26. The Committee's selection criteria ensure that any topic selected for scrutiny will contribute to at least one of the Council's priorities. Scrutiny itself helps to demonstrate that this is a listening Council, providing first class services accessible to all.

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Draft Work Programme 2011/12

3 November	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Community Transport 2 Medium Term Financial Strategy 3 Report of the Sheltered Housing task and finish group (may be delayed) 4 Economic Development Strategy - update 5 Member Development Strategy?
17 November	All-members workshop on budget and service planning: growth bids; potential savings; HRA self-financing arrangements
15 December	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Customer Service Excellence update 2 Planning Services task and finish group update 3 Performance Management task and finish group update – to include an update on Performance Improvement Action Plan
2 February 2012	All-members Budget scrutiny workshop – based on draft 2012/13 budget
2 February	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 2012/13 Budget 2 Waste and recycling service action plan - monitor progress on the target of 65% recycling and composting by 2012
6 February	
29 March 2012	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Local Strategic Partnership 2 Progress at Northstowe and Cambridge fringes
3 May 2012 7pm	Cancelled

Potential task and finish groups:

Partnership/ joint working

Communication and community engagement (current strategy is out of date)

Localism and Decentralisation Bill/ Act - impact on council, partners and residents (Royal Assent due November/December)

Other topics suggested:

Absence management/ sickness performance – await outcome of SMT work on this

Drainage issues - joint scrutiny with County Council

Job evaluation/ HR service – February?

SCDC achievement of sustainability aims – potential collaboration with Climate Change working group

Planning enforcement/ S106 compliance (consider in December with Planning t&f update?)



PAPER Analysis



When considering whether to adopt an item onto its agenda programme, the Committee will score the item using the following criteria:

1. **Public Interest:** the concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen for scrutiny
(1= low public interest, 2=medium public interest, 3=high public interest)
2. **Ability to change:** priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence
(1= little chance of changing, 2=reasonable chance, 3=good chance)
3. **Performance:** priority should be given to the areas in which the Council, and other agencies, are not performing well.
(1= good performance, 2=moderate performance, 3=low performance)
4. **Extent:** priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or large parts of the District.
(1= only one ward, 2= multi-ward issue, 3=the entire District)
5. **Replication:** work programmes must take account of what else is happening in the areas being considered to avoid duplication or wasted effort.
(1= already well covered, 2=already partly covered, 3=not already covered)

Also of major importance is the extent to which any potential scrutiny issue has implications for the Council's priorities, as well as the overall vision:

“To make South Cambridgeshire a safe and healthy place where residents are proud to live and where there will be opportunities for employment, enterprise and world-leading innovation. We will be a listening Council, providing a voice for rural life and first-class services accessible to all.”