

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

5 July 2012

WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

Purpose

- 1 To enable the committee to plan its work programme for 2012/13.

Options

2. The Committee may wish to agree to use the draft programme at Appendix A as a starting point for 2012/13 subject to amendments made at this meeting.
3. The Committee may also agree to the terms of reference as set out in Appendix B for a cross-party task and finish group looking at the street scene in a village, or group of villages, selected by the committee.

Considerations

4. This is the Committee's first business meeting of 2012/13, and the opportunity to agree a basic work programme for the coming civic year. In agreeing topics, Members are asked to briefly discuss the intended scope of each one and, if possible, the approach and timing. Some topics may warrant time-limited sub groups, others may be dealt with in one or two meetings of the main committee.
5. The Committee has always sought to involve residents and partners in the selection of topics and carrying out scrutiny reviews. Now, given the Government's localism agenda the Committee may wish to even more actively engage with and support individuals, groups and partners to use and collaborate in scrutiny activities.
6. There are already a several strands of joint scrutiny:
 - Health – a joint committee for the County and District Councils of Cambridgeshire: there may be scope for complementary health and wellbeing work at District level
 - Police and Crime Panel – from November 2012
 - Cambridgeshire Future Transport – a task and finish group for the County and District Councils of Cambridgeshire;
 - Local Enterprise Partnership – the scrutiny network is considering periodic joint sessions for the County and District Councils of Cambridgeshire, Forest Heath, North Herts, Rutland, St Edmundsbury, Uttlesford and West Norfolk councils.
7. All scrutiny activities need to add value to the work of the Council and contribute to the achievement of its corporate objectives.
8. In choosing topics for the work programme, Members are reminded of the agreed selection criteria as at Appendix D.

Potential topics for scrutiny in 2012/13

9. A draft framework for the work programme is at Appendix A, followed by a list of past reviews on which the committee may wish to be updated, and a list of potential topics discussed by the Committee at a workshop in June.

10. The most popular topic was 'housing vulnerable people' and this could be addressed in a half- or one-day review. However, the term 'vulnerable people' spans many categories, and the strategies for helping them vary accordingly. Officers have therefore asked for clarity regarding which of the following categories prompted members' interest this topic:
 - anti-social behaviour cases
 - care leavers
 - child welfare cases
 - non-statutory homeless people (single or couples)
 - offenders
 - older people
 - people with mental health issues
 - troubled families
11. At the meeting of 29 March 2012 the Committee suggested setting up a task and finish group on street scene issues as this was a matter of concern to residents. Officers suggest that the Committee considers selecting a parish council to conduct a joint review. This approach would help the Council to demonstrate its readiness to embrace the spirit of localism. A draft scoping document is at Appendix B; the Committee may wish to discuss and refine this as a basis for discussion with a parish council selected by this committee.
12. Members also accepted the Cabinet's suggestion to invite one or two portfolio holder(s) per meeting, to scrutinise their work programmes and explore any areas for further scrutiny input.
13. Further topics may be chosen from the Council's Forward Plan as at <http://scams.moderngov.co.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=293&bcr=1>.

Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder issues

14. The Police and Justice Act 2006 requires the Council to place crime and disorder matters on at least one scrutiny agenda each year. However, the Committee may wish to wait until later in 2012/13 to agree on its approach and timing this year, given the provisions of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.
15. This Act will see the election of the area's first Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) whose role from November 2012, will be to replace the Police Authority in scrutinising the police service. The PCC will in turn be scrutinised, and to a certain extent supported by, a new Police and Crime Panel (PCP), on which this Council is represented.
16. The South Cambridgeshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership meets only twice a year now and like all CDRPs, its future funding is unclear.
17. The committee is advised to return to this discussion in January 2013.

Finance Scrutiny

18. The diagram at Appendix C was developed by the Finance task and finish group to show the points at which scrutiny could add value. Expert advice is that scrutiny of the budget is at its most effective earlier in the cycle, when there is more time to influence service planning and budget decisions.
19. As in past years, the Executive Director for Corporate Services is planning a member workshop on 1 November when service planning is underway, to examine growth bids and potential savings. This workshop will contribute to effective

member challenge of the budget towards its later stages of development. The Committee may wish to invite the nascent youth council to join the workshop.

20. A second workshop is planned in February 2013 based on the draft 2013/14 budget.

Performance monitoring

21. The Cabinet has decided that performance reports will no longer go to individual Portfolio Holders. Instead, the corporate healthcard and financial information will go to Cabinet quarterly.
22. Therefore scrutiny input will no longer be possible via the PFH monitors, and it is suggested that the scrutiny committee receives those same quarterly reports as follows:

Q1 (April-June) - 6 September

Q2 (July-Sept) - 5 November

Q3 (Oct-Dec) - 14 February

Q4 (Jan-Mar) - 23 April

Meeting times

23. In 2010/11 members agreed to hold winter meetings at 2pm and other meetings at 7pm. This continues in the published timetable at Appendix A.
24. As five new members have since joined the Committee, it is appropriate to check whether this arrangement remains acceptable.
25. A survey of portfolio holders (who are required to attend as appropriate) showed some very strong preferences. Cllrs Corney and Wotherspoon requested 2pm as did the Leader regarding the 14 February meeting. Cllr Edwards prefers 4pm or later and Cllr Howell 5.30pm or later.
26. It has been usual practice for the committee to hold a private pre-meeting forty-five minutes beforehand to formulate their lines of enquiry. So, meetings at 2pm, 6pm or 7pm would be preceded by a pre-meeting at 1.15pm, 5.15pm or 6.15pm respectively.

27. 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. Other legislation is as set out in the report. 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

28. Children and Young People (CYP) have been 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 describe CYP involvement.
29. Consultation will be extended to include the new Youth Council once it is in place from September 2012 and joint scrutiny projects may be suggested. It is hoped that Youth Council members may wish to join in the finance workshop in November, subject to members' agreement

Consultation

30. Cabinet, elected members, senior officers and residents, including the Council's nascent consultation panel, have been invited to suggest potential topics. Parish councils continue to be consulted during the year.
31. Ongoing consultation with nearby councils, including the county council, explores the potential for joint scrutiny activities. The committee was represented at a cross-county network meeting in June where officers and members discussed potential topics for scrutiny work programmes in 2012/13. They intend to meet again later in 2012/13.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

32. The Committee's selection criteria ensure that any topic selected for scrutiny will contribute to at least one of the Council's priorities.
33. Scrutiny itself helps the Council to "listen to and engage with residents, parishes and businesses to ensure we deliver first class services and value for money".

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