

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 26 MAY 2016

COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2016/2017

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

(Contact: Christine Gore, Tel: (01285) 623605)

(The decisions on this matter will be resolutions)

1. PURPOSE

To assist the Committee in considering its Work Programme for 2016/2017.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee determines its Work Programme for 2016/2017 having regard to the information contained in this report and the recommendations agreed by Council.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. At the first meeting of the Committee in the new municipal year initial consideration is given to the Work Programme for the year having regard to the approach to scrutiny work adopted by Council on 22 October 2008, the intention of which was that work programmes should comprise fewer more strategic issues. These would probably be key policy areas either reviewing implemented policies or input to future policy development which the Committee would investigate over several meetings with the aim of adding value.
- 3.2. At that time it was agreed to adopt a “toolkit” approach in deciding whether a major review or Working Party should be implemented. This would initially be completed by the relevant Chairman, Vice Chairman and Strategic Director so as to ensure that all suggested reviews would be subject to a series of criteria before they could proceed. A copy of the “toolkit” is attached as Appendix A.
- 3.3. It is not intended that the ‘Toolkit’ approach be used for small reviews requiring only a brief report. There will still be the opportunity to bring forward one-off reports/papers on particular issues of interest to the Committee outside of the normal Work Programme but it will also be necessary to maintain a general overview of the ways in which external agencies are responding to community concerns including when necessary inviting representatives to attend meetings of the Committee. The inclusion of a standing agenda item for Members questions also provides the opportunity for Members to raise ‘hot topics’.
- 3.4. The Committee is invited to consider which topics are considered the priorities for a strategic review in line with the agreed approach to scrutiny for inclusion in the 2016/2017 Work Programme.
- 3.5. To help members formulate a work programme for the year the main areas of responsibility of the committee are attached at Appendix B. Members are asked to consider what areas they wish to focus on and also the approach to scrutiny which could include themed meetings or more detailed reviews involving smaller groups of councillors.

4. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

In accordance with the Constitution of the Council, Committee has the power to investigate any matters it considers relevant to its work area, and to make recommendations to the Council, the Executive or any other Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council as it sees fit.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

6. REASONS

To enable the Committee to review its Work Programme.

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Strategic Director

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Date: 9 May 2016

Background Papers
None

SCRUTINY TOOLKIT/ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The potential scrutiny issue should:

- Be of local and preferably current concern
- Have a clear purpose
- Be linked to the Council's corporate objectives
- Be capable of being influenced by the Committee
- Be of manageable scope – focussed rather than too wide ranging
- Be of sufficient scope to warrant a scrutiny review – not something that can easily be fixed by meeting with the service provider or, for example, a future officer presentation or report
- Not be being scrutinised by another Scrutiny Committee"

In addition, the following should be considered:

- Is there a minimum of, say, four councillors who wish to participate in the review (where a working group is to be established) or who wish to
- Does it require any financial resources?
- How much Officer time would be required?
- Does the concern on the issue extend to the public?

Once a matter has been agreed for inclusion in the work programme, the following considerations should form the basis of the planning of the review:

- How long should the review be scheduled to take?
- How will we judge whether the review was successful?
- Will there be distinct stages to the review?
- What documentation/evidence/research may be needed and why?
- Will there be a need for site visits, where and why?
- Who might be called as witnesses and why?
- How might the cabinet/executive be called to account?
- What challenges might this raise for scrutiny members?
- What support will be required from officers?
- How will we deal with public relations/media interest?
- How will we engage with the public?
- What other issues or barriers need to be addressed?

**Economic and Social O&S Committee
Areas of Responsibility**

Planning and Local Plan

The committee has responsibility for scrutiny of the planning function.

At the current time the Local Plan is being developed and the second hearing session has now been postponed to allow the Council to carry out further work. Suggested changes to the plan will be reported to Cabinet and Council (expected to be in September) before submission to the Inspector.

The revised Local Plan timetable was agreed by Cabinet in March.

A progress report on the existing plan is also received on an annual basis.

Housing and Benefits

There have been a number of changes regarding housing matters in recent months including the introduction, on a trial basis, of a Digital Nominations Scheme. The committee has a liaison role with housing providers in the district and it is anticipated that a special meeting will be held with Registered Social Landlords to discuss current issues and challenges.

In addition changes to the benefits regime including the introduction of Universal Credit is a major change for the district council.

Health Issues

This is a very wide ranging area of work and covers many aspects of the health agenda. Scrutiny of health matters is largely through the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the council appoints a representative to serve on this body who can take forward the views of the council.

The committee also has a role in respect of consultations on health matters and it is anticipated that there will be a county wide consultation on community hospital provision later this year, which the Committee should properly consider and respond to in some detail.

Social Care

Whilst generally services relating to children, adults and the elderly are not a direct responsibility of this council, they do impact on residents in the district.

Members are aware of potential funding and service cuts to some services and this may be an area where the committee will wish to respond to consultations and possible changes to service delivery in the district.

Leisure

The council uses a contractor, currently Greenwich Leisure Limited, to deliver its leisure services and the letting of a new contract is in the early stages. The Committee may wish to monitor the progress of the procurement process.

Business Issues

The economy of the district is an area that the committee has looked at in the past particularly in light of new retail developments within the district and elsewhere. The Committee may wish to maintain a watching brief on these issues and receive regular update reports.