

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 17 JULY 2014

COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2014/2015

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

(Contact: Ralph Young, Tel: (01993) 861295)

(The decisions on this matter will be resolutions)

1. PURPOSE

To assist the Committee in considering its Work Programme for 2014/2015.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee determines its Work Programme for 2014/2015 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. It is not intended that this toolkit approach be used for small reviews requiring only a brief report to be produced. A copy of the “toolkit” is attached at 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 2014/2015 Work Programme. A draft programme incorporating items rolled forward from last year is attached at Appendix B.

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: 1 July 2014

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?

Appendix B

	Work Area	Comments	Meeting / Anticipated Completion Date	Originator
1	Waste Contract	The new contract has been in operation since November 2010. Members have previously agreed that progress should be monitored by the committee.	On-going	ENV
2	Flood Prevention	The committee has already undertaken significant work in respect of flooding issues. An update report is included on the agenda for this meeting.	On-going	ENV
3	OCC consultation on the Oxfordshire Flood Risk Management Strategy	Details of the consultation are awaited. This would also include consideration of the Environment Agency's Initial Assessment Report on Witney Flood Alleviation		New Item
4	Thames Water – Infrastructure Issues	During discussions with Thames Water the issue of the adequacy of the sewage infrastructure to meet the requirements of new developments has been raised. It is suggested that this would be a pertinent issue for the committee to examine in more detail.		New Item
5	Open Space Grass Cutting	The issue of grass cutting has been raised as a potential item for consideration. In light of potential reductions in funding for such works it is suggested that this could be considered by the committee as part of the work programme.		New Item
6	Low Carbon and Environmental Plan	The new WODC Low Carbon and Environmental Plan was approved in February 2014. Members previously received an annual update in respect of the previous plan and it is suggested that it would be beneficial if this was continued for the new plan.	February 2015	New Item