

Guidance note on approach to setting a Scrutiny Work Programme

1. Introduction

1.1 For the 2017/18 municipal year it is intended that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) will meet every 8 weeks. It will maintain an overview of the work of the panels and be responsible for the overall scrutiny work programme.

The 4 standing scrutiny panels will each meet approximately once every 4-6 weeks depending on the workload. There may sometimes be a need to call an additional meeting to deal with an urgent matter. Attached at Appendix 1 is a document that shows the makeup of the panels and the areas that fall within each panel's remit. It is important to note that each panel can also look at relevant external partners where it is appropriate to a piece of work.

It is anticipated that wherever possible all in depth scrutiny work is carried out by scrutiny panels. If however something very urgent arises and there is not the capacity within the appropriate standing panel then the OSMC will consider establishing a time limited ad hoc panel to carry out the review.

When planning scrutiny panel meetings, the panel is asked to consider if the issue under consideration is suitable to webcast at the meeting. Where confidential information is being shared, or an issue is at the development stage, it may not be appropriate or possible to webcast.

2. Setting a work programme

2.1. At the beginning of every municipal year, each scrutiny panel must set an initial work programme for the coming year. It is important that the work programme focuses on priority issues and areas where scrutiny can add value. The programme may need to be refined as the year progresses as other urgent issues arise.

At a time when all service areas of the council are facing significant change, it is essential that scrutiny plans ahead so that the Cabinet and officers are able to plan the work required and attendance at meetings. Carrying out effective scrutiny takes a lot of time, commitment and effort so it is simply not possible to look at every issue.

2.2 The councillors and co-optees on each panel will develop a proposed work programme of priority issues for the coming year. The proposed work programme will then go to the OSMC for sign off. If a panel wants to do an in depth piece of scrutiny work then the proposed terms of reference and project plan for the piece of work will need to be approved by the OSMC. When selecting issues, scrutiny will need to consider whether it can make a real difference by looking at the issue, for example, whether its recommendations could result in improved services.

2.3. The Centre for Public Scrutiny provides advice and guidance to local authorities and other bodies on good practice in overview and scrutiny. It suggests that the underpinning principles for the focus of scrutiny work should be:

- Makes a positive impact on services;
- Promotes good practice;
- Challenges underperformance;
- Acts as a catalyst for change;
- Deals, where appropriate, with relevant partnership issues.

2.4 There are some things that scrutiny should not look at, these are:

- It is not appropriate for scrutiny to consider individual complaints or any local issue(s) which should be dealt with at ward councillor level and made directly to services.
- Panels cannot investigate regulatory or 'quasi-judicial' decisions, such as planning or licensing decisions.

3. Identifying potential issues:

3.1 Initial sources for potential items are:

1	Items rolled forward by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in 2016/17 (These are set out in Appendix 1)
2	Items linked to Cabinet priorities for 2017/18
3	Inspection outcomes / improvement plans
4	Performance Information – are there any significant areas of under performance where scrutiny could add value by taking a closer look and reporting back on findings and recommendations on how the position might be improved.
5	Scrutiny – at a time of intense change within the Council there are multiple pieces of work on going. Scrutiny has the opportunity to get involved at an early stage to influence proposals before final decisions are made.
6	Items in the forward plan (Opportunities for pre decision scrutiny)
7	Key areas of partnership work, for example Child and Adolescent Health Services
8.	Follow up on past Scrutiny recommendations that are still awaiting completion

3.2 It is suggested that panels now go to appendix 2 to see a filter mechanism that could help to prioritise the potential work programme issues.

3.3 **Once** the draft work programme has been agreed by the panel it will go for approval by the OSMC in September 2017.

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