

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25 JUNE 2015

TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH SCRUTINY REVIEWS – PRIORITIES AND TIMETABLE

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Summary

This report invites the Committee to discuss and agree a timetable and process for the selection of topics for the next round of in-depth scrutiny reviews.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

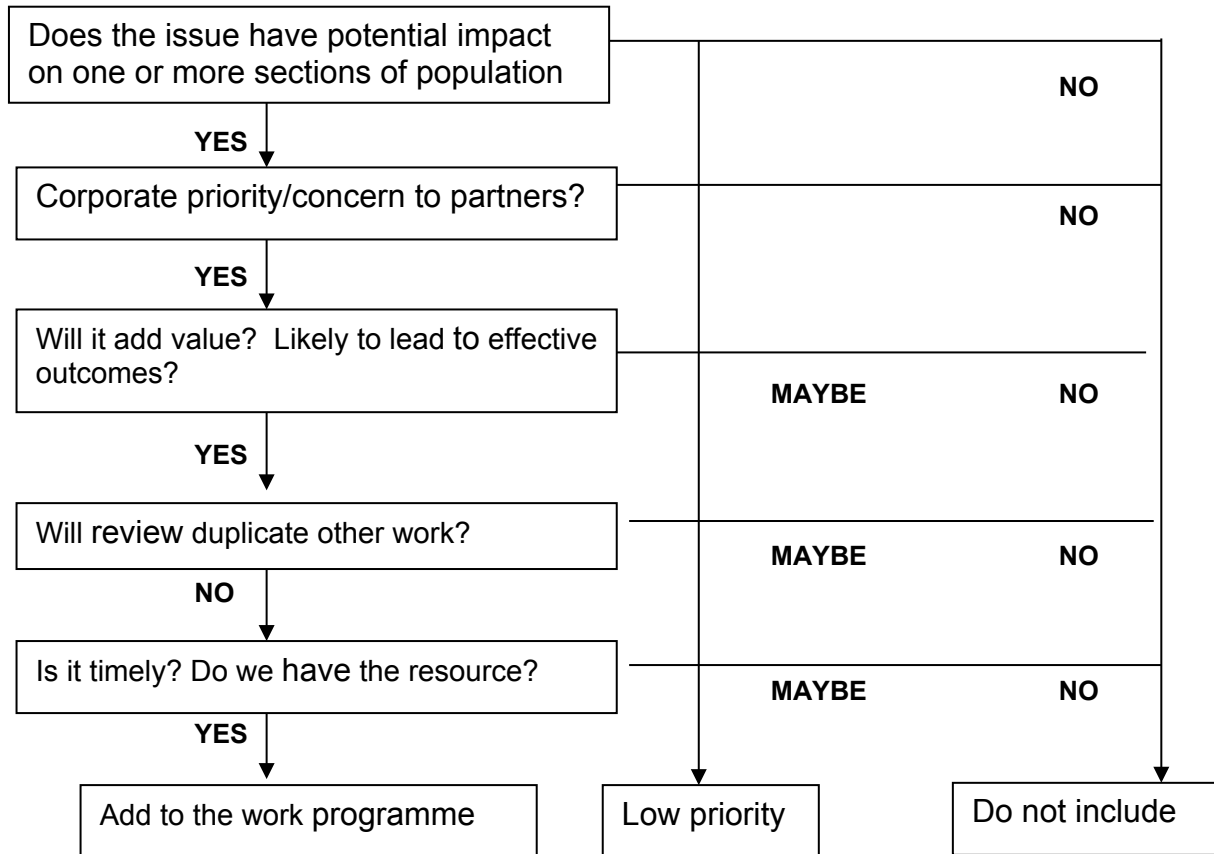
- 1.1 The Council's Constitution states that each Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for setting its own work programme, which should take into account the wishes of all Members of the Committee.
- 1.2 The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee has within its remit the provision of guidance and leadership on the development and co-ordination of the scrutiny function for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees, including guidance on priorities for scrutiny activities.

2. Background

- 2.1 In June 2011 the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to exercise a more pro-active role than previously in prioritising the programme of in-depth scrutiny review work. This was in light of a Council decision that a maximum of three in-depth reviews via Task Groups or themed Committee meetings could be undertaken annually following a reduction in posts within Democratic Services.
- 2.2 The programme of in-depth reviews since 2011 is attached at Appendix 1. The second round of reviews selected under the new process and due to conclude at the end of 2014 included a Task Group on Housing: Demand, Supply and Affordability. Due to some slippage in the timescale for completion of the other reviews in the last round of reviews it was unanimously agreed at the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 February 2015 to recommend that this should be the first Task Group to be established after the election.

- 2.3 At the same time as the introduction of a restriction in the number of scrutiny in-depth reviews a more systematic and criteria based process was adopted by Members for the selection of review topics. This reflects national best practice and is summarised below and in Appendix 2:

Questions to ask when prioritising topics for review



3. Process and timetable for selection scrutiny in-depth review topics

- 3.1 Members are asked to agree that the first Task Group in the post-election period should undertake an in-depth review into Housing: demand, supply and affordability as recommended at the last meeting of the Committee on 3 February 2015. This would be a cross-cutting review covering housing strategy and services which are within the remit of this Committee as well as the strategic planning issues associated with housing such as the Local Plan and affordable housing targets which fall within the remit of the Regeneration, Community and Culture O & S Committee. Therefore, ideally membership of the Task Group should be drawn from both Committees with the final recommendations going back to both Committees before referral to Cabinet. Members are asked to agree that the Task Group should start its work in late August/early September following conclusion of the post-election Member Induction programme and the school holidays.
- 3.2 Members are also recommended to follow the established process for the selection of further topics for the next round of scrutiny in-depth review topics as this has worked well since 2011. The timetable for this would be as follows:

- (i) **June -August** - Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be notified of the proposed timetable and process for the determination of the next round of in-depth reviews and Members invited to submit suggestions for topics taking into account the criteria adopted for the selection of reviews (as set out above);
- (ii) **August to end September** - Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen, Vice Chairmen and Opposition Spokespersons use their pre-agenda meetings with officers to propose topics to be put forward and then each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider and agree topics to be put forward to this Committee on 3 December.
- (iii) **Late October** – All O&S Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and Opposition Spokespersons meet informally to prioritise two of the topics put forward by the O and S Committees to be recommended to the Business Support O and S Committee.
- (iv) **3 December** - The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and agrees a programme of two in-depth reviews for the period January to September 2016 based on an indicative timescale of 20 weeks for each review.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Members of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be able to contribute suggestions for topics to be included in the programme of scrutiny in-depth review work.

5. Risk Management

- 5.1 Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
In-depth scrutiny reviews fail to make an impact	In published guidance on effective work programming for Overview and Scrutiny Committees the Centre for Public Scrutiny says “effective work programming is the bedrock of an effective scrutiny function. Done well, it can help to lay the foundations for targeted, incisive and timely work on issues of local importance, where scrutiny can add value. Done badly, scrutiny can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done is likely to be minimal”	This Committee has agreed a rigorous process for identifying and prioritising topics for inclusion in the in-depth review work programme.

6. Financial and Legal Implications

- 6.1 There is a budget of £5210 within Democratic Services to support activity associated with in depth scrutiny review work in this financial year. This can be used for member level visits, expenses claims from those invited to give evidence, expert advice and support with community engagement and other expenditure.
- 6.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Committee is asked to agree that a Task Group on housing: demand, supply and affordability in Medway should be the first to commence in late August/ early September 2015 and that the membership of this Group should be five Councillors (in the ratio 3:1:1) to be drawn from this Committee and the Regeneration, Community and Culture O & S Committee.
- 7.2 The Committee is asked to agree the process and timetable for the selection of the next round of in-depth reviews as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report

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Background papers

A Cunning Plan? Devising a scrutiny work programme – guidance published by Centre for Public Scrutiny

APPENDIX 1

OVERVIEW OF TASK GROUPS: 2011 to 2015

1. Programme of reviews agreed in September 2011 (with addition of a topic agreed by full Council in January 2012*)

Lead Committee	Topic	Indicative and actual timetable
Children and Young People	Effective challenge to address under performance in schools	Indicative Nov 2011 to March 2012 Actual Nov 2011 to April 2012
Business Support/Regeneration, Community and Culture (RCC)	Fair Access to Credit – added to programme by Full Council in January 2012*	Indicative March to June 2012 Actual Feb to Sept 2012
RCC	Supported Accommodation	Indicative Sept to December 2012 Actual August to December 2012
RCC	De-cluttering of town centres and main roads in Medway	Indicative Jan 2013 to March 2013 Actual Feb to July 2013
Health and Adult Social Care	Review of Mental Health Services in Medway	Indicative April to June 2013 Actual June 2013 to January 2014

2. Programme of reviews agreed in April 2013

Lead Committee	Topic	Original indicative timetable and final report
Health and Adult Social Care	Health Inequalities across Medway and how to direct investment where it is most needed	Indicative August to November 2013 Actual Oct 2013 to May 2014
Business Support	Impact of Welfare Reforms	Indicative Dec 2013 to March 2014 Actual April to Sept 2014
Children and Young People	Support for Care Leavers (originally Preventing LAC from becoming criminalised)	Indicative April to July 2014 Actual August 2014 to April 2015
RCC	Housing in Medway: demand, supply and affordability	Indicative August to November 2014 Actual <i>Not yet started</i>

APPENDIX 2

LONGLIST OF INDEPTH TOPICS SUGGESTED BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES 2015/16
Aid to prioritising the work programme

COMMITTEE	Does issue have potential impact on one or more sections of the population?	Corporate concern/issue for partners?	Will it add value/lead to effective outcomes?	Will review duplicate other work?	Is it timely/do we have the resources?	Scope for service improvement?	Priority order (2 reviews to be selected by members to take place between January and September 2016)
Business Support							
Housing – demand, supply and affordability *	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
Children and Young People							
Health and Adult Social Care							
Regeneration, Community and Culture							
Housing – demand, supply and affordability *	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	

*Cross cutting review

LONGLIST OF INDEPTH TOPICS SUGGESTED BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES 2015/16
PROPOSED TOPICS FOR TASK GROUP IN-DEPTH REVIEWS
Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee – (Topic 1 of x)

Housing – Demand, Supply and Affordability	<p>Reason for Review</p> <p>In April 2013 the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to include a review of the demand, supply and affordability of Housing in Medway in the programme of in-depth reviews agreed at that time. In discussing the possible scope of this review. Members emphasised the key social and economic role that housing plays, particularly for those who are struggling to access affordable housing. On 3 February 2015 the Committee was advised that it would not be possible to start and conclude the work of the Task Group before the local elections on 7 May. The Committee agreed to recommend that this Task Group should be the first one established in 2015/16.</p> <p>Potential for impact on one or more sections of the population?</p> <p>Is this an issue of corporate concern and/or an issue for partners?</p> <p>Will it add value/lead to effective outcomes?</p> <p>Will the review duplicate other work?</p> <p>Is it timely/ do we have the resources?</p> <p>Will the review provide scope for service improvement?</p>
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