

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 DECEMBER 2015

TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH SCRUTINY REVIEWS – 2016

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Summary

This report invites the Committee to consider and approve the topics suggested for in-depth scrutiny reviews in 2016.

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.

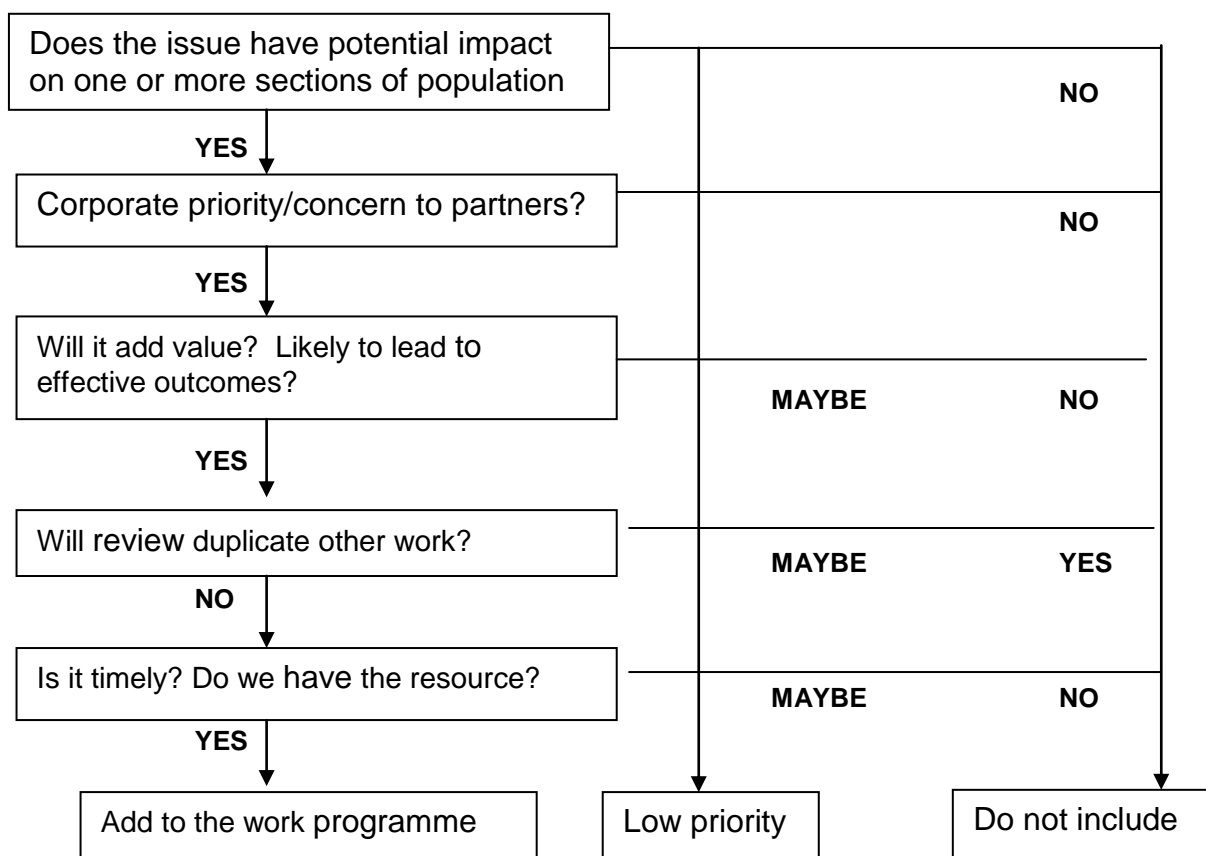
2. Background

- 2.1 In 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. Every effort is made to programme Task Groups to start and conclude their work within 20 weeks although, in practice, the pace is determined by Members and the degree to which evidence can be gathered within that timescale. Typically there is some slippage (and this has been reflected in the indicative timeline for the current programme of Task Group activity outlined in paragraph 3.4 of this report).
- 2.2 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 extended timelines for completion of 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 elections in May 2015. This Task Group is now underway and will report its recommendations to this Committee and the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course.

- 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:

Questions to ask when prioritising topics for review



3. Recommended scrutiny in-depth review topics for 2016

- 3.1 Since this Committee met in June 2015 each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has discussed options for in-depth reviews in 2016 taking into account Medway's adopted selection criteria. The following topics have been suggested and were discussed at an informal meeting on 3 November to which all Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen, Vice Chairmen and Opposition Spokespersons were invited:

- How far has Medway gone in developing a dementia friendly community?
- Employment Opportunities for 18-21 year olds (including apprenticeships)

- 3.2 Appendix 1 sets out the rationale for both the suggested topics. Members who attended the informal meeting on 3 November to discuss next steps unanimously

agreed to recommend that a Task Group on Dementia should take place at the conclusion of the current Task Group on Housing to be lead by the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members have acknowledged that recommendations arising from the work of this Task Group may be cross-cutting and that the mechanism for reporting back to all four Overview and Scrutiny Committees, as appropriate, would need consideration at the scoping stage.

3.3 It is recommended that a Task Group on Employment Opportunities for 18 to 21 year olds should be third in the current programme of reviews. This would be a cross-cutting review with membership drawn from both the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.4 If approved, the indicative timeline for this round of Task Group activity would be as follows:

Housing, Demand, Supply and Affordability	September 2015 to February 2016
How far as Medway gone in developing a Dementia Friendly Community	March 2016 to July 2016
Employment Opportunities for 18 to 21 year olds (including apprenticeships)	August 2016 to December 2016

3.5 Appendix 2 to this report lists all the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group topics since 2007. This list was requested for the benefit of Councillors who were newly elected in May 2015 to provide an overview of the wide range of issues that have been the subject of in- depth review by Overview and Scrutiny Committees in recent years. In Medway there is a record of 100% of Task Group recommendations being accepted by the Cabinet with each Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewing progress in implementation of any Task Group recommendations six months after Cabinet approval.

4. **Consultation**

4.1 Members of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been able to contribute suggestions for topics to be included in the 2016 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. 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 the programme of Task Group topics for 2016 should be as follows:

Review two (to follow the Task Group on Housing) to be lead by the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- **How far has Medway gone in developing a dementia friendly community?**

Review three to be cross-cutting with membership drawn from the Children and Young People and Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committees:

- **Employment Opportunities for 18-21 year olds (including apprenticeships)**

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Longlist of indepth topics suggested by overview and scrutiny committees 2015/16

Appendix 2 - Overview and Scrutiny Task Group topics since 2007

Background papers

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