
REPORT TO:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 8
DATE OF MEETING:	24TH JUNE 2015	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN PARAGRAPH NO: N/A
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	TOVE CECILIA LINDGREN tove.lindgren@south-derbys.gov.uk (EXT: 5848)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	SETTING THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16	REF: N/A
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 To consider and agree the Committee's work programme for the year.

2.0 Purpose of the report

2.1 To set out a possible approach to setting the work programme for members to consider, along with the possible next steps for finalising it.

3.0. Background

3.1 the Overview & Scrutiny Committee has been given a clear remit by the Council to scrutinise and hold to account those who are responsible for providing services used by people in the district – both those services provided by the Council itself and other agencies. This is explained in the Council's constitution. The relevant section is attached to this report.

3.2. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has carried out an extensive programme of activities over the years and this has allowed it to make a significant contribution to the life of the Council and South Derbyshire as a whole. The report summarising the work of the Committee during the 2014-15 local government year was considered by members earlier on the agenda for today's meeting.

4.1 How we have set the work programme in the past.

4.1 The Committee has, in previous years has met as a focus group to identify potential issues to form its core work programme. However, before taking a firm decision on this It

has also consulted a range of other stakeholders, both within the Council and the wider community, such as the parish councils, to find out what they think should be scrutinised.

4.2 This approach to setting the work programme does have advantages. In particular, it is inclusive and can help to ensure that there is wider ownership of and support the Committee's work than might otherwise have been the case.

4.3 However, there are also potential drawbacks. Perhaps the most important of these is that the work programme that the Committee finally agrees on will not necessarily be based on or adequately address the Council's corporate objectives. In other words, there is no guarantee that what the Committee decides to look at will genuinely 'add value' to the Council or rather that what it looks at will add the *most* value. Given the limited member and officer capacity which the Committee has to carry out its work programme, it is important that we do this.

5. Setting the work programme for 2015/16

5.1 The most practical way in which the Committee can help to focus on the right issues would be by deciding in advance what criteria it is going to use in order to choose what issues it is going to scrutinise during the year. Members may want to consider adopting something along the following lines. It is offered at this stage as the basis for further discussion.

First: The work programme ought to be based on what is important for the Council and to its partners. We should focus on the key goals and objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan

Second: The programme should focus on performance to see whether we (and our partners) are actually delivering on the key goals and objectives set out in the Corporate Plan.

Third: The work programme should result in tangible and practical recommendations for action – rather than make sweeping suggestions that are undeliverable (for example, because of the costs involved).

Fourth: The programme should be proportionate to the capacity of both members and officers to carry it out. We need to be clear about who is going to do what.

6.0 Using the corporate plan action plan to decide on the work topics (the Corporate Action Plan 2015 – 2019 is currently being drafted)

6.1 It would be helpful if the Committee could consider potential topics for its work programme based around the Corporate Plan themes once they become available.

7.0. The next steps

7.1 Once members have made a preliminary decision about what issues they would like to include in the work programme, the officers can then pull together some specific proposals for investigations for the Committee to consider. These could then form the basis for a consultation exercise with both internal and external stakeholders. The aim of this

consultation exercise would be to determine: (a) whether they support the proposed programme of investigations or (b) if there were any alternative enquiries, related to the Council's corporate objectives, which the committee ought to carry out.

7.2 We would seek to fast track this process, so that the Committee was able to finalise and endorse its work programme at its June meeting and, with the agreement of the Chair, begin its first investigation at this meeting also.

7.3 Whatever lines of enquiry which the Committee does ultimately include in its work programme will need to be properly planned to ensure that they are effectively delivered. For example, we will need to be clear about what are we hoping to achieve from the investigation, what the key questions we would like to explore, who should be invited to give evidence to the Committee etc.

7.4 It is important that elected members can play a full part in any investigations. But this means being realistic about what they can do and how much capacity that they have to take part in Overview & Scrutiny. We also need to take into account the impact which any Overview & Scrutiny investigations might have on the wider organisation - both in those departments required to provide evidence / information and also on the Chief Executive's staff who provide governance and support to the Committee. Ultimately, there is no point in trying to carry out investigations that are so broad in their scope that neither elected members nor officers are able to deliver them.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report

9.0 Corporate Implications

9.1 None directly arising from this report

10.0 Background Papers

10.1 Scoping documents for reviews and previous committee reports

11.0 Attachments

11.1 NONE