

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2 September 2013

Populating the Scrutiny Work Plan

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 During the first year of the new scrutiny arrangements a number of topics were proposed resulting in ten scrutiny task groups being set up. After this initial impetus, the Scrutiny work plan now has a very thin agenda. This was referred to at the Council meeting on 22 July when the Scrutiny Annual report was received by Council and identified as an issue that needed to be addressed.

2. Summary of the Issue

- 2.1 Council, on the 22 July, heard from a number of members who had suggestions for the Scrutiny work programme. It is possible that if there were more topics which members felt were interesting, then there may be more who are willing to participate in the scrutiny process. The two areas that need to be addressed are; how Scrutiny can attract a wider spread of members to take part in scrutiny task groups and, increasing the amount of topics which are brought to the Overview and Scrutiny committee for consideration.

3. Attracting more members to take part in Scrutiny task groups

- 3.1 The Annual Report on the Overview and Scrutiny process highlighted that there were still a number of members who had not engaged in Scrutiny or joined a scrutiny task group. 25% of members did not respond to the survey and generally they did not speak up in Council as to why they had not got involved. Some members did cite lack of time as a reason or lack of interesting topics and some members suggested that if the public had a greater part to play in the process then this would mean they would get more heavily involved.
- 3.2 At Council it was suggested that the Skills Audit, which was carried out by HR, could be used to help match members skills to those required for new scrutiny task groups. A personal invite could then be issued to members, rather than a global invite, which may have more success in attracting members to sit on task groups. The skills matrix was only completed by 15 members in 2011.
- 3.3 There is also the possibility that if the topics for scrutiny task groups were more directly linked to the Corporate plan, then members may get involved as they may feel that it is a way of holding the Cabinet to account by a greater degree. This may also encourage a greater degree of involvement and interest from the Cabinet

member if the task group were scrutinising a current issue in their portfolio.

4. Sources of topics for Scrutiny

4.1 The scrutiny registration process

This provides a facility for members to propose topics for scrutiny. There was also a view from members responding to the questionnaire that we should raise public awareness of Scrutiny and encourage them to put forward topics for scrutiny. A form was included in the Annual report but members may like to consider publicising this more widely via the website or publicity in the media.

4.2 The Forward Plan

The Forward plan sets out all the decisions to be taken by Council and Cabinet in the next four months and so should be an ideal starting point for O&S in formulating their work plan. It is available on the website and circulated to members via email on a monthly basis (see Appendix 2). The Forward Plan was discussed at the Chair's briefing on 15 August and they identified a number of topics in the Forward Plan where O&S may want to have a better understanding of the item and the decision to be made. These are highlighted in Appendix 2 starting with the Joint Waste Committee Business Plan.

4.3 The Corporate Risk Register and Corporate Strategy/Business Plan

If Scrutiny is holding the Council to account on whether it is delivering what it set out to deliver, the Corporate Strategy and resulting action plan are important starting points. Similarly the Corporate Risk Register does not currently come to O&S on a regular basis but it could be added to their workplan and used to identify areas warranting more detailed scrutiny.

4.4 Other Member groups

Since the introduction of new scrutiny arrangements, O&S have received a regular report on the work of the scrutiny task groups which has been in the public domain. It was suggested at the last O&S chair's briefing that Scrutiny may want to be kept informed of the work of other groups where members of the Council are involved. These include the various Cabinet Member working groups, Commissioning working groups as well as the corporate governance groups relating to the new commissioned and shared services. A list of these is attached to a previous agenda item on member working groups and may prompt the committee to request further information or some form of follow up.

4.4.1 What topics have been proposed?

At the last O&S meeting in May and in Council on 22 July a number of topics were proposed for Scrutiny to consider and are set out in the list below:

- Bereavement services
- The nursery
- Car parking and enforcement
- CBH
- The council's obligations to young people
- HR and appraisals
- Policies for the winter work force

- Dog fouling
- Pubs and licensing
- Use of 106 money's
- External partnerships – how are they being scrutinised and held to account

5. Summary of evidence/information

5.1 As set out in this report.

6. Next Steps

6.1 Members are asked to consider the potential source of topics for their scrutiny workplan and decide how they want to proceed.

Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current workplan 2. Cabinet Forward plan
Background Papers	None
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Accountability	Chair of O&S committee, Councillor Duncan Smith
Cabinet Member	Corporate Services, Councillor Jon Walklett