



Haringey Council

Report for:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 8 June 2015	Item Number:	10
Title:	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Development Process (2015/16)		
Report Authorised by:	Bernie Ryan, Assistant Director of Corporate Governance		
Lead Officer:	Clifford Hart, Democratic Services Manager		
Ward(s) affected: All	Report for Key/Non Key Decisions: N/A		

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 Developing an effective work programme is the bedrock of an effective scrutiny function. Done well, it can help lay the foundations for targeted, inclusive 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.
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) is responsible for developing an overall work plan including work for its four standing scrutiny panels. A new work programme is produced each year and an outline process for developing this was discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 27 March 2015.
- 1.3 This report sets out some basic principles behind good work programming and highlights key consultative processes that will help underpin the selection and prioritisation of topics for consideration by scrutiny. A preliminary assessment of member training needs, to support the delivery of the work programme, is also included.
- 1.4 Consultation for the development of the work programme is planned from May to June 2015 with the final programme being agreed at Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 27 July 2015. A summary of key dates is provided in the body of the report (section 10).

2. Cabinet Member introduction

- 2.1 N/A



3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: (a) consider the report; (b) agree the timeframe for the development of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2015/16 (section 10 of the report); and (c) make recommendations as appropriate.

4. Alternative options considered

- 4.1 N/A

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The careful selection and prioritisation of work is essential if the scrutiny function is to be successful, achieve added value and retain credibility.
- 5.2 The work programme developed will need to reflect the structure for Overview and Scrutiny in Haringey which includes the overarching Overview & Scrutiny Committee as well as the four standing panels: Adults and Health; Children and Young People; Environment & Community Safety; Housing & Regeneration.
- 5.3 The work programme will be developed in consultation with local stakeholders and will aim to ensure that items or topics selected for scrutiny involvement in the year ahead:
- Compliment the priorities and work of the Council and its partners;
 - Reflect the concerns of local communities, and,
 - Identify those issues where scrutiny can make most impact.

6. Principles

- 6.1 *“**Scrutiny** is based on the principle that someone who makes a decision...should not be the only one to review or challenge it. **Overview** is founded on the belief that an open, inclusive, member-led approach to policy review...results in better policies in the long run”*(Jessica Crowe, former Executive Director, Centre for Public Scrutiny).
- 6.2 Expending resources on investigating an issue via scrutiny requires clear justification yet there are often difficulties in prioritising work. Some of the problems in developing and maintaining an effective work programme include:
- Agenda creep and losing sight of the key issues;
 - Diving into detail;
 - Focusing on minor points;
 - Going over old ground;



- Lack of progress on identified issues;
- Overlapping with the role of other committees;
- Hobbyhorses;
- Running out of time;
- Political loyalty versus the independence of scrutiny.

6.3 To help overcome these barriers, the careful selection and prioritisation of work is essential if scrutiny is to be successful, gain buy in from senior officers and Cabinet, retain credibility and achieve added value.

6.4 It's important to note that successful work programming is not a "start-stop" process just for the start of the year. It should be kept under regular review to ensure it remains relevant.

6.5 The Centre for Public Scrutiny has identified a number of features in planning an effective scrutiny work programme¹, which include:

- It should be **a member led process** (e.g. involvement of all non executive members, and members leading on the short-listing and prioritisation of topics – with support from officers)
- It should **reflect local needs, priorities and policies** (e.g. issues of community concern as well as those priorities identified in the Corporate Plan and proposals within the Medium Term Financial Strategy)
- It should **prioritise topics** for scrutiny involvement **that have most impact /benefit**
- It should **involve local stakeholders**; e.g. local residents, community groups, Residents Associations, partners, businesses, and service users.
- It **should be flexible** to enable scrutiny to respond to new or urgent issues as they emerge.
- Having **a meaningful discussion** about the work programme probably works better than a complex set of feasibility criteria, which may be over-bureaucratic and resource intensive.

¹ A Cunning Plan: Devising a Scrutiny Work Programme, Centre for Public Scrutiny, 2011



7. Components of a scrutiny work programme

- 7.1 Overview and Scrutiny has a number of distinct functions which provide a framework for the activities of local scrutiny bodies. An effective scrutiny work programme should aim to reflect a balance of these activities;
- **Holding the Executive to Account** – questioning the Leader and Cabinet Members on issues within their portfolio and through pre- and post-cabinet decision scrutiny. For example, the operation of ‘Call-in’ procedures and ensuring meaningful input into the development of business cases relating to decisions made by Council in February.
 - **Policy Review and Development** – assisting Cabinet by undertaking strategic reviews to assess the effectiveness of existing policies or to inform the development of new strategies;
 - **Performance Monitoring** – identifying services that are not performing, investigating and making recommendations for improvement;
 - **External Scrutiny** – scrutinising and holding to account those partners and other local agencies which provide key services to the public;
 - **Public and community engagement** – engaging and involving local communities in scrutiny activities and scrutinising those issues which are of concern to the local community.
- 7.2 In the context of these functions, and in accordance with the scrutiny protocol, a range of reports can be requested to be included within the work Overview and Scrutiny Committee and scrutiny panels. Depending on the selected topic and the planned outcome, this could include:
- (i) Performance Reports;
 - (ii) One off reports on matters of national or local interest or concern (e.g. Casey Report);
 - (iii) Issues arising out of internal and external assessment (e.g. Ofsted, Care Quality Commission);
 - (iv) Reports on strategies and policies under development, or other issues on which the Cabinet or officers would like scrutiny views or support;
 - (v) Progress reports on implementing previous scrutiny recommendations accepted by the Cabinet or appropriate Executive body.
- 7.3 In addition in-depth scrutiny reviews are an important aspect of Overview and Scrutiny work and provide opportunities to thoroughly investigate topics and to make improvements. Through the gathering and consideration of evidence from a wider range of sources, they enable more robust and effective challenge as well as an increased likelihood of delivering positive outcomes. In depth reviews should also help engage the public, and provide greater transparency and accountability. It is nevertheless important that there is a balance between depth and breadth of work undertaken so that resources can be used to their greatest effect.



8. Prioritising and selecting issues for scrutiny involvement

- 8.1 A wide ranging consultation process with local stakeholders will guide and inform the selection of work programme items (see section 10). This process will help to generate and prioritise a 'long list' of possible topics which can be included within the scrutiny work programme.
- 8.2 There are a number of practical criteria which are used to assist in the prioritisation and selection of those topics taken forward from the long list in the work programme. Selected topics should:
- Compliment the priorities and work of the Council and its partners;
 - Not duplicate work being undertaken elsewhere by the Council and its partners;
 - Reflect the concerns of the wider community;
 - Be practical and demonstrate a positive and beneficial impact.

9. Monitoring the work programme

- 9.1 Once the work programme is agreed, there are both formal and informal systems in place to ensure effective monitoring of the work programme. Regular agenda planning meetings (with the Chair and senior officers) and discussion at Committee itself gives an opportunity to:
- Discuss the format, structure and priority of future items/meetings;
 - Discuss the rules and procedures for formal meetings – ensuring clarity, consistency, and good time keeping;
 - Discuss what other information is required, including the identification and of witnesses which may include external experts, service-users, community groups, amongst others;
 - Consider options for getting out and about including site visits to other authorities and front-line service visits;
 - Develop key lines of enquiry or a questioning strategy;
 - Ensure the right people attend the right meetings at the right time;
 - Follow up on any actions agreed, ensuring outcomes from recommendations;
 - Consider member development needs to enable activities to be planned that take into consideration items included on the future work programme.
- 9.2 To assist in work programme development and monitoring, a new work programme template – attached at **Appendix A** - has been created to ensure the details and desired outcomes of items on the work programme can be kept under review.



10. Key consultative processes for the scrutiny work programme

10.1 Any local stakeholder may suggest an item for the scrutiny work programme, this could include a member, local partners, officers, members of the community or voluntary sector groups or local residents. With this in mind, a number of consultative processes are employed to support the development of the Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme, these include:

- Public Survey - local residents and community groups;
- Scrutiny Cafe – non executive members, local partners and senior officers;
- Informal meetings with Cabinet Member and Senior Officers;

Public survey

10.2 Public engagement and involvement is a key function of scrutiny and local residents and community groups are encouraged to participate in all aspects of scrutiny from the development of the work programme, participation at meetings and contribution to depth projects (e.g. providing service assessments / service user insights).

10.3 To ensure the issues considered by scrutiny are both important and relevant to the local community, an on-line survey has been distributed to local residents, community groups and other local stakeholders to assess their views. The purpose of the survey is therefore threefold:

- To facilitate community participation;
- To identify broad areas of concern which may guide and inform member decisions in agreeing the scrutiny work programme;
- To facilitate specific suggestions for in depth scrutiny review.

10.4 This survey has been successfully administered in previous years where it has generated in excess of 160 responses. Scrutiny members have also found that the survey both informed and legitimated the selection of topics for the work programme.

10.5 The survey will be administered for a 3 week period from mid-May. To facilitate further discussion and prioritisation of topics to be included within the work programme, suggestions for scrutiny involvement will be analysed and coded by:

- The corporate priority they fall within;
- The remit of which appropriate scrutiny body it falls within.



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Scrutiny Cafe

- 10.6 The Scrutiny Cafe aims to bring together key local stakeholders (non executive members, partners and senior council officers) for round table discussions to further inform the development the scrutiny work programme. Round table discussions will be themed around the remits of the scrutiny panels (which also closely correspond to corporate priorities):
- Enable every child and young person to have the best start in life, with high quality education;
 - Enable all adults to live healthy, long and fulfilling lives;
 - Create a clean and safe borough where people are proud to live with stronger communities and partnerships;
 - Drive growth and employment from which everyone can benefit;
 - Create homes and communities where people choose to live and are able to thrive.
- 10.7 The themed round table discussions will be informed and guided by issues and suggestions emerging from the public survey. Discussions will be led by the relevant scrutiny chair with the support of officers. The aim of these discussions will be to:
- Identify any further issues for the scrutiny work programme (to those already suggested);
 - Prioritise issues or suggestions to be included within the scrutiny work programme.
- 10.8 The Scrutiny Cafe consultation format was used in association with the Centre for Public Scrutiny in the development of the scrutiny work programme for 2014/15. Participants indicated that this approach had been beneficial in that this supported informed discussion and allowed meaningful assessments of suggested topics for scrutiny. This year the Scrutiny Cafe will take place on 15 June 2015, during the evening.

Cabinet members and senior officers

- 10.9 To conclude the consultation process for the development of the scrutiny, Chairs of individual scrutiny committee/panels meet with relevant Cabinet members and senior officers. The primary purpose of such meetings is to discuss those issues and suggestions for inclusion within the scrutiny work programme emerging from the public survey and Scrutiny Cafe to ensure final selections:
- Are aligned with corporate priorities, objectives and outcomes;
 - Are in areas where greatest practical assistance can be provided;
 - Scrutiny processes are commensurate to desired outcomes (e.g. a one-off report or more in depth investigation).



10.10 This meeting is also an opportunity at which any topics selected for in depth scrutiny investigation can be discussed and scoped with Cabinet members and senior officers. In particular, discussions can assist the identification of:

- Project objectives (how scrutiny can positively contribute to the business of the council);
- Key lines of enquiry and officers and other local stakeholders to include within the investigation.

10.11 At this juncture, Cabinet members and senior officers are also invited to suggest additional topics where scrutiny could be beneficially involved and included within the final work programme. These could include:

- Forthcoming strategies or policies which may benefit from scrutiny involvement;
- Items on the Forward Plan / Delivery Plans which may benefit from pre-decision scrutiny;
- Progress reports on key council priorities (Corporate Programme);
- Annual service reports or inspection reports.

10.12 The meeting is also an opportunity for the Chair to agree with relevant Cabinet members, the dates at which they will attend Overview & Scrutiny Committee or panel for their (twice yearly) Question and Answer session.

Table: Work Programme Development Timeline

Date	Fora	Purpose
27 April	Informal meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Chair of OSC and Panels to reflect on 14/15 work programme to identify carry over work items , future training and development needs etc.
14 May	Annual Council	Confirmation of Membership of Overview & Scrutiny Committee
May 2015	Informal meeting of new Overview & Scrutiny Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine Chairs of Scrutiny Panels; • Brief for work programme development process; • Identify training needs.
May 2015	Chairs and Chief Whips	Recruitment of non-executive members to Scrutiny Panels
May 2015	Scrutiny Survey	To identify priorities and topics for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme for 2015/16 from local residents, community groups and other local stakeholders. (3 weeks)
8 June	Overview & Scrutiny Committee (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership and terms of reference of scrutiny bodies confirmed • Work programme development update and sign off process;



Date	Fora	Purpose
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders state of the borough address (outline priorities in year ahead)
15 June	Scrutiny Cafe	Overview & Scrutiny Committee to conduct themed round table discussions with non-executive members, Senior Officers and partners to identify possible work areas.
June 2015	Consultation with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers	Individual Chairs of OSC and Scrutiny Panels to meet with relevant Cabinet members and Senior officers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure work items align with corporate priorities; Identify those areas where scrutiny can provide greatest assistance; To agree and scope work items taken forward.
29 June & 9 July	Scrutiny Panels – Round 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm terms of reference and membership Discuss and agree work plans – agenda planning
June 2015 tba	OSC/Cabinet face to face	Twice yearly meeting
27 July	Overview & Scrutiny Committee (2)	Confirm 2015/16 work plan of Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Panels.
Ongoing	All meetings of all scrutiny bodies	Work programme monitoring.

11. Member training and development

11.1 Member Development underpins the work of the council in all democratic processes and is critical to ensure Members are properly supported to undertake their role.

11.2 Members of Overview and Scrutiny require a number of skills. These skills are highlighted below and will be used to identify training needs and development areas as part of the process for developing a scrutiny work programme for 2015/16.

Skills for Scrutiny Members²

- Taking evidence from a wide range of people, interviewing, questioning and listening skills.
- Understanding and using (i) performance management, information, (ii) other data and findings from research, (iii) information from inspections.
- Understanding the policy framework, skills to review implications of policy framework.

² Adapted from the LGiU Scrutiny Checklist, 2003



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- Developing recommendations, negotiating a report across parties and handling minority reports/vies
- Digesting and understanding paperwork and electronic information
- Communication skills
- Influencing skills
- Monitoring implementation of recommendations
- Evaluation skills

Skills for Scrutiny Chairmen³

- Chairing meetings of different types, from steering a formal agenda to facilitating an informal group to holding a public consultation session.
- Leadership and project management skills
- Planning and managing a busy workload
- Ability to identify topics of public interest for review
- Ability to work with officers
- Dealing with the media
- Champion scrutiny both internally and externally

11.3 Scrutiny training requirements can be addressed in many ways. For example, through formal training, one-to-one sessions or mentoring and will need to be picked up as part of the wider member development programme.

11.4 To develop a successful work programme for 2015/16, an assessment of the support and development activities provided by the Council will be required to ensure Members are properly equipped to undertake planned scrutiny work. This should take into consideration the skills listed above and take into account items included in the scrutiny work programme.

³ Adapted from the LGiU Scrutiny Checklist, 2003



12. Update on the work programme development process to date

12.1 A number of informal consultative meetings⁴ were held with Overview & Scrutiny members and other non executive members during the course of 2014/15. The purpose of these meetings was to reflect upon and identify:

- Scrutiny processes which require adaptation or where further member training or support was required;
- Items to be considered within 2015/16 work programming.

Scrutiny processes identified for further development or member training

12.2 Members identified a number of scrutiny processes which require adaptation or where further member training could assist the effectiveness of the scrutiny function in Haringey. Key items from these discussions have been summarised below:

- **Improved communication with local stakeholders** to illustrate where scrutiny can add value (e.g. community engagement, non-party political appraisal) and where it has made an impact;
- Improved **performance monitoring** process with more developed use of performance data to assist scrutiny to add value to their work / investigations;
- Reduce the number of items on **scrutiny agenda** to allow for more detailed and meaningful discussions;
- Further **preparation** and evidence gathering ahead meetings to inform and assist more effective questioning;
- To develop and **extend pre-meeting process** to assist in more effective meeting management and questioning;
- Facilitate a **mentoring scheme** with scrutiny members from other boroughs;
- Establish a more rigorous system to **follow up scrutiny recommendations**;
- A need to improve communication of **scrutiny outcomes** (e.g. through social media, newsletters etc);
- Ensuring scrutiny involvement in the development of **Delivery Plans** (and understanding of the new **Priority Boards**);
- To review the '**Call-in**' process.

⁴ These included: Centre for Public Scrutiny facilitated session for all non executive members on 19th January 2015 and Overview & Scrutiny Committee reflections session held on 27th April 2015.



12.3 Through the course of each year, issues for scrutiny involvement often emerge and are duly noted for future work programming. During 2014/15 scrutiny bodies discussed items for possible inclusion in future work programming. Such issues will be discussed and assessed alongside other suggested topics put forward as part of the process for developing the work programme for 2015/16.

13. Comments of the Chief Finance Officer and financial implications

13.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report. Should any of the work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny generate recommendations with financial implications these will be highlighted at that time.

14. Comments of the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance and legal implications

14.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising from the report and the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance has been consulted on the contents of this report.

14.2 In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the approval of the future scrutiny work programme and the appointment of Scrutiny Review Panels (to assist the scrutiny functions) falls within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

15. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments

15.1 Overview and Scrutiny has a strong community engagement role and aims to regularly involve local stakeholders, including residents, in its work. It seeks to do this through:

- Helping to articulate the views of members of the local community and their representatives on issues of local concern.
- Bringing local concerns to the attention of decision makers and incorporating them into policies and strategies.
- Identifying and engaging with hard to reach groups
- Helping to develop consensus by seeking to reconcile differing views and developing a shared view of the way forward.

15.2 The evidence generated by scrutiny reviews / committee work helps to identify the kind of services wanted by local people. It also promotes openness and transparency as meetings are held in public and documents are available to local people.

16. Head of Procurement Comments

N/A



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17. Policy Implications

17.1 This reports sets out how the work of Overview and Scrutiny will contribute and add value to the work of the Council and its partners in meeting locally agreed priorities.

18. Use of Appendices

Appendix A – Work Programme Template

19. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1981