

Meeting: COMMUNITY SELECT
COMMITTEE

Agenda Item: **3**

Date: 18 MARCH 2014

2014/2015 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To agree the Scrutiny Workplan for the Select Committee for the new Municipal Year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That feedback from the Scrutiny Evaluation Questionnaire completed by Members be noted.
- 2.2 That having considered ideas put forward by individual Members from their Scrutiny Evaluation Survey and topics raised from Community Groups following canvassing of the groups through January and February 2014 (see section 5.1), the Committee determine the subject matter of its Scrutiny Study for 2014/2015.
- 2.3 That the Committee agrees with the recommended arrangements for undertaking a Community Safety focused meeting in 2014/15 (see section 5.6) acting in its capacity as the Council's statutory Crime and Disorder Committee (see section 5.3).
- 2.4 That the Committee endorses the comments made in relation to those suggestions put forward for Scrutiny that for various reason would not be appropriate at this time (see section 5.8) and that those Community Groups/Members who have put forward these ideas be informed accordingly.
- 2.5 That consideration be given to including in the workplan specific monitoring or review of recommendations from previous studies (see section 6.2).
- 2.6 That the Policy Development work identified for the Committee (see section 7.1) be noted.
- 2.7 That the Chair writes to all those Groups and individuals who have put forward suggestions for study thanking them for their interest and that they be sent

details of the agreed workplan and opportunities to take part in the scrutiny work to be undertaken.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Scrutiny Committees are asked to draft their workplan ahead of the new Municipal year in order that work may begin as soon as the Committees are appointed at Annual Council. Any outstanding/unfinished studies, where applicable, might also need to be included.
- 3.2 During February 2014 Members provided feedback from the Scrutiny Evaluation and Work Programme Planning Survey that had been circulated for Scrutiny topics for the 2014/2015 Municipal Year.
- 3.3 When considering what work to undertake in the coming year Members may wish to consider if the matter in question is of a cross cutting nature and might lend itself to being considered jointly with another Select Committee.
- 3.4 Officers have also been requested to bring to the Committee's attention Policy Development items that the Select Committee might be requested to consider and comment on before reports thereon are submitted to the Executive.
- 3.5 The Committee may also consider whether specific time should be allocated for monitoring or review of recommendations of previous studies. It is recognised that there is a limited dedicated officer resource for the Scrutiny work of 4 Scrutiny Committees and therefore it is important to ensure that workplans are in place in order that the call on those resources and on each Committee's time on all its activities are prioritised and evenly spread across the year.
- 3.6 The draft calendar of meetings for 2014/2015 previously circulated to Members includes dates for meetings of Overview & Scrutiny Committee that are time critical as they are considering decisions taken by the Executive and Budget & Policy Framework matters. For other meetings of the Select Committees a number of dates have been reserved and once the workplans for each Committee have been drafted these specific dates can be allocated.

4. SCRUTINY – SUMMARY OF EVALUATION BY MEMBERS

- 4.1 In February 2014 all Members of Scrutiny Committees were provided with an Evaluation Questionnaire to gauge the positive aspects of Scrutiny work undertaken, how Scrutiny might be more effective and ideas for future studies. The following summary is based on the 14 replies that were received.
- 4.2 As part of the Survey, Members were asked what aspects of Scrutiny could be improved to provide a better service. By and large Members expressed satisfaction with the way Scrutiny is being undertaken but provided challenge around the following areas:
 - More support for the admin/investigation side of the Scrutiny Section

- That reviews be conducted in more detail with more meetings but understand that resources & officer time are limited so could restrict this
- The Portfolio Holders should have no influence during deliberations
- Continued monitoring of previous reviews
- Allow an opposition Member to Chair one Select Committee
- Use a “4 C’s methodology of Best Value Reviews (Challenge / Compare / Consult / Compete) as a template for relevant service reviews
- Allow time to ensure a thorough review is completed
- Provide more questioning skills training for newer Members
- Find out what third party contractors are doing when carrying out a service on behalf of the Council
- That information from officers (in some cases) could be provided in a more timely fashion to help Members undertake their review
- That the Scrutiny Officer continues to make sure that issues from previous reviews are not lost when the Committee structure changes

5. POTENTIAL SCRUTINY TOPICS FOR 2014/2015

5.1 Following the canvassing of Members and Community Groups following through January and February 2014 the following topics have been suggested:

- What’s the impact on Stevenage’s voluntary sector not having a dedicated Council for Voluntary Services Organisation? (from Kadoma Link & Members)
- Partnerships (CAB)
- Sports in Schools, and community sports links. Addressing the recent loss of JHN as a community facility (from Sports Stevenage)
- "promote sport for all" how can Sports Stevenage, SBC's and So Stevenage's concerns for physical and emotional wellbeing be developed. What’s the take-up of schemes for fitness and also to reduce obesity? (from Sports Stevenage)
- Communications – Use of an area of the Council’s Web site or creation of a Community Web Site to share information (from Stevenage Furniture Recycling Scheme)
- Grant Aid - ‘In kind’ at least - to be considered for those organisations essential to the current economic climate and which enable residents to move on from their curtailed circumstances (from Stevenage Furniture Recycling Scheme)
- Use of LCBs: ‘whether individual members are really getting value for money from their LCBs’ and ‘Grant funding/LCB in respect of guidelines on what is considered appropriate/acceptable funding and what checks are in place in to verify the integrity of the bid prior to it being submitted to Councillors (suggestions from 3 Members – this could be a joint review with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee)

- 5.2 The Community Select Committee as the Council's Statutory Crime & Disorder Committee is required by statute to hold a meeting to consider a Crime and Disorder /Community Safety agenda item/review at least once during the Municipal Year. Therefore the Committee must schedule at least one meeting a year to consider a community safety theme.
- 5.3 The statutory regulation governing Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees is detailed in the "*Crime & Disorder (Overview & Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 No. 942 – Regulation 4 – Frequency of meetings*":
- “4. A crime and disorder committee shall meet to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions as the committee considers appropriate but no less than once in every twelve month period.”
- 5.4 Home Office guidance (May 2009) Page 23 Section 3 – detailed guidance on sections 19 and 20 of the Act and Regulations, states:
- “ 3.3 Frequency of meetings*
- The regulations leave the frequency of meetings to local discretion, subject to the minimum requirement of once a year.*
- If a local authority decides to undertake “set piece” community safety scrutiny only once a year, this annual meeting could be in the form of an event looking at crime and disorder matters and discussing which crime and disorder matters should be considered in the next municipal year as matters of local concern.”*
- 5.5 As a District Council there are no direct internal services that can be scrutinised with regard to community safety matters as it is not a direct function of the Council. Rather the responsibility is to hold the Responsible Authority Group (RAG)/SoSafe Community Safety Partnership to account for setting the correct community safety priorities.
- 5.6 In the 2013/14 Municipal Year the Community Select Committee met with the Chair of RAG, the Executive Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities and the Council's Community Safety Officer as well as Hertfordshire Constabulary's Chief Inspector for Stevenage to provide an overview of RAG and SoSafe's community safety responsibilities as well as looking at the draft SoSafe Community Safety priorities for the coming year within the action plan. This meeting provided the Community Select Committee with an opportunity to challenge and have Scrutiny oversight of this area. The Committee is asked whether it wishes to carry out its statutory role under the same arrangements for 2014/15?
- 5.7 For information, ideas for studies put forward last year by Members (but were not undertaken) included -

- Active Lifestyles of the 16-24 year olds (including Sports and the Arts) subject to, the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, Culture, Sport and Leisure deliberations with his counterpart at Hertfordshire County regarding Youth Services provision in Stevenage.
- Partial street light switch off – It was agreed at the time that as HCC were scrutinising the issue it would not be practicable or sensible to run a parallel review.

5.8 Other ideas have come forward that are within the remit of this Select Committee but it would be recommended that at this time such studies were not appropriate -

<u>Suggestion</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>Comment</u>
<u>Services for older people</u> , 'Because the demographics are changing for Stevenage which mean there will be many more'	CAB	Community Select Committee have just scrutinised Community Transport for Older People in 2013/14. The statutory responsibility for Older People sits with Hertfordshire County Council.
<u>Community Centres</u> – 'CAB Board have an interest in Community Centres (through Stevenage Solutions) but would welcome it being looked at' & 'Community Centres, their management, their role in the community, does SBC get value for money from the grant given to the Community Centres.'	CAB & 2 Members	There is already a review underway and will report to Executive in July 2014, so a Scrutiny Review would not be appropriate at this time.
<u>Maintenance of Community Centre Buildings</u> – 'The community centre managers in Stevenage meet regularly through the year and it has come up a few times whether we could handle our own budget for maintenance'	St Nicholas Community Association	This is a policy decision which should be addressed in the review which will report to the Executive in July (see above).
<u>Community Development</u>	Stevenage Furniture Recycling Scheme	Further detail would be required.
<u>Older People Communications</u>	Age UK (formerly Age	Further detail would be required and the statutory responsibility for Older People sits with Hertfordshire County Council.

	Concern)	
<u>Older People and Transport</u>	Age UK (formerly Age Concern)	A review was undertaken on the Council's Community Transport that is used by older people in 2013.
<u>Health</u> – 'After so many changes what's the role now for District and Borough Council's?'	Members	A Community Select Committee meeting is being arranged in the form of a briefing/roundtable discussion with a focus on Health and Public Health. The Community, Health and Older People Portfolio Holder, the Chair of the Stevenage Locality Group and the Head of Public Health at County have been invited. Health Scrutiny responsibility and the Public Health agenda and related funding sits at County Level.
<u>Education</u> – 'Have the new academies had an impact on Schools in Stevenage?'	Members	Gathering meaningful data would be difficult. Responsibility for Education had sat at a County Level but the introduction of Academies and Free Schools has taken these Schools out of the Education authority remit. It might be more suitable as a briefing.

6. MONITORING/REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Committee may consider there is a need to undertake some follow-up work on recommendations arising from previous studies. It may be considered sufficient to simply request update briefings from the relevant Heads of Service to be circulated to Members at appropriate intervals. However, if the Committee requires more detailed consideration or examination of the progress of previous recommendations this should be factored into its workplan.

6.2 Reports within the remit of this Committee that have been issued over the last two years include –

- Stevenage Museum (revisit recommendations 1 year on from 3rd Quarter of 2013 onwards)
- Access to GP Surgeries
- Night Time Economy

7. POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR 2014/2015

7.1 The following matters have been identified, in consultation with the Strategic Director (Community), for potential Policy Development to be worked on with the Portfolio Holder for 2014/2015 –

7.2 Members will be invited to have input in the Policy Development of the Community Association Review that is due for consideration with the Executive in July 2014.

- 7.3 Any further information available regarding other Policy Development for the Committee will be updated orally at the meeting.
- 7.4 The Strategic Director (Community) has highlighted some issues that Members should be aware of which may emerge during 2014/2015 for consideration and could be addressed with a briefing:
- SLL
 - Discussions around the potential to establish a 'single provider' for Community Transport in Stevenage that was a recommendation of the CSC review in Community Transport for Older People
 - The Council's response to the OFSTED review into SBC Children's Centres

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

A small budget is held to support the work of the seven Committees in their research and study.

8.2 Legal Implications

The role of Scrutiny and Overview Committees is set out in the Local Government Act 2000. The recommendations made in this report are to facilitate the Committees to fully undertake this role.

8.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

There are no direct Equalities and Diversity implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Specific Equalities and Diversity Implications are considered during each scrutiny review.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Evaluation Questionnaire – February 2014

APPENDICES

None