

Meeting: COMMUNITY SELECT
COMMITTEE

Agenda Item: **3**

Date: 18 MARCH 2015

2015/2016 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Authors – Jackie Cansick Ext. 2216
Contributors – Stephen Weaver Ext. 2332
Lead Officers – Scott Crudgington Ext. 2185
Contact Officer – Stephen Weaver Ext. 2332

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To agree the Scrutiny Work Programme 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 through January and February 2015 (see section 5.1), the Committee determine the subject matter of its Scrutiny Study for 2015/2016.
- 2.3 That the Committee agrees with the recommended arrangements for undertaking a Community Safety focused meeting in 2015/16 (see section 5.6) acting in its capacity as the Council's statutory Crime and Disorder Committee (see section 5.3).
- 2.4 That consideration be given to including in the work plan specific monitoring or review of recommendations from previous studies (see section 6.2).
- 2.5 That the Policy Development work identified so far for the Committee (see section 7.1) be noted.

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 January and February 2015 Members provided feedback from the Scrutiny Evaluation and Work Programme Planning Survey that had been circulated for Scrutiny topics for the 2015/2016 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 3 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 2015/2016 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 January 2015 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 7 replies received from the 10 Members of the Community Select Committee that returned a survey. Overall there were 15 replies received from the 22 Members who are on one or more of the Council's Scrutiny Committees.
- 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, with specific Member comments as follows:
- I know there are time constraints but sometimes more time is needed so a better evaluation can be achieved
 - More involvement of an opposition member, for example chairing OSC or a Select Committee even for one topic
 - I think the biggest problem is continuity. I have sat on at least two meetings this year, which discussed work commissioned several years ago by previous members of the committee that were out of date and where hardly anyone on the committee had comments to make. I think those reports could be for noting.
 - The minutes should be more detailed.

- Before new Committee members start I would be beneficial if they have a short meeting prior to the first Committee meeting to update them on the current position of that group, as it would enable them to understand where the group is at in the process of a Scrutiny
- Better communication to members of select committees
- Need to re-visit past reviews to see what changes have actually been made
- Briefing prior to the scrutiny beginning so members are aware of the issues around the scrutiny subject would I hope focus the committee to ask pertinent questions while the committee is sitting. These briefing could also include packs signposting members where to find further information
- More support for the Scrutiny Officer
- Concerned that the recommendations for the review into training and employment opportunities for young people had not been carried out
- I feel that there needs to be de-brief sessions following the scrutiny work meetings in order that the members appraise their own performance and share what they hope to come from the scrutiny – in terms of what they have contributed and how they may follow up any matters arising. When topics are in the plan that members are not familiar with there needs to be a more formal way of being informed well before the meeting which would avoid members arriving to the meeting and asking questions that would have been better answered prior to the meeting. This would leave the scrutiny meeting to focus on the progressive rather than reflective stance that sometimes prevails
- The amount of paperwork at O&S is still huge and Members get muddled by it – providing page numbering has been helpful

4.3 Following a similar process in February 2014, Members identified issues for improvement. For Members assistance the following progress against these suggestions are presented in the table below:

You said	We did
More support for the admin / investigation side of the Scrutiny Section	Given the pressures on resources, it is not possible, nor likely in the future that there would be capacity to provide further dedicated admin / investigation support for scrutiny. All meetings are now clerked which is an improvement on the position of some years ago.
That reviews be conducted in more detail with more meetings but understand that resources & officer time are limited so could restrict this	Given the reduction in the overall number of Scrutiny Committees in recent years it is now possible to spend more time (with more meetings) on reviews
The Portfolio Holders should have no	The Scrutiny Officer is not aware of

influence during deliberations	any circumstances during the current Municipal Year where any Portfolio Holder has had any direct influence over scrutiny deliberations. Executive Portfolio holders only attend meetings when invited.
Continued monitoring of previous reviews	During the 2014/15 Municipal Year monitoring of previous review recommendations was undertaken by the two Select Committees. The Annual Scrutiny Report to Council will provide full detail.
Allow an opposition Member to Chair one Select Committee	This matter is determined by the Majority Group and therefore not something that officers can influence.
Use a "4 C's methodology of Best Value Reviews (Challenge / Compare / Consult / Compete) as a template for relevant service reviews	This methodology, although not without merit, is perhaps not wholly relevant to the way reviews are undertaken, specifically "compete" which is not relevant to Scrutiny. Reviews do however involve an element of challenge and comparison with the use of a "critical friend" in reviews.
Allow time to ensure a thorough review is completed	As stated above, with fewer Committees it is now possible to complete reviews in more depth.
Provide more questioning skills & scrutiny training for newer Members	A training session was provide to Scrutiny Members by South East Employers on 23 July 2014. This will be revisited in 2015/16.
Find out what third party contractors are doing when carrying out a service on behalf of the Council	This very much depends what the subject matter of a review might be. However, the review into Decent Homes involved a degree of close scrutiny of the external contractors who delivered the service.
That information from officers (in some cases) could be provided in a more timely fashion to help Members undertake their review	Officer responses to information requests have been received consistently in a timely manner.
That the Scrutiny Officer continues to make sure that issues from previous reviews are not lost when the Committee structure changes	As stated above, monitoring of previous review recommendations and Executive responses have continued to be undertaken by the appropriate Select Committee.

5. POTENTIAL SCRUTINY TOPICS FOR 2015/2016

- 5.1 In response to an Officer request during last year's work programme planning, Members of the Community Select Committee had previously agreed that there should be a review of an Integrated Community Transport Service for Stevenage, which was planned to be undertaken in the 2014-15 Municipal Year. Unfortunately, since the approach was made by officers to Hertfordshire County Council it has not been possible to move ahead with this piece of work, as officers have been waiting for a formal response from the County Council. It is recommended that this item remain on the work programme until it can be progressed.
- 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 2014/15 Municipal Year the Community Select Committee will have met as the Council's statutory Crime & Disorder Committee on two occasions (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 on 30 March 2015, 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. The Committee also met on 4 November to look at the past performance against the 3 priority areas. Both meetings 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 2015/16?

- 5.7 Work Programme Schedule for 2015/16. When the Scrutiny Work Programme is agreed by the Community Select Committee the Scrutiny Officer will, using the agreed dates for generic Select Committee meetings in the Calendar of Meetings, draw together a work plan schedule for the 2015/16 Municipal Year which will be circulated to Members, and electronic diary invites will be sent to all CSC Members.
- 5.8 Members had previously indicated that they would like to scrutinise the possibility of an integrated Community Transport Service when a response is provided by HCC.
- 5.9 Members had also indicated that they would like to revisit again the recommendations and actions from the review into Stevenage Museum in December 2015, as well as making time for a discussion item on Public Health, as detailed at 5.10 below.
- 5.10 Since the 2013/14 Municipal Year the Community Select Committee has met the Director of Public Health at Hertfordshire County Council to discuss with the Director issues around Public Health and how the Borough Council can work together with the County Council to address the local priorities. Members and the Director of Public Health have said that these meetings are beneficial, and although there are no statutory obligations to hold such meetings at a Member level it is nonetheless considered useful to arrange such a meeting at least on an annual basis. The Community Select Committee are therefore invited to include a further meeting with the Director of Public Health to be diarised for 2015-16.
- 5.11 Following the canvassing of Members through January and February 2015 the following topics have been suggested as potential scrutiny review items:
 - LCB – Budgets –what should be considered value for money? A scrutiny of what LCB Budget money is spent on and where it may arise – to hold members to account on their decisions and ask recipients of LCB money what in fact the money has done to further their cause or how the community has benefitted. (possibly jointly with O&S Committee)
 - I would like scrutinise how councillors spend their Local Community Budgets and how the system could be improved. (possibly jointly with O&S)

- The working of the new housing allocations policy.
- There are issues in the quality of health care and social care that have been brought to my attention by residents. I'd like to meet with GPs, CCG, NHS, Social Care to see where the problems are what can be done to help.
- Older person's provision is always an important issue, specifically housing, support provided in the home and safety.
- To look at our Elderly Resident's Courts to see if they are fit for purpose
- I would like to see some work done looking at the provision of services in the wider community that serve those in acute crisis: credit union, debt counselling services, CAB, other charitable organisations, with a view to ensuring that those in relative poverty are able to reach, or are aware of the services available to them.
- I would like the Community Select Committee scrutiny next year 2015 – 16 to be led by what the community is saying, this could be done by an analysis of the calls to the customer call centre.
- The Community Select Committee should undertake scrutiny of Residents Meetings, the review could look at the following, how they engage the community, is there a better way, looking at other models. Are they cost effective? In this digital age would the use of Facebook pages, tweeter be a better way of engaging the community?
- I would like to have at least one meeting where we call the relevant executive members in to give a report on their work – this in turn could inform future scrutiny items.

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 three years and have not previously been revisited include –
- Access to GP Surgeries – (Completed 25 September 2012)
 - Community Safety Review into the Night Time Economy – (Completed 12 September 2012)
 - Conditions in the Private Rented Sector (Completed 2 March 2015)
 - Community Transport for Older People (Completed January 2014)
 - Museum Review (Completed 20 November 2012)*

*CSC have revisited this review in November 2014, however Members asked for this to be looked at again to monitor progress in December 2015

- 6.3 A Member has requested that the Committee revisit a review undertaken

five years ago on the support that SBC provides to third or voluntary sector organisation working within in the town in co-operation with SBC. The Member has said that it is time to go back and see how this major piece of work has impacted on the organisations, what has improved and what still needs to be improved.

7. POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR 2015/2016

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 2015/2016.

- Energy and Sustainability Strategy – Lead Officer, Tony Campbell
- SBC's compliance with the Equality Framework for Local Government - Lead Officer, Richard Protheroe
- Rent Policy Review – Lead Officer, Jaine Cresser

7.2 Any further information available regarding other Policy Development for the Committee will be updated orally at the meeting.

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 for 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 – January 2015

APPENDICES

None