

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

23 May 2013

The Work of Overview and Scrutiny in the Previous Council

Purpose

- 1 To report to the new Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on ongoing work recommended by the former Management Committee as part of the development of a work programme for the function in the new Council.

Background

- 2 A comprehensive review of the function took place with a report to Council in May last year. The outcome was little change to the structure (see [Appendix A](#)) apart from the creation of a new management committee to take overall responsibility for the function and its working relationship with the Cabinet. However, most significantly, a new style and approach was adopted based on constructive early engagement, a focus on supporting the development of policy linked to the business plan, and seeking positive outcomes for customers. A revised overview and scrutiny work programme following discussions with the Council's Executive and partners reflected this approach which resulted in a more effective and worthwhile function for all those involved. Scrutiny officer resources within democratic services were also aligned to support delivery of the programme.
- 3 In the run up to Council elections in May, the Management Committee asked that each of the select committees produce a brief "end of term" style report in order to highlight some of the good work done. The report also provided the opportunity for the select committees to review their respective parts of the then current work programme and recommend ongoing pieces of work for possible inclusion in the overview and scrutiny work programme of the new Council.
- 4 The select committees had been planning for this situation and had sought final reports from many of their task groups for consideration at the last meetings of the select committees. As a number of these were focused on major change and improvement projects aligned to the long term business and financial plans of the Council then it is no surprise that there are recommendations for overview and scrutiny work to continue in these areas as much spanned the election period.

- 5 Following consideration by the Management Committee, Appendix B now lists the topics recommended to continue.

Work Programme

- 6 The work programme should in the main be aligned to Council priorities. These are in response to the wishes of the people of Wiltshire and partners following consultation and reflected in the main corporate documents including Business Plan, Financial Plan and Joint Strategic Assessment. The transformation programme covers delivery of a number of significant projects from these plans.
- 7 Performance monitoring of delivery of the Business Plan targets are reported periodically to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny as is spend against the budget. The Executive must consult with Overview and Scrutiny on budget setting and policy framework items prior to decision by Council. The Cabinet is also required to publish a forward work plan of key decisions and other matters it intends to consider. Early discussion between leading representatives of the two functions is vital to deliver a focused, relevant and effective work programme that adds value to policy development and decision-making in the Council.
- 8 The work programme should also provide space for topics raised by the Management Committee, select committees and non-executive councillor requests. It is also important that Overview and Scrutiny is outward facing in the work it does in terms of seeking and understanding the views of customers, partners and stakeholders. Getting to the cause of issues and encouraging improvements in processes are important components.
- 9 The work programme should be viewed as a live document which is constantly reviewed and updated. It will be reported to every meeting of the Management Committee and relevant parts to the respective select committees. The Management Committee will need to be mindful of the capacity of councillors and resources within the scrutiny team when determining its work programme.
- 10 These matters have been explored to a degree during the councillor induction programme and the new Council may decide to give further direction or review how Overview and Scrutiny undertakes its responsibilities.

Next Steps

- 11 The Management Committee will have appointed its chairman and vice-chairman at today's meeting as will the select committees in the forthcoming weeks. This will provide leadership of the function and allow for informal discussion meetings to be arranged with Cabinet members, portfolio-holders

and service directors in order to gain common understanding and support over priorities in the work programme.

- 12 It is understood that a review of the current Business Plan will be conducted in the near future which will provide an opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny to review where it focuses its attention. Overview and Scrutiny brings a real strength when it engages in developing policy on the big themes being highlighted and pursued by the Council and its partners.
- 13 As part of the councillor induction programme, a half-day event is scheduled for Overview and Scrutiny on 16 May. A report will be made to the Management Committee on the outcome of this event elsewhere on today's agenda which may raise a number of topics for possible inclusion in the work programme.

Financial and Environmental Implications

- 14 There are no direct implications although the scrutiny reviews of service policy and delivery will cover such implications as part of the process. Officers providing information to the overview and scrutiny function do so as part of their wider corporate responsibilities to governance and decision-making of the Council. As already mentioned the new Management Committee will be mindful in developing its work programme of the member and officer capacity to delivery it.

Recommendations

- 15 To give consideration to the legacy topics listed in Appendix B for inclusion in the Committee's work programme and to advise the select committees accordingly.
- 16 To support early discussion with Cabinet members, portfolio-holders and service directors to gain a more informed understanding about Executive priorities and report back on findings.
- 17 To note the intention of the Council to review its Business Plan and the potential implications for Overview and Scrutiny's work programme.
- 18 To consider any topics that may arise from the induction event on 16 May.

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