



Joint Overview & Scrutiny Transition Board
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Report

Subject : Work Programme 2008/2009
Report to : Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board
Date : Friday 22nd February 2008
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1. **Reason for Report to the Board:**

The Board is invited to consider and approve (in principle at this stage - if the Orders are not approved) the Overview & Scrutiny work programme that will run until the new unitary Wiltshire Council is established on 1 April 2009.

2. **Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme:**

At the Board's first informal meeting at Urchfont members considered the role of Overview and Scrutiny during the transition process. Several agreements were reached at that meeting:

To keep under review the work of the Implementation Executive and the Joint Implementation Team, by:

- Holding the Implementation Executive to account by regularly reviewing the IE work plan, the Transition Project Plan including the budgets and risks associated with the project.
- Challenging aspects of the programme by calling members, officers and other stakeholders to appear before the Board and give account as necessary.
- Commissioning scrutiny review groups to examine and develop proposals in a limited number of priority areas, these were identified as:
 - the role and operation of the of the community area boards and area partnerships
 - the delivery of development control (local planning) services
 - delivery of waste collection, recycling and waste disposal
 - the delivery of local housing services and affordable housing
 - community access arrangements
- Develop and maintain communications with existing scrutiny committees in each authority and all non-executive members in Wiltshire, facilitating participation in the O&S transition programme and encouraging members to refer matters to the Board for consideration.
- Seek to engage a wide range of partners and other stakeholder groups in the work of the Board and in the transition process.
- In addition, the Board will develop and recommend effective overview and scrutiny arrangements for the new unitary Wiltshire Council that build on best practice and latest approaches in the field and fully reflect the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Collectively these activities will provide a demanding work programme for the Board. The table at **Annex A** sets out the activities involved and the level of resource required to support each element of the programme.

3. **Scrutiny Reviews:**

The Board has identified five priority areas where it wishes to commission smaller groups of non-executive members to undertake more structured scrutiny reviews. The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Officers Team has attempted to scope these reviews based on the views expressed by the Board at its two previous meetings. The scoping papers are attached at **Annex B**. Members may wish to review and approve the scope of each review and to seek nominations from each council to fill the positions available.

4. **Resource Implications:**

The Joint O&S Officer Team has assessed the resource implications associated with the programme. This assessment is set out in the table attached at **Annex A**. The time commitments are an estimate at this stage and will need to be carefully monitored during the programme.

Members have previously noted that scrutiny resources in Wiltshire are very limited. This has been further eroded by recent departures and secondments. The pressure will be most apparent in the delivery of the five scrutiny reviews. To help share the load, minimise the impact on individual scrutiny officers and expedite the reviews in a timely manner it is suggested that two officers be allocated to work on each review (a total of 10 days work for each over a 3 month period). Salisbury District Council has four scrutiny officers available, the County has three and North Wilts and West Wiltshire have one scrutiny/policy officer each. Kennet have no dedicated scrutiny resource. In addition, it is anticipated that a significant resource will be needed to support the work of the Board, oversee the programme and maintain effective communications with non-executive members and existing scrutiny committees.

The full work programme of JOSTB will commit around 25% of the total scrutiny officer capacity in Wiltshire (currently at 5 FTE). This pressure on existing staff may necessitate a bid to the Programme Board for additional resources to support the work of the JOSTB. The Joint O&S Officer Team will assess this and report further to the next meeting.

5. **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board:

- (1) Approves the Scrutiny Review Programme attached at Annex A.
- (2) Approves the draft scoping papers for the five priority reviews set out at Annex B.
- (3) Invites the five councils to appoint members to fill the positions on the scrutiny reviews.
- (4) Informs the Implementation Executive of the review programme.
- (5) Notes the resource implications of the programme and calls for a further report at the next meeting on how this may be addressed.