

21 July 2015

Agenda Item 6

Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2015/16

Report author:	Bob Pullen – Policy and Performance Officer
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Recommendations

That the Committee considers which topics or services it should review during the course of the year.

1 Purpose of report

1.1 Following the initial discussion of the Committee’s work programme for the forthcoming year at the meeting on 24 June, this report collates the suggestions made at that meeting and provides an initial analysis to help the Committee to select and prioritise what reviews might be taken forward.

2 Background

2.1 Each year, the Committee decides which topics it should review and in what priority order. This year, the Committee will need to be mindful of its revised terms of reference (Appendix i) and the fact that some reviews instigated in previous years by the former Policy Overview Committee may need taking forward to completion.

3 Discussion

3.1 As acknowledged at the meeting held on 24 June, if the Scrutiny Committee is to be effective and bring real value, it will need to focus on where it can make its biggest impact. This means basing decisions on what topics or services to review on clear objectives and hard evidence why such a review is justified.

3.2 The topics and services that were suggested as possible areas to review at the last meeting are listed in the schedule at Appendix ii together with existing activity or reviews which were previously instigated either by the Scrutiny Committee or the former Policy Overview Committee.

3.3 In prioritising which reviews to take forward, it should be remembered that the Committee will also be considering regular finance and performance reports and undertaking the annual scrutiny of the Cabinet’s budget proposals which all needs to be fitted into the Committee’s work schedule. There may also be other urgent items arising during the course of the year which will require the Committee’s attention.

3.4 New reviews will need to be scoped and a review plan (setting out clear justification, objectives, timescales and what information is being sought, and

from whom), will need to be approved by the Committee in advance of any work starting in earnest.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 That the Committee considers which topics or services it should review during the course of the year.

5 Officer contacts

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Terms of reference for the Scrutiny Committee

Preamble: the Scrutiny Committee satisfies the requirement under legislation (S.9F of the Local Government Act 2000 as inserted by the Localism Act 2011) to include provision for the appointment of one or more committees. The Scrutiny Committee plays a particular role in scrutinising the Executive's annual budget proposals as part of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules (Part 4.3 of the Constitution refers).

General role: within the terms of reference, the Committee will:

- (i) review or scrutinise decisions made, and performance of, the Cabinet and Committees and Council Officers both in relation to individual decisions and over time;
- (ii) review or scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas;
- (iii) require Members of the Cabinet and/or Committees and Chief Officers to attend before it to answer questions about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects;
- (iv) make recommendations to the Cabinet or appropriate Committee or Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process – it is expected that reviews of policy arising out of the work of the Committee would be referred to the Policy Development and Review Committee;
- (v) review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the Scrutiny Committee and local people about their activities and performance;
- (vi) make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive;
- (vii) make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of the area;
- (viii) exercise the right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the executive;
- (ix) consider Councillor Call for Action requests in accordance with the Councillor Call for Action Protocol contained in Part 5 of this Constitution; and
- (x) in accordance with Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006, to act as the Council's "Crime and Disorder Committee" in terms of reviewing and scrutinising decisions made, or other actions taken, in connection with the responsible authorities discharge of their Crime and Disorder functions.

The Scrutiny Committee shall exercise overall responsibility for any finances made available to them.

Annual Report – the Scrutiny Committee must report annually to the full council on its work and make recommendations for amended working methods if appropriate.

Appendix ii

Scrutiny Committee – Possible review activity 2015/16

Topic	Ongoing review/activity?	Commentary
1 - Financial monitoring	Yes	The Committee will continue to receive quarterly financial monitoring reports during the course of the year to review.
2 - Performance monitoring	Yes	The Committee will continue to receive quarterly performance monitoring reports during the course of the year to review.
3 - Council Budget	Yes	The annual review of the Cabinet's budget proposals for 2016/17 will take place at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 28 January 2016.
4 – Fees and charges	Yes	The Committee has traditionally reviewed the Cabinet's proposals for setting Fees and Charges for Council Services for the next financial year. This is likely to take place at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11 November 2015.
5 – Elections	No	The Chairman of the Committee has received an undertaking from the Chief Executive that a report on the conduct of this years combined Parliamentary, Borough and Elections will be provided to the Committee for review.
6 – Mid Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP): Planning Support	Yes	There was an initial discussion with the MKIP Board during a joint meeting of the Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells Scrutiny Committees on 23 February 2015 about Planning Support. Since then, Tunbridge Wells BC has announced that it would explore withdrawing from the shared Planning Support Service and the three authorities have established a Planning Support Disaggregation Project Board to consider the implications of Tunbridge Wells BC's decision. The outcome of the 23 February joint scrutiny meeting was that a Task and Finish Group comprised of a small number of members from each of the Committees would review MKIP Planning Support, but that may now be put on hold to await developments.
7 - Asset transfers	Yes	Interim report submitted to Cabinet during 2011/12. Task and Finish Group established to review what had happened since 2011/12 during last Municipal

Topic	Ongoing review/activity?	Commentary
		Year. A report of the review needs to be brought to the Committee for consideration as soon as possible.
8 - Economic development review	Yes	This review had commenced in 2013/14 under the former Policy Overview Committee when the Task and Finish Group set up to lead it undertook a number of interviews with business interests across the Borough. The Committee discussed this at their last meeting and suggested the review might focus in on some specific elements of economic development – e.g. how the Council was assisting businesses and the apprenticeship scheme.
9 - Housing services	No	Suggestion made at last Committee meeting to review homelessness, lack of affordable housing and the effects of the Spare Room Subsidy.
10 – Planning services	Partly	Suggestion made at last Committee meeting to review issues within Development Control and Planning Enforcement. However, it was pointed out that the Policy Development and Review Committee was already engaged in a review of the Planning Enforcement Charter and Strategy. Furthermore, it was planned that a Joint Task and Finish Group formed from the Scrutiny Committees of SBC, MBC and TWBC would review MKIP Planning Support.
11 – Leisure and tourism	No	Suggestion made at last meeting to review issues relating to leisure and tourism provision within Swale. Were we making the most of existing facilities?
12 – Local Engagement Forums	No	Suggestion made at last meeting to review whether the LEFs were actually engaging with local residents and what were they trying to achieve.