

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 25 March 2015

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Planning the Commission's 2015/16 work programme

Lead officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services

Lead member: Councillor Peter Southgate, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

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Recommendations:

- A. That the Commission reviews its 2014/15 work programme (set out in the appendix), identifying what worked well, what worked less well and what the Commission would like to do differently next year;
 - B. That the Commission suggests items for inclusion in the 2015/16 work programme – both agenda items and potential task group review topics;
 - C. That the Commission re-establishes the financial monitoring group and makes recommendations regarding its work programme;
 - D. That the Commission advises on agenda items for its meeting on 14 July 2015.
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To enable the Commission to plan its work programme for the forthcoming municipal year and, in particular, to agree agenda items for the first meeting of the municipal year.

2. DETAILS

Identifying issues for the 2015/16 work programme

- 2.1 The scrutiny officers are currently gathering suggestions for issues to scrutinise, either as Panel agenda items or task group reviews. Suggestions are being sought from members of the public, councillors and partner organisations including the police, NHS and Merton Voluntary Service Council. Other issues of public concern will be identified through the Annual Residents Survey. The council's departmental management teams have been consulted in order to identify forthcoming issues on which the Panel could contribute to the policymaking process.
- 2.2 The Commission is therefore invited to suggest items for inclusion in the 2015/16 work programme – both agenda items and potential task group review topics.
- 2.3 All the suggestions received will be discussed at the Commission's topic workshop on 20 May 2015. As in previous years, participants will be asked to prioritise the suggestions using criteria so that the issues chosen relate to:

- the Council's strategic priorities;
- services that are underperforming;
- issues of public interest or concern;
- issues where scrutiny could make a difference

2.4 The Commission is asked to take into account a reference from the General Purposes Committee meeting on 12 March 2015. General Purposes Committee discussed the use of consultants and temporary staff, including the recruitment and retention of social workers. It sought assurance that these issues had been scrutinised and recommended that the Commission consider them for inclusion in its 2015/16 work programme.

Financial monitoring scrutiny task group

2.5 For the past three years the Commission has established a financial monitoring task group to lead on the scrutiny of financial monitoring information on behalf of the Commission, with the following terms of reference:

- to carry out scrutiny of the Council's financial monitoring information on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
- to advise on other agenda items as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
- to report minutes of its meetings back to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
- to send via the Commission any recommendations or references to Cabinet, Council or other decision making bodies.

2.6 The task group has met four times a year to enable the financial monitoring information to be examined on a quarterly basis. The meetings are held in public and the agenda and minutes are published on the Council's website.

2.7 The task group, at its meeting on 26 February 2015, identified a number of issues that could be scrutinised in more detail in order to contribute to the identification of alternative savings and sources of revenue as requested by the Commission. The Head of Democracy Services will add these to the topic longlist for consideration at the topic workshop on 20 May - community transport, commercial waste service and estate management.

2.8 The task group will meet again on 1 July (with its 2014/15 membership) to receive the final 2014/15 monitoring report, examine the capital programme in more detail and review HR metrics.

2.9 It is recommended that the Commission agree to re-establish the task group for 2015/16. The Commission would then formally appoint members at its meeting on 14 July 2015.

Planning the first meeting of the 2015/16 municipal year

2.10 A note of the workshop discussion and draft work programme will be reported to the first meeting of the Commission in the new municipal year. The Commission will be requested to discuss this draft and agree any changes that it wishes to make.

- 2.11 In previous years the Commission has received presentations from the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Borough Commander at this meeting. This provides an opportunity to consider their priorities and challenges for the year ahead, alongside the scrutiny work programme discussion. The Chief Executive is unavailable to attend the 14 July meeting but he and the Leader could attend on 15 September. It is therefore suggested that the Commission invite the Borough Commander to the July meeting and the Leader and Chief Executive to the September meeting.
- 2.12 The Commission is asked to advise on any other items that it would be helpful to include on the agenda for its 14 July meeting.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission can select topics for scrutiny review and for other scrutiny work as it sees fit, taking into account views and suggestions from officers, partner organisations and the public.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

Scrutiny topic suggestions are being sought from members of the public, councillors, council officers and partner organisations including the police, NHS and Merton Voluntary Service Council.

5. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None for the purposes of this report.

6. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are none specific to this report.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engaging with local partners in scrutiny reviews. Furthermore, the outcomes of reviews are intended to benefit all sections of the local community.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Police and Justice Act 2006 requires every Council to have a scrutiny committee with the power to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken by the Council and the other responsible authorities in the exercise of their crime and disorder functions. The other responsible authorities are the police, the police authority (Metropolitan Police Authority), the fire and rescue authority and the Primary Care Trust.
- 8.2 In Merton the responsible committee is the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.
- 8.3 Under the 2006 Act, the responsible committee is required to “meet to review or scrutinise decisions made, or action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions, no less than once every twelve months”. In doing so, it may require the attendance of officers from the Council, the police and co-operating authorities.

- 9. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
 - 9.1 None relating to this report.
- 10. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
 - 10.1 2014/15 work programme
- 11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**
 - 11.1 None