

TO: ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC POLICY COMMITTEE – 8 JUNE 2005

SUBJECT: WORK PLAN FOR 2005/06

FROM: MEMBERS' SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider and agree the work plan for 2005/06 and to consider the approach to carrying out the work of the Committee.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Annual Council at its meeting on 18th May 2005 agreed a change to its constitution in respect of its Overview and Scrutiny arrangements. The new arrangements:

- Created an Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee that would focus on reviewing items of business to be considered by the Executive.
- Maintained the Audit and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee whose role was not appreciably altered.
- Created two Policy Committees whose role would be to:
 - Review past decisions
 - Develop council policy
 - Look at specific issues and problems within service areas

2.1 The two Policy Committees are Environment and Economic Policy, and Cultural and Social Policy. The table at Appendix 1 illustrates what the two Policy Committees and Audit and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee cover in terms of Executive portfolios, service activities, service areas, Community Plan areas and themes, and council strategy/policy areas.

2.2 This change of structure has meant disassembling the work plans of the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committees and joining the relevant sections together. However, as the Committee has a different remit then it is appropriate to consider what issues and items of work the Committee really want to consider for the year ahead so that staff can prepare the information and plan ahead. To assist in this deliberation, Appendix 2 contains all of those work items that are relevant to this Committee that were on the work plans of the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committees and suggested approaches to these. This does not mean to say that the new Committee need follow these suggestions or include any of them within their work plan as it is the Committee's choice. In particular, the work plan includes reports on quarterly performance that will in fact be considered by the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee and may no longer be relevant on a quarterly basis but Councillors may want to look at particular performance issues or indeed such issues may be referred to them to look at.

2.3 In exercising that choice, members may want to consider the contents of Appendix 1 as this indicates the scope of areas in their remit. Also attached are the Portfolio Holder Statements at Appendix 3 for the areas relevant to this Committee as there may be some issues and items that the Committee will want to consider or to understand how they are being progressed. In addition, at Appendix 4 is a list of those items of the Executive considered over the past year that are relevant to the scope of this Committee. Those in *italics* are areas suggested the Committee may want to include within their work programme. As part of the role of the Committee is to review past decisions this may prove useful in helping to determine which past decision(s) should be reviewed.

2.4 When considering items for inclusion within the work plan the Committee should be mindful of the following guidance from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) on this matter, to be sure that the subject is significant, as set out below:

“The first step is for scrutiny members to be sure that the subject to be reviewed is significant. Undertaking in-depth investigations is resource intensive of both member and officer resources. Investing such a high level of resources should only be undertaken for high priority issues.

The following criteria which could be used to ‘check’ a topic against, to ensure that it is significant:

Significant Items

- a) Issue identified by members, or in the local media, as a key issue of public concern (through members’ surgeries and other constituency activities);
- b) Poor Performing Service/ High level of user dissatisfaction with service;
- c) Service ranked as important by community (through market research, citizens’ panel and so on);
- d) High level of budgetary commitment to policy/service area;
- e) Pattern of budgetary overspends;
- f) Council or central government corporate priority area;
- g) Issue raised by external audit’s Management Letter, or in Inspectorates Reports (OFSTED, Joint SSI, Best Value); or
- h) New Government guidance or legislation.

2.5 In addition to the work plan for the year ahead, members should consider how they wish to deal with the work items. Reports can of course be prepared and presented in the perhaps more normal style. Councillors can work in groups outside of the traditional Committee style meetings. Indeed, Councillors do not have to hold the scheduled meetings as a formal meeting. They can choose another way of working. Councillors could split into smaller groups to look at items and then report back to the wider Committee. Experience has shown this to be a very effective way of working. It also has the benefit of enabling more junior staff the opportunity to gain experience of working with Councillors. In addition, select committee style meetings may also be appropriate especially if Councillors wish to invite a number of people external to the Council to attend and to contribute or indeed to be examined.

3. **POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK**

3.1 The work of the Policy Committee is now an essential part of the Council's constitutional structure and its approach to delivering its services and projects.

4. **OUTCOMES REQUIRED**

4.1 The Committee is asked to decide its work plan for the year ahead, taking account of the time available set against the importance of the subject.

4.2 The Committee is asked to decide on which approach to deploy in respect of the items that make up its work programme.

4.3 The Strategic Director (Environment) and Committee Services Officer be asked to programme in when the items to be considered by this Committee for each meeting of the municipal year.

Graham Leach
Committee Services Officer

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Annual Council 18th May 2005

Work plan reports to Environment and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committees March 2005

Areas in District Affected:

All

Executive Portfolio Area and Holder:

Environmental Services – Councillor Mrs Begg and Economic Services – Councillor Tamlin

For further information about this report please contact:

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