

Report to: Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee

Date: 25 June 2007

Report of: Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Report No: 6

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Report Title: **Identification of Issues for Scrutiny / Annual Work Programme**

**Confidential /
Non Confidential:**
(delete as approp)

(Non-Confidential) This report does **not** contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public

Purpose:

To present to members a list of suitable issues for scrutiny to assist them in the selection of the issues they believe are the most pertinent for the Scrutiny Committee to receive reports on or investigate further during the current municipal year.

Recommendations:

1. To approve the list of issues identified for the Scrutiny Committee for the next twelve months.
2. To consider the identification of further issues for inclusion on the Committee's work programme.
3. To consider the identification of any appropriate issue to take forward as a Scrutiny Panel.

Decision:

**Background
Doc(s):**

Members will be aware that Scrutiny Committee agendas include Minutes of previous Executive, Executive Member and Policy Development Group meetings. Although this ensures that Members have a complete overview of the work of the Council, relating to the remit of the Scrutiny Committee, it often means that Scrutiny repeats overview work that has already been undertaken. Scrutiny is often most effective when it is retrospective, reviewing policy rather than simply repeating an overview process already conducted by a PDG.

The attached report, therefore, includes:-

A timetabled list of issues identified by the Chair and the Vice Chair as issues they would like to receive reports/investigate over the next twelve months. Many items on this list emanate from Executive decisions made over the last year, along with other matters from performance and external inspection information.

Background Information

1.0 Choosing Issues

At the Draft Work Programme Meeting with the chair and vice chair the matters set out in 1.1 and 1.2 below were borne in mind and Members of the Committee are asked to refer to these issues when considering additional items for consideration during the municipal year.

1.1 Key Factors in Assessing Relevance of Issues for Scrutiny

Relevance

- The Policy highlighted for Scrutiny is under the remit of the Scrutiny Committee.
- That the planned scrutiny has an impact in improving services to better meet the needs and expectations of residents/customers.
- Ensure that the policy, action, or organisation is not being scrutinised elsewhere.

Public Interest

- There is evidence of significant Bolton wide public interest in this topic.
- It is a “high profile” topic for specific Bolton wide communities or interest groups.
- The review would need to give an opportunity for the people of Bolton to have a say.

Impact

- The review will have a significant impact on the “well-being” of the public of Bolton.
- The issue has implications for diversity, equality and social inclusion.
- This could make a big difference to the way services are delivered.
- This could make a big difference to the way resources are used.

Performance

- Is Performance particularly good/bad?

1.2 Identification of Criteria to Evaluate the Appropriateness of Issues for Scrutiny Panels

The review of whether a subject is suitable for scrutiny should seek to address:-

- Relevance
 - Would a review be replicated by any other internal or external review process?
 - Is the service or issue a national government priority?
 - Have there been national changes to policy?
 - Is the issue of significant interest to the Bolton wide public?
 - Would there be a significant impact on a particular community? (both interest and locality)
Have there been local changes to policy?

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- Is it an area of poor performance?
- Is it an area of outstanding performance?
- Is there a pattern of budgetary overspend in service area?
- Has there been a change to the remit of our arms length bodies?
- Potential Impact of a Review
 - Is it possible for the Scrutiny Panel to make a valuable contribution?
 - Are there sufficient resources both in terms of finance and officer availability to have a tangible impact?

1.3 The Council's Key Aims and Change Programme Themes

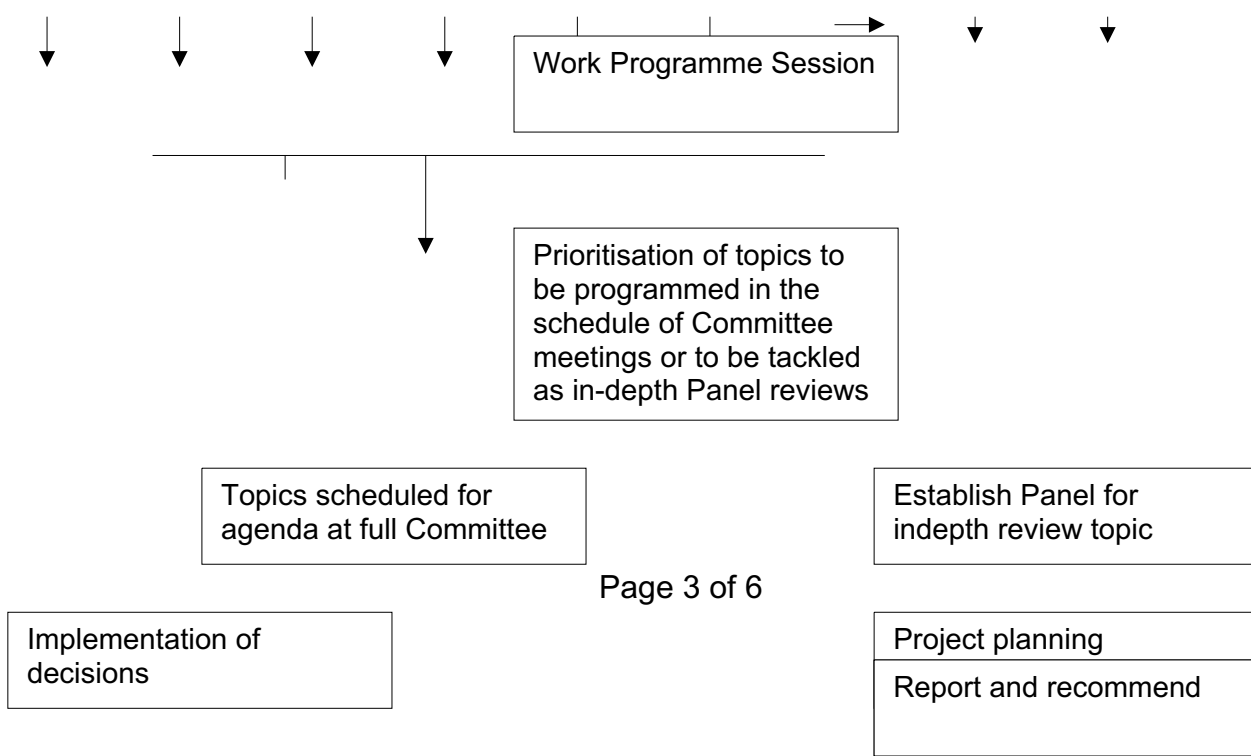
It is also worth keeping in mind the Council's Key Aims and Change Programme Themes when considering Committee Work Programmes :-

Key Aims – Strong and Confident Bolton, Safe Bolton, Achieving Bolton, Prosperous Bolton, Clean and Green Bolton, Healthy Bolton, Transforming our Services.

Change Programme Themes – Customer Access, Local Delivery, Seamless Service, Shared Services and Resources.

Attached at **Appendix One** is a schedule which Members can use as an aid to the identification of items for consideration by the Committee.

1.4 Planning and Managing the Committee Workload



Monitor implementation of
decisions
(Schedule at each
Committee meeting)

Monitor implementation of
recommendations
(Schedule at each
Committee meeting)

Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

25 June 2007	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agreement of Work Programme 2. Corporate Resources Department Performance Indicators – Quarter 4 2006/07
20 August 2007	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Benefit Fraud 2. Shaping Future Services 3. Voluntary Early Retirement and Ill Health Retirements, Quarters 3 & 4 2006/07
15 October 2007	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access to Council Services Scrutiny Panel – Executive Member response 2. Publishing costs 3.
3 December 2007	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.
4 February 2008	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementation of revised cash collection facilities 2.
14 April 2008	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.

Below is a list of monitoring items that the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee has usually also considered as part of its work programme:

- Corporate Resources Department Performance Indicators (quarterly)
- Central Departments Service and Financial Performance monitoring report (quarterly)
- Ill Health Retirements and Voluntary Early Retirements (bi-annual)
- Employment Review: Departmental Comparisons (annual)
- Employment Review: Staff Audit (annual)
- Employment Review: Results of Recruitment Monitoring (annual)
- Employment Review: Exit, Disciplinary and Grievance Monitoring (annual)
- Strategic Employment Monitoring Programme Pay & Remuneration (annual)
- Strategic Employment Monitoring Employee Management (annual)
- Strategic Employment Monitoring Basis of Employment (annual)
- Sickness Absence Monitor (annual)

Also to be added to the Committee's work programme are relevant items (scheduled to appear before the Executive or relevant Executive Members) from the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions, and issues identified by Scrutiny Committee members for inclusion.

Evaluating the Work of Scrutiny Panels

Evaluating the work of Scrutiny Panels will become increasingly important to aid the Council in determining what works well and in terms of Government expectations.

Evaluating the panel and monitoring implementation:-

1. At their last meeting, all panels include an item in which they look back on the panel's work and evaluate its effectiveness. Panel members' views of what has and has not been effective is noted so that it can be taken on board for future panels (item for web site).
2. Once the report has been received by the Executive it is sent out to all those who contributed to the panel's work along with a short evaluation form asking contributors about their experience of the scrutiny panel, from the adequacy of administrative arrangements to the standard of interaction with the panel and their views on the final report. The published report is put on the web site and also sent to all libraries and is provided on request to anyone who wants a copy.
3. Ultimately the real effectiveness of the panel must be measured by the difference it makes to outcomes. This remains extremely hard to evaluate given that there may be many changes occurring within a particular service area at any one time due to any number of reasons and these can all have an impact on residents' lives. Singling out the effect of the implementation of scrutiny panel recommendations is therefore very difficult.
4. However, care should be taken to ensure that those recommendations that are agreed by the Executive are implemented.

This should be done via a standard Decision Monitoring Schedule which will be implemented this municipal year.

In certain circumstances it may though be necessary to write off some outstanding recommendations. This may be because implementation was initially agreed in principle, subject to funding being approved but despite attempts to locate sources there is no reason to think that funding will be available in the near future. It could also be because legislation or internal changes had altered the shape of a service to such an extent that some recommendations had become obsolete.