

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 15 March 2010
Report of: Borough Solicitor
Subject/Title: Strengthening the Overview and Scrutiny Function

1.0 Report Summary

To update on the work carried out by Overview and Scrutiny so far and to establish a framework to strengthen the overview and scrutiny function during 2010/11.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee approve the recommended approach and timetable for approving Overview and Scrutiny Work programmes in 2010/2011 and to make any initial suggestions on potential work programme items for 2010/2011

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 It is good practice to agree a Work Programme to enable effective management of the Committee's business.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

- 6.1 Not known at this stage.

7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 7.1 None identified at the moment.

8.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 8.1 Not known at this stage.

9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk Management

10.1 There are no identifiable risks.

11.0 Background and Options

11.1 Since vesting day the Cabinet and CMT has focused on ensuring that critical services are delivered to some of the most vulnerable members of our communities. This has been especially demanding for Cabinet Members and Chief Officers who have had tremendous challenges facing them. As such, to embark on a rigorous and challenging Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2009/10 would have added little significant value to the Council. In recognition of these unique circumstances the Overview and Scrutiny Committees have undertaken a light touch approach to their work. They have focused on developing effective working relationships and understanding the emerging issues for the Council and its Partners. This is helping to provide clarity about the role of Overview and Scrutiny at Cheshire East that was absent at the time of vesting day. This paper sets out the progress made by each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, other achievements to date and makes proposals on developing a rigorous and challenging Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2010/11.

12.0 The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2009/10

12.1 Attached at Appendix 1 is a summary of the different matters which each Committee has been involved in that form the basis of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2009/10. Each matter has been linked to a corporate objective. For 2010/11 this should be expanded to include LAA priorities and relevant BVPIs etc.

12.2 A number of other activities have been taking place to develop the Overview and Scrutiny function and these include

- Establishing a Scrutiny Chairmen's Group that co-ordinates the work of the Committees and champions the Overview and Scrutiny Function
- Training and development sessions have been held and further session on scoping and questioning techniques will be run by North West Employers in March 2010.
- Effective Health Scrutiny is taking place
- A successful joint bid to the Centre for Public Scrutiny to become a Scrutiny Development Areas to help develop the role of overview and scrutiny in tackling health inequalities.

- Three call ins of a Cabinet Decisions
- Strong focus on implications of CAA
- Strong relationship with colleagues from Performance Management
- Extensive research on the Local Strategic Partnership and the LAA
- Development of a Protocol between the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Safer Cheshire East Partnership to provide a framework for that scrutiny to take place in accordance with Part 3 of the Police and Justice Act 2006
- Leading role in the Budget consultation for 2011/2012 through the establishment of a Budget Consultation group. This group will begin work in April 2010 to prepare for the 2011/2012 Budget

13. Strengthening the Overview and Scrutiny Function

Since vesting day Overview and Scrutiny has largely sat outside of the business planning cycle of the Council. If Overview and Scrutiny is to add value to the work of the Council, it needs to ensure that the majority of its work programme compliments the work of CMT and Cabinet. Therefore it is proposed that the 2010/11 work programme is drawn up in consultation with CMT and Cabinet and as such becomes part of the business planning cycle of the Council. However, it must also be stressed that in order for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to function effectively, CMT must acknowledge that the role of O&S is not to be restricted to acting as a sounding board for consultations, and therefore ensure that opportunities are given to O&S committees to undertake pre-scrutiny work on policy development. This role should also be reflected in the work programmes of the respective Committees. Set out below is a suggested time table and activity to achieve this:-

Date	Activity
March 2010	Overview and Scrutiny Committees considers potential items for Work Programme for 2010/11
March 2010	CMT considers potential items for Work Programme for 2010/11
March 2010	Cabinet Briefing considers potential items for Work Programme for 2010/11
April 2010	Overview and Scrutiny Committees consider draft Annual Report
April 2010	Annual Scrutiny Review involving CMT Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny to look at lessons learned from 2009/10 and consider emerging Programme for 2010/11
May/June 2010	Annual Scrutiny Review outcomes considered by Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen and draft Programme for 2010/11 agreed and referred to CMT for information. This will include identifying clear links with corporate objectives and LAA priorities.

June 2010	Overview and Scrutiny Committees receive Work Programme and begin planning its delivery
July 2010	Council Receives Annual Scrutiny Report

Consideration should also be given to the Scrutiny Chairmen presenting a joint report to Council meeting every 6 months on the specific work of Overview and Scrutiny and to use this as an opportunity to promote Overview and Scrutiny activities generally.

14.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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