

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## REPORT TO: CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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**Date of Meeting:** 14 June 2011  
**Report of:** Borough Solicitor  
**Subject/Title:** Work Programme update

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### **1.0 Report Summary**

- 1.1 To review items in the 2011/2012 Work Programme listed in the schedule attached, together with any other items suggested by Committee Members.

### **2.0 Recommendations**

That the 2011/2012 work programme be reviewed.

### **3.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is good practice to agree and review the 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 - Carbon reduction - Health**

- 6.1 Not known at this stage.

### **7.0 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 Not known at this stage.

### **8.0 Legal Implications**

- 8.1 None.

### **9.0 Risk Management**

9.1 There are no identifiable risks.

## **10.0 Background and Options**

10.1 In preparation for the 2011/2012 civic year, the Committee reviewed the 2010/2011 work programme to identify any items that could be deleted, and those which should remain. The schedule attached to this report reflects that position.

10.2 The following three matters had been subject to Overview and Scrutiny monitoring during the last 12 months:

- Highways Contract Monitoring Group
- Macclesfield Data Centre Monitoring Group
- Budget Monitoring Group

10.3 This committee originally set up the Highways Monitoring group to monitor the progress of the procurement process. A decision on the Highways contract is expected on 6 June 2011, which in effect closes the procurement process and it therefore follows that there will be no need to re convene the monitoring group.

10.4 The Macclesfield data centre monitoring group consisted of only two Councillors both of whom are no longer Members of this Committee. The Committee received a very brief update report at its previous meeting but up to that point, very little had been reported to the Committee by way of progress, and therefore the need for this group to continue must be in doubt.

10.5 For the past two years, the Committee has appointed a Budget Monitoring Group. In the 2010/11 civic year, its terms of reference were:

- To influence the budget setting process and to ensure that the Council has regard to Corporate priorities and to agree and set milestones.
- To submit initial comments on the draft budget prior to formal consultation with the 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- To determine the future consultation process for Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- To have in place an agreed mechanism for regular budget monitoring

Its intended outcome was to:

1. Budgets to be disaggregated to fit in with the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements in relation to budget setting.
2. Agreement that each of the 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees be given an opportunity to have an input in setting budget priorities for the 2011/2012 budget.

3. An advisory report to Cabinet, containing the preliminary views of Corporate Scrutiny on the budget challenge process, in light of the Government's funding announcement.
  4. A cycle of dedicated O&S meetings in early January to formally comment on the budget
- 10.6 It is well documented that due to late decisions by Government on the Comprehensive Spending Review, the focus of this group shifted away from the original terms of reference as it became involved in detail consideration of the budget and the budget challenge process.
- 10.7 The Committee is requested to consider whether this group should be reconvened. If it is to be continued, the Committee may wish to consider amending its terms of reference to concentrate on a narrower focus of the Budget Consultation Process.
- 10.8 Members will recall that a number of changes were made to Portfolio responsibilities at the Annual meeting of Council on 18 May 2011. Prior to that decision, the 5 Overview and Scrutiny committees were aligned to individual Portfolio holders. In particular, the changes are likely to have a significant impact on the potential workload of Corporate Scrutiny committee in that the following service areas no longer fall within the remit of this committee:
- Assets
  - Libraries
  - Leisure Services
  - Leisure and Cultural Strategy
- 10.9 The Scrutiny Chairmen's group has been charged with the initial task of reviewing the remits of the Committees and it is expected that Council will take a formal decision in July 2011. The group is due to meet the Leader of the Council immediately prior to this meeting to discuss with him the rationale behind the Cabinet changes. For that reason, it will not be possible to finalise the work programme today, because the responsibilities of all 6 Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be subject to Council approval on 21 July 2011.
- 10.10 Members are asked when reviewing the work programme attached to pay close attention to the Corporate Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy.
- 10.11 Members must also have regard to the general criteria which should be applied to all potential items when considering whether any Scrutiny activity is appropriate. Matters should be assessed against the following criteria:
- Does the issue fall within a corporate priority
  - Is the issue of key interest to the public
  - Does the matter relate to a poor or declining performing service for which there is no obvious explanation
  - Is there a pattern of budgetary overspends

- Is it a matter raised by external audit management letters and or audit reports?
- Is there a high level of dissatisfaction with the service

If during the assessment process any of the following emerge, then the topic should be rejected:

- The topic is already being addressed elsewhere
- The matter is subjudice
- Scrutiny cannot add value or is unlikely to be able to conclude an investigation within the specified timescale

## **11     *Access to Information***

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

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