

Maidstone Borough Council

Scrutiny Coordinating Committee

Tuesday 25 February 2014

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Development

Report of: Christian Scade, Senior Corporate Policy Officer

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to create a work programme for the 2014/15 municipal year.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to consider ways to develop an effective Overview and Scrutiny work programme and to consider opportunities for input from stakeholders / partners to ensure priorities and concerns from the local community are picked up.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee consider: (a) ways to develop an effective 2014/15 work programme for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee and; (b) opportunities for stakeholders / partners to influence the work programme.

3. Background

- 3.1 Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) is required to approve and co-ordinate an annual work programme. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of each OSC have an important role to play in ensuring that time and resources are effectively and efficiently used.
- 3.2 The careful selection and prioritisation of work is essential if the scrutiny function is to be successful, achieve added value and retain credibility.
- 3.3 The breakdown below provides a useful summary and *aide memoire* on the role of scrutiny:
 - *Holding to Account*
 - *Policy Development*
 - *Policy Review*
 - *Performance Management*
 - *External Scrutiny*

- 3.4 Each work programme should be realistic, relevant to Members and be able to be adequately resourced. They also need to be flexible to ensure they remain relevant and retain a degree of capacity to enable additional issues to be scrutinised urgently.
- 3.5 In addition to committee reports, scrutiny reviews are an important aspect of Overview and Scrutiny work, and provide opportunities to thoroughly investigate topics and to make improvements. This type of work should enable more robust and effective challenge and lead to better decision-making. In depth reviews should also help engage the public, and provide greater transparency and accountability.
- 3.6 At the start of the 2013/14 municipal year each Overview and Scrutiny Committee took part in a "marketplace" activity. These took place before the first round of meetings and enabled scrutiny Members to meet with officers to gain a better understanding of major pieces of work, applicable to each Committee's terms of reference, for the coming year.
- 3.7 In addition the following information was made available to scrutiny committees in June 2013 to help with their work planning:
- Cabinet Members presented their priorities for the year;
 - Relevant issues referred to each Committee by the 2012/13 Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
 - Review suggestions received from members of the public, Members and Officers;
 - The Council's priorities and outcomes as identified in the Strategic Plan.
- 3.8 To develop the scrutiny work programmes for 2014/15 Members of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee may wish to provide feedback on the "marketplace" activities and the information that was provided to each Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the start of the 2013/14 municipal year.
- 3.9 In addition, Members may wish to consider whether input from community representatives and key stakeholders would be a useful addition to the "marketplace" activities.

4. Background Documents

- 4.1 None