

## **Maidstone Borough Council**

### **Scrutiny Coordinating Committee**

**Thursday 10 July 2014**

#### **Future Work Programme and Member Development Needs**

**Report of:** Christian Scade

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 To consider topics for inclusion in the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee's work programme for the 2014/15 Municipal Year.
- 1.2 To consider training needs or development areas for Overview and Scrutiny for the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

#### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the Committee:
  - (a) Considers its work programme, attached at **Appendix A**, and suggests items for consideration at future meetings, to ensure it is appropriate and covers all issues Members wish to consider within the Committee's remit.
  - (b) Considers the development activities planned for Overview and Scrutiny and identifies any additional training needs or development areas.

#### **3. Background to recommendation**

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee is a Committee consisting of the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It will meet from time to time to consider matters relating to the conduct, performance and procedures of the Committees; to develop mechanisms for addressing cross-cutting issues; and to prevent duplication in the work of the individual committees.
- 3.2 The Committee may wish to consider the support and development it could offer the four Scrutiny Committees at each meeting by structuring its own work programme.

#### **4. Member Development Needs**

- 4.1 Overview and Scrutiny requires a number of skills and the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee, in its report (April, 2013) to Council on the Cabinet and Enhanced Scrutiny Model, made the following recommendation:

- “Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee should identify development needs at the beginning of the year and then on a quarterly basis via the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.”

4.2 Skills identified for Scrutiny Committee Members are listed in the Members’ Overview and Scrutiny Handbook and the list below should be used to identify any training needs or development areas. These can be addressed through formal training, one-to-one sessions or mentoring; many, however will be developed through experience.

### **Skills for Scrutiny Members**

*Adapted from the LGiU Scrutiny Checklist, 2003*

- Taking evidence from a wide range of people, interviewing, questioning and listening skills
- Understanding and using (i) performance management information, (ii) other data and findings from research, (iii) information from inspections
- Understanding the policy framework, skills to review implications of policy framework
- Developing recommendations, negotiating a report across parties and handling minority reports/vies
- Digesting and understanding paperwork and electronic information
- Communication skills
- Influencing skills
- Monitoring implementation of recommendations
- Evaluation skills

4.3 In addition, the skills below have been identified as necessary for Scrutiny Chairmen:

### **Skills for Scrutiny Chairmen**

*Adapted from the LGiU Scrutiny Checklist, 2003*

- Leadership and project management skills
- Planning and managing a busy workload
- Ability to identify topics of public interest for review
- Ability to work with officers

- Chairing meetings of different types, from steering a formal agenda to facilitating an informal group to holding a public consultation session
- Dealing with the media
- Champion scrutiny both internally and externally

## **5. Member Development Activities**

- 5.1 Following discussion at the last Scrutiny Coordinating Committee meeting it was agreed that an event should take place after the election, facilitated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, focussing on developing working relationships between Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet members.
- 5.2 This event will take place on Wednesday 23 July (during the morning).
- 5.3 The session plan, attached at **Appendix B**, has been put together following feedback received at the last Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.
- 5.4 This feedback will also be used to develop a practical and interactive "Questioning and Challenging Skills" event.

## **6. Impact on Corporate Objectives**

- 6.1 Member Development underpins the work of the council in all democratic processes and is critical to ensure that Members are properly supported to undertake their role.

## **7. Other Implications**

- 7.1 The council has agreed a budget for Member Development.
- 7.2 In addition to meeting the individual training needs of elected members, the budget will be used to provide across the board training for all councillors on Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- 7.3 There are financial implications of either increased or reduced provision, but the Member Development Policy would operate within existing budgets.
- 7.4 There are staffing implications because the development of scrutiny training activities is provided by officers. An increase in member participation would make better use of their time.

## **8. Background Papers**

- 8.1 None