

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 28 March 2017

Wards: All

Subject: Planning the Commission's 2017/18 work programme

Lead officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services

Lead member: Councillor Peter Southgate, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

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Recommendations:

- A. That the Commission reviews its 2016/17 work programme (set out in the appendix), identifying what worked well, what worked less well and what the Commission would like to do differently next year;
 - B. That the Commission suggests items for inclusion in the 2017/18 work programme – both agenda items and potential task group review topics;
 - C. That the Commission re-establishes the financial monitoring task group and makes recommendations regarding its work programme;
 - D. That the Commission advises on agenda items for its meeting on 6 July 2017.
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To enable the Commission to plan its work programme for the forthcoming municipal year and, in particular, to agree agenda items for the first meeting of the municipal year.

2. DETAILS

Identifying issues for the 2017/18 work programme

- 2.1 The scrutiny officers are currently gathering suggestions for issues to scrutinise, either as Commission agenda items or task group reviews. Suggestions are being sought from members of the public, councillors and partner organisations including the Police, NHS and Merton Voluntary Service Council. The council's departmental management teams have been consulted in order to identify forthcoming issues on which the Commission could contribute to the policymaking process.
- 2.2 The Commission is therefore invited to suggest items for inclusion in the 2017/18 work programme – both agenda items and potential task group review topics.
- 2.3 All the suggestions received will be discussed at the Commission's topic workshop on 23 May 2017. As in previous years, participants will be asked to prioritise the suggestions using criteria so that the issues chosen relate to:
 - the Council's strategic priorities;
 - services that are underperforming;
 - issues of public interest or concern;
 - issues where scrutiny could make a difference

Financial monitoring scrutiny task group

2.4 In previous years the Commission has established a financial monitoring task group to lead on the scrutiny of financial monitoring information on behalf of the Commission, with the following terms of reference:

- to carry out scrutiny of the Council's financial monitoring information on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
- to advise on other agenda items as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
- to report minutes of its meetings back to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
- to send via the Commission any recommendations or references to Cabinet, Council or other decision making bodies.

2.5 The task group has met four times a year to enable the financial monitoring information to be examined on a quarterly basis. The meetings are held in public and the agenda and minutes are published on the Council's website.

2.6 It is recommended that the Commission agrees to re-establish the task group for 2017/18. The Commission would then formally appoint members at its meeting on 6 July 2017.

Planning the first meeting of the 2017/18 municipal year

2.7 A note of the workshop discussion and draft work programme will be reported to the first meeting of the Commission in the new municipal year. The Commission will be requested to discuss this draft and agree any changes that it wishes to make.

2.8 Last year the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive attended the first meeting of the municipal year to outline their priorities and challenges for the year ahead. The Merton Partnership annual report was also presented at that meeting so that members could ask the Leader and Chief Executive questions on issues arising from the report.

2.9 The Commission also received an analysis of the Members' annual scrutiny survey and a scrutiny improvement plan at its July meeting last year.

2.10 One of the recommendations of the shared and outsourced services task group was that "the Overview and Scrutiny Commission should invite the Chief Executive to present a report annually to set out how challenge has been embedded, what choices have been made by service managers on models of service delivery, what changes resulted from the challenge process and what options were rejected and why".

2.11 The Commission is reminded that it has:

- deferred a report from Safer Merton (on violence against women and girls, services for women in refuges, anti-social behaviour and related matters) from March to July 2017.
- agreed to take an update report on the customer contact programme at its July meeting or refer the matter to the financial monitoring task group

2.12 It is therefore recommended that the Commission should include the following items on the agenda for the meeting on 6 July:

- Priorities and challenges for 2017/18 – Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive
- Merton Partnership Annual Report - Head of Policy, Strategy & Partnerships

- Embedding challenge in models of service delivery – Chief Executive
- Violence against women and girls, services for women in refuges, anti-social behaviour and related matters – Safer Merton
- Customer contact programme – update report (or refer for consideration by financial monitoring task group)
- Analysis of Members’ annual scrutiny survey – Head of Democracy Services

2.13 The Commission is asked to advise on any other items that it would be helpful to include on the agenda for its 6 July meeting.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission can select topics for scrutiny review and for other scrutiny work as it sees fit, taking into account views and suggestions from officers, partner organisations and the public.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

Scrutiny topic suggestions are being sought from members of the public, councillors, council officers and partner organisations including the police, NHS and Merton Voluntary Service Council.

5. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None for the purposes of this report.

6. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are none specific to this report.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

7.1 It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engaging with local partners in scrutiny reviews. Furthermore, the outcomes of reviews are intended to benefit all sections of the local community.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Police and Justice Act 2006 requires every Council to have a scrutiny committee with the power to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken by the Council and the other responsible authorities in the exercise of their crime and disorder functions. The other responsible authorities are the police, the police authority (Metropolitan Police Authority), the fire and rescue authority and the NHS (Merton Clinical Commissioning Group and local NHS Trusts).

8.2 In Merton the responsible committee is the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

8.3 Under the 2006 Act, the responsible committee is required to “meet to review or scrutinise decisions made, or action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions, no less than once every twelve months”. In doing so, it may require the attendance of officers from the Council, the police and co-operating authorities.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None relating to this report.

10. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

10.1 2016/17 work programme

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None