

WORK PROGRAMMES

Report By: Director of Corporate and Customer Services

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To consider the Scrutiny Committees' current and future work programmes.

Background

2. In accordance with the Scrutiny Improvement Plan a report on Scrutiny Committees current Work Programmes will be made to each of the scheduled quarterly meetings of this Scrutiny Committee. Copies of the current Work Programmes are attached.
3. The Scrutiny Improvement Plan also identifies the need for a work programme to be agreed focussing on priority areas for improvement, taking account of the views of other Scrutiny Committee Members, Cabinet Members and Directors.
4. On 10th April, 2006 the Committee agreed that an informal meeting of Members of the Strategic Monitoring Committee should be held to review the development of work programmes. I was recognised that the current work programmes did not substantially reflect the Council-wide themes and issues identified as priority areas in the Council's Overall Improvement Plan, the Annual Operating Plan and the Herefordshire Community Strategy including the Local Area Agreement.
5. At the informal meeting on 4th May Members were presented with a discussion paper setting out a number of possible themes for the scrutiny programme over the next year. Members expressed an interest in pursuing the following matters:
 - **Recycling:** How is it working? What message is the Council sending out (eg use of green recycling bags, opening hours for Recycling Centres and capacity.) Is the Council responding to the public's comments about the Council's approach? What are we doing, are we doing it well enough? What can be done to improve?
 - **Planning (Development Control) Policies:** What is the scope for local discretion, noting implications of some decisions on adult social care provision and other Council priorities?
 - **Understanding and Responding to Customers:** how well are we doing this?
 - **Every Child Matters:** Transition from Social Care to adult life. Exchange of information between Schools and Social Workers. Are the plans being put in place with the Council's partners working well in practice? Is the Council fulfilling its Corporate Parent Role?
 - **Older Peoples Strategy:** Is it robust enough, how does it fit with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, what are the implications for other services?

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Tim Brown, Committee Manager (Scrutiny)
on 01432 260239

- **Improving Adult Social Care:** considering and commenting on the assessments of adult social care needs and services that are being produced, including the wider implications for health services and housing.
 - **Rural Schools Review:** Is the review addressing all the issues? What part do schools play in the Community? What is link to other Council plans?
6. It was noted that the important issue of homelessness was already being dealt with by Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee.
 7. It was also suggested that a programme should be developed for testing whether plans and programmes are being delivered, and having desired practical impact on the user/customer, especially where they are particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged.
 8. The wish was also expressed that consideration be given to how backbench Members of the Council could play a meaningful role in developing policies which helped to improve delivery of services.
 9. It was noted that there would be a number of ways in which the Scrutiny Committees could approach possible themes for the scrutiny work programme. It was suggested that the work need not necessarily take the form of large scale in-depth reviews and that consideration should also be given to undertaking small-scale quick reviews to give the Committees a snapshot of performance in particular areas.
 10. In order to progress matters it is proposed that the Director of Corporate Services be authorised to arrange for scoping work to be carried out on the areas identified above following consultation with the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees.

RECOMMENDATION

- THAT (a) the Director of Corporate Services be authorised to arrange for scoping work to be carried out on the areas identified above following consultation with the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees;**
- and**
- (b) the current Work Programmes be noted, subject to any comment the Committee wishes to make.**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None