

ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME AND POLICY REVIEW 2009-2010

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

18 JUNE 2009

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 For Members to determine the Annual Work Programme for the Scrutiny Committee during 2009-10, including the main theme for a detailed policy review.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Committee is responsible for setting its own work programme within the following remit:

Local Transport Plan; Unitary Development Plan; Building Control; Coast Protection; Cemeteries and Crematorium; Grounds Maintenance; Highway Services and Streetscene; Waste and Recycling; Allotments.

- 2.2 On 8 April 2009, Cabinet approved a Review of Scrutiny and revised the terms of reference (attached) for the Council's Scrutiny Committees to better align the subject focus to the relevant priorities of the Sunderland Strategy. The intention is for the committee to focus on the priority areas and targets in the Sunderland Strategy and Local Area Agreement and that the work of all Scrutiny Committees consistently addresses those areas of performance requiring detailed examination.

- 2.3 This approach linked to strategic and LAA priorities is proposed to allow a clear themed focus on the outcomes for the people of Sunderland, and allow for cross-cutting examination of issues, with potential for linking areas of knowledge and expertise that would not ordinarily be brought together, so increasing the likelihood of the committees identifying novel approaches and solutions to the issues they consider.

- 2.4 The most relevant Sunderland Strategy priority for this committee is:

Attractive and Accessible City - creating a city that celebrates and protects its natural and built environment, a place that is recognised inside and outside the city as an attractive and accessible place to live, work, study and visit. The physical environment will support everyone in the city to achieve their aspirations, now and in the future.

- 2.5 All committees will take a role in the scrutiny of partnership and area issues and have a role in engaging with partners, external scrutiny, community and public engagement, engaging with media and area scrutiny.

3. Operation of the Committee

- 3.1 The work programme of the Committee sets out the key issues to be addressed during the year and a timetable of work. To be effective, the work programme seeks to provide a framework for the year ahead, while retaining sufficient flexibility to respond to any important issues that may emerge.
- 3.2 The work programme seeks to reflect the remit of the Scrutiny Committee and balance its responsibility for undertaking scrutiny, performance management and policy review and development.
- 3.3 The work programme is a working document which Committee can develop throughout the year. As a living document, the work programme allows members and officers to maintain an overview of work planned and undertaken during the Council year.
- 3.4 The Committee has previously managed all policy review evidence gathering through special evidence gathering meetings, site visits, commissioning of consultants and desk-based research. To further enhance and develop this Member-led approach the Committee may wish to consider smaller working groups involving members in pursuing issues in the work programme enabling discussion, development of ideas and preparation for the questioning of witnesses outside of Committee.

4. Suggested Topics and Methods of Enquiry

- 4.1 Topics for inclusion in the work programme may be single items for scrutiny, short term reviews over 2-3 months or a major policy review.
- 4.2 At the time of writing this report, discussions are still to be held at the Scrutiny Conference on 11 June 2009 at the Environment and Attractive City breakout session. These discussions will play a central role in shaping the content of the work programme.
- 4.3 As the conference is being held after the distribution of this agenda, a list of topics will be circulated at the meeting.
- 4.4 However, during May 2009 members were invited to submit suggestions for the work programme. The following issues have been raised:-
 - Community Transport in the City
 - Off Street Car Parking in the City
 - Allotments
 - Highways/Network Management Plan
 - Public Transport
 - Traffic Issues
 - Streetlighting
 - Speed Management
 - Local Transport Plan

- Public Realm and Streetscene

5. Policy Review

- 5.1 Policy review is the process of maintaining an overview of council policies and will usually examine whether the council's intended policy outcomes have been achieved. The process will also explore issues such as the service user's perspective.
- 5.2 Policy reviews are project planned with appropriate methodology applied to investigate the chosen topic. This may include meetings, site visits, surveys, public meetings or analysis of comparative practice in other local authorities.
- 5.3 Last year's study carried out by the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee was into traffic issues in the city. All previous reviews are available at:-
www.sunderland.gov.uk/Public/editable/Themes/CityCouncil/corporate/review/reviewcommittees
- 5.3 The Committee is asked to identify a suitable topic for policy review from the issues highlighted at the Scrutiny Conference and the items listed in paragraph 4.1.
- 5.4 Following the selection of a topic for review, the Committee will receive a report setting out a possible approach to the review. This will include the terms of reference, definitions, links to corporate goals, partnerships, the national and local context, and proposals for gathering evidence.

6. Work Programme

- 6.1 A model work programme for 2009 -10 is attached as Appendix A. The work programme will be populated with items agreed by members at this meeting and submitted to the July meeting.
- 6.2 The work programme can be amended during the year. Any Member of the Committee can add an item of business to an agenda (See Protocol 1 Overview & Scrutiny Handbook).

7. Conclusion & Recommendation

- 7.1 The Committee is asked to
- (a) Consider items for inclusion on the Annual Work Programme for 2009 -10
 - (b) Consider a topic for policy review.
- 7.2 Subject to any amendment at this meeting, the work programme will be submitted to the Management Scrutiny Committee in its coordinating role.

8. Background Papers

None

Contact Officer : Jim Diamond 0191 561 1396
james.diamond@sunderland.gov.uk