

SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME AND POLICY REVIEW 2009-2010

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

15 JUNE 2009

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: SP1: Prosperous City; SP2: Healthy City; SP3: Safe City; SP4: Learning City; SP5: Attractive and Inclusive City

CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CIO1: Delivering Customer Focused Services, CIO4: Improving Partnership Working to Deliver 'One City'.

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 remit of

Major Projects, Sustainability overview, Creating Inclusive Communities overview, Housing overview, Housing Strategy, Private Housing, Housing Associations, Culture overview, Art Development, Museums and Heritage

- 2.2 The Council's Overview and Scrutiny function is identified as a key improvement area for the Council and presents a development opportunity in response to the national agenda around community engagement. A report approved by Cabinet on 8 April 2009 (appendix 1) revised the terms of reference for the committees to align the subject focus to the relevant priorities of the Sunderland Strategy. Cabinet's response to the Review Committee's recommendations ensures each Committee is able to afford necessary attention to the areas within their remit, and that the Management Scrutiny Committee's role of overview of corporate policies, performance and budget can be carried out without detriment to its further role in overseeing and coordinating scrutiny business, through the formation of an additional Overview and Scrutiny Committee to oversee implementation of the cross cutting priorities, and those major projects that are key to achieving the city's priorities with particular regard to the sustainability of these initiatives into the future.
- 2.3 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 seven Scrutiny Committees consistently addresses those areas of performance requiring detailed examination.

2.4 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.

2.5 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 Sustainability Scrutiny Committee is a newly formulated committee for 2009/10 and while arrangements will develop as the committee progresses through the municipal year there are certain principles which allow for the management of large amounts of business in a productive way.

3.2 The annual work programme provides a mechanism for planning the work of the committee and ensuring that the agenda is balanced and concentrates on those reports members believe to be of the highest priority.

3.3 The scrutiny committee will undertake a policy review gathering evidence through a variety of techniques including special evidence gathering meetings, site visits, focus groups, 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 The full list of all topics suggested by Members and the proposed method of enquiry, including from the discussions held at the Scrutiny Conference on 11 June 2009 and the Sustainability breakout session will be available prior to the meeting. Unfortunately due to timings and agenda deadlines it is not possible to include this information in the report.

4.3 In selecting from the long lists members will be asked to consider the revised terms of reference for the committee as referred to in section 2 of this report.

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 Reviews of particular interest to this committee that have been carried out by the six previous Committee's including:
- Swimming in Sunderland
 - A Place to Play – A review of music venues in Sunderland
 - Housing Strategy within the City of Sunderland
 - Coastline as a Cultural Resource
 - Sport in Sunderland
 - Sunderland housing Group and the Development of Best Practice in Neighbourhood Renewal.

A complete library of all review reports is available at:

www.sunderland.gov.uk/Public/editable/Themes/CityCouncil/corporate/review/reviewcommittees

- 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.
- 5.5 The shortlist of Review Topics for 2009-10 will again be circulated prior to the meeting and following the scrutiny conference being held on 11 June 2009. The Committee is recommended to select one topic from the shortlist, when available, for an in depth review during the year.

6. Work Programme

- 6.1 A draft work programme for 2009-10 with items already scheduled is attached as Appendix 2. The items highlighted above, when reduced to a short list and when timings can be known, will be included in the programme.
- 6.2 Members may also want to retain sufficient flexibility within the work programme to allow the Committee to respond to issues that emerge during the year, in addition to ensuring that the Committee investigates and monitors issues already identified as a Committee priority. In particular, Members may wish to ensure that future agendas can accommodate early consultation on emerging proposals, to ensure that the Committee's work is able to contribute to the development of new proposals at an early stage when the Committee's views can add maximum value.
- 6.3 The work programme can be amended during the year. Any Member of the Scrutiny Committee can add an item of business to a Scrutiny Committee agenda (See Protocol 1 Overview & Scrutiny Handbook).

7. Conclusion & Recommendation

7.1 The Committee is asked to

- (a) Consider the draft Annual Work Programme for 2009-10 and indicate any additions or amendments
- (b) Consider the list of suggestions for policy review and determine one topic for 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

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