

Appendix A

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PLANNING GUIDANCE

1. In terms of undertaking effective Overview and Scrutiny, Members are asked to agree a small number of manageable issues for consideration for each of the standing Panels and OSMC that can be accommodated within the schedule of OSMC meetings.
2. Setting the Committee's forward work plan is an important task for Members. Done correctly it will allow Overview and Scrutiny to contribute to effective decision making and improved delivery of services. Done badly it can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done is likely to be minimal. This short briefing provides some key principles of effective work planning.

Remit of OSMC

3. When identifying topics for OSMC to consider Members should note that the remit of OSMC is slightly different from the Standing Panels as it needs to maintain an overarching view of O&S and a focus on corporate services and finance. Its remit includes the following:
 - i. **Ensuring co-ordination and management of Overview and Scrutiny activities** by setting Panel work plans, receiving progress reports, receiving recommendations.
 - ii. Consideration of issues for Overview and Scrutiny i.e. pre decision scrutiny, policy review, finance and performance monitoring across all Council and partner activity (except Health).
 - iii. **Reviewing the Council's corporate health** via regular consideration of budget and performance information and value for money services.
 - v. **Considering key corporate policies** in their draft form to allow the Committee to contribute to their development prior to approval.
 - vi. Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny's role in the **budget setting process**
 - viii. **Developing the Scrutiny function** by co-ordinating, managing and promoting good practice within Overview and Scrutiny e.g. protocols, Action Plan etc.
 - ix. **Considering the Call In** of any relevant decisions and holding decision makers to account.
4. Overview and Scrutiny work plans should incorporate issues that include the following:
 - i. **Holding the Executive to account** (e.g. Call in, reviewing performance and impact of any decisions or policies, Cabinet Members, pre decision Scrutiny)
 - ii. **Contributing to performance monitoring/service improvements** (ensuring that effective performance and service improvement takes place by effectively challenging the Executive, Officers and Partners.

- iii. **Policy development and review** – Proposing evidence based recommendations to influence future policy e.g. short reviews (Select Committee style) or in depth reviews.
- iv. **External Scrutiny** – Scrutiny of partners and other external bodies.

Key Principles of Effective Work Planning

- 5. Best practice has shown us that Overview and Scrutiny is most effective when:
 - i. It is strategic in nature with topics relating directly to supporting the delivery of borough wide priorities.
 - ii. It is focused on reviewing a small number of issues in detail, rather than trying to review everything (the quality not quantity principle).
 - iii. It is forward looking. The real impact of Scrutiny lies in shaping and influencing future policy/decisions through evidence based review.
 - iv. Work plans and outcomes and impact of any recommendations are regularly reviewed
 - v. Topics are carefully selected they should seek to add value to the organisation and the delivery of public services
 - vi. There is a clear understanding of the aims and objectives when undertaking Overview and Scrutiny of a specific issue.
 - vii. The process is Member led, taking account of advice from officers, partners etc.

Criteria for Inclusion on the Work Plan

- 6. The Attached Annex “Ingredients For An Effective Review” contains principles that should be taken into account in considering issues for review by the standing Panels.

Prioritisation

- 7. Effective work plans should be focused and manageable. There is always the potential that the Committee may develop a shopping list of issues to look at in case something is “missed”. This is unlikely to achieve any significant value as Scrutiny becomes nothing more than an information giving forum with little focus and no opportunity to look at issues in any real depth.
- 8. There is however a need for Members to build up knowledge on certain issues but in many cases this can be undertaken outside the formal meeting setting. Detailed below are some of the ways in which O&S can review issues identified on its work plan.
 - i. **Written briefing, Workshops, Seminars and Presentations** – This enables Members to gain an understanding of an issue and identify whether any further Scrutiny work should be undertaken. There may be occasions where small groups of Members may wish to investigate an issue and feed back to the Panel.

- ii. **Report** – formal report considered at an O&S meeting at which the Panel would look to formally consider a specific issue. Clarity should be given on the aspect which the Committee/Panel wishes to review.
- iii. **Working Groups** – established to gather evidence, look at an issue and report back to the Committee with its findings and put forward evidence based recommendations.
- iv. **In depth/Minor review** – to undertake a more in depth study of an issue where partners, stakeholders, public, are invited to give evidence etc.
- v. **Evidence gathering/consultation** - site visits, drop in sessions, questionnaires, social media, meetings in community to gauge views on a specific issue etc.

Capacity/Resources

- 9. The work plan should allow for urgent /unexpected issues to be considered. Time will also need to be set aside to undertake any briefings, workshops, site visits or other activities that may support OSMC's work e.g. budget review. The work plan should therefore be seen as a live document which should be regularly reviewed and updated at each formal meeting.