

Report of Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: 18th June 2015

Subject: Sources of work for the Scrutiny Board

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| Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-In? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

Summary of main issues

1. Scrutiny Boards are responsible for ensuring that items of scrutiny work come from a strategic approach as well as a need to challenge service performance and respond to issues of high public interest.
2. The vision for Scrutiny, agreed by full Council on 21st May 2015 (Appendix 1) also recognises that resources to support the Scrutiny function are, (like all other Council functions), under considerable pressure and that requests from Scrutiny Boards cannot always be met. Consequently, when establishing their work programmes Scrutiny Boards should
 - Ensure any Scrutiny undertaken has clarity and focus of purpose and will add value and can be delivered within an agreed time frame.
 - Avoid pure "information items" except where that information is being received as part of a policy/scrutiny review
 - Seek the advice of the Scrutiny officer, the relevant Director and Executive Member about available resources
 - Avoid duplication by having a full appreciation of any existing forums already having oversight of, or monitoring a particular issue
 - Balanced in terms of the workload across the Scrutiny Boards and as to the type of Scrutiny taking place

- Sufficiently flexible to enable the consideration of urgent matters that may arise during the year
3. This report provides information and guidance on potential sources of work and areas of priority within the Board's terms of reference. In consultation with the relevant Directors and Executive Board Members, the Scrutiny Board is requested to consider areas of Scrutiny for the forthcoming municipal year.

Recommendations

4. Members are requested to;
- Use the attached information and the discussion with those present at the meeting to draw up a list of areas for Scrutiny for the forthcoming municipal year.
 - Request that the Chair and the Scrutiny Officer consult with the relevant Director and Executive Board Members regarding resources in line with the agreed Vision for Scrutiny and report back to the next meeting with a draft work programme.

1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To assist the Scrutiny Board in effectively managing its workload for the forthcoming municipal year, this report provides information and guidance on potential sources of work and areas of priority within the Board's terms of reference.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 Scrutiny Boards are responsible for ensuring that items of scrutiny work come from a strategic approach as well as a need to challenge service performance and respond to issues of high public interest.

3.0 Main issues

Best Council Plan

- 3.1 A refresh of the Best Council Plan was agreed at Executive Board in March 2015, to reflect the progress made over the past year and the significant changes to the context in which the council is working. The resulting 'Best Council Plan – Summary' is attached as Appendix 2.
- 3.2 One of the six objectives defined in the plan is building a child-friendly city. Some of the key areas of focus which support this are:
- Continuing focus on helping all children to be healthy, safe from harm and to progress and achieve at school
 - Expanding services that support families to resolve problems impacting on the welfare of children using £4.8m national funding attracted from Innovation Fund
 - Promoting good mental health.

Strategic Partnership Board

- 3.3 As set out within its terms of reference, this Scrutiny Board may review or scrutinise the performance of the Children and Families Trust Board acting as 'critical friend'.

The draft Children and Young People Plan (CYPP) 2015 – 2019 from Good to Great is attached as Appendix 3, details the focus or 'obsessions' of the Children and Families Trust Board. It is a statement of intent and ambition which details how a positive and significant difference will be made to the lives of over 183,000 children and young people in the City. The draft CYPP is due to be considered by the Executive Board on the 24 June 2015 .

- 3.4 In determining items of scrutiny work this year, the Scrutiny Board is encouraged to explore how it can add value to the work of the Partnership in delivering on the city priorities and the obsessions and outcomes detailed in the Children and Young Peoples Plan. The Executive Board Member for Children and Families and the Director of Children's Services have been invited to the meeting to highlight particular areas where further scrutiny could add value and improve services.

Other sources of Scrutiny work

- 3.5 The Scrutiny Boards' terms of reference are also determined by reference to Directors' delegations. As such, Scrutiny Boards have always challenged service directorates across the full range of council activities and the Scrutiny Board may therefore undertake pieces of scrutiny work in line with its terms of reference, as considered appropriate.
- 3.6 The Board's performance monitoring and critical friend role can often lead to the identification of areas for more detailed scrutiny. It is proposed that a performance report be scheduled into the work program in July 2015. The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board annual report is also scheduled for discussion in September 2015.
- 3.7 This year the Scrutiny Board is requested to consider the voice of influence of children in Leeds. The Youth Council have highlighted that currently the top issues for young people in the City, as voted for by 19,500 young people in Leeds (November 2014) is improving work experience opportunities.
- 3.8 The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) during 2014/15 has undertaken some pre-decision Scrutiny into the developing School Transport Policy for SEN children and young people at the request of the Executive Board. It is recommended that this work continues until such time as the policy is agreed by Executive Board. The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) also formed a working group looking at safeguarding children at risk of CSE. It is also recommended that this work continues for 2015/16.
- 3.9 Other common sources of work include pre-decision scrutiny, requests for scrutiny and other corporate referrals.
- 3.10 Scrutiny Boards have always sought to work in partnership with one another where appropriate, in particular in cross-cutting areas which span more than one Scrutiny Board's terms of reference. In setting the work programme for the coming year, the Board is encouraged to consider areas of work which may benefit from a partnership approach.
- 3.11 The Board is also required to be formally consulted during the development of key policies which form part of the council's budget and policy framework. It is anticipated that the Scrutiny Board will be asked to contribute to the development of initial budget proposals for 2015/16 later in the municipal year.
- 3.12 The Board should consider if a similar or related issue is already being examined by Scrutiny or has been considered by Scrutiny recently and if the matter raised is of sufficient significance and has the potential for Scrutiny to produce realistic recommendations that could be implemented and lead to tangible improvements. A list of previous scrutiny inquires relating to Children's Services is attached as Appendix 4.

4.0 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 It is recognised that in order to enable Scrutiny to focus on strategic areas of priority, each Scrutiny Board needs to establish an early dialogue with the Directors and Executive Board Members holding the relevant portfolios. The Vision for Scrutiny, agreed by full Council in May 2015 also states that Scrutiny Boards should seek the advice of the Scrutiny officer, the relevant Director and Executive Member about available resources prior to agreeing items of work

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration.

4.2.1 The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules state that, where appropriate, all terms of reference for work undertaken by Scrutiny Boards will include 'to review how and to what effect consideration has been given to the impact of a service or policy on all equality areas, as set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme'.

4.3 Council Policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The terms of reference of the Scrutiny Boards promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the best council objectives.

4.3.2 The following plans are relevant to the work of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services):

- The Leeds Children and Young Peoples Plan 2015-2019 – Good to Great
- Best Council Plan 2015-20

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 Experience has shown that the Scrutiny process is more effective and adds greater value if the Board seeks to minimise the number of substantial inquiries running at one time and focus its resources on one key issue at a time.

4.4.2 The Vision for Scrutiny, agreed by full Council also recognises that resources to support the Scrutiny function are, (like all other Council functions), under considerable pressure and that requests from Scrutiny Boards cannot always be met. Consequently, when establishing their work programmes Scrutiny Boards should

- Seek the advice of the Scrutiny officer, the relevant Director and Executive Member about available resources
- Avoid duplication by having a full appreciation of any existing forums already having oversight of, or monitoring a particular issue
- Ensure any Scrutiny undertaken has clarity and focus of purpose and will add value and can be delivered within an agreed time frame.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 This report has no specific legal implications.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 There are no risk management implications relevant to this report.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Scrutiny Boards are responsible for ensuring that items of scrutiny work come from a strategic approach as well as a need to challenge service performance and respond to issues of high public interest. This report provides information and guidance on potential sources of work and areas of priority within the Board's terms of reference. In consultation with the relevant Directors, Executive Board Members and Scrutiny Officer, the Scrutiny Board is requested to consider areas of Scrutiny for the forthcoming municipal year.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Members are requested to;

- Use the attached information and the discussion with those present at the meeting to draw up a list of areas for Scrutiny for the forthcoming municipal year.
- Request that the Chair and the Scrutiny Officer consult with the relevant Director and Executive Board Members regarding resources in line with the agreed Vision for Scrutiny and report back to the next meeting with a draft work programme.

7.0 Background papers¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.