



Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Date: 23 June 2011

Subject: Sources of work and areas of priority for the Scrutiny Board

Electoral Wards Affected:

All

☐

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

☐

Community Cohesion

☐

Narrowing the Gap

☐

1 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 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.
- 2.2 The amendments made to the Overview and Scrutiny function this year encourage Scrutiny to be more strategic and outward looking in its operation and focus on the City Priorities.
- 2.3 City Priority Plans have recently been established to replace the Leeds Strategic Plan. These new city-wide partnership plans identify the key outcomes and priorities to be delivered by the Council and its partners over the next 4 years. The City Priority Plans are aligned to the new Strategic Partnerships who will own the plans and be responsible for ensuring the delivery of the agreed priorities.
- 2.4 The City Priority Plans are structured around a small set of short term (4 year) priorities each of which is measured through a headline indicator. As such they are the "must-do" priorities or "obsessions" for each partnership and may be supported by more detailed plans as the partnership sees fit.

3 Main issues

Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference

- 3.1 Five of the Scrutiny Boards are now themed to mirror the Strategic Partnership Boards. In doing so, the terms of reference for these Scrutiny Boards now determine a number of areas of review to be undertaken during a municipal year on behalf of the Council.
- 3.2 For this Scrutiny Board the focus of review is;
 - a) reducing the numbers of looked after children
 - b) improving attendance
 - c) increasing the number of young people in employment, education and training
- 3.3 These areas of review are focused around the City Priorities and therefore come from a strategic approach. However, all Scrutiny Boards remain autonomous in determining the scope of their reviews.
- 3.4 A copy of the terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) is attached for reference purposes (Appendix 1).

Other sources of Scrutiny work

- 3.5 In addition to the areas of review outlined with the Scrutiny Board's terms of reference, other sources of work will continue to be 'requests for scrutiny' and corporate referrals. The Scrutiny Board may also undertake further pieces of scrutiny work as considered appropriate.
- 3.6 However, over the last few years of Scrutiny Board work, experience has shown that the 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. This view was echoed within the findings of the KPMG external audit report 2009 on the Scrutiny function in Leeds.
- 3.7 The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules require Scrutiny Boards, before deciding to undertake an inquiry, to consider the current workload of the Scrutiny Board and the available resources to carry out the work.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 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 Director and Executive Board Member holding the relevant portfolio and, where appropriate, the relevant strategic partnership chair.
- 4.2 The Director of Children's Services and the Executive Board Member with responsibility for Children's Services (who is also the Chair of the Children's Trust Board) have therefore been invited to attend today's meeting to discuss the City Priorities in relation to the Board's terms of reference.
- 4.3 An extract of the draft City Priority Plan 2011 – 2015 relevant to the Board's terms of reference is attached for the Board's consideration (Appendix 2). The full draft City Priority Plan is expected to be considered by the Executive Board in June 2011 prior to being approved by full Council.

- 4.4 Attached as Appendix 3 and 4 respectively are the latest Executive Board minutes and the Council's current Forward Plan relating to this Board's portfolio.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members are requested to use the attached information and the discussion with those present at the meeting to confirm the areas of priority for the Scrutiny Board over the forthcoming municipal year.

Background papers

None used