

## Report of Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support

### Report to Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources)

**Date: 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

### **Subject: Sources of work for the Scrutiny Board**

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<sup>1</sup>, attached at Appendix 1, recognises that like all other Council functions, resources to support the Scrutiny function are 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;

<sup>1</sup> This forms part of Article 6 within the Council Constitution.

- 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 priority areas of Scrutiny for the forthcoming municipal year.

### **Recommendations**

4. Members are requested to consider the information and guidance provided within this report when determining priority areas of Scrutiny work for the forthcoming municipal year.

## **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. Scrutiny is also a valuable sounding board for new policy initiatives and therefore such pre-decision work continues to be encouraged.

## **3.0 Main issues**

### **Key sources of information**

#### ➤ Best Council Plan

- 3.1 The Best Council Plan is a significant source of information in terms of highlighting the Council's key areas of priority over the coming months and years.

- 3.2 A refresh of the Best Council Plan was agreed by Council in February 2018 to reflect the significant changes to the context in which the council is working. The resulting 'Best Council Plan – Summary' is therefore attached for Members information (see Appendix 2).

#### ➤ Performance Data

- 3.3 Performance monitoring remains a key element of the Scrutiny Boards' work and is also a valuable source of information to help identify potential areas that may warrant further scrutiny. The most recent performance data is therefore included as a separate agenda item for today's meeting (Agenda Item 10). This provides the Board with a summary of performance against the strategic priorities that are relevant to the Board's remit.

- 3.4 Last year, the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board also decided to receive regular performance update reports throughout the municipal year in order to 'drill down' into service area performance. As part of Agenda Item 10, the Board will be requested to consider whether or not it wishes to adopt that approach again this year.

#### ➤ Financial Information

- 3.5 All Scrutiny Boards are consulted annually on the Council's initial budget proposals in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. This is undertaken in conjunction with a review of the in-year financial health of the authority.

- 3.6 The 2018/19 budget proposals were agreed by Full Council on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2018. The Scrutiny Board may wish to consider progress against the delivery of these and therefore a summary of the budget proposals relevant to the remit of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board is provided in Appendix 3.

- 3.7 Maintaining an overview of the Council's financial health is also a key element of the Scrutiny Board's work and therefore the Board may wish to receive further financial health updates during the municipal year.

Areas of Scrutiny work identified last year that now fall within the remit of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board.

- 3.8 Last year, the former Inclusive Growth, Culture and Sport Scrutiny Board agreed to consider and monitor progress with the city's European Capital of Culture 2023 Bid as well as monitoring the development of a delivery plan linked to the city's new Culture Strategy 2017-2030, which was formally adopted in July 2017.
- 3.9 In March 2018, the Board produced a Statement setting out its observations and conclusions ([Link to Statement](#)). Within this, the Board acknowledges that there is still a significant amount of work yet to be undertaken over the coming months and years in terms of achieving the ambitions of the Culture Strategy and therefore strongly advises on-going Scrutiny involvement in this area of work by successor Scrutiny Boards.
- 3.10 As this area of work now falls within the remit of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board, the Board is asked to consider whether or not to include this within its work programme for this municipal year.

**Other sources of Scrutiny work**

- 3.11 Other common sources of work include requests for scrutiny, Call In requests and other corporate referrals. 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.

**Methods of working**

- 3.12 This year, each Scrutiny Board has six formal meetings scheduled throughout the municipal year. These meetings are generally held within the Civic Hall and are open to the public.
- 3.13 Whilst the decision to hold any additional formal meetings is left to the discretion of each Board, historically Scrutiny Boards have also adopted other methods of evidence gathering outside of the formal meeting settings, such as site visits and working group meetings.
- 3.14 Working groups comprise of a number of Members from a particular Scrutiny Board who may be appointed to carry out specific tasks on behalf of the Board. Suitable tasks for a working group may involve Members meeting on their own (for example for the purposes of developing reports and recommendations in connection with an ongoing Inquiry or terms of reference for a future Inquiry). Alternatively they may entail activities which cannot realistically be undertaken within the confines of a formally convened Scrutiny Board meeting.
- 3.15 In all cases, the primary purpose of a working group is to obtain and/or develop information and to report back to a formally convened meeting of the Scrutiny Board.

A working group cannot discharge the primary purpose of a Scrutiny Board i.e. it cannot undertake Inquiries independently from its parent Scrutiny Board, conduct Inquiries, issue reports/recommendations (other than to its parent Scrutiny Board) or in any way present itself to a third party as representing the views of the parent Scrutiny Board.

- 3.16 However, as set out within the Vision for Scrutiny, the Board must also remain mindful of the resource implications associated with the use of site visits and working group meetings when determining its work programme.

## **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 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.

### **4.4 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 like all other Council functions, resources to support the Scrutiny function are 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 consider the information and guidance provided within this report when determining priority areas of Scrutiny work for the forthcoming municipal year.

## **7.0 Background papers<sup>2</sup>**

7.1 None

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<sup>2</sup> 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.