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Report of Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support

Report to Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)

Date: 28 June 2018

Subject: Sources of work for the Scrutiny Board

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	☐ Yes	☒ No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	☐ Yes	☒ 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[1], 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;

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[1] 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).

➢ Inclusive Growth Strategy

3.4 The Draft Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy (due to be considered by Executive Board on the 27 June 2018) sets out the ambition for Leeds and how everyone can contribute to the city's growth; providing a framework for how all parts of the council will work with businesses, universities, colleges, schools, the community sector, and with partners in the city region, Yorkshire, the North and national government to grow the Leeds economy. The 'Twelve Big Ideas', are outlined in the latest publically available version of the Inclusive Growth Strategy is presented in Appendix 3 for information. Big Idea 5 refers to 'supporting places and communities to respond to economic change'.

➢ Performance Data

3.6 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 11). This provides the Board with a summary of performance against the strategic priorities that are relevant to the Board's remit.

> ➢ Financial Information

3.7 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.

3.8 The 2018/19 budget proposals were agreed by Full Council on 21st February 2018. The most recent 2017/18 out-turn report and Financial Health Monitoring report are provided as a separate agenda item for today's meeting (Agenda item 12). This is provided to support the Scrutiny Board in identifying sources of work and also to facilitate specific scrutiny of the budget.

3.9 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.

Potential Areas of Scrutiny work previously identified.

3.10 Last year, Scrutiny Boards recommended that this successor Board maintain a watching brief in relation to the following areas:

> ➢ Air Quality Solution for Leeds
> ➢ Improving Standards in the Private Rented Sector (Selective Licensing)
> ➢ Waste and Recycling Strategy (pre-decision Executive Board in Autumn 2018)
> ➢ Refuse Collection Re-routing Update
> ➢ Universal Credit (Spring 2019)
> ➢ Leeds Response to Grenfell – Response and Update
> ➢ Locality Working – Six Priority Neighbourhoods (update before December 2018)
> ➢ Review of Horticultural Maintenance in Cemeteries – Response and Tracking
> ➢ Development of Community Hubs – Recommendation Tracking
> ➢ Reducing Repeat Customer Contacts – Recommendation Tracking

3.11 Whilst the Board will need to determine whether or not these remain as items of work, these have been reflected provisionally into the Board's draft work schedule (see Agenda Item 13).

Other sources of Scrutiny work

3.12 Other common sources of work include requests for scrutiny, Call In requests and other corporate referrals. A request for scrutiny has recently been submitted to the Chair, Cllr Anderson, for the consideration of the Scrutiny Board. This is detailed at appendix 4 of this report.

3.13 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

3.14 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.

3.15 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.

3.16 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.

3.17 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.

3.18 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[2]

7.1 None

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[2] 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.