



Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board: Central and Corporate Function

Date: 9th June 2008

Subject: Input to the Work Programme 2008/09 - Sources of Work and
Establishing the Board's Priorities

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report provides information and guidance to assist the Board develop its work programme for 2008/09 that is focused on strategic issues.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Members will aware that the most recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for the Council identified the following area for improvement.

CPA Area for Improvement

"While scrutiny has improved with the introduction of seven new Scrutiny Committees these still remain inconsistent in their approach to challenging policy development. As a consequence effective challenge to the Council through overview and Scrutiny remains inconsistent. Further development is required to ensure a robust approach for all Scrutiny Boards."

3.0 Background Information

3.1 It is important for Scrutiny Boards in developing their work programme in 2008/09 to have regard to the CPAs concerns and focus more on the Council's corporate strategic priorities.

3.2 Relevant core information from the following key sources have been extracted appropriate to this Board's responsibilities and attached to this paper to assist Members in this process (Appendix 1):

- Local Area Agreement
- Leeds Strategic Plan & Council Business Plan 2008-11
- Corporate Performance Management Information
- Corporate Assessment Report
- Corporate Assessment Actions 2008
- Details of any forthcoming external audit reviews
- Outstanding issues from Scrutiny Board (Resources)

3.3 Other sources of work will continue to be 'requests for scrutiny' and corporate referrals.

3.4 A copy of the Board's terms of reference is attached for reference purposes. (Appendix 2)

3.5 The relevant extract from the latest forward plan, the most recent Executive Board minutes and outstanding issues referred from 2007/08 are also attached for consideration. (Appendix 3)

4.0 Guidance

4.1 Over the last few years of Scrutiny Board work, experience has shown that the process is more effective if the Board seeks to minimise the number of substantial inquiries running at one time.

4.2 The Board is advised to consider the benefits of single item agendas (excluding miscellaneous information and minutes) in order to focus on all the relevant evidence and complete the inquiry in a shorter period of time. There are various mechanisms available to assist the Board in concluding inquiries quickly whilst the issues are pertinent, such as working groups and site visits.

4.3 The agreed Memorandum of Understanding between Executive Board and Overview and Scrutiny which now sits within the Council's Constitution states;

"The responsibility of those setting scrutiny work programmes is, therefore, to ensure that items of work come from a strategic approach as well as a need to challenge service performance and respond to issues of high public interest.

It is recognised that Scrutiny Boards have a 'watching brief' role. In addition information is required for members' own development process, particularly as membership of the Boards is changed annually.

However, it is also recognised that agendas are often filled up with reports for this purpose, which takes up time for both officers and Members. Where Scrutiny Boards wish to ask questions at a general or more strategic level and/or be updated on issues already considered in detail, the facility of Members' Questions – where a verbal exchange replaces written reports - should be used.

It is expected that where ever possible prior notification is given of the likely questions to be asked".

4.4 For the past couple of years the Children's Services Board in particular has developed the approach of devoting one meeting per quarter to overview and performance management. This includes receiving reports and scrutinising executive members and officers on relevant issues.

5.0 Work programming

- 5.1 The Director of Resources, Alan Gay, the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) and James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement) have been invited to attend this meeting of the Board to contribute to discussions about the Board's work programme.
- 5.2 Following those discussions, the Board is asked to agree an outline work programme that prioritises the issues to be investigated.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are requested to use the attached information and the discussion with officers to inform the development and approval of its work programme under the next agenda item.