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Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships)

Date: 21st July 2008

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

Electoral Wards Affected: All

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 continue to develop its work programme for 2008/09 that is focused on strategic issues.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 At the last Board meeting the Leader of Council, Councillor R Brett, the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy, Planning and Improvement) and the Deputy Director of Leeds Initiative, Martin Dean assisted the Board to identify areas for possible scrutiny and responded to questions from the Board. As a consequence of these discussions an initial work programme was agreed.

2.2 The Board today wanted the opportunity to examine further the relationships the Council has at a city, area and regional level with regard to development and regeneration. It particularly expressed interest in transport and city region decision making and wanted to identify areas for scrutiny inquiries that would add value to the process.

2.3 The Executive Board Member with portfolio responsibility for Development and Regeneration, Councillor Andrew Carter, the Chief Executive of the Council Paul Rogerson and the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, Neil Evans have been invited to attend today's meeting to talk on these issues and to respond to questions from the Board.

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 A full set of relevant core information from key sources were provided to Members at the last meeting but key documents are provided again for ease of reference as follows:
- Local Area Agreement (**Document A**)
 - Leeds Strategic Plan (**Documents B**)
 - Council Business Plan 2008 -11 (**Document C**)
 - Corporate Assessment Actions 2008 (**Document D**)
 - Details of Partners (**Document E**)
 - Board's terms of reference (**Document F**)

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".

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 Members are requested to use the discussion with the Executive Member with portfolio responsibility for Development and Regeneration and those of the officers and the information provided with this report to develop its work programme and prioritise issues to be investigated under the next agenda item.