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## Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

**Scrutiny Board: Children's Services**

**Date: 11<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

**Subject: Input to the Work Programme 2009/10 - Sources of Work and  
Establishing the Board's Priorities**

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### Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

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## 1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report provides information and guidance to assist the Board to develop its work programme for 2009/10.

## 2.0 Background

2.1 Relevant information from the following key sources has been attached to this paper to assist Members in this process (Appendix 1):

- Leeds Strategic Plan 2008 to 2011 – Executive Summary
- Building Brighter Futures: The Leeds Children and Young People's Plan 2009-14 – immediate priorities and long term ambitions
- List of scrutiny work undertaken in the past five years.

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

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

2.4 The relevant extract from the latest forward plan and the most recent Executive Board minutes are also attached for consideration. (Appendix 3)

## 3.0 Guidance

3.1 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. This view is echoed within the findings of the recent KPMG external report on the Scrutiny function in Leeds, which is discussed elsewhere on this agenda.

3.2 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 an inquiry in a shorter period of time. There are various mechanisms available to assist the Board in concluding inquiries quickly, such as working groups and site visits.

3.3 The agreed Memorandum of Understanding between Executive Board and Overview and Scrutiny which 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 wherever possible prior notification is given of the likely questions to be asked".*

3.4 For the past couple of years the Children's Services Board in particular has developed the approach of devoting one meeting per quarter to 'horizon scan' issues and consider performance management. This includes discussing with Executive Members and officers relevant issues. This is acknowledged within the KPMG report as good practice.

#### **4.0 Work programming**

4.1 The Lead Executive Member and the Director of Children's Services have been invited to attend this meeting to contribute to discussions about the Board's work programme.

4.2 Following those discussions, the Board is asked to agree an outline work programme that prioritises the issues to be investigated.

#### **5.0 Recommendations**

5.1 Members are requested to use the attached information and the discussion with those present at the meeting to develop its work programme.

#### **Background Papers**

Council Business Plan 2008 - 2011