

Report of the Head of Scrutiny Support and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing)

Date: 7th June 2006

Subject: Work Programme

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Ethnic minorities

Women

Disabled people

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report proposes guidelines for the development of a work programme for this Scrutiny Board.
- 1.2 Members will be aware that Scrutiny Boards are now aligned to Executive Member portfolios. For this Board, the remit covers the responsibilities within the Executive Board Member portfolio for Neighbourhoods and Housing. These areas of responsibility are identified in **appendix 1**.
- 1.3 Whilst the remit of the Board is now aligned to Executive Board Member responsibilities, Members will be aware that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment for the Council has highlighted the need to focus on the corporate priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan. Members may wish therefore to focus the work programme on those issues related to the following priorities:

Priorities within the Corporate Plan relevant to Neighbourhoods and Housing

Narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged people and the rest of the city

Reduce crime and fear of crime

Develop strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds

Create a sense of belonging for all communities and encourage active involvement in community life.

Make sure our community facilities meet the needs of local communities now and in the future.

A list of the activities and measures of success relating to these priorities, as outlined in the Corporate Plan is at **appendix 2**.

2.0 WORK PROGRAMME

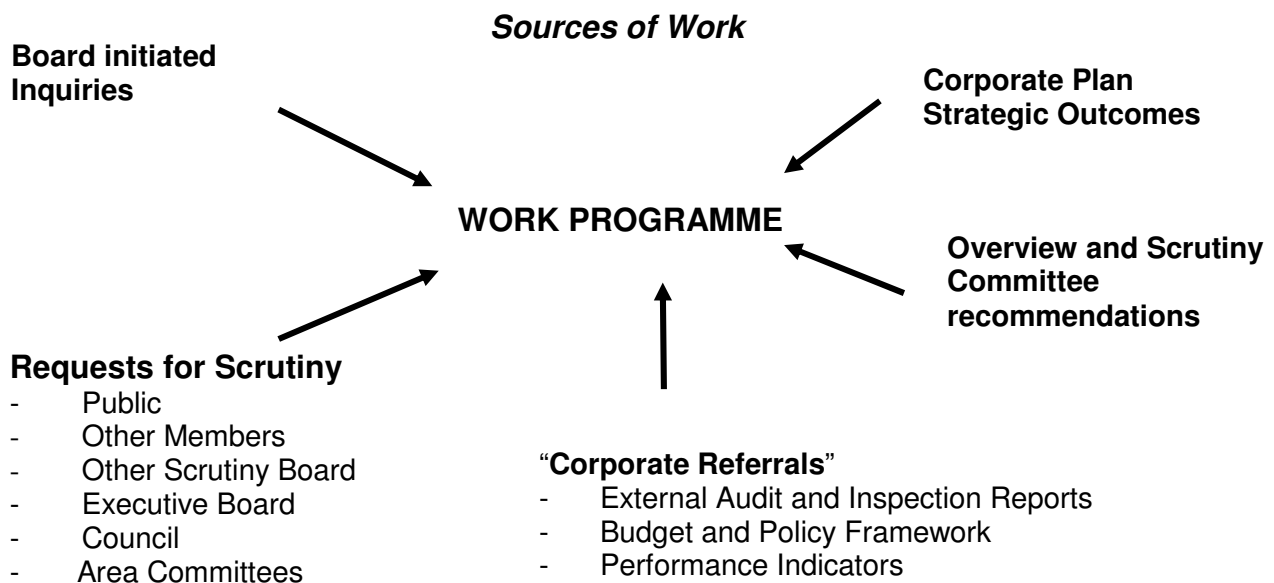
2.1 Scrutiny Boards perform a number of roles. These include:

- holding the Executive to account including the review of executive decisions;
- review and development of policy;
- performance monitoring and review in relation to the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan 2005/08 and Council Plan;
- undertaking tasks as determined within the Council's Constitution;
- evaluating and monitoring initiatives and pilot work.¹

2.2 The development of a manageable work programme enables Members to undertake:

- Effective planning of the Board's time and workload;
- The identification of priorities for inquiry, based on the Corporate Plan 2005/08 priorities;
- The allocation of financial and human resources to support the Board;
- Planning of evidence from Councillors, Officers and potential external witnesses allowing the provision of written submissions in advance where required;
- Informing the public in advance of the Board's proposed activities, thereby enhancing their ability to participate.

2.3 Scrutiny Board work comes from a number of different sources:



2.4 These different elements will require forward planning and the Board will need to consider giving priority to the Corporate Plan 2005/08 strategic outcomes. The Board will also need to create a manageable workload. 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. It is advised that the Board considers 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

¹ Leeds City Council Comprehensive Performance Assessment Report – Audit Commission December 2002 e.g. Headingley Streetscene Pilot was evaluated by City Services in 2003/4

the Board in concluding inquiries quickly whilst the issues are pertinent, such as working groups and site visits.

- 2.5 Previous experience has shown that the majority of work is initiated by the Board itself and given that there will be a number of competing demands, this work needs to be carefully selected in order to reflect the priorities associated with the relevant strategic outcome within the Corporate Plan 2005/08 and Council Plan to ensure the Council is achieving those stated aims.
- 2.6 At the end of the last municipal year, a number of Boards suggested 'carry over' items for consideration by the relevant Board this year. These are included on the work programme at **appendix 3** under 'unscheduled items'. The Board may agree to plan these into the year's work, or may agree to prioritise other areas.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 2.6 The Board should also be aware that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to undertake inquiries into matters which fall within the remit of more than one Scrutiny Board.
- 2.7 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will from time to time also recommend Inquiry subjects to relevant Boards, which should be taken into account when the Board discusses its work programming.

Work programming

- 2.8 Following discussions with the Director, and/or the Executive Member at the first meeting of the municipal year, it is proposed that Board Members make suggestions for:
- (a) Inquiries (taking into account the corporate priorities in the Corporate Plan and the latest available Corporate Priority Board minutes at **appendix 4**.)
 - (b) Inquiries into emerging policy issues, reviewing existing policies, reviewing performance of significant parts of the service or issues of high public interest
 - (c) Reviews of proposed executive decisions using sources such as the Forward Plan of Key Decisions (attached at **appendix 5**).
- 2.9 It is suggested that the Board agrees an outline work programme that prioritises the issues to be investigated. The work programme would need, in accordance with the protocols, to fairly reflect minority party concerns.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Members are requested to agree the details of the Board's work program.