

**Report to:** Communities Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 29 January 2015

**Report Author:** Scrutiny Coordinator

**Title:** Scrutiny Work Programme

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**1. What is the report about?**

The report presents Communities Scrutiny Committee with its draft forward work programme for members' consideration.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

To seek the Committee to review and agree on its programme of future work, and to update members on relevant issues.

**3. What are the recommendations?**

That the Committee:

- 3.1 considers the information provided and approves, revises or amends its forward work programme as it deems appropriate; and
- 3.2 appoints representatives to serve on the Highways & Public Realm and the Planning & Public Protection Service Challenge Groups.

**4. Report details.**

- 4.1 Article 6 of Denbighshire County Council's Constitution sets out each Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference, functions and membership, whilst the rules of procedure for scrutiny committees are laid out in Part 4 of the Constitution.
- 4.2 The Constitution stipulates that the Council's scrutiny committees must prepare and keep under review a programme for their future work. By reviewing and prioritising issues, members are able to ensure that the work programme delivers a member-led agenda.
- 4.3 For a number of years it has been an adopted practice in Denbighshire for scrutiny committees to limit the number of reports considered at any one meeting to a maximum of four plus the Committee's own work programme report. The aim of this approach is to facilitate detailed and effective debate on each topic.
- 4.4 In recent years the Welsh Government (WG) and the Wales Audit Office (WAO) have highlighted the need to strengthen scrutiny's role across local government and public services in Wales, including utilising scrutiny as a means of engaging with residents and service-

users. Going forward scrutiny will be expected to engage better and more frequently with the public with a view to securing better decisions which ultimately lead to better outcomes for citizens. In future the WAO will measure scrutiny's effectiveness in fulfilling these expectations.

4.5 Having regard to the national vision for scrutiny whilst at the same time focussing on local priorities, the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) recently recommended that the Council's scrutiny committees should, when deciding on their work programmes, focus on the following key areas:

- budget savings;
- achievement of the Corporate Plan objectives (with particular emphasis on the their deliverability during a period of financial austerity);
- any other items agreed by the Scrutiny Committee (or the SCVCG) as high priority (based on the PAPER test criteria – see paragraph 4.6 below) and;
- Urgent, unforeseen or high priority issues

4.6 The Committee is therefore requested to consider its draft work programme for future meetings, as detailed in appendix 1, and approve, revise or amend it as it deems appropriate. During consideration of the forward work programme the Committee may find it useful to have regard to the 'PAPER' test (see below) to determine a topic's suitability for scrutiny:

<b><u>P</u>ublic Interest:</b>	is the matter of concern to residents?
<b><u>A</u>bility to have an impact:</b>	can Scrutiny influence and change things?
<b><u>P</u>erformance:</b>	does is concern an underperforming service or area?
<b><u>E</u>xtent:</b>	does it affect a large number of residents/large geographic area?
<b><u>R</u>eplication:</b>	is anyone else looking at it?

#### Scrutiny Proposal Forms

4.7 As mentioned in paragraph 4.2 above the Council's Constitution requires scrutiny committees to prepare and keep under review a programme for their future work. To assist the process of prioritising reports, if officers are of the view that a subject merits time for discussion on the Committee's business agenda they have to formally request the Committee to consider receiving a report on that topic. This is done via the submission of a 'proposal form' which clarifies the purpose, importance and potential outcomes of suggested subjects. No officer proposal forms have been received for consideration at the current meeting.

4.8 With a view to making better use of scrutiny's time by focussing committees' resources on detailed examination of subjects, adding

value through the decision-making process and securing better outcomes for residents, the SCVCG recently decided that members, as well as officers, should complete 'scrutiny proposal forms' outlining the reasons why they think a particular subject would benefit from scrutiny's input. A copy of the 'member's proposal form' can be seen at Appendix 2. The reverse side of this form contains a flowchart listing questions which members should consider when proposing an item for scrutiny, and which committees should ask when determining a topic's suitability for inclusion on a scrutiny forward work programme. If, having followed this process, a topic is not deemed suitable for formal examination by a scrutiny committee, alternative channels for sharing the information or examining the matter can be considered e.g. the provision of an 'information report', or if the matter is of a very local nature examination by the relevant Member Area Group (MAG). In future no items will be included on a forward work programme without a 'scrutiny proposal form' being completed and the topic being accepted for inclusion by the Committee. Assistance with the form's completion is available from the Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

#### Rhyl Coastal Defence Assessment

- 4.9 A report on the above was scheduled for presentation to the Committee at the current meeting. However, as a meeting is scheduled to take place between the Council and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) with respect to this assessment at the end of January the Chair has permitted the deferral of the report's presentation to the Committee until the next meeting on 12 March, on the basis that it would be premature for scrutiny to consider the matter ahead of that meeting taking place.

#### Supported Independent Living Service

- 4.10 Another report originally scheduled for presentation to the current meeting was the one on the above service. As this Service has recently transferred from the Housing Service to the Adult and Business Service it will be subject to a full service review. Consequently, it would be premature to present a report on the matter to the Committee until that review has concluded and its findings are known. The Chair therefore permitted its deferral until the early autumn of 2015 (see Appendix 1 attached).

#### Cabinet Forward Work Programme

- 4.11 When determining their programme of future work it is useful for scrutiny committees to have regard to Cabinet's scheduled programme of work. For this purpose a copy of the Cabinet's forward work programme is attached at Appendix 3.

#### Progress on Committee Resolutions

- 4.12 A table summarising recent Committee resolutions and advising members on progress with their implementation is attached at Appendix 4 to this report.

**5. Service Challenge Groups**

There has for some time been vacancies for a representative from the Committee on both the Highways & Public Realm, and the Planning & Public Protection Service Challenge Groups. The Committee is therefore requested to appoint a representative to serve on each group. An up to date list of scrutiny representatives on the Service Challenge Groups is attached at Appendix 5 for information.

**6. Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group**

Under the Council's scrutiny arrangements the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) performs the role of a coordinating committee. The Group met on 8 January and, as detailed in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 above, recommended the use of Member Proposal forms and a stringent process for determining a topic's suitability for scrutiny. At that meeting it also discussed a draft terms of reference for the cross-scrutiny task and finish group that will be established to evaluate the impact of the budget cuts. Copies of the draft terms of reference will be available at the meeting on 29 January.

**7. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

Effective scrutiny will assist the Council to deliver its corporate priorities in line with community needs and residents' wishes. Continual development and review of a coordinated work programme will assist the Council to deliver its corporate priorities, improve outcomes for residents whilst also managing austere budget cuts.

**8. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.**

No Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the purpose of this report as consideration of the Committee's forward work programme is not deemed to have an adverse or unfair impact on people who share protected characteristics.

**9. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

Services may need to allocate officer time to assist the Committee with the activities identified in the forward work programme, and with any actions that may result following consideration of those items.

**10. What consultations have been carried out?**

None required for this report. However, the report itself and the consideration of the forward work programme represent a consultation process with the Committee with respect to its programme of future work.

**11. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

No risks have been identified with respect to the consideration of the Committee's forward work programme. However, by regularly reviewing its forward work programme the Committee can ensure that areas of risk are considered and examined as and when they are identified, and recommendations are made with a view to addressing those risks.

**12. Power to make the decision**

Article 6.3.7 of the Council's Constitution stipulates that the Council's scrutiny committees must prepare and keep under review a programme for their future work.

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