

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

15th June 2016

Report of: Andrea Dell, Service Manager Scrutiny

Title: Scrutiny Work Programme Update

Ward: Citywide

Officer Presenting Report: Andrea Dell, Service Manager, Policy, Scrutiny, Research and Executive Support

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RECOMMENDATION

That Members discuss and endorse the following recommendations on the arrangements for setting the Scrutiny Work Programme for 16/17 and beyond;

1. A Scrutiny work programme work-shop be held in September 2016 and this work programme, where appropriate and possible, not be restricted to one year but run up until 2020 whilst ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities to respond to arising issues and pre-decision Scrutiny
2. In the interim (June to September) Scrutiny continues with arising pre-decision scrutiny items as required (for example Devolution), development opportunities for new scrutiny members, and focus on the setting of the 2016-20 work programme.
3. That the work programme be evidence based and aligned to the budget setting processes and the Mayor's Forward Plan and Vision.

Summary

This report sets out the recommendations that were made at the March 2016 OSMB meeting on the setting of the future Scrutiny Work Programme and additional recommendations by the Scrutiny officers. The purpose of this report is to highlight these recommendations for discussion with current OSMB members.

Background

Each municipal year a work programme is set for each Scrutiny Commission that is

overseen by OSMB. As set out in the Constitution, there are 44 'occurrences' of Scrutiny each year. This has traditionally been allocated with 4 for OSMB and 10 for each individual Commission, however, it is a decision for the members as to the allocation of resources.

The Work Programme has traditionally been set via a member workshop, held in June, that ran until the pre-election period (March/April) with a summer recess in August. The workshop has previously brought together suggestions of scrutiny activity which have then been discussed by each Commission to form their work programme and then brought together into one overarching plan overseen by OSMB. The suggestions have come from a variety of sources including individual members, the Mayor and recommendations from officers.

Recommendations

Outlined below are the main recommendations from the OSMB as discussed in March 2016.

1. In the 15/16 Municipal Year, there was consensus amongst Members that the 'all out' elections taking place in May 16 presented an opportunity to review the approach to setting the Scrutiny Work Programme.
2. Members agreed that one of the primary areas of focus for Scrutiny, building on the Centre for Public Scrutiny's review, is policy development, and that a Work Programme that spanned more than one year – at least in part – would be a good way of achieving early involvement.

Scrutiny officer recommendation – a programme of activity that runs for the full four-year term of the current executive is suggested. This will enable members to carry out scrutiny activity and then review the impact of this at a later point, plus enable more in-depth policy development. This however must be balanced with the need for opportunities to scrutinise arising issues and pre-decision scrutiny and this must be built into the work programme. A longer term work programme should enable greater flexibility to respond to arising issues.

3. It was also observed that since there would be no elections until 2020, there would be no need to suspend Scrutiny activity from April to June to accommodate the pre and post-election period. It was therefore agreed that whilst it was important for Scrutiny to continue to meet over the summer months to pick up any urgent business, particularly any pre-decision Cabinet reports, the setting of the Work Programme could be postponed until September when the Mayoral priorities for the coming term would be clearer.
4. Members have indicated that when we set the Work Programme for 15/16 and beyond, we should gather evidence to ensure that we are looking at the issues that are the most pressing for the city or can add the most value.

5. Scrutiny officer recommendation: It is suggested that the work programme should align to the Mayor's Forward Plan, future Vision and the Council's Budget priorities. The budget-setting process will involve consultation with the public and it is suggested that the outcomes from this be used to inform the programme setting. At the time of dispatch of papers the remit and timings for this were under discussion with the new Mayoral Executive however it is recommended that the principal of aligning the programme to the Forward Plan, Vision and Budget be adopted.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

N/A