



# LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 26<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2002

### REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

#### WORK PROGRAMME

##### Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to:-
  - i) ask the Commission to give initial consideration to developing its work programme;
  - ii) inform the Commission of advice given to Scrutiny Committees regarding their work programmes, the outcome of which will be reported to the next meeting of the Commission.

##### Background

2. In considering their work programmes, Committees have been asked to have regard to the following elements of the Constitution and the report agreed by the Council in January, 2001, on the future shape of Scrutiny.
3. The relevant sections of the Constitution are:
  - The Scrutiny Commission shall approve an annual overview and scrutiny work programme, including the programme of other overview and scrutiny committees, to ensure that there is efficient use of the Committee's time and that the potential for duplication of effort is minimised. (Overview and Scrutiny Rule 2(1)).
  - Overview and scrutiny committees shall obtain the prior approval of the Scrutiny Commission for their work programme and in formulating their work programme they shall take into account wishes of members on that committee who are not members of the current political administration of the County Council. (Overview and Scrutiny Rule 7).
  - The role of Scrutiny Reference Group will be considering matters relating to the overall management and operation of overview and scrutiny and the work programme of the Scrutiny Commission.
4. The report to the County Council on 10<sup>th</sup> January – The Future Shape of Scrutiny made particular reference to the need to ensure that the finite amount of resources, both officers and elected members, are used

effectively. The report argued that there should be a priority approach to the allocation of resources and the County Council in endorsing the report supported a priority approach a summary of which is as follows:-

- (i) pre-eminence should be given to the reviews included in the Best Value Review Programme on the basis that these are a statutory requirement on the authority and there are consequences for the Authority of failing to do them. In addition, the Best Value Review Programme has been compiled jointly between Scrutiny and the Executive and approved by the Council and as such should reflect the key priorities for the Council. This was on the understanding that resources must be adequate to allow examination of service areas identified by scrutiny itself and approved by the Council.
- (ii) the second priority should be the review and roll-forward of the Plans forming the Policy Framework. One of the consequences of the LGA 2000 is that, in future, most of the County Council's activity will need to be considered from a Plan-based perspective. One of the major roles of the Council is to approve plans forming the Policy Framework. Detailed scrutiny of such Plans is important on the basis that the Plans, once approved, will in effect determine the scope of the Executive powers. (The Plans, when agreed, can be implemented by the Executive without reference to the Council).
- (iii) Review activity undertaken by Scrutiny should be carefully planned and focussed to ensure that it is achievable in the light of resources available. It should also seek not to duplicate the work of Best Value Review Panels or 'other reviews' in the Cabinet work programme.

#### **Views of the Scrutiny Reference Group**

5. Scrutiny Committees have also been advised of the conclusions arising from the discussions discussions at the Scrutiny Reference Group as follows:-
  - a) Identification of issues for the work programme was a matter for members of the Committee and, in particular, the Chairman and Spokesmen of the Committees who are in a position to influence how proactive each Committee should be;
  - b) The content and delivery of targets and commitments in the Best Value Performance Plan, Medium Term Corporate Strategy and the outcome of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment should influence the identification of issues to be considered. Members should also have regard to other sources of information which may be relevant to judging the performance of the Authority e.g:
    - any available analysis of trends in complaints by service users;
    - concerns/views expressed by service users/public obtained through consultation exercises;

- information arising from an external examination of the Authority's performance e.g. National Performance Indicators, District Audit Reports/reviews, or inspections carried out by the SSI or OFSTED.
- c) that from time to time Committees might be asked by the Cabinet to comment on key policies or plans, consider outcomes of Best Value reviews, etc. Therefore each Committee should seek to identify no more than two items at any one time in their annual work programme.
6. Committees were further advised to have regard to current or planned review activity when considering their work programme and to maintain a focussed approach, at the outset, to their work programme by:
- identifying clearly the scope of the issue to be the subject of scrutiny;
  - setting clear objectives to the exercise;
  - establishing the method of working (reports to the Committee or establishing a Panel);
  - identifying of the type of advice and support it would require.
7. The Education, Health and Social Care and Highways, Transportation and Waste Management Scrutiny Committees have meetings arranged to consider their work programme and the outcome of their deliberations will be reported at the next meeting of the Commission. The Resources Committee is meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> June and has been asked to authorise its Chairman and Spokemen, in consultation with the Director of Resources to consider and recommend a work programme. A meeting of the Chairman and Spokesmen of the newly established Community Services Committee has been arranged to give initial consideration to a potential work programme.

### **Developing the Commission's Work Programme**

7. Appendix 1 sets out the list of items the Scrutiny Reference Group has identified as potential topics together with areas of work already under consideration by the Commission or Scrutiny Reference Group.

### **Recommendations**

8. The Commission is asked to:-
- a) note the advice given to Scrutiny Committees in developing their work programme;
  - b) consider and comment the potential topics already under considerations together with those proposed by the Scrutiny Reference Group and indicate any other topics it consider merit scrutiny;

- c) note that a detailed report on work programmes for all Committees and the Commission will be submitted to the next meeting.

**Equal Opportunities Implications**

None.

**Background Papers**

Constitution of the County Council.

Report to Council on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2001 – Future Shape of Scrutiny.

**Officers to contact.**

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**Issues identified by Scrutiny**1. **Partnership Working and Governance**

This has been identified as a potential topic for scrutiny by a five member panel. Work is being undertaken at officer level and the Chairman and Spokemen have been kept informed of progress. A further report on this matter will be made to the Commission and/or Scrutiny Reference Group during the summer.

2. **Community Strategy**

A five member panel has been established to undertake this work. A report on this appears elsewhere on the agenda.

3. **Community Safety**

This is the subject of a best value review the outcome of which will be reported to the Commission in September/October.

4. **Post Office Closures**

Concern has been raised by a number of members about the difficulties being experienced by Cosignia/Royal Mail PLC and the impact on local communities of any closure of sub post offices. Consideration is being given to an appropriate way of addressing this issue through the scrutiny process and a report will be submitted to the Scrutiny Commission or Scrutiny Reference Group in the near future.

5. **Better Access to Better Services Initiative**

It has been suggested that the implementation of this Initiative should be monitored either through regular reports to the Commission or by a five member panel. The Commission may wish to consider whether this issue should be examined by the Resources Scrutiny Committee.

**Issues in the current Forward Plan**

Race Equality Scheme	September/October
Local Public Service Agreements	September/October
Community Strategy	September/October

**Other issues**

Half Year Performance Indicators against BVPP targets and commitments	November/December
Outcome of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment	November/December
Budget and Capital Programme	December/January

